

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, JUNE 18, 2023

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

11th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME

GATHERING

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Jesus Christ summons us
to answer God's call of mercy.
**All: Christ gathers us and gives us power
to be healed and to heal,**
One: to be forgiven and to forgive,
All: to be freed from sin and to set others free,
One: to tell one another and the world:
God's presence is at hand.
All: Let us worship God.

***OPENING HYMN** "Here in this Place" GtG 401

**1. Here in this place the new light is streaming;
now is the darkness vanished away;
see in this space our fears and our dreamings
brought here to you in the light of this day.
Gather us in, the lost and forsaken;
gather us in, the blind and the lame;
call to us now, and we shall awaken;
we shall arise at the sound of our name.**

**2. We are the young, our lives are a myst'ry,
We are the old who yearn for your face.
We have been sung throughout all of history,
called to be light to the whole human race.
Gather us in, the rich and the haughty;
gather us in, the proud and the strong;
give us a heart, so meek and so lowly;
give us the courage to enter the song.**

(continued...)

3. Here we will take the wine and the water;
here we will take the bread of new birth.
Here you shall call your sons and your daughters,
call us anew to be salt for the earth.
Give us to drink the wine of compassion;
give us to eat the bread that is you;
nourish us well, and teach us to fashion
lives that are holy and hearts that are true.

4. Not in the dark of buildings confining,
not in some heaven, light-years away:
here in this place the new light is shining;
now is the kingdom, and now is the day.
Gather us in and hold us forever;
gather us in and make us your own;
gather us in, all peoples together,
fire of love in our flesh and our bone.

*Gather Us In, Text and Tune by Marty Haugen, 1979.
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UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Dear God, you call us to be a light to the world, yet ours is not a shining example. The trust we are to have in you often grows dim, and sometimes fades completely. We put a price tag on the love we are to share freely. By your grace and for the sake of your dear Son, forgive us. By your Spirit renew us, and refresh us in the ways of your faith, hope, and love. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

One: Hear the good news:

All: **God's steadfast love endures forever, and God's faithfulness is promised to all generations.**

One: We are justified by faith, forgiven and freed, and at peace with God and each other through Jesus Christ.

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 9:35-10:8

MATTHEW 9:35-10:8 (various)

³⁵ *Jesus traveled among all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, announcing the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness.*

³⁶ *Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them because they were troubled and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.* ³⁷ *Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into the harvest field."*

¹ *Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to throw them out and to heal every disease and every sickness.* ² *These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; ³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴ Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.*

⁵ *These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. ⁶ Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. ⁷ As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those with skin diseases, and throw out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. ..."*

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON "When John Deere Can't" by Pastor Bill Vincent

Technology is wonderful. It has made our lives safer, easier, more convenient. We are able to do things we never dreamed of being able to do, with instant communication, less invasive surgery, cars that drive – and even park – themselves.

But there are some things technology cannot do – they cannot do for us.

Like harvest.

Oh, I know, you've seen tractors out in fields. And if you know something about them, they have gotten more and more advanced in their technology, with air conditioning, and computers that tell them how much fertilizer to put where.

But the kind of harvest that Jesus is talking about – that's something that we have to step up to the plate and do ourselves. All of us.

"*The harvest is plentiful,*" he says, "*but the workers are few.*" And then he sends out the disciples.

This harvest?

"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick,"
(Matthew 9:12 NRSV)

he has said. We read that last week.

“Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them because they were troubled and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”

Meeting their needs, whether it be healing or hearing. For he also mentioned to them to proclaim that word,

“The kingdom of heaven has come near.”

The harvest: to reach out to the deep need of the people and to cultivate a receptivity to hearing that wondrous news of God’s provision and God’s presence in our lives.

And the harvest is indeed plentiful. As one translation puts it,

“bigger than you can imagine.” (Common English Bible)

And we have little need to doubt that. With debates that are more acrimonious, rhetoric that is more strident, conflict that is more deadly. With discrimination and unfair policies based on race or sex or gender or age. With war that continues to rage in Ukraine. With a Minneapolis Police Department that is blasted for its unfair practices. And because of storms that rage and rage and rage, with too much rain here and too little rain there, and too much and too strong a wind elsewhere.

Compared with the harvest to be done, the workers are indeed few.

However, we mistakenly assume that the workers for the harvest are far fewer than they actually are.

For unfortunately, far too often – not always in our words, but in our actions and how we live – unfortunately all too often, the assumption, when it has to do with this harvest that Jesus speaks about, is that the one in the black robe who is preaching on Sunday morning is the only one working in the harvest.

Wrong!

All of us are workers for this harvest of the kingdom.

Yes, I may serve as pastor – it’s a role, a function in the larger picture – but I do not do all the ministering of this congregation or any congregation, not by a long shot.

We all do. We all are called to do.

In the letter of First Peter we hear,

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of the one who called you out of darkness into God’s marvelous light. (I Peter 2:9 NRSV)

You. Me. We.

And in some congregations – if you go and visit and share in worship with them – some congregations will list in their bulletins the pastors and other staff members; and then they’ll say, “Ministers: All the people.”

That is a truth we need to wrap our minds around and wrap our lives in.

Loren Mead, in his book The Once and Future Church, speaks of the history of the church and how ministry has been understood. And yes, there have been times in the history of the church when the focus has seemed to be that only the one who is ordained as the pastor got to do anything that was good and significant in the ministry of the church.

But we have turned the corner with that.

As Mead mentions, there is that phrase that speaks of “the ministry of the laity”: the ministry of the people. And it means “a change of consciousness” in the church. For

If laity have ministry [– and they do, you do –] then a Christian who is a doctor or teacher or laborer has something special that they are called to do or say or...witness to in their world. (p.25)

So when was the last time you thought of yourself as a minister?

“I am a minister of the gospel in this household.” What difference will that make when someone else in the household gets on your nerves; or there’s a blowup and a disagreement?

“I am a minister of the gospel in this workplace.” What difference will that make when others are stressed out from overwork, or inappropriate behavior?

“I am a minister of the gospel in this organization.” With the decisions that are made and the encounters with opposition and disagreements that might erupt.

“I am a minister of the gospel around this table.” As we eat a meal and give thanks for those who prepared it, and also offer prayers for those who struggle to put food on their table.

And we can recognize this ministry and the opportunities for such ministry, not only in our own lives, but in the lives of others. We can affirm and encourage fellow workers in their ministering.

I was at a conference at one of the seminaries of the Presbyterian Church, staying in one of the dorms. As I was leaving my room, I met one of the people who was going about cleaning the rooms. And as I walked by, I simply said, “Thank you for your ministry.” And you should have seen the change in the demeanor of that person when she realized something of the significance of what she was doing.

Or saying “Thank you for your ministry” to the nurse who takes the time, in the midst of the busy-ness, to explain things to a family who is in turmoil over their loved one who lies unconscious in the bed.

Or for the person in the check out line trying to check you out and so many other people, yet who takes the time to smile at the child who is overwhelmed by it all and shy and hiding behind her mother’s leg.

You may remember last week I mentioned something about that 56-year-old CEO who had a secret: he could not read. He knew shame from that secret, but finally got the courage to say something about it in the midst of his peers. And he feared their jeering and laughter. But they didn’t laugh. They supported him, they respected him, they helped him. And that’s ministering.

When we share a word of compassion, when we cheer someone on in a tough time, when we go out of our way to help someone in their need, that’s ministering. In different situations, in everyday situations, as we seek to embody our faith and our God, and offer the same comfort and hope that we know; the guidance and the direction; offering healing, casting out those demons that wrestle with us and with which we wrestle inside our lives and beyond.

Ministering to those people with whom we meet and whom we know.

With a hammer to help build a house for someone who could not afford it.

With food to a pantry who shares it with those who don't have it on their table.

And maybe even with that parent that you and I have seen before in the grocery store: the parent that is so angry with the child that is acting out, ready to burst at the seams. And maybe walking by and simply saying, "You know, parenting can be stressful." And offering a smile to the child, and to the parent. In a simple way, letting them know they are not alone, and someone else understands. And maybe the temperature of the encounter will come down a notch, or three.

All the while, in all of this, we need to remember our motivation for doing this:

"You received without payment, give without payment,"

Jesus said.

Our motivation is that knowledge, that experience, that truth of the grace that we know in Jesus Christ: grace that we do not deserve, but God gives anyway, and calls us to share with others.

And we seek to do that without having to hide. Not to beat people over the head about it, but simply to communicate, "Here I am. Yes, God has blessed me with assurance and guidance, with love and joy and peace. And because I have received that so freely, I seek to give it freely as well."

And we become some of those workers in the harvest, in the need and the searching and the love that God seeks to share.

And in doing so we let our light shine.

You remember Jesus said,

"Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16-NRSV)

For that's where the focus needs to be.

We reflect God's light. We reflect God's love. We share God's love. Because we know it. And we know that others need to know it as well.

This is the harvest the Lord needs us to do.

And yes, we may pray to the Lord of the harvest to send more workers.

And yes, we may pray that we are more worthy workers ourselves.

And who knows, we may end up being the answer to someone else's prayer in their need and in their searching.

I leave you with these words. Words by Lavon Bayler in a hymn he writes and shares reflecting on this passage: a poem that spoke to me, and I believe it will speak to you as well.

**Our Savior traveled through the land,
That common folks might understand
Good news that Love had come to reign,
To heal their ills and ease their pain.**

**Without a shepherd, they appeared
Harassed and helpless, not revered.
Christ had compassion on the lost
And cared for them despite the cost.** (continued...)

**He called disciples, sent them out
To deal with fear and sin and doubt.
A harvest plentiful awaits
The lab'ers Jesus consecrates.**

**And still today, authority
Is giv'n to use Love's energy
To serve and heal in Jesus' name,
The lost and helpless to reclaim.**

**We're called to use our gifts of grace,
God's suff'ring people to embrace.
All we receive, we pass along,
Inviting all to sing Love's song.**

("Our Savior Traveled" (#61), from *Taught by Love* by Lavon Bayler, United Church Press, 1998)

Amen.

***HYMN** "Lord, You Give the Great Commission" GtG 298 (*Verses 1-2, 4-5*)

1. **Lord, you give the great commission:
"Heal the sick and preach the word."
Lest the church neglect its mission,
and the gospel go unheard,
help us witness to your purpose
with renewed integrity:
with the Spirit's gifts empower us
for the work of ministry.**
2. **Lord, you call us to your service:
"In my name baptize and teach."
That the world may trust your promise,
life abundant meant for each,
give us all new fervor, draw us
closer in community:
with the Spirit's gifts empower us
for the work of ministry.**
4. **Lord, you show us love's true measure:
"Father, what they do, forgive."
Yet we hoard as private treasure
all that you so freely give.**

(continued...)

**May your care and mercy lead us
to a just society:
with the Spirit's gifts empower us
for the work of ministry.**

- 5. Lord, you bless with words assuring:
"I am with you to the end."
Faith and hope and love restoring,
may we serve as you intend,
and, amid the cares that claim us,
hold in mind eternity:
with the Spirit's gifts empower us
for the work of ministry.**

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***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

**We trust in God the Holy Spirit,
everywhere the giver and renewer of life.
The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith,
sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God and neighbor,
and binds us together with all believers
in the one body of Christ, the Church.
The same Spirit
who inspired the prophets and apostles
rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture,
engages us through the Word proclaimed,
claims us in the waters of baptism,
feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation,
and calls women and men to all ministries of the Church.
In a broken and fearful world
the Spirit gives us courage
to pray without ceasing,
to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior,
to unmask idolatries in Church and culture,
to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,
and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.
In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit,
we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks
and to live holy and joyful lives,
even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth,
praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"**

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

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

One: Incline your ear to us;
All: **hear our prayers and supplications.**

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*

**Bountifully you have given to us, O Lord, bountifully may we give.
Accept these offerings we bring. They are but a portion of your gifts to us.
We offer you all that we have and all that we are, that your will might be
done and your kingdom come. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.**

SENDING

***CLOSING HYMN** "Go to the World!" GtG 295

**1. Go to the world!
Go into all the earth.
Go preach the cross where Christ renews life's worth,
baptizing as the sign of our rebirth.
Alleluia. Alleluia.**

**2. Go to the world!
Go into every place.
Go live the word of God's redeeming grace.
Go seek God's presence in each time and space.
Alleluia. Alleluia.**

(continued...)

**3. Go to the world!
Go struggle, bless, and pray;
the nights of tears give way to joyous day.
As servant church, you follow Christ's own way.
Alleluia. Alleluia.**

**4. Go to the world!
Go as the ones I send,
for I am with you till the age shall end,
when all the hosts of glory cry "Amen!"
Alleluia. Alleluia.**

*Go to the World, Text by Sylvia G. Dunstan, 1985.
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***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

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

***RESPONSE "Go with Us, Lord" GtG 748**

**Go with us, Lord, and guide the way
through this and every coming day,
that in your Spirit strong and true
our lives may be our gift to you.**

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POSTLUDE

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