

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, MAY 26, 2024

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

TRINITY SUNDAY

GATHERING

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP

- One: Come, people of God, to give thanks and sing.
All: **We come from our various lives to offer ourselves in this time of worship.**
- One: Come, children of God, to be touched and blessed.
All: **We come in anticipation of God's presence here and God's work in our midst.**
- One: Come, servants of God, to be taught and commissioned.
All: **We come to be instilled with purpose and filled with a mission.**
Unison: **We come to worship the Lord our God.**

***OPENING HYMN** "Wild and Lone the Prophet's Voice" GtG 163

1. **Wild and lone the prophet's voice
echoes through the desert still,
calling us to make a choice,
bidding us to do God's will:
"Turn from sin and be baptized;
cleanse your heart and mind and soul.
Quitting all the sins you prized,
yield your life to God's control.**
2. **"Bear the fruit repentance sows:
lives of justice, truth, and love.
Trust no other claim than those;
set your heart on things above.
Soon the Lord will come in power,
burning clean the threshing floor:
then will flames the chaff devour;
wheat alone shall fill God's store."**

(continued...)

3. **With such preaching, stark and bold,
John proclaimed salvation near,
and his timeless warnings hold
words of hope to all who hear.
So we dare to journey on,
led by faith through ways untrod,
till we come at last like John
to behold the Lamb of God.**

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UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**God of compassion and mercy, hear us as we make our confession.
You call, but we do not listen.
You show us your path,
but we prefer our own way and follow our own desires.
We turn not from our evil ways,
nor do we sacrifice those treasures that give us status.
We say we obey you, but our deeds betray us.
By your grace renew us, and cleanse us of sin.
Forgive us, heal us, and lead us back to you,
that we might heed your call and love others as Christ loves us.
In his name we pray. Amen.**

SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

One: God desires relationship with us, and reconciliation for all of creation.
Jesus comes bearing the good news of forgiveness and transformation.
Receive the good news:

All: **We are covered by God's grace and forgiven in Jesus Christ and given
new life. 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 Mark 1:1-20

Mark 1:1-20 (New Revised Standard Version, updated edition)

¹ *The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ.*

² *As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,*

*“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way,*

³ *the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:*

*‘Prepare the way of the Lord;
make his paths straight,’ ”*

⁴ *so John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And the whole Judean region and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him and were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals. ⁸ I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”*

⁹ *In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove upon him. ¹¹ And a voice came from the heavens, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”*

¹² *And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³ He was in the wilderness forty days, tested by Satan, and he was with the wild beasts, and the angels waited on him.*

¹⁴ *Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the good news of God ¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”*

¹⁶ *As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers. ¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people.” ¹⁸ And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹ As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰ Immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.*

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON “Ready, Get Set...” by Pastor Bill Vincent

Of Mark...and Sherwin-Williams. You know, of the “Cover the Earth” fame: the paint. There may be something to be learned in an initial comparison of Mark and Sherwin-Williams.

You see, Mark covers a lot of ground in these first 20 verses. And there is much we could say about it all.

But I want us to focus on this emphasis on preparation.

And anyone who has ever painted a room knows what I'm talking about.

The actual painting is not that big of a deal, doesn't take that much time. Not as much time as...

...The preparation. If you want the paint to look good, if you want it to adhere to whatever surface you're working with, if you want it to work in the room, you have to prepare. What color do you want? Do you want a glossy finish? or a semi-gloss? Is the wall ready to receive the paint? Do you need to strip off some wallpaper? Do you need to prime the wood or the drywall? Do you need to sand some rough spots, or even fill in some holes? Do you need to put painter's tape on the floor boards? Do you need to move furniture and cover the furniture? Do you need to put drop cloths down to protect the floor? Do you need to remove pictures from the wall?

It seems like it's ALL about the preparation.

As Mark starts off his story – *“The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ”* – he's all about preparation.

“Prepare the way of the Lord.” Get ready.

John the baptizer is the first one on the preparation wagon. Indeed, he is the very one who seeks to *“prepare the way of the Lord,”* to prepare the way for the Lord. For he comes *“proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.”*

He seeks to help prepare the people – to help the people get ready – for the coming of the Lord: the one who is greater than John, the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.

And one crucial thing to note about John's work of preparation? John's preparation is not for himself: it is for another. He is helping other people prepare; but he is also helping others prepare, not for John himself, but for yet Another.

John's preparation is not to point to himself, but to Another.

And we might do well to take a certain cue from him. For in our preparation – in our work in life – the focus is not on us: our wants, our wishes, our desires. Oh, yes, we need to pay attention to ourselves – to our needs, to our health – for if we do not care for ourselves, we won't be prepared for anything.

But our focus is not on us. It's on Another. And in fact, that Other shapes and forms – and informs – our preparation, our getting ready...our life.

And what is interesting to note about Mark's portrayal: even this Other – Jesus – prepares.

He is baptized by John, and then has this wondrous revelation in his own baptism. Actually, this revelatory moment may be more for us, as a confirmation that this really is Jesus,

the Christ: the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Coming One, the One for whom we prepare; the Son of God.

And then, from this magnificent event, this same Jesus – this Son of God – is immediately driven out into the wilderness by the very Spirit that just descended upon him.

He is driven out into the wilderness and “*tested by Satan*”: tested by the very power of evil. Yes, I realize that often we tend to hear it translated: Jesus was “tempted by Satan.” But “tested” is actually a better translation of the word. Not that Jesus would ever be tempted – or enticed – by anything that Satan had to offer. But that Jesus – the Son of God – is tested in the very struggle with evil that he will continue to encounter and combat throughout his ministry, in the form of resistance from other people and influence from other powers and the impact of disease and death on people’s lives.

So the wilderness becomes a testing site, a proving grounds. Which makes sense in a way. You know, as soon as you roll out a new model, you run it through a series of strict tests to make sure it proves itself to be all that it was intended to be.

And note this: If Jesus needs to prepare, who are we to suggest that we do not need to prepare? Yet how often, in our words and choices and manner, do we do that very thing. “I have arrived! I don’t need to learn anything new. I don’t need to grow any more. I’m done. I have arrived. I’ve finished my work!”

Really?!?

I wonder: Is not the deeper truth that life is a preparation for life?

We graduate: same root as the words gradual and gradation. We wrap up one level of life and move on to the next level, to embrace another level.

We commence another step or chapter in our life. We embark on another leg of the journey.

We are always preparing, and always in need of preparing.

Not always an “on-your-tiptoes” high level of alertness. No one can sustain that – and it can drive you crazy.

But we are always learning from the past. Always open to the future. And trying to strike that balance...in order to prepare.

Our preparation is not always (or often) linear: even, steady, a straight line on a graph. But fits and starts.

And sometimes we know – we can see – we’re learning, we’re growing.

And sometimes we do not.

And sometimes we know – we can see – what we’re preparing for.

And sometimes we do not.

And sometimes we can take a wrong path, and it takes us in the wrong direction, maybe even to a deadend. And we have to turn around, back track: “repent.”

And sometimes it may not necessarily be a bad path we have taken. It’s just not the path we were meant to take.

And so some chapters, some paths, some legs of the journey prepare us more than others. And some prepare us in a more positive manner than others.

But if we are alert, aware, looking, attentive, we are always preparing.
And that's actually an exciting thing.
For that preparation is for new life, and more life, and fuller life, and deeper life – life with God.

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” The good news of God's coming. The good news of God's kingdom. The good news of God's Son, Jesus Christ.

“The time is fulfilled.” The stage is set. The wall is primed. Time to paint the town red...and blue...and green...and yellow...and orange...and all the other colors of life God intends. For God is ready. God is coming. Coming to the people. Coming in one Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

But are we ready? Are we prepared?

And so Jesus walks along the Sea of Galilee and sees two fishers, and says, *“Follow me.”* And they follow.

And he sees two others, and calls to them. And they follow.
Somehow they were ready – prepared – to answer the call, to respond.
But they were not done.

Answering the call is not the end.
It is the beginning...or part of the beginning.
And the preparation for the next step, and another leg of the journey, and a deeper understanding, and a fuller life.

Preparation for this journey of life with God, where each step of the journey prepares us for the next step.

So, are you ready?
Get set....

***HYMN** “Dear Lord and Father of Mankind” GtG 169 (*Verses 1-2*)

- 1. Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
forgive our foolish ways;
re clothe us in our rightful mind,
in purer lives thy service find,
in deeper reverence, praise.**
- 2. In simple trust like theirs who heard
beside the Syrian sea
the gracious calling of the Lord,
let us, like them, without a word
rise up and follow thee.** (*next page...*)

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Music: REST, Frederick Charles Maker, 1887
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***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH** (from "*A Declaration of Faith*")

**In forming his people and sending them into the world
Jesus called individuals to be disciples.
They were to share the joy of his companionship,
to understand and obey his teachings,
and to follow him in life and death.
We confess that Christians today are called to discipleship.
Life shared with Christ and shaped by Christ
is God's undeserved gift to each of us.
It is also God's demand upon every one of us,
never perfectly fulfilled by any of us.
Forgiven by God and supported by our siblings in Christ,
we strive to become more faithful and effective
in our daily practice of the Christian life.**

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PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

One: Lord, in your mercy...
All: ...touch us by your grace, and fill us with your courage.

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*

**Holy God, we trust in the provisions of your love
and the abundance of your grace.**

**We give you thanks for every blessing and spiritual gift
you have poured out upon us.**

**Let the gifts of our lives
be a source of blessing in your world.**

**Use us, and the gifts we bring,
for your holy work of transformation,
as we seek to go where Jesus leads us. Amen.**

SENDING

***CLOSING HYMN** "Jesus Calls Us" GtG 720

1. **Jesus calls us: o'er the tumult
of our life's wild, restless sea;
day by day his sweet voice soundeth
saying, "Christian, follow me."**
2. **Jesus calls us from the worship
of the vain world's golden store,
from each idol that would keep us,
saying, "Christian, love me more."**
3. **In our joys and in our sorrows,
days of toil and hours of ease,
still he calls, in cares and pleasures,
"Christian, love me more than these."**
4. **Jesus calls us: by thy mercies,
Savior, may we hear thy call,
give our hearts to thine obedience,
serve and love thee best of all.**

Words: Cecil Frances Alexander, 1852
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***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

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

All: ...Amen.

POSTLUDE

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