

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, JANUARY 16, 2022

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

**SECOND SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME**

**GATHERING**

**PRELUDE**

**CALL TO WORSHIP** *(from Psalm 36)*

One: “How precious is the steadfast love of God.” If you are discouraged by  
the way your life is going...

**All: ...come worship the God of Hope.**

One: Come to find refuge in the shelter of God’s ways.

**All: With steadfast love, God calls our names.**

One: Our God is ever present to strengthen and sustain us.

**All: Come, let us worship our loving God!**

**\*OPENING HYMN** “Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above” GtG 645

One: Sing praise to God who reigns above,  
the God of all creation,

**All: the God of power, the God of love,  
the God of our salvation.**

One: With healing balm my soul is filled,  
and every faithless murmur stilled:

**All: to God all praise and glory!**

One: What God's almighty power has made  
God's gracious mercy keepeth;

**All: by morning glow or evening shade  
God's watchful eye ne'er sleepeth.**

One: Within the kingdom of God's might,  
lo! all is just and all is right:

**All: to God all praise and glory!**

One: The Lord is never far away, but,

**All: through all grief distressing,  
an ever-present help and stay,  
our peace and joy and blessing,**

One: as with a mother's tender hand  
God gently leads the chosen band:

**All: to God all praise and glory!**

One: Thus all my toilsome way along  
I sing aloud thy praises,  
**All: that all may hear the grateful song  
my voice unwearied raises.**  
One: Be joyful in the Lord, my heart;  
**All: both soul and body, take your part:**  
**Unison: to God all praise and glory!**

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**\*UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

**Holy and Almighty God,  
you alone know how often we have sinned  
in wandering from your ways,  
in wasting your gifts,  
in forgetting your love.  
You love us, but we have not loved you.  
You call, but we have not listened.  
We walk away from neighbors in need,  
wrapped in our own concerns.  
We condone evil, prejudice, warfare, and greed.  
Have mercy on us, O Lord.  
Forgive our sins,  
and help us to live in your light,  
and walk in your ways,  
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.**

**\*SILENT CONFESSION**

**\*ASSURANCE OF PARDON** *(from I John 4 & Luke 2)*

One: “In this is love, not that we loved God but that God loved us and sent  
God's only Son into the world so that we might live through him.”  
**All: This is indeed “good news of great joy for all the people.”**  
One: So rejoice and be glad, for in Jesus Christ we are loved, in Jesus Christ we  
are accepted, in Jesus Christ we are forgiven.  
**All: “Glory to God in the highest heaven!”**

**\*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 Isaiah 62:1-5

ISAIAH 62:1-5 (various)

<sup>1</sup> *For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,  
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,  
until her righteousness shines out like the dawn,  
and her salvation blazes like a torch.*

<sup>2</sup> *The nations will see your righteousness,  
and all the kings your glory;  
you will be called by a new name  
that the mouth of the Lord will bestow.*

<sup>3</sup> *You will be a crown of splendor in the hand of the Lord,  
and a diadem of royalty in the hand of your God.*

<sup>4</sup> *You will no longer be called Forsaken,  
and your land will no longer be called Desolate.*

*Instead, you will be called My Delight Is in Her,  
and your land, Married.*

*Because the Lord delights in you,  
and your land will be married.*

<sup>5</sup> *For as a young man marries a young woman,  
so the one who formed you will marry you;  
and as a bridegroom rejoices over the bride,  
so will your God rejoice over you.*

### PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

**SERMON** by Pastor Bill Vincent

The message must be proclaimed, regardless of who it is who does it.  
For the message must be heard: by Jerusalem, by the exiles, and by us.

Actually, it probably wasn't the exiles per se, so much as it was the returned exiles.

I mean, all indications are that this message – this word – is being spoken to those who have already returned from their time of exile in Babylon.

They had actually heard an earlier voice while in exile: a voice that spoke, “*comfort, comfort, to my people*” (Isaiah 40:1); a voice that spoke of a glorious release from bondage (almost a second exodus) and a glorious return to a place they called home.

So they had responded, and they had returned.

But life was not how they had envisioned.

The glory they expected turned to squabbles and broken dreams.

The excitement they anticipated morphed into the humdrum of eking out an existence in a desolate land resisting their efforts at fruitfulness.

And hope had sagged into disappointment.

And into this situation our messenger brings this word. Whether that messenger was the prophet himself, or pictured as some heavenly messenger, or even the Lord Godself, we cannot be sure.

But what is certain is the urgency and determination of the voice, and its message: that this message must be proclaimed, for it needs, desperately, to be heard.

A message that the despair of the people is not the determining factor for them.

A message that the direness of their situation is not the ultimate reality.

A message that their circumstances – come what may – cannot and do not finally define them.

Something else does, signified by a change of name, sparked by a new relationship.

Now, the image used to describe the relationship is marriage.

It actually was a tricky image for the messenger to use. For with its sexual overtones, marriage was in danger of being confused with the fertility culture of surrounding religions with their emphasis on the fertility of the land being enacted in the sexual relations with the cult prostitutes.

But marriage also carried with it a powerful image of intimacy, of closeness, of truly knowing someone, of deeply communing with another.

*For as a young man marries a young woman,  
so the one who formed you will marry you;  
and as a bridegroom rejoices over the bride,  
so will your God rejoice over you.*

The messenger does not intend to overlook the difficult times the people are facing, acknowledging that, at present, the people feel forsaken and their situation appears desolate.

But those circumstances are transformed with the realization that they are wedded to “*the one who formed them,*” they are claimed by the one who created them, they are cared for by the God who calls them by name.

And in that relationship, and in that situation, they are delighted in and rejoiced over...and delivered.

For in that relationship, they can face anything...as can we.

Have you ever wondered, pondered, questioned: what’s it all about? why bother? why do I even try this faith thing, this Christian life? what’s the use? what’s the point?

I thought faith was supposed to make a difference in my life.

But here I am. My life is still a shambles. My personal landscape is a trackless waste.

How has faith helped me?  
Where is God now?

Maybe much like the experience of the returned exiles, who had high hopes...that sunk into lower disappointments.

Yet, the message we hear is that there *is* good news to share; there *is* joy to be known. The final point being that new relationship with God.

For even in my darkest days, I am not forsaken.  
Even in my most hopeless circumstance, I am not left to my own devices.  
And my life is not desolate, devoid of hope, nothing but despair.  
And, for us, God has made all of that clear  
-through an itinerant preacher who welcomed the children to interrupt him;  
-through the story of one journeying from Jerusalem to Jericho who bandaged and nursed one beaten and bruised by life;  
-through the voice of one begging for forgiveness for us – we who nailed him to that cross.

Through Jesus Christ we hear the clarion call that God delights in us, and wants to be in relationship with us, in communion with us.

That God is wed to my life and my situation and my circumstances.  
Not in some weird kind of divine/human sexual relationship.  
But likened to that image of marriage: intimate, close, deep knowing; and protective, watching over, caring for us. As one translation puts it, “*your land will be cared for once again*” (Common English Bible, v.4c).

Oh, yes, our life is not all it is meant to be; where we are now – in life, in history, in this world – is not where we need, or want, to be, and not where God intends us to be.

But make no mistake about it: we are not abandoned.  
And so we are not without hope.  
For God is with us.  
God is here.  
God claims us and walks with us and delights in us.  
And that is our hope.

And whether (in whatever moment) you need to proclaim that message to me or I need to proclaim that message to you or we need to proclaim that message to the world,

-the urgency of this message is clear, and the promise of this message is sure, and the fruit of this message is life and joy.

All because of God’s deep, ever-lasting love for us.

Thanks be to God!

**\*HYMN “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” GtG 611**

1. **Joyful, joyful, we adore thee,  
God of glory, Lord of love;  
hearts unfold like flowers before thee,  
opening to the sun above.  
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness;  
drive the dark of doubt away.  
Giver of immortal gladness,  
fill us with the light of day.**
  
2. **All thy works with joy surround thee;  
earth and heaven reflect thy rays;  
stars and angels sing around thee,  
center of unbroken praise.  
Field and forest, vale and mountain,  
flowery meadow, flashing sea,  
chanting bird and flowing fountain,  
call us to rejoice in Thee.**
  
3. **Mortals, join the happy chorus  
which the morning stars began.  
Love divine is reigning o'er us,  
joining all in heaven's plan.  
Ever singing, march we onward,  
victors in the midst of strife.  
Joyful music leads us sunward  
in the triumph song of life.**

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**\*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

**We trust in God,  
whom Jesus called Abba, Father.  
In sovereign love God created the world good  
and makes everyone equally in God's image,  
male and female, of every race and people,  
to live as one community.  
But we rebel against God; we hide from our Creator.  
Ignoring God's commandments,  
we violate the image of God in others and ourselves,  
accept lies as truth,**

exploit neighbor and nature,  
and threaten death to the planet entrusted to our care.  
We deserve God's condemnation.  
Yet God acts with justice and mercy to redeem creation.  
In everlasting love,  
the God of Abraham and Sarah chose a covenant people  
to bless all families of the earth.  
Hearing their cry,  
God delivered the children of Israel  
from the house of bondage.  
Loving us still,  
God makes us heirs with Christ of the covenant.  
Like a mother who will not forsake her nursing child,  
like a father who runs to welcome the prodigal home,  
God is faithful still.

(from *A Brief Statement of Faith*, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Book of Confessions)

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Pastor: Lord, in your mercy...  
People: ...hear our prayer.

## 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*

**O God, accept our offerings of thanksgiving for your faithfulness toward us, and use them and us to be instruments of your never-failing love for all your people. In Jesus' name. Amen.**

### **SENDING**

**\*CLOSING HYMN** "May the God of Hope Go with Us" GtG 765

**May the God of hope go with us every day,  
filling all our lives with love and joy and peace.  
May the God of justice speed us on our way,  
bringing light and hope to every land and race.  
Praying, let us work for peace;  
singing, share our joy with all;  
working for a world that's new,  
faithful when we hear Christ's call.**

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**\*CHARGE AND BLESSING**

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

**People:** ...Amen.

### **POSTLUDE**

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