

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, AUGUST 13, 2023

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

19th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME

GATHERING

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP *(from Isaiah 43)*

One: “The Lord who created you says, ‘Do not be afraid – I will save you. I have called you by name – you are mine.’”

All: **“When you pass through deep waters, I will be with you; your troubles will not overwhelm you.”**

One: “For I am the Lord your God, the holy God of Israel, who saves you.”

All: **“Do not be afraid – I am with you!”**

One: Trusting in the call and promise of God, let us come and worship.

***OPENING HYMN** “Standing on the Promises” GtG 838

**1. Standing on the promises of Christ my king,
through eternal ages let his praises ring;
glory in the highest, I will shout and sing,
standing on the promises of God.**

Refrain: **Standing, standing,
standing on the promises of God my Savior;
standing, standing,
I’m standing on the promises of God.**

**2. Standing on the promises that cannot fail,
when the howling storms of doubt and fear assail,
by the living Word of God I shall prevail,
standing on the promises of God. *Refrain:***

**3. Standing on the promises of Christ the Lord,
bound to him eternally by love’s strong cord,
overcoming daily with the Spirit’s sword,
standing on the promises of God. *Refrain:***

(continued...)

4. **Standing on the promises I cannot fall,
listening every moment to the Spirit's call,
resting in my Savior as my all in all,
standing on the promises of God. Refrain:**

Words and Music (PROMISES): R. Kelso Carter, 1886.
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UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Dear God,
we say we trust you,
but our lives say otherwise.
We are intimidated by our circumstances,
distracted from your purposes,
drowning in doubts and fears.
We rely upon our own wits
instead of your wisdom.
We depend upon our own resources
instead of your strength.
Forgive us, gracious Lord.
Teach us faith,
and show us the way of trusting in your word.
For you are our God and we are your people,
and we pray in your Son's name. Amen.**

SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

One: In the strength of the Lord Almighty we confide.
All: **In the mercy of God we trust.**
One: By the power of God we are restored.
All: **By the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we are renewed.**
One: So rejoice and celebrate this day!
All: **For in Jesus Christ we are forgiven, we are loved, we are given new life. 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 READING Matthew 14:22-33

MATTHEW 14:22-33 (Today's English Version)

²² Then Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side of the lake, while he sent the people away. ²³ After sending the people away, he went up a hill by himself to pray. When evening came, Jesus was there alone; ²⁴ and by this time the boat was far out in the lake, tossed about by the waves, because the wind was blowing against it.

²⁵ Between three and six o'clock in the morning Jesus came to the disciples, walking on the water. ²⁶ When they saw him walking on the water, they were terrified. "It's a ghost!" they said, and screamed with fear.

²⁷ Jesus spoke to them at once. "Courage!" he said. "It is I. Do not be afraid!"

²⁸ Then Peter spoke up. "Lord, if it is really you, order me to come out on the water to you."

²⁹ "Come!" answered Jesus. So Peter got out of the boat and started walking on the water to Jesus. ³⁰ But when he noticed the strong wind, he was afraid and started to sink down in the water. "Save me, Lord!" he cried.

³¹ At once Jesus reached out and grabbed hold of him and said, "What little faith you have! Why did you doubt?"

³² They both got into the boat, and the wind died down. ³³ Then the disciples in the boat worshiped Jesus. "Truly you are the Son of God!" they exclaimed.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON "Ship-shape? Or Weather-worn?" by Pastor Bill Vincent

We are familiar with the image of the storms of life.
And we are familiar with the experience.

So was Edward Hopper. A Presbyterian minister, his last pastorate was a small church called the Church of Sea and Land in New York City, where he ministered to the sailors who came in and out of the harbor and "made their way to and from their ships." During that time of his ministry, he penned these words:

**Jesus, Savior, pilot me
over life's tempestuous sea:
unknown waves before me roll,
hiding rocks and treacherous shoal;
chart and compass come from thee –
Jesus, Savior, pilot me!**

(Kenneth W. Osbeck, *101 More Hymn Stories*)

The song painted a literal picture for the sailors – and also a figurative one.

It shares a metaphor for us as well...

*when the flotsam and jetsam of dreams lie scattered upon the seas of life.

*when the waves of tragedy beat incessantly against us.

*when we are faced with a difficult decision, unsure of self and our course of action, and the waves of doubt sweep over us.

*when the storm of divorce leaves relationships fractured and dreams in ruins.

*when an unforeseen accident washes over the quiet, orderly foundation of life.

*when the wave of illness capsizes our plans for the future.

And perhaps connected to them all – to all these different storms, and winds, and waves that knock us down and swamp us and threaten to drown us – perhaps connected to them all in a way that reinforces them all is the storm of the unknown.

I don't know what's going to happen.

I don't know what to do.

I don't know whether things will get better or not.

I don't know where the next paycheck will come from.

I don't know who will help me.

I don't know what life will be like. I thought I once did, but now I don't know.

I thought I had life figured out, my purpose and direction in life calculated. But now I'm just not sure.

I don't know.

And in agony and desperation, over our heads in question marks and up to our necks in blank spaces with no answers, we cry out, "Save me, Lord!"

And a hand reaches out, even from the midst of the storm, and takes hold of us and lifts us up from the sea of our despair. And we are saved.

For, you see, there may be many things we don't know. But there is one thing we do know.

As the song says, "**Jesus loves me, this I know.**"

The winds of change and the waves of doubt may still press in upon us.

The unknowns may very well remain – unknowns a-plenty.

But one thing I do know and know for certain: the God we meet and hear, the God we discover and come to know in Jesus Christ – this God knows us and loves us and cares for us always.

"Jesus loves me. This I know."

And with my eyes focused on him, with my ears – and heart – attuned to his word, the waves that break, the winds that bluster seem to die down.

Not that they disappear.

So don't get me wrong. The wind that buffeted me before remains. The waves that pounded against me before remain.

But their effect is different.

No longer are my steps shaped by the wind; no longer is my path – my life – determined by the waves. Now my steps are steady, even in the midst of the swirling waves; now my path is

clear, even in the trackless waste of the sea; now my life is focused, even in the whirlwind about me.

For my steps, my path, my life are guided by the one upon whose face I gaze, the one whose voice I heed.

And that voice says, "Do not fear."

Horatio Spafford heard that voice.

a...Chicago businessman, [he] suffered financial disaster in the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. He and his wife were still grieving over the death of their son shortly before the fire, and he realized they needed to get away for a vacation. ... Spafford decided to take the entire family to England. His wife and four daughter went ahead on the SS *Ville du Havre*, and he planned to follow in a few days.

But on the Atlantic Ocean the ship was struck by an iron sailing vessel and sank within twelve minutes. Two hundred and twenty-six lives were lost – including the Spaffords' four daughters. When the survivors were brought to shore [in] Wales, Mrs. Spafford cabled her husband, "Saved alone."

[Horatio] Spafford booked passage on the next ship. As they were crossing the Atlantic, the captain pointed out the place where he thought the *Ville du Havre* had gone down. That night, Spafford penned [these] words:

**When peace like a river attendeth my way,
when sorrows like sea-billows roll;
whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say,
"It is well, it is well with my soul."**

(The One-Year Book of Hymns: 365 Devotional Readings Based on Great Hymns of the Faith, by Brown, Norton, Petersen and Petersen)

As the risen Christ promised the disciples, "*Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age*" (Matthew 28:20). In the midst of the tempests of life, with our fear of the wind and wave, and especially with our fear of being abandoned and left to our own devices, this promise of his presence is enough to still any storm, enough to calm any heart.

"Do not be afraid," he says, "it is I." And we come to realize that is all we need to know. This doesn't answer all the questions. This doesn't make life fine and fancy free.

But it does give us hope and courage, strength and endurance. For we know we are not alone. For now, with his help, we can walk among the waves of life, instead of sinking beneath them.

So that...

*when the waves of tragedy beat incessantly against us, he steadies us by his own hands.

*When we face a difficult decision, unsure of self and our course of action, and the waves of doubt sweep over us, we can be confident in his presence with us always.

*When that unforeseen accident washes over our orderly foundation of life, we can be assured that his foundation remains secure.

*When those waves of illness capsize our plans for the future, we know he has plans for us and will see them through.

And so we carry on, with him by our side, ever guiding, ever steadying, ever present.

So, "Jesus, Savior, pilot [us]" over the tempestuous seas of life. Come to us in the storm and tempest, and rescue us.

And we will ply the sea together.

***HYMN** "Eternal Father, Strong to Save" GtG 8

1. **Eternal Father, strong to save,
whose arm has bound the restless wave,
who bade the mighty ocean deep
its own appointed limits keep:
O hear us when we cry to thee
for those in peril on the sea.**
2. **O Savior, whose almighty word
the wind and waves submissive heard,
who walked upon the foaming deep,
and calm amid its rage did sleep:
O hear us when we cry to thee
for those in peril on the sea.**
3. **O Holy Spirit, who did brood
upon the chaos wild and rude,
and bade its angry tumult cease,
and gave, for fierce confusion, peace:
O hear us when we cry to thee
for those in peril on the sea.**
4. **O Trinity of love and power,
all travelers guard in danger's hour;
from rock and tempest, fire and foe,
protect them wheresoe'er they go;
thus evermore shall rise to thee
glad praise from air and land and sea.**

Words: William Whiting, 1860, alt.

Music: MELITA, John Bacchus Dykes, 1861

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***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

(next page...)

**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.**

**With believers in every time and place,
we rejoice that nothing in life or in death
can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

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

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

One: Save us, O Lord...
All: ...we come to you.

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*

(next page...)

**Dear God, we give you thanks
for your help in times of trouble
and your comfort in times of sorrow.**

**We give you thanks
for a world of beauty
and for people who care.**

**Accept the gifts we offer
as tokens of our gratitude and
symbols of our commitment
to worship you and
love one another.**

In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

SENDING

***CLOSING HYMN** "Give to the Wind 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 the 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.**

Words: Paul Gerhardt, 1653; trans. John Wesley, 1737, alt.
Music: FESTAL SONG, William H. Walter, 1872
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***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

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

All: ...**Amen.**

POSTLUDE

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