

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, JUNE 26, 2022

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

13th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME

GATHERING

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Triumph and tragedy...and back to the mountaintop again. Life never stands still, and neither does the Spirit of God.

All: So we bring our cares and woes with us as we gather as God's people, prepared to receive God's truth and to take that truth out into the world.

One: Let us worship God.

***OPENING HYMN "Give to the Winds Thy Fears" GtG 815**

1. **Give to the winds thy fears;
hope, and be undismayed.
God hears thy sighs and counts thy tears;
God shall lift up thy head.**

2. **Through waves and clouds and storms
God gently clears thy way.
Wait patiently; so shall this night
soon end in joyous day.**

3. **Leave to God's sovereign sway
to choose and to command.
So shalt thou, wondering, own God's way,
how wise, how strong God's hand!**

4. **Let us in life, in death,
thy steadfast truth declare,
and publish with our final breath
thy love and guardian care.**

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***UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

**Holy One, God Most High,
grant us faith to confess our sins
and seek your mercy.
There are barren places in our lives
where we have wandered far from you.
We have listened to voices
who distracted us from your call.
We have submitted to powers
competing for our loyalty to you.
We have not taken the hand you offer
to lead us out of godforsakenness,
and into your holy ways.
God our Savior, forgive us.
Quench our thirst for you
from the Rock of our salvation,
and let your love well up in us
unto eternal life.
Speak tenderly to us of your presence.
Feed us with your word.
Deliver us from evil.
Let us enter into your kingdom;
then send us out to serve you
by the power of the Holy Spirit,
in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

***SILENT CONFESSION**

***ASSURANCE OF PARDON** *(from Psalm 51)*

One: The prayer of the psalmist is our prayer:
All: **"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit."**
One: The good news that the psalmist proclaims and that we know in Jesus Christ is that our God is a God of grace, quick to forgive and ready to recreate in us a heart of remembrance and a spirit of trust. So let us hear and believe that good news once again.
All: **For by the grace of God we are loved and accepted, forgiven and restored through Jesus Christ our Lord. Alleluia!**

***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 I Kings 19:1-19a

I KINGS 19:1-19a (various)

¹ Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. ² Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." ³ Then he was afraid, and he arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.

⁴ But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree, and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord; take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." ⁵ Then he lay down under the solitary broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat." ⁶ He looked, and behold, there by his head was a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. He ate and drank and lay down again. ⁷ The angel of the Lord came a second time, touched him, and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." ⁸ He got up and ate and drank; then he went refreshed by that food forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb the mount of God. ⁹ There he went into a cave and spent the night.

Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁰ He answered, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts, for the Israelites have abandoned your covenant, torn down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I am the only one left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away."

¹¹ The Lord said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Now a great and strong wind rent the mountains, breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; ¹² and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire the soft whisper of a voice. ¹³ When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then a voice came to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁴ He answered, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts, for the Israelites have abandoned your covenant, torn down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I am the only one left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away." ¹⁵ Then the Lord said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram. ¹⁶ Also you shall anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel, and you shall anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah to succeed you as prophet. ¹⁷ Whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall kill; and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall kill. ¹⁸ Yet I have preserved seven thousand in Israel – all those whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him."

¹⁹ So he set out from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat,...

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON by Pastor Bill Vincent

It is unbelievable! Elijah has just experienced a grand victory. You'd think, after such an impressive win, he'd have more spunk.

But now he's running for his life, with his tail between his legs no less – metaphorically speaking, of course.

We find it hard to understand, hard to believe.

Yet...maybe we have been here before, too.

The swell of a great accomplishment. The wave of pride. The rush of sweet victory.

Only to be followed by a crash, a nose-dive.

For the adrenaline is gone, and the savor of victory turns sour.

For problems remain.

And we're slightly (or greatly) disappointed that our grand event did not solve the world's problems and make life smooth sailing from here on out.

From the high, to the low: the great let down.

And we are drained. We are exhausted. We have nothing left to give.

Or so it seems.

Where do we find the energy?

Where do we find the motivation to go on?

Why go on?

So Elijah flees for his life, running to an out-of-the-way place, a deserted place. And wants to end it all.

In his drained state, he sleeps.

Then is startled awake by an angel with a 'cake' (and he gets to eat it, too!) – bread of some sort – and water. Not once, but twice.

So, Elijah makes his way, with this new and unexpected influx of energy – Elijah makes his way to the mount of God, Horeb.

Now, this story comes from a tradition somewhat different from the one we might be used to – so, with the name Horeb, we need to hear 'Sinai'. Ah! That's a name, and place, we recognize. Now we understand: the same mountain where the people gathered and Moses received God's instruction.

Elijah makes his way to this holy mountain of God, to encounter God, to make his case before God, to complain to God.

And when he arrives, being far, far away from where he started, God simply asks, “*What are you doing here, Elijah?*”

“I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts, for the Israelites have abandoned your covenant, torn down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I am the only one left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.”

In other words, “But I did everything you asked me to. And it didn’t seem to make any difference. So why go on? What’s the point? You won’t even let me die.” (Remember the food along the way?)

Well, God, how do you respond to that?

“*Go out on the mountain,*” the Lord says, “*for the Lord is about to pass by.*”

(Uh oh! Elijah’s in trouble now.)

And the winds howl. And the earth quakes. And the fire roars.

And then, “*the soft whisper of a voice.*” Or...something like that. We’re not quite sure exactly how to translate it. So you have “a sound of sheer silence” (NRSV), or “a gentle whisper” (NIV), or “a light murmuring sound” (Texts:JB), or “the sound of a gentle breeze” (Nelson:JB), or “a still small voice” (RSV).

The point is, in contrast to the wild, noisy, extravagant display, we have something quiet and still...and profound.

It’s almost as if – probably not, but – it’s almost as if God has stomped God’s feet and screamed and ranted and raved, being disappointed with Elijah. And then, with even greater strength, takes a deep breath and composes the divine self.

From all the noise, to all that quiet.

Now, we’d best pay attention.

And Elijah knows it. And prepares himself for his encounter with God.

Once again God asks, “*What are you doing here, Elijah?*”

And, just like God asks the exact same question, Elijah responds with the exact same answer:

“I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts, for the Israelites have abandoned your covenant, torn down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I am the only one left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.”

In other words, “But I did everything you asked me to. And it didn’t seem to make any difference. So why go on? What’s the point? You won’t even let me die.” (Well, of course, he didn’t really say that last one. But the truth is, God won’t let him die.)

And then I imagine there being...a pause.

Picture it this way. You may have to delve into your childhood memories for it, but think of it this way.

It’s like you and your siblings or best friends have been caught doing something you weren’t supposed to do, or not doing something you were supposed to do. And when you’re caught, you start pointing fingers and pleading your case and making excuses and whine, whine, whine.

Until you stop.
For the parent or teacher or whomever is just standing there, not saying a word.
And you realize: discussion is over. Now, you'd better pay attention; now, you'd better listen, and do what you're told.

And God says simply, "Go."
Oh, yes. There are additional instructions and details, I realize that. But the real point is, "Go." "You have your instructions; you know what you're supposed to do. Now, Go."

"And oh, by the way" – as an aside; for, you know, whining never warrants anything more than an aside – "By the way, you are not the only one," God says. "I still have 7000 people faithful to me and my way and my work. You are not alone. Never have been. Now, Go."

And Elijah went and found Elisha.

The mountain-high of accomplishing great (or even little) things is wonderful: when things go our way and we can see that we have made a difference.
But after the mountain-high, it's time to go back to the valley. For that's where most of life is experienced and where most of life's people are.

Even Jesus went from the mount of transfiguration down to the valley to meet a father and his sick son: into the midst of human need and the need to serve.
There is still work to be done.

So, where do we get the energy to go on?
How are we prepared for the next challenge? ("You mean there's another one?!")

And Elijah's story reminds us that, even in our story, the Lord provides – that is a promise.

Maybe not with angels in the kitchen cooking cakes for us. But definitely with the sustaining presence of God.

And even though we may think it is easier to discern that presence and provision of the Lord on the mountaintop – in the midst of stunning earthquake and howling wind and roaring fire – we can be assured – in fact, we ARE assured – that God is just as present and equally (if not more so) providing for us in the valley – even in the quiet murmurs and gentle whispers of each day.

In a quiet friend, in a gentle nudge, the Lord provides.

And the Lord says again, "Go!" – and that, too, is a promise.
The Lord does not let up just because we're tired.
The Lord does not give up on Elijah.
But neither will the Lord let Elijah give up. Nor us.

So, carry on.
Celebrate victories large and small in the day to day struggle for God's work and God's will and God's way.
And carry on.
There is more work to be done.

The story is told of a soup kitchen one Easter Sunday evening:

Among several volunteers working to prepare the special meal of ham and mashed potatoes and cake for the crowd of five thousand would be two women who had recently become regular Sunday night volunteers. When the day was over, and the unusually large crowd of men had been fed, and yet there were still twelve refrigerators full of leftovers, and the two tired women were walking to their cars, one said to the other, "Can you believe so many people donated so much food? Can you believe we fed five thousand people? I feel a little better about the world and about myself right now. I think I'll be riding high on this for a long while." The other woman responded by saying only: "I'll see you same time next week." (Lectionary Homiletics, p.44)

There is more work to be done.
There are people to feed and people to comfort.
There are words to be spoken and people to stand beside.
For Jezebel still threatens.
And Ahab remains in power.
And "*God's kingdom come, God's will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*" is not fully realized...yet.

So, carry on.
The mountain-high is great. The accomplishment, large or small, is to be celebrated.
But there is work still to be done.
And even with each threat and each set back, we hold to the truth that our basic foundation is not shaken, our steady anchor in life has not been severed, and God will see us through it all – and that, too, is a promise.
For God is still God.
And God's call still remains.
So, "see you same time next week."

***HYMN** "If Thou but Trust in God to Guide Thee" GtG 816

**1. If thou but trust in God to guide thee,
with hopeful heart through all thy ways,
God will give strength, whate'er betide thee,
to bear thee through the evil days.**

**Who trusts in God's unchanging love
builds on the rock that nought can move.**

- 2. Only be still, and wait God's leisure
in cheerful hope, with heart content
to take whate'er thy Keeper's pleasure
and all-discerning love hath sent.
No doubt our inmost wants are clear
to One who holds us always dear.**
- 3. Sing, pray, and swerve not from God's ways,
but do thine own part faithfully.
Trust the rich promises of grace;
so shall they be fulfilled in thee.
God never yet forsook at need
the soul secured by trust indeed.**

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***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

**In life and in death we belong to God.
Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit,
we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel,
whom alone we worship and serve.**

**Like a mother who will not forsake her nursing child,
like a father who runs to welcome the prodigal home,
God is faithful still.**

**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

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

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*

**With our gifts, O God,
we remember with thanksgiving
the life that we have because of you.
Make us grateful every day
for the privilege of offering ourselves
for the well-being of all your world. Amen.**

SENDING

***CLOSING HYMN** "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind" GtG 169 (*Verses 1, 4, and 5*)

- 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.**
- 4. Drop thy still dews of quietness,
till all our strivings cease;
take from our souls the strain and stress,
and let our ordered lives confess
the beauty of thy peace.**

**5. Breathe through the heats of our desire
thy coolness and thy balm;
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still, small voice of calm!**

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***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

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

People: ...**Amen.**

POSTLUDE

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