

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, JUNE 11, 2023

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

10th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME

GATHERING

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP *(based on Hosea 6)*

One: Return to the One Holy God who calls you to steadfast love.
All: **The Lord desires love, not sacrifice.**
One: Return to the One who heals and binds, revives and raises up.
All: **The Lord desires knowledge, not burnt offerings.**
One: Rejoice in the name of the One who favors all creation with light and life.
All: **Amen.**

***OPENING HYMN** “O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing” GtG 610 *(Verses 1-4)*

1. **O for a thousand tongues to sing
my dear Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and King,
the triumphs of God's grace!**
2. **The name of Jesus charms our fears,
and bids our sorrows cease,
sings music in the sinner's ears,
brings life, and health, and peace.**
3. **Christ speaks, and listening to his voice
new life the dead receive;
the mournful waken to rejoice;
the poor in heart believe.**
4. **My gracious Master and my God,
assist me to proclaim,
to spread through all the earth abroad
the honors of thy name.**

Words: Charles Wesley, 1739, alt. *Public Domain.*

Music: Carl Gotthelf Glaser, 1828; arr. Lowell Mason, 1839. *Public Domain.*

UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Merciful God,
your word and your promises come to us
when our hearts are full with rejoicing
and when our hearts fall with sorrow for our failings.
Promises we make we too easily break.
The gifts you have given us
we have not shared with our neighbors.
By overt acts and by omission,
we do not honor your desire for Earth
and all her creatures.
We beg your mercy.
Forgive us, gracious and merciful God.
Forgive the pain and brokenness we cause by our own faithlessness.
Help us to amend our lives
in accord with your admonitions.
Show us the pathway toward healing
and give us peace,
in the name of Christ, our Savior. Amen.

SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

One: God has poured out love upon us.
All: **We are made well and whole, not because of ourselves, but through the grace of God!**
One: In the name of the God who raised Jesus from the dead, your sins are forgiven.
All: **Let us walk in the way of faith, for we can now live in peace!**

THE PEACE

One: The peace of Christ be with you.
All: **And also with you.**
(From your seat, a brief sign of peace may be shared: a wave of the hand, a nod of the head, etc.)

THE WORD

SCRIPTURE READING Matthew 9:9-13,18-26

MATTHEW 9:9-13,18-26 (various)

⁹ As Jesus continued on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at a kiosk for collecting taxes. He said to him, "Follow me," and he got up and followed him.

¹⁰ And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹ But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” ¹² On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ¹³ Go and learn what this means: I want mercy and not sacrifice. I did not come to call righteous people, but sinners.”

¹⁸ While Jesus was speaking to them, a ruler came and knelt in front of him, saying, “My daughter has just died. But come and place your hand on her, and she will live.” ¹⁹ Jesus got up and went with him, and so did his disciples. ²⁰ Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. ²¹ She said to herself, “If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed.” ²² Jesus turned around and saw her, and said, “Courage, my daughter! Your faith has made you well.” At that very moment the woman became well. ²³ When Jesus went into the ruler’s house, he saw the flute players and the distressed crowd. ²⁴ He said, “Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep.” But they laughed at him. ²⁵ But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up. ²⁶ The news about this spread all over that part of the country.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON “The Doctor Is Always In” by Pastor Bill Vincent

“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. Go and learn what this means: I want mercy and not sacrifice. I did not come to call righteous people, but sinners.”

So who are these sick that Jesus came for, as the Great Physician?

They are those people who bleed: bleed with wounds that too often will not heal, that drains them of life.

Maybe it’s from that grudge that they just can’t let go of, that sucks the life out of them.

Or maybe it’s some issue in life that goes unresolved.

Or it’s from that broken relationship that goes unreconciled.

Maybe it’s like that 56-year-old CEO who had a secret: that he could not read. And in his shame he kept it to himself.

It’s those people who are dead, in one shape or form or another.

Maybe they’re not really alive, not fully alive; maybe not even quite alert to what’s going on around them. It’s like your foot that goes asleep and just won’t quite work.

That man or that woman who, as they were growing up, was told, ‘Don’t cry’. Until they’ve taken their feelings and bottled them up. And a part of who they are is dead: it is lifeless,

it is hidden away and stashed away out of fear. Does Jesus say to them, “They are not alive but asleep”?

Perhaps it is the person who wakes up each morning with fear of being abused physically once again. And throughout the day feel they are worthless and worthless and worthless.

That person who has been hurt and feels numb inside.

That person who cries out – but only to themselves – “I am dying inside” from the pain, the agony, the loneliness.

They are the tax collectors and the sinners of our day. The outcasts, the disreputable people that we don’t want to hear about and certainly don’t want to see: the pariahs. Kind of a difficult part that we think of, because remember Jesus issues his invitation to all, including them.

He speaks to a woman who is ‘unclean’ and not supposed to be associating with others. He reaches out and touches a young girl who, quite honestly at that time, was unimportant.

The sinners. And, though we may not like to think about it, that includes us.

These are the sick that Jesus came for.

These are the sick he came to heal.

They are the walking wounded, those dead to life and faith, the outcasts, the sinners.

All of us, if we will acknowledge our need of him.

But then, how does he heal us? How does he bring this healing to us?

Yes, there are other stories we might read, that are, in some ways, more spectacular.

But as we read our stories this morning, what are some ways that he brings his healing presence to others?

He heals simply by his call.

He walks by Matthew’s place and simply calls, “Follow me.”

It’s like standing there as the group keeps getting smaller, and finally getting picked for the team.

Or like having someone say, “Why don’t you come on over and join us at our table.”

“You mean me?” “Yes, you.” That’s what he says.

Someone cares for us, someone wants us, someone wants to be with us.

And the burden of being the outcast, being the outsider, is lifted.

He heals by his fellowship and by his very presence. His presence around that table with Matthew and other tax collectors and those sinners. He was there with them.

We even see it when he goes into the girl and he reaches out and touches her with his hand, and in that presence lifts her up.

And whatever confounds us, whatever confronts us in life – even death – we find we are not alone. And that loneliness, that sense of forsakenness, is dispelled.

He heals through his availability to us: to people of all walks and all stations in life.

This ruler who came to him: who came to him in public, in front of everyone else. And when he asked Jesus for help, Jesus got up and went with him: he was there, he was available, he followed at this man's request.

And he was available to that woman who felt like she had to sneak up behind him and not be noticed. And just by being there he was available to her, his power was available to her; and she just had to reach out and touch him.

He is available, if we would but avail ourselves of his availability.

So we sing in that hymn,

**What a friend we have in Jesus ...
take it to the Lord in prayer.**

(words by Joseph Scriven, ca. 1855)

And know that he is available.

And yes, he heals by his word.

In the way Matthew tells the story (as opposed to some of the other gospel writers), it is only as Jesus turns and speaks to the woman that we hear that she is healed.

We reach out to him and he heals us and speaks that word of healing and wholeness and fullness of life.

And yes, we need to acknowledge that sometimes the word he speaks can surprise us and offer us a direction, a perspective different from our own.

"She is not dead but asleep." That's a different word than we were expecting.

But if we will listen and if we will hear that word, it will be healing, if we will trust that this word, and the one who speaks this word, is true.

So we can experience healing through his call, through his presence, through his availability, through his word.

But note that this is actually only part of this experience of healing.

For remember: he came not only for us; he came for the world.

So, how does he offer this healing for the world?

Though maybe, the more to the point question is,

How can we embody and share his healing and his presence in the world?

We can offer his healing in sincerity as we extend his call to others.

I mean, we have heard; we have responded. Will we share this call with others?

Yes, realize that to do this we may have to expand our sense (understanding) of 'our people.' We may have to do more than simply waiting for someone to walk through the door. We may have to go out to them and be present with them and share with them and invite them.

Or are we too comfortable with 'our own people': too comfortable to branch out and embrace and include others that are not part of our 'acceptable' social group?

We can offer his healing with integrity as we embody his presence. Standing with the hurting, the bleeding, the dying, the outcasts. Being with them in their pain, their loneliness, their guilt.

Is ours a healing presence?

I mean, one wonders, there are times when we are having difficulty enough with our own pain, our own hurt, our own grief, that we find it difficult if not impossible to share our own presence with others.

Or perhaps we're so unfamiliar or unaware of our own loneliness that we cannot embody Christ's presence to others.

We offer his healing with openness as we reflect his availability.

When he speaks of 'mercy', that word refers to compassion; it can also refer to understanding and patience.

And I wonder: if someone was in pain, if they had a problem, if they were confused, if they were experiencing inner turmoil, would they feel comfortable coming to us for help?

Would they perceive an open invitation for them to come to us?

Or from past words and previous encounters, would they think that we were too busy, didn't have time for them, and might even be judgmental in our response?

We can offer his healing in humility as we seek to speak, not our own, but Jesus' word.

Sometimes to do that we have to get ourselves out of the way in order to be able to speak Jesus' word.

Then we wonder if we are too busy defending our own word: too busy to heed and learn his word, let alone to speak it with others.

Are we so comfortable with our own view of how life is supposed to be, that we do not consider his word may challenge us to think and believe and behave differently; that maybe Jesus' view of life is so radically different from ours, so that when he speaks those words, "*She is not dead but asleep,*" that we laugh too.

All of which may in some ways bring us back full circle.

For we can begin to question our readiness: we're not quite sure we have this ability to share Christ's presence. And we realize that we have a long way to go in embodying Christ's healing presence to the world.

We realize we need help. Much like someone who is sick needs a doctor.

But then, we're in luck. Or, we're in grace. For in grace, he comes to us again – and again, and again – to extend his call, to offer his presence, to speak his word for the healing of what ails us; even as, at the same time, he nudges us and directs us and encourages us to share that healing with others.

We are here, now, in the presence of our risen Lord, Jesus Christ: the one who can heal us that we might know wholeness, and share it with others.

And in that we say – with our words and our lives – thanks be to God.

***HYMN** “We Come to You for Healing, Lord” GtG 796

- 1. We come to you for healing, Lord,
of body, mind, and soul,
and pray that by your Spirit’s touch
we may again be whole.**
- 2. As once you walked through ancient streets
and reached toward those in pain,
we know you come among us still
with power to heal again.**
- 3. You touch us through physicians’ skills,
through nurses’ gifts of care,
and through the love of faithful friends
who lift our lives in prayer.**
- 4. Through nights of pain and wakefulness,
through days when strength runs low,
grant us your gift of patience, Lord,
your calming peace to know.**
- 5. We come to you, O loving Lord,
in our distress and pain,
in trust that through our nights and days
your grace will heal, sustain.**

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***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

**In life and in death we belong to God.
Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit,
we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel,
whom alone we worship and serve.**

(continued...)

**We trust in Jesus Christ,
fully human, fully God.
Jesus proclaimed the reign of God:
preaching good news to the poor
and release to the captives,
teaching by word and deed
and blessing the children,
healing the sick
and binding up the brokenhearted,
eating with outcasts,
forgiving sinners,
and calling all to repent and believe the gospel.
Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition,
Jesus was crucified,
suffering the depths of human pain
and giving his life for the sins of the world.
God raised this Jesus from the dead,
vindicating his sinless life,
breaking the power of sin and evil,
delivering us from death to life eternal.**

**With believers in every time and place,
we rejoice that nothing in life or in death
can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

(from A Brief Statement of Faith, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Book of Confessions)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

**One: Hear our prayer this day...
All: ..God of wholeness and grace.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER (Traditional)

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever. Amen.**

OFFERING

Invitation

Reflection

**Unison Prayer of Dedication*

**For the love and joy and wholeness you offer to us,
we give you thanks, O God.
Teach us the blessedness of our lives
and the grace of knowing you.
Fill our hearts with thanksgiving
that our lives might reflect our gratitude.
Through our offerings
may we be channels of your compassion and healing to others,
for the sake of Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.**

SENDING

***CLOSING HYMN** “We Cannot Measure How You Heal” GtG 797

- 1. We cannot measure how you heal
or answer every sufferer’s prayer,
yet we believe your grace responds
where faith and doubt unite to care.
Your hands, though bloodied on the cross,
survive to hold and heal and warn,
to carry all through death to life
and cradle children yet unborn.**
- 2. The pain that will not go away,
the guilt that clings from things long past,
the fear of what the future holds,
are present as if meant to last.
But present too is love which tends
the hurt we never hoped to find,
the private agonies inside,
the memories that haunt the mind.**
- 3. So some have come who need your help
and some have come to make amends,
as hands which shaped and saved the world
are present in the touch of friends.**

(continued...)

**Lord, let your Spirit meet us here
to mend the body, mind, and soul,
to disentangle peace from pain,
and make your broken people whole.**

Text by John L. Bell and Graham Maule.

Music: Scottish melody. Tune arrangement by John L. Bell.

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***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

One: ...And let the gathered people of God say...

All: ...Amen.

POSTLUDE

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