

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, JUNE 14, 2020

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union,
Missouri

11th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME

GATHERING

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: We are called by God to love, to serve.
All: **We call upon God to help and heal; to equip and guide.**
One: Let us hear the Lord and know the Lord hears us.
All: **We come to worship the Lord our God.**

***OPENING HYMN** “We Are Called to Be God’s People” [Tune GtG 81]

**1. We are called to be God's people
Showing by our lives His grace
One in heart and one in spirit
Sign of hope for all the race
Let us show how He has changed us
And remade us as His own
Let us share our life together
As we shall around His throne**

**2. We are called to be God's servants
Working in His world today
Taking His own task upon us
All His sacred words obey
Let us rise then to His summons
Dedicate to Him our all
That we may be faithful servants
Quick to answer now His call**

**3. We are called to be God's prophets
Speaking for the truth and right
Standing firm for godly justice
Bringing evil into light**

**Let us seek the courage needed
Our high calling to fulfill
That we all may know the blessing
Of the doing of God's will**

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***UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

We sing to you, O God, and even sing your praise; but we fail to follow through. Forgive us when we hear your call but do not heed it. Forgive us when we are so afraid we cannot do something that we end up doing nothing. Forgive us when the slightest little bump in the road diverts us from our purpose -- from your purpose. Forgive us when we give up so quickly and are distracted so easily. Help us to know your grace and heed your call, to embrace your mission and trust your guidance. By your goodness and mercy, transform us as followers of your Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

***SILENT CONFESSION**

***ASSURANCE OF PARDON** *(from Mark 1 & Romans 5)*

One: “The right time has come, and the Kingdom of God is near! Turn away from your sins and believe the Good News!”

All: **The Good News is this: “God has shown us how much God loves us, for it was while we were still sinners that Christ died for us!”**

One: Friends, believe that Good News. In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

All: **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 READINGS Genesis 18:1-15
Matthew 9:35-10:8

GENESIS 18:1-15 (New Revised Standard Version+)

1 The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. 2 He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. 3 He said, “My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. 4 Let

a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. 5 Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on -- since you have come to your servant.” So they said, “Do as you have said.” 6 And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, “Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes.” 7 Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. 8 Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

9 They said to him, “Where is your wife Sarah?” And he said, “There, in the tent.” 10 Then one said, “I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him. 11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. 12 So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have this pleasure?” 13 The Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’ 14 Is anything too wonderful for the Lord? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son.” 15 But Sarah denied, saying, “I did not laugh”; for she was afraid. The Lord said, “Oh yes, you did laugh.”

MATTHEW 9:35-10:8 (New Revised Standard Version)

35 Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; 38 therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into the harvest.”

1 Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure 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: “Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, 6 but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7 As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ 8 Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Lord God, by your Spirit
teach us to obey your voice
and keep your covenant
so that we may be a your holy people;
in Jesus’ name. Amen.

SERMON “Seriously Laughable; Laughably Serious” by Pastor Bill Vincent

Are you serious? These people? Really?

Could be said of Abraham and Sarah, of the 12 disciples, and of us.

We read this list in Matthew -- the list of people Jesus sends to do extraordinary things -- ordinary people: couple of fishermen, a tax collector, Alphaeus’ son.

Like Sam and Sherry, Janet and Jason, Joe the plumber and Christin from Smithville.

Ordinary people sent out to...

-‘proclaim good news’ to a world awash in bad news.

-‘cast out unclean spirits’ in the midst of people who have a hard enough time changing their own minds...let alone their hearts.

-‘cure every disease and sickness’ when we cannot agree how to combat the viruses of COVID-19 and racism.

-‘cleanse the lepers’ in the midst of a people whose automatic reaction is all too often to declare unclean and unwanted those unlike them.

-‘raise the dead’ when too many are dying for too little reason, and too many who remain feel lifeless.

And these ordinary people are supposed to take on this extraordinary work, ministry, task?

Really? These people?

Yes, really.

The likes of these.

The likes of you ... and me.

And it can happen. Just ask Abraham and Sarah, plucked from his home town at a ripe old age.

But the question is, “Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?”

Abraham and Sarah are past retirement age, past their prime, “past the age of childbearing.”

In the midst of their past and being passed, they are told that God is truly able to do wondrous things, even with those who appear to be passed over by life.

Really?

Laughable, you might say. So did Sarah.

Laughable, maybe. But true nonetheless. Maybe only through a 9-month period of pregnancy, which I have heard is no cake walk. Maybe only through the pain, and joy, of childbirth, yes. Maybe only through a life turned upside down by swaddling cloths and dirty diapers. But even with all of that, God is truly able to do wondrous things, even with those who appear to be barren of life.

“Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?” No, nothing is too wonderful for the Lord. Even life from a barren womb. Even new life from an empty tomb.

So, share this story side by side with our Matthew passage, and we have our answer: Yes! God can do extraordinary things through the likes of people like you and me.

And our possible response? (pardon my 'French') "Well, I'll be damned."

Truth is...you just might. Not by God, but by others.

As Jesus sends the disciples off on this preposterous journey, he notes,

"I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves." (Matthew 10:16)

He warns them of persecutions, rejections, resistance, divisions, strife.

For good news is not good news for everyone. Healing, cleansing, raising from the dead are not welcomed by all.

Giving life is an assault on the powers that live off death and perpetuate it. To speak of healing and release from evil spirits is directly to confront oppression, the status quo, power and prestige. To speak of good news insults those who make money off of hopelessness, those who barter in the demonic.

So there will be resistance, hostility; and even apathy, which can destroy good news faster than about anything.

So, yes, we might be 'damned' -- in a manner of speaking.

But we will also be blessed.

There is that promise -- implicit in the Matthew passage, or better yet, in the context.

1. Remember the Beatitudes? the 'blessed-tudes'

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:10)

I'm not sure that one would win me over, but...

"Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matthew 5:11)

Still not thrilled. Yet...

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." (Matthew 5:6)

Now you're talking.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy." (Matthew 5:7)

Yes, thank you.

Blessed in these ways. But also...

2. Blessed with community. That list of people -- those common, everyday, not particularly notable people. But they're our people. And we answer this call, we know that we do this thing called ministry together: in community, as a community.

3. Blessed with Christ's very presence. When Jesus greets the disciples, after his resurrection, on that hill in Galilee, he reiterates this call, this commission, this task. He even expands this (the disciples', our) mission from only *"the lost sheep of the house of Israel"* to *"all nations."* And then he says, *"Lo, I with you always"* (Matthew 28:20). So whether we are here in this nation or with some other nation, we not alone. We do not accept this call or engage in this task on our own.

We will be blessed. Like Abraham and Sarah, with a new birth, a new lease on life, a new level of trust in God and commitment to God.

But even more, and perhaps more importantly, if we can believe the promise originally made to Abraham, not only will we be blessed, we will also be a blessing (which is a blessing in itself).

When God first called Abraham,

“I will bless you, ... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

(Genesis 12:2,3)

I believe that is precisely what Jesus intended in the first place when he sent the disciples out: commissioned them, and us, to meet needs, to minister to people, to be a blessing to them and to the world.

The Study Catechism: Full Version of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) speaks of the mission of the church -- our mission -- to “extend mercy and forgiveness to the needy.” And

QUESTION 65. WHO ARE THE NEEDY?

The hungry need bread, the homeless need a roof, the oppressed need justice, and the lonely need fellowship. At the same time -- on another and deeper level -- the hopeless need hope, sinners need forgiveness, and the world needs the gospel. On this level no one is excluded, and all the needy are one. Our mission as the church is to bring hope to a desperate world by declaring God's undying love -- as one beggar tells another where to find bread.

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Know someone who is hungry? We know of the food that will fill the stomach and the soul.

Know someone who is thirsty? We can share that which slakes one's thirst and satisfies the heart.

Know someone who has lost their hope? We know the source of hope for us all.

To meet the needs of others, to minister to people; to be a blessing to them, to the world.

The need is great. The challenge is greater.

But the One who calls is greater still, and can do wonders, even with the likes of you and me.

God calls you -- Yes, you.

God can work wonderful things through you -- Yes, you...even if you feel overwhelmed by life or devoid of life.

To answer the call will be no cake walk.

But you will be blessed:

with community

with purpose

with a new lease on life.

And you will be a blessing, making a difference: like the flavor of salt for tasteless food, or a tasteless way of life; like light shining in a dark world, or a dark heart.

So, go.

Hear the call, and respond: say, Yes!

Let God use you to give birth to wonder and compassion, justice and life.

Expect difficulties.

But even in those difficulties, cling to the blessings of one another and Christ's ever-present presence and new life in him.

And rejoice, because you can make a difference in the world

by the grace of God

with the goodness of God

for the glory of God.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

***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

From you alone, Lord Jesus Christ, comes the authority
to heal the sick, cast out demons,
welcome the outcast, and even raise the dead.
Therefore we are bold to seek your power
and ready to claim your grace.
God of power and grace...
...hear our prayer.

Heal the sick in us and through us. . . . *[silence]*
Touch with compassion all those who suffer;
speak the word that will make them whole.
God of power and grace...
...hear our prayer.

Cast out demons in us and through us. . . . *[silence]*
Banish the powers that oppress your people;
bring peace to troubled hearts and minds.
God of power and grace...
...hear our prayer.

Welcome the outcast in us and through us. . . . *[silence]*
Open the doors of your church to all;
gather the lost and bring them home.
God of power and grace...
...hear our prayer.

Raise the dead in us and through us. . . . *[silence]*
As you broke free from the grave,
destroy the power of death forever.
God of power and grace...
...hear our prayer.

Nothing is impossible for you, Christ Jesus.
Let these signs of your coming realm
be manifest in our world today;
for you are our Lord and Savior. Amen.

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

Jesus said: The harvest is plentiful,
but the laborers are few.
Therefore we ask the Lord to send us out
as laborers for the harvest.
Let us offer the gifts of our lives to the Lord.

Reflection

(Time of silence to ponder and reflect on our response to God's grace.)

**Unison Prayer of Dedication*

**Dear God, we are grateful that you do not give up on us and that you
continue to invite us to partner with you to embrace and change the world.
We offer what we can -- all that we are and all that we have -- to you and
your will, for the nurturing of your work here "on earth as it is in heaven."
In your Son's name we pray. Amen.**

SENDING

***CLOSING HYMN** "Come, Labor On" GtG 719

1. **Come, labor on.
Who dares stand idle on the harvest plain
while all around us waves the golden grain?
And to each servant does the Master say,
"Go work today."**
2. **Come, labor on.
Claim the high calling angels cannot share;
to young and old the gospel gladness bear.
Redeem the time; its hours too swiftly fly.
The night draws nigh.**

3. **Come, labor on.**
Cast off all gloomy doubt and faithless fear!
No arm so weak but may do service here.
Though feeble agents, may we all fulfill
God's righteous will.
4. **Come, labor on.**
No time for rest, till glows the western sky,
till the long shadows o'er our pathway lie,
and a glad sound comes with the setting sun,
"Well done, well done!"

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***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

One: God, who has been present here, goes with us.
All: God will continue to work within and among us.
One: God, whose strength we celebrate, empowers us.
All: God sends us as laborers into the harvest.
One: Let us go forth in the love of God, reconciled and blessed;
All: as we claim the values that transcend our differences.
One: As you have been healed, bring healing to others,
All: as the Spirit empowers our ministry and mission.
One: May the love of God,
the grace of Christ,
and the Spirit's peace
be with you always.
And let the gathered people of God say...
All: ...Amen.

POSTLUDE

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