

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2025

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME

GATHERING

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP *(based on Psalm 130)*

One: With God, there is forgiveness, steadfast love, great power to redeem.

All: **We wait for the Lord, who is our hope.**

**Through the long night,
we watch for God more passionately
than for the sun's first light!**

One: Wait for God, and hope in God's Word.

Open your hearts to the holy presence in our midst.

All: **Our ears are attentive to the voice of God.**

We open our lives to God's direction.

***OPENING HYMN** "Blessed Jesus, at Your Word" GtG 395

1. Blessed Jesus, at your word
we have come again to hear you;
let our thoughts and hearts be stirred
and in glowing faith be near you.
By your gospel true and holy,
teach us, Lord, to love you solely.

2. All our knowledge, sense, and sight
lie in deepest darkness shrouded,
till your Spirit breaks our night,
filling us with light unclouded.
All good thoughts and all good living
come but by your gracious giving.

3. Glorious Lord, yourself impart,
Light of Light, from God proceeding.

(continued...)

**Touch our lips and ears and heart;
help us by your Spirit's pleading.
Hear the cry your church now raises;
hear, and bless our prayers and praises.**

Words: Tobias Clausnitzer, 1663; trans. Catherine Winkworth, 1858, alt.
Music: LIEBSTER JESU, Johann Rudolph Ahle; harm. Johann Sebastian
Bach, 18th cent., alt.
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UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Almighty God, you have called us to bring out the best in the world around us,
to be bold in our faith, to share your love with those around us.
We have failed your command.
Instead, we have asked for your righteous judgment against others,
while failing to acknowledge the sin in our own lives.
We have worshiped you with our lips,
but have dishonored you with our actions.
We have prayed for you to end the suffering in our world,
yet we have not practiced compassion and generosity toward others.
Our religion has become the source of quarreling
rather than a testimony to your grace.
We are so misguided that we cannot discern good from evil,
making the wrong choice, choosing the wrong side.
Forgive our self-righteousness, O God.
Forgive us for rejecting your way and your work in our lives.
Give us your insight and integrity of heart,
that we may shine forth the light of your salvation,
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

One: Even when we fail, even when we are not perfect, God still claims us.
God still calls us by name. God still places God's Spirit upon us.
Sisters and brothers, do not lose heart.
When we call, God hears us; when we confess, God forgives us.
All: **In mercy God forgives us our sin and grants us genuine repentance.
We are being renewed day by day
through the grace of Christ extended to us.**
One: So we believe and so we proclaim: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.
All: **Thanks be to God!**
One: May the grace of our Lord overflow for you
with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

THE PEACE

One: The peace of Christ be with you all.

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 READINGS Luke 8:16-21

Luke 11:27-36

LUKE 8:16-21 (New Revised Standard Version, updated edition)

¹⁶ “No one after lighting a lamp hides it under a jar or puts it under a bed; rather, one puts it on a lampstand, so that those who enter may see the light. ¹⁷ For nothing is hidden that will not be disclosed, nor is anything secret that will not become known and come to light. ¹⁸ So pay attention to how you listen, for to those who have, more will be given, and from those who do not have, even what they seem to have will be taken away.”

¹⁹ Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. ²⁰ And he was told, “Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you.” ²¹ But he said to them, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.”

LUKE 11:27-36 (New Revised Standard Version, updated edition)

²⁷ While he was saying this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, “Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you!” ²⁸ But he said, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it!”

²⁹ When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, “This generation is an evil generation; it asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. ³⁰ For just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so the Son of Humankind will be to this generation. ³¹ The queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and indeed, something greater than Solomon is here! ³² The people of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the proclamation of Jonah, and indeed, something greater than Jonah is here!

³³ “No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar or under a bushel basket; rather, one puts it on the lampstand so that those who enter may see the light. ³⁴ Your eye is the lamp of your body. If your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but if it is unhealthy, your body is full of darkness. ³⁵ Therefore consider whether the light in you is not darkness. ³⁶ But if your whole body is full of light, with no part of it in darkness, it will be as full of light as when a lamp gives you light with its rays.”

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION “Thy Word Is a Lamp unto My Feet” GtG 458

**Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.
Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.**

**When I feel afraid, and I think I've lost my way,
still you're there right beside me.
Nothing will I fear as long as you are near.
Please be near me to the end.**

**Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.
Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.**

Words: Amy Grant, 1984

Music: THY WORD, Michael W. Smith, 1984; arr. John Sharber

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SERMON “Hearing the Light” by Pastor Bill Vincent

No one would light a lamp...and then hide it, cover it up, put it under something so people cannot see.

No one would do that.
Until we do.

Remember that talk about signs?

Jesus calls it an evil generation that asks for a sign.

Some people were, it seems, having trouble with Jesus and his work and his ministry. He just didn't fit into their expectations. He didn't square with their predetermined categories. He didn't make it into the file folders of life.

So they asked for a sign to prove himself.
And he called that evil.

It was almost like they were asking for the light, seeking the light, said they wanted the light. But what they really wanted was the same old same old: something familiar, known, controllable, that could fit into their pocket.

So, they asked for the light, they sought the light, they said they wanted the light. But they really wanted to hide the light so it wouldn't disturb them and their preset lives.

They didn't want to change. They didn't want to hear that they needed to change – repent, I think, is the word we're looking for.

They wanted to squelch the light, dim it; control the light, put it away somewhere. They didn't want to spread the light. They wanted to contain the light.

And what they thought was light in themselves was not; it was really darkness: turning away from the source of light, opposing the one who was the light.

Of course, the first time we hear this saying – about light and a lamp – it is shared in a somewhat more positive light (if you don't mind my saying it that way).

We hear about this saying in the context of the parable of the sower: you know, seeds and soil, growth and fruit, and harvest.

And we like those things. We cherish those things in our lives.

We look for them: the seed of a good idea; growth in ourselves, and others, in grace and integrity; a harvest of good deeds, and goodness.

Yes, that's good!

But even here, Jesus offers something of a caution when he says, *"Pay attention to how you listen."*

It matters how we listen to this word, how we receive this light.

It matters how we respond to this seed that comes flying – by the grace of God – out of who-knows-where, and lands in our lives, lands in our hearts, lands in us.

Will we receive it?

Will we nurture it?

Will we respond to it? including its demands and its redirecting our lives?

And the message actually gets darker (if you don't mind my saying it that way) when he says, *"to those who have, more will be given, and from those who do not have, even what they seem to have will be taken away."*

He almost seems to suggest that, if we receive the word and hear his voice and respond positively to his light; our response will increase, and our understanding will grow, and we will know a greater and greater harvest to his work and presence in our lives.

But if we don't? If we treat his word as almost humdrum, and consider listening to his voice a chore, and shade ourselves from his light; then his word will mean less and less to us, and perhaps we'll understand it less and less, and heed it less and less...and dismiss it more and more, and forget him more and more. Like digging ourselves a hole deeper and deeper, and darker and darker.

Would we do that?

The light can invite ... or frighten ... depending upon us, and our response.

For the light reveals, and more than just nice, "Isn't that sweet?" sort of things.

The light also reveals what has been hiding in the darkness, including us. What has been hiding in the darkness and needs to be revealed for what it is: opposition to God's way.

Will I let the light reveal the hidden corners of my life, and my world; and help me see what needs to change, what needs healing?

For the word not only offers – and graciously so – and invites.

The word also challenges ... and offers a different tack and a different perspective and a new take on life – my life – and the world.

Am I willing to listen and take it in, and allow it to challenge me and change me...and transform me?

For Jesus not only says, "Blessed are you."

Jesus also says, "Woe to you."

And how we respond demonstrates how we are – or are not – related to Jesus.

Yes, there are those who think they see light; but it is, in reality, darkness.

There are those who neither see nor embrace nor reflect the light...even though they think they do.

But it is far too easy for us – any of us – to use this light/dark imagery to our advantage to justify our point of view, to support our way of doing things.

It is far too easy for us – any of us – to think we see the light, and believe others don't; and so to wield this light/dark imagery as a weapon against others: a weapon to protect our way and our life; a weapon to eradicate the life and way and way of life of others.

Even to the point that some have used this light/dark imagery by suggesting that those with dark-er skin pigmentation are therefore evil and those with light-er skin pigmentation are therefore good.

And yes, it's kind of scary to think that, those who have little light in them, even what little light they have may be taken a way...and make matters even worse.

But I agree with Robert Dunham (*Feasting on the Gospels: Luke, Volume 1*, p.322) who notes that the strident language that Jesus adopts (at times) is best left to Jesus. The words of condemnation and judgment are best left to Jesus – and let that word stand on its own, for "*those with ears to hear.*"

For the accusation that the light in us is really darkness serves equally well with us as it does others.

The real question is how best do we combat the confusing of light and darkness, even within ourselves, let alone in others, in the world?

The question is, it seems, will we – do we – see in this Jesus the coming and presence of God's light? Do we – will we – identify him and his words and his way with the light that God seeks to shine upon this world? And will we seek that light, embrace that light, follow that light? hear those words, seek that way, follow him?

How will we respond to this Jesus? to his life, to his ministry; to his word, to him?

How will we hear that voice and do it? How will we receive that word and obey it? How will we see that One and follow? For how we respond will demonstrate whether we are – or are not – part of the family:

beloved relatives...that share the very same blood and story...of Christ [himself]. (L. Wesley de Souza, *Feasting on the Gospels: Luke, Volume 1*, p.226)

***HYMN “Longing for Light, We Wait in Darkness” GtG 314**
(Christ, Be Our Light)

**1. Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.**

Refrain:

**Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your church
gathered today.**

**2. Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has power to save us.
Make us your living voice.**

Refrain:

**3. Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed.**

Refrain:

**4. Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stone.**

Refrain:

**5. Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
making your kingdom come.**

Refrain:

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***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH** (from *The Confession of 1967*)

**The life, death, resurrection, and promised coming of Jesus Christ
has set the pattern for the church's mission.**
His human life
involves the church in the common life of all people.
His service to men and women
commits the church to work for every form of human well-being.
His suffering
makes the church sensitive to all human suffering
so that it sees the face of Christ in the faces of persons in every kind of need.
His crucifixion
discloses to the church God's judgment on the inhumanity
that marks human relations,
and the awful consequences of the church's own complicity in injustice.
In the power of the risen Christ and the hope of his coming,
the church sees the promise of God's renewal of human life in society
and of God's victory over all wrong.

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PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

One: God of love...
All: ...heal us and help us in your light.

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.

OFFERING

Invitation

Reflection

**Unison Prayer of Dedication*

**Loving God,
we give thanks for all you have given to us
and praise you for your astounding goodness.
Receive the dedication of our hearts, minds, and bodies
for the ministry of your church.
Bless our offering for the work of your kingdom,
and give us wisdom for the right use of all you have provided,
through Christ our Lord and our Light. Amen.**

SENDING

***CLOSING HYMN “Come! Live in the Light!” GtG 749
(We Are Called)**

**1. Come! Live in the light!
Shine with the joy
and the love of the Lord!
We are called
to be light for the kingdom,
to live in the freedom
of the city of God.
We are called to act with justice;
we are called to love tenderly;
we are called to serve one another,
to walk humbly with God.**

**2. Come! Open your heart!
Show your mercy
to all those in fear!
We are called
to be hope for the hopeless
so hatred and violence
will be no more.
We are called to act with justice;
we are called to love tenderly;
we are called to serve one another,
to walk humbly with God.**

(continued...)

**3. Sing! Sing a new song!
Sing of that great day
when all will be one!
God will reign,
and we'll walk with each other
as sisters and brothers
united in love.
We are called to act with justice;
we are called to love tenderly;
we are called to serve one another,
to walk humbly with God.**

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***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

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

POSTLUDE

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