

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, JULY 2, 2023

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

**13<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME**

**GATHERING**

**PRELUDE**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

One: With heart and soul and voices we come to worship.  
All: **We seek to love and serve the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and strength and mind.**  
One: So come to give thanks and praise.  
All: **We come to rejoice in the goodness of the Lord our God.**

**\*OPENING HYMN** “The God of Abraham Praise” GtG 49 (*Verses 1, 2, & 4*)

1. **The God of Abraham praise,  
who reigns enthroned above,  
the Ancient of Eternal Days,  
the God of love!  
The Lord, the great I Am,  
by earth and heaven confessed,  
we bow before your holy name,  
forever blest.**
  
2. **Your spirit still flows free,  
high surging where it will.  
In prophet's word you spoke of old  
and you speak still.  
Established is your law,  
and changeless it shall stand,  
deep writ upon the human heart  
by your strong hand.**
  
4. **You have eternal life  
implanted in the soul;  
your love shall be our strength and stay,  
while ages roll.**

*(continued...)*

**We praise you, living God!  
We praise your holy name:  
the first, the last, beyond all thought,  
and still the same!**

Words: Moses Maimonides, 12<sup>th</sup> cent.; vers. Daniel ben Judah Dayan, 1404;  
stanzas 1, 3, trans. Thomas Olivers, ca. 1770, alt.; stanzas 2, 4, trans. Max  
Landsberg, Newton M. Mann, and William C. Gannett, 1884, 1910, alt.  
Music: LEONI, Jewish melody, 17<sup>th</sup> cent.; adapt. Meyer Lyon and Thomas  
Olivers, 1770.  
*Public Domain.*

### **UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

**God of Providence, your faithfulness is from everlasting to everlasting, but we fail to trust. You hold all creation in the palm of your hand, but we take our lives into our own hands more often than we would like to admit. When we trust ourselves more than your grace, forgive us. When we get caught up in our own strivings, relieve us. When we think the world rests on our shoulders, remind us. Call us back to your way. Teach us to turn our lives over to your gracious care. Amen.**

### **SILENT CONFESSION**

#### **ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

One: As a cup of cold water quenches our thirst, God's grace soothes our souls.  
All: **The Lord is indeed a God of mercy and compassion.**  
One: In Christ, God seeks the lost and forgives the sinner and loves the world.  
All: **So let us hear and believe this wonderful, grace-filled news: that in Jesus Christ we are forgiven. In Jesus Christ we are loved. Alleluia! Amen!**

#### **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** Genesis 22:1-14

*(next page...)*

Genesis 22:1-14 (New Revised Standard Version)

<sup>1</sup> After these things God tested Abraham. God said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." <sup>2</sup> God said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you." <sup>3</sup> So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him. <sup>4</sup> On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place far away. <sup>5</sup> Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the boy and I will go over there; we will worship, and then we will come back to you." <sup>6</sup> Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. <sup>7</sup> Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" <sup>8</sup> Abraham said, "God will provide the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together.

<sup>9</sup> When they came to the place that God had shown him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. <sup>10</sup> Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son. <sup>11</sup> But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." <sup>12</sup> The angel of the Lord said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you revere God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." <sup>13</sup> And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. <sup>14</sup> So Abraham called that place "The Lord will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided."

## **PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

**SERMON** "How Much?" by Pastor Bill Vincent

It is a horrifying request.

But also carries with it a terribly – terrifyingly – important message. A point so crucial, so vital, that it is in its own way horrifying, earth-shaking, for it shakes our life to the very core.

The story of the testing of Abraham ends up testing us.

Now, before I continue, a word of caution to children and those who love them.

This story in no way – I repeat: *no way!* – justifies harming children, in an abusive situation or otherwise.

In fact, as the story was told, it may even have been shared originally to make the point that God does not ask, require, or condone such child sacrifice, as was done by some other peoples in that area and time.

But will we take the easy way out and fall to the temptation of thinking this is only a horrifying story that, in its horror, forever forbids the atrocious practice of child sacrifice? Now it does do that, but will we stop there?

Or will we hear in and through the horror the atrocious demand of God, much to our own personal horror?

*"Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there..."*

Are we willing to offer – to not withhold – to give to God that which we love, that which is most precious to us, in order to be faithful: to follow down the path to the place God will show us?

What is that which we love? What is most precious to us? The locus of our dreams, the focus of our life. We almost dread thinking of it, for fear of being found out.

Is it family? friends?

Our need to know?

Our need to be in control?

Our need to have it all together?

*"Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me,"* (Matthew 10:37)

Jesus would say.

What is first in our lives? Who is first in our lives? Who really?

But this issue is raised in such a way as to make the hair stand up on our neck. The question is asked in such a way as to chill us to the bone...which is probably an indication of how on target the question is.

The answer takes true, deep sacrifice – metaphorically speaking, of course, though no less seriously.

And we find that very difficult, that commitment. Hard for us to do.

Will we? not give just lip service, but heart service?

Will we?

Can we? Are we capable of giving at such depth?

There is hope for us. Not that God will lessen the demand, but that we might have a chance of fulfilling it.

*"For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose their reward."* (Mark 9:41)

Even so small an effort as a cup of cold water.

God may demand the greatest. But God also welcomes the least. Even the little things.

God accepts even the small steps on the journey of our surrender. Like every single one of Abraham's steps on his 3-day journey. As the saying goes, "The journey of 10,000 miles begins with a single step."

Even the small things we hand over to God begin our journey of faithfulness, our obedience, our sincere service and worship of God.

And through all those steps, God will provide.

Not as a simplistic answer. It certainly was not simplistic to Abraham, or to Isaac.

But this ultimate hope (and providing) is demonstrated many years later...when God went up on a mountain, to a place few (if any) of us have ever dared go, and did what we would (and could) not do – offered up God's own Son – and in so doing, provided ultimately for us: life, help, inspiration and empowerment...

...and sought to impress upon us how deep, how wide, how long, how broad – how unfathomable – is God's great love for us.

A message we all too often miss, as this story illustrates: a story told in a song by Jimmy Wayne.

**He can't remember the times that he thought,  
"Does my daddy love me? Probably not."  
That didn't stop him from wishing that he did,  
didn't keep him from wanting or worshiping him.**

**He guesses he saw him about once a year.  
He could still feel the way he felt, standing in tears,  
stretching his arms out as far as they'd go,  
whispering, "Daddy, I want you to know:**

**"I love you this much.  
And I'm waiting on you  
to make up your mind:  
do you love me too?  
How ever long it takes,  
I'm never giving up.  
No matter what,  
I love you this much."**

**[The boy] grew to hate him for what he had done,  
'cause what kind of father could do that to his son?  
He said, "Damn you, daddy," the day that he died.  
The man didn't blink, but [inside] the little boy cried:**

**"I love you this much.  
And I'm waiting on you  
to make up your mind:  
do you love me too?  
How ever long it takes,  
I'm never giving up.  
No matter what,  
I love you this much."**

**Half way through the [funeral] service,  
while the choir sang a hymn,  
he looked up above the preacher,  
and he sat and stared at him.**

**He said, "Forgive me, Father," when he realized  
that he hadn't been unloved or alone all his life.  
His arms were stretched out as far as they'd go,  
nailed to the cross for the whole world to know:**

**"I love you this much.  
And I'm waiting on you  
to make up your mind:  
do you love me too?  
How ever long it takes,  
I'm never giving up.  
No matter what,  
I love you this much."**

(“I Love You This Much,” words by Chris DuBois, Don Sampson, and Jimmy Wayne; on “Jimmy Wayne” 2003)

When all is said and done, we have something Abraham did not have: the example of God's sacrifice – gift – of God's own Son.

Even so, when all is said and done, Abraham demonstrated something we too often do not: arms, and heart, opened wide, with a response, "*Here I am,*" as much as if to say, "Lord, I love you this much."

So, in a sense, we come full circle.  
For the God who tests  
    is the same God who shows us the way.  
The God who demands faithfulness  
    is the same God who embodies faithfulness.  
The God who says "Follow me"  
    is the same God who provides the means to do just that  
        by loving us.

"I love you this much," God says.

*"Go to the place I will show you,"* God says.

As God calls daily to us, may our response be, like Abraham's, "*Here I am.*"

**\*HYMN** “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” GtG 223 (*Verses 1, 2, & 4*)

1. **When I survey the wondrous cross  
on which the Prince of glory died,  
my richest gain I count but loss,  
and pour contempt on all my pride.**
  
2. **Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
save in the death of Christ my God;  
all the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to his blood.**
  
4. **Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
that were a present far too small;  
love so amazing, so divine,  
demands my soul, my life, my all.**

Words: Isaac Watts, 1707. Music: HAMBURG, Lowell Mason, 1824.  
*Public Domain.*

**\*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.**

**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!"**

**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:** God of mercy...  
**All:** ...hear our prayer.

## THE EUCHARIST

### OFFERING

*Invitation*

*Reflection*

*\*Unison Prayer of Dedication*

**For your grace that claims us and your love that transforms us, we give you thanks, O God. We offer to you the fruits of the earth and the fruits of our labor, that they may be used for the repair of the world. Bless our gifts, those who give them, and those who will receive them. May our whole lives be an offering before you. Amen.**

### SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

*Invitation to the Lord's Table*

*Prayer of Thanksgiving*

Leader: The Lord be with you.

**People: And also with you.**

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

**People: We lift them to the Lord.**

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

*(The prayer continues...)*

*The Lord's Prayer* (Contemporary)

**Our Father in heaven,**

**hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours  
now and forever. Amen.**

*Breaking of the Bread*

**Sing** "In Remembrance of Me" GtG 521

**1. In remembrance of me, eat this bread.**

**In remembrance of me, drink this wine.**

**In remembrance of me, pray for the time  
when God's own will is done.**

*(continued...)*



**2. In remembrance of me, heal the sick.  
In remembrance of me, feed the poor.  
In remembrance of me, open the door  
and let your neighbors in,  
let them in.**

**Take, eat, and be comforted;  
drink and remember, too,  
that this is my body and  
precious blood shed for you,  
shed for you.**

**3. In remembrance of me, search for truth.  
In remembrance of me, always love.  
In remembrance of me, don't look above,  
but in your heart, look for God.**

**Do this in remembrance of me.**

*In Remembrance, Text by Ragan Courtney, Tune (RED) by Buryl Red.  
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*Communion of the People*

(You are invited to partake of each of the elements as you are served,  
remembering our commitment to the Lord.)

*Prayer*

### **SENDING**

**\*CLOSING HYMN** “Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart” GtG 688 (*Verses 1, 3, & 5*)

- 1. Spirit of God, descend upon my heart;  
wean it from earth; through all its pulses move;  
stoop to my weakness, mighty as thou art,  
and make me love thee as I ought to love.**
- 3. Hast thou not bid us love thee, God and King;  
all, all thine own, soul, heart, and strength, and mind?**

*(continued...)*

**I see thy cross; there teach my heart to cling.  
O let me seek thee, and O let me find!**

- 5. Teach me to love thee as thine angels love,  
one holy passion filling all my frame;  
the baptism of the heaven-descended Dove,  
my heart an altar, and thy love the flame.**

Words: George Croly, 1867.

Music: MORECAMBE, Frederick Cook Atkinson, 1870.  
*Public Domain.*

**\*CHARGE AND BLESSING**

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

**All:** ...Amen.

**\*RESPONSE** “More Love to Thee, O Christ” GtG 828 (*Verse 1*)

- 1. More love to thee, O Christ,  
more love to thee!  
Hear thou the prayer I make  
on bended knee.  
This is my earnest plea:  
more love, O Christ, to thee;  
more love to thee,  
more love to thee!**

Words: Elizabeth Payson Prentiss, 1856.

Music: MORE LOVE TO THEE, William Howard Doane, 1870.  
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**POSTLUDE**

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