

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, MAY 12, 2024

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

SEVENTH SUNDAY of EASTER

GATHERING

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP

- One: We are together today because...
All: **...God calls us to be a new and different people, salt and light to the world.**
One: We have been called for a mission:
All: **to be the body of Christ in today's world.**
One: So we come as God's people to be nurtured and rejoice.
All: **We come to be challenged, to learn, and to grow.**
Unison: **So come, let us worship the Lord.**

***OPENING HYMN** "Give Thanks, O Christian People" GtG 644

- 1. Give thanks, O Christian people,
for workers of our day
who heed the call to service
and make it their life's way
to go to feed the hungry,
to tend to those in need,
to work for equal justice,
till all God's folk are freed.**
- 2. Give thanks, O Christian people,
for leaders of our years
who live to share with others
our joy when Christ appears,
to teach the ones who seek light,
to guide the faltering feet,
to lead the followers forward
our living Lord to meet.**

(continued...)

3. **Give thanks, O Christian people,
for all who love the Lord,
who live each day believing
in God's eternal Word:
to share Christ's love in living,
to witness with each deed,
to use the talents given
to plant the gospel seed.**

4. **Give thanks, O Christian people,
for life in fellowship
with all who trust our Savior
their serving to equip:
to ease another's burdens,
to cope in joy and stress,
to magnify God's message
and Christ's great love confess.**

Text by Mary Jackson Cathey. Copyright 1981, The Pilgrim Press, All rights reserved.
Reprinted / Podcast / Streamed with permission under ONE LICENSE #A-739819/#A-739796. All rights reserved.

Music: ES FLOG EIN KLEINS WALDVOGELEIN, Memmingen ms., 17th cent.; harm.
George Ratcliffe Woodward, 1904
Public Domain

UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Holy and merciful God,
We have been called together into the church
to live the resurrection faith,
to embody Easter and touch lives as Jesus did.
We have not done this well.
Our vision has been narrow and limited.
Our testimony has been timid and self-protective.
We have lived for ourselves,
and apart from you.
We have turned from our neighbors,
and ignored the pain of the world.
In your great mercy forgive our sins
and free us from our self-centered ways,
that we may choose your way
and follow your Son,
Jesus Christ, our risen Lord and Savior. Amen.**

SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

- One: We remind ourselves of the good news we have heard and in which we believe:
- All: Christ transforms. Christ renews. We are a new creation.**
- One: In Christ Jesus, God has promised to forgive us and reconcile us to God and each other. So let us rejoice and be glad, proclaiming once again the good news.
- All: For in Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Amen! Thanks be to God!**

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 Acts 1:15-17, 21-26

ACTS 1:15-17, 21-26 (New Revised Standard Version)

¹⁵ *In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred twenty persons) and said,* ¹⁶ *“Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus –* ¹⁷ *for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.” ...* ²¹ *So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,* ²² *beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us – one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection.”* ²³ *So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias.* ²⁴ *Then they prayed and said, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen* ²⁵ *to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.”* ²⁶ *And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.*

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON “A Share ... and Share Alike” by Pastor Bill Vincent

A “*share in this ministry.*” That’s what it’s about for you and me: a “*share in this ministry.*”

The share may be “apostleship” (as in this story), serving as a deacon (see Acts 6) or an elder; with gifts to share, like hospitality, preaching, compassion, generosity, healing; time, presence.

Some things for us to note regarding the process we read about in this first chapter in Acts...

There was criteria for choosing: not everyone is fit for every share of ministry. But note: each of us is fit for some share of this ministry.

In our story: “*men.*” Sorry, women: in that time, in this capacity (as apostle) that’s how the early church understood (for the most part). But I do think it shows something of how we have continued to grow and learn as a church and a people of faith that we have realized clearly that women – that all people – are fit to be called and to be a part of “*this ministry,*” to have a “*share in this ministry.*” And for that realization and growth, I say, “Thanks be to God.”

Note also: “*accompanied us.*” Someone who is a part of the community of faith: who has been with Jesus, been in relationship with him. Witness to his ministry and work: “*a witness...to his resurrection*” – the focus of our ministry.

And, with that criteria in mind, “*they proposed two.*”

- “*Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus.*”

Now you’ll note that Joseph obviously has the greater credentials: more things are said about him than the other candidate; more ink is spilled describing his fitness for the job. And, considering how precious papyrus was for writing and how time consuming it was to write, that’s saying something. Describing his being known by the community, maybe his popularity.

Or is all that ink spilled to let people know who he was because he was an unknown even when this was written, and more had to be said of him because fewer people knew him?

- “*and Matthias.*” And then there is Matthias. Only his name is given. Is that because there was nothing to say about him? Because he was nondescript, an unknown, and unexciting?

My father used to recount how his mother would introduce their family and the children: there was “a girl, a boy...and Billy.” The tail end, like an afterthought, almost forgotten, inconsequential?

Is “*and Matthias*” an afterthought?

Or is it because he was already known by the community (especially as this was being written) and what more needed to be said for people to know who he was – what more needed to be said than simply his name. Like...Oprah.

“*So they proposed two.*”

“*Then they prayed.*” The community looked to God to make the choice: “*Lord...show us which one of these two you have chosen.*”

In their case, “*show us*” through the casting of lots. Seems strange and haphazard to us. But maybe not so outlandish: like the recent election in Union, where the vote in Ward 2 for the

Board of Aldermen ended in a tie, and one way of resolving that tie is “**election by lot**” (Weekend May 11-12, 2024 issue of *The Washington Missourian*). It reminded me of another election I heard of a while back: the election for mayor in a small town ended in a tie vote; and, instead of spending \$10,000 for another election, they agreed to settle the matter by the toss of a coin (NBC Nightly News 5/19/12).

In our case, we tend to have “**chosen by God through the voice of this congregation**” (W-4.0404a, *Book of Order* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)) in a formal way with a Nominating Committee and election at a Congregational Meeting.

What is crucial to note in each instance is, chosen by God through the discernment of the community: God’s discernment through the community.

“And the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles”...never to be heard from again. If he wasn’t nondescript before, he was now. And we never hear of him again. Nothing.

Does that mean he didn’t do a good job? Does that mean he wasn’t faithful? Does that mean – God forbid! – that God got it wrong in choosing him? Or did the people misunderstand God in choosing him?

No. Doesn’t necessarily mean any of that.

It simply means Matthias probably did nothing exceptional, nothing noteworthy, nothing worth mentioning ... nothing exceptional, that is, compared to Peter and John who healed a man lame from birth (see Acts 3); nothing noteworthy, compared to Lydia and her extensive hospitality to Paul and others (see Acts 16); nothing worth mentioning, compared to Paul who had a wondrous conversion experience and traveled the known world preaching and teaching and establishing and encouraging churches.

It appears Matthias didn’t do any of that...at least not in a noteworthy way. Certainly not before he was chosen. More than likely not after he was chosen, either.

But he was chosen. And the people understood that he was chosen by God.

And I think it’s safe to assume that he was faithful, even if he wasn’t spectacular or flashy. He had been with the community of faith all along, in the good days and the bad – that says something for him. He had been with Jesus; he was a witness to the resurrection (the focal point of the community’s message). And he was chosen. And I believe it’s safe to say, Yes, he was faithful. He may not have been front-page material or banner headlines. He may not have been newsworthy. But he was faithful – in a quiet, inconspicuous, behind-the-scenes kind of way.

Sound like anybody you know?

Stories of quiet, faithful people: behind the scenes. Constant in their ministering. Not calling attention to themselves. Making a contribution, making a difference, in their own way, with their own tasks and offering their gifts, through their calling and challenges. Making a difference in their particular arena, community, context – in their own particular corner of the world.

And it’s hard to come up with stories, because they are unknown, quiet, behind-the-scenes. They don’t want to call attention to themselves.

But I dare say you know of people like that. And you may be ‘a people’ like that. And the community cannot do without you.

I confess: I am one of those people who likes to remain seated and, after the movie is over, watch the credits go by: where was it filmed? what was that music they used? And all those names: people who helped with costumes and makeup and stunts, who built the sets and recorded the sound and fed the crew. Names of people you don’t know and will never see again. But the movie would never have happened without them.

On this day, what about our mothers? Some of our mothers may have been behind-the-scenes kind of people; some may not. But I dare say we know we would not be who we are or where we are without our mothers.

We will celebrate Memorial Day in two weeks, remembering those who died in service to their country – “heroes” we call them – most often in battle, most often on the front line. And it is good to honor them and to remember. But let us not forget all the others: support services, logistics, quartermaster. Without these others supporting the front line, the victory would never have occurred.

Any well-oiled machine needs all its parts working to operate as intended.

An organism – a body – with its different parts, needs each part working. As Paul reminds us as he writes to the Christians in Corinth (see I Corinthians 12). Some parts of the body are seen, visible; some parts are not. But if the appendix is out of whack, the whole body knows it. If the kidneys are not doing their job, the whole body is affected.

The body needs all the parts working, and working faithfully.

What about you?

Where are you in this scheme?

What part will you play? What part are you playing?

Maybe not always seen, but important nonetheless.

The church – the world – needs its Peters and its Pauls. The church – the world – needs its Lydias.

But the church – and the world – needs its Matthiases, too.

All of them – each of us – have a part to play, a “*share in this ministry.*”

For you are called. You are chosen. That’s what we believe in the church. That’s what we believe *of* the church.

Paul affirms it time and time again, so often addressing his letters to “*the elect*” (chosen ones), “*the saints*” (those set apart for God’s work and purposes). Even to the conflicted, troublesome church in Corinth. It is Paul’s way of affirming that God has called each one of us.

The call may seem as random as the casting of lots, or tossing a coin. The choosing may seem as ponderous and laborious as a nominating committee and electing officers.

But we are each and everyone of us called and chosen. For a reason. For a purpose. We may not always understand the reason. We may not fully fathom the purpose. But there is a

reason. There is a purpose. And maybe we'll find out in time. But we're called and chosen now. Now is when we need to step up to the plate, and offer our gifts, and our time, and ourselves.

And say Yes.

Oh, we can say No, for sure.

But I'd like to think we'll say Yes.

And maybe we'll be a Peter or a Paul. Maybe we'll be a Lydia. Maybe we'll be a Matthias. Or, even better, we can be the particular child of God that God has called us to be.

So, what will you answer? Who will you be? What share of this ministry will you share?

***HYMN "I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me"**

1. I'm gonna live so

God can use me

anywhere

and anytime!

I'm gonna live so

God can use me

anywhere

and anytime!

2. I'm gonna work so

God can use me

anywhere

and anytime!

I'm gonna work so

God can use me

anywhere

and anytime!

3. I'm gonna pray so

God can use me

anywhere

and anytime!

I'm gonna pray so

God can use me

anywhere

and anytime!

(continued...)

4. I'm gonna sing so
God can use me
anywhere
and anytime!
I'm gonna sing so
God can use me
anywhere
and anytime!

Words and Music: African American spiritual
Public Domain

***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: God who calls...
All: ...strengthen us in your way.

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*

**Wonderful God, we thank you for gathering us into this community.
We thank you for your love which never fails. We thank you for holding us
and guiding us and calling us your own. Accept our grateful hearts and the
gifts we offer. Through our giving, and through our giving thanks, may your
name be known and your will be done. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.**

SENDING

***CLOSING HYMN "We All Are One in Mission" GtG 733**

**1. We all are one in mission;
we all are one in call,
our varied gifts united
by Christ, the Lord of all.
A single, great commission
compels us from above
to plan and work together
that all may know Christ's love.**

(continued...)

2. **We all are called for service
to witness in God's name.
Our ministries are different;
our purpose is the same:
to touch the lives of others
by God's surprising grace,
so every folk and nation
may feel God's warm embrace.**

3. **Now let us be united
and let our song be heard.
Now let us be a vessel
for God's redeeming word.
We all are one in mission;
we all are one in call,
our varied gifts united
by Christ, the Lord of all.**

Words: Rusty Edwards, 1985, alt. © 1986 by Hope Publishing Company
Used by permission through CCLI License #11178434 / #2457662.
Music: ES FLOG EIN KLEINS WALDVOGELEIN, Memmingen ms.,
17th cent.; harm. George Ratcliffe Woodward, 1904
Public Domain

***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

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

POSTLUDE

The Call to Worship and Prayer of Confession are reprinted by permission of United Church Press from *Led by Love* by Lavon Bayler. Copyright 1996 by United Church Press.

The Prayer of Confession is reprinted by permission from *Book of Common Worship*, © 1993 Westminster/John Knox Press.

The Assurance of Pardon and Prayer for Illumination are written by Teri McDowell Ott and used by permission. © Presbyterian Outlook, 2024.

The Assurance of Pardon and Prayers of the People (adapted) are used by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from *Feasting on the Word® Worship Companion*. Copyright 2014.