

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, AUGUST 27, 2023

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

**21<sup>st</sup> SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME**

**GATHERING**

**PRELUDE**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

- One: Come, people of God, to be refreshed and renewed for the journey of life.  
All: **We come to embrace the one who embraces us.**  
One: Come, people of God, to hear again the call to discipleship.  
All: **We come to hear God speak and to relish the presence of the Lord.**  
One: Come, people of God, come.  
All: **We come in joy to worship the Lord.**

**\*OPENING HYMN** “Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah” GtG 65

1. **Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,  
pilgrim through this barren land.  
I am weak, but thou art mighty.  
Hold me with thy powerful hand.  
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,  
feed me till I want no more;  
feed me till I want no more.**
  
2. **Open now the crystal fountain,  
whence the healing stream doth flow.  
Let the fire and cloudy pillar  
lead me all my journey through.  
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer,  
be thou still my strength and shield;  
be thou still my strength and shield.**
  
3. **When I tread the verge of Jordan,  
bid my anxious fears subside.  
Death of death, and hell's destruction,  
land me safe on Canaan's side.**

*(continued...)*

**Songs of praises, songs of praises  
I will ever give to thee;  
I will ever give to thee.**

Words: William Williams, 1762; stanza 1, trans. Peter Williams,  
1771; stanzas 2-3, trans. William Williams, 1772  
Music: CWM RHONDDA, John Hughes, 1907  
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## **UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

**Dear God, you show us how to live.  
But we want to make our own adjustments to suit ourselves.  
You show us the path to life,  
but we ‘hem’ and ‘haw’ and choose a different way: the world’s way.  
We conform to this world’s frantic pace,  
too hectic to notice all the blessings you provide.  
We conform to this world’s reckless waste,  
exploiting what you entrust to our care.  
We conform to this world’s shallow values,  
oblivious to the giftedness of people different from us.  
We conform to this world’s impatient attitudes,  
preferring the latest instead of the lasting.  
Forgive us, God of grace and tender mercy.  
Forgive our conformity  
and reclaim us as your own.  
Touch our minds that we may choose you.  
Touch our hearts that we may embrace you.  
Touch our lives that we may follow you.  
For the sake of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,  
in whose name we pray. Amen.**

## **SILENT CONFESSION**

### **ASSURANCE OF PARDON** *(from I Timothy 1 & I Peter 2)*

**One:** Hear the good news! “The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance,  
that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”  
**All:** “He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, that we might be  
dead to sin, and alive to all that is good.”  
**One:** I declare to you in the name of 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 READING Matthew 16:13-24

MATTHEW 16:13-24 (Today's English Version)

<sup>13</sup> Jesus went to the territory near the town of Caesarea Philippi, where he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Humankind is?"

<sup>14</sup> "Some say John the Baptist," they answered. "Others say Elijah, while others say Jeremiah or some other prophet."

<sup>15</sup> "What about you?" he asked them. "Who do you say I am?"

<sup>16</sup> Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

<sup>17</sup> "Good for you, Simon son of John!" answered Jesus. "For this truth did not come to you from any human being, but it was given to you directly by my Father in heaven. <sup>18</sup> And so I tell you, Peter: you are a rock, and on this rock foundation I will build my church, and not even death will ever be able to overcome it. <sup>19</sup> I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of heaven; what you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in heaven, and what you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven."

<sup>20</sup> Then Jesus ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

<sup>21</sup> From that time on Jesus began to say plainly to his disciples, "I must go to Jerusalem and suffer much from the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the Law. I will be put to death, but three days later I will be raised to life."

<sup>22</sup> Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "God forbid it, Lord!" he said. "That must never happen to you!"

<sup>23</sup> Jesus turned around and said to Peter, "Get away from me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my way, because these thoughts of yours don't come from God, but from human nature."

<sup>24</sup> Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you want to come with me, you must forget yourself, carry your cross, and follow me..."

## PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON "Choose...to Walk" by Pastor Bill Vincent

"Who do you say I am?" Jesus asks.

I have another question: Why Caesarea Philippi?

From what we know, Caesarea Philippi was a Gentile frontier town, known in antiquity as having a shrine to Pan, the nature god.

It was outside the Jewish homeland.

And maybe that's the point: it's not home.

Not simply in church, but out there in the world, "*Who do you say I am?*" The real test. In Union and Pacific; in Jacksonville, Florida and Lahaina, Hawaii.

"*Who do you say I am?*" In school, at work, at the grocery store, at play.

"*Who do you say I am?*" In words and deeds and choices and actions and lives.

It is one thing to answer at home, in familiar surroundings, among folk that we know (or presume) would answer like us.

It is another to answer in a foreign land, among unfamiliar surroundings.

That's where we hear the real answer.

And that's where we hear *my* answer.

Who do I say that he is?

The time comes when it has to be my answer, not another's.

Yes, I can learn from another's answer. Like those papers we used to write in school comparing one person's stance to another's.

I can learn from another's answer: what they have to say in their lives and deeds.

But there comes a point in time when other people's answers will not do. When you – and I – have to speak for ourselves, have to claim it for ourselves; have to stake a claim and make a stand and say, 'This is what I believe'.

My commitment.

My answer.

And that's a risk.

And it's one thing to risk with someone else's answer.

It's another thing to risk with one's own.

For I may get it wrong: that's part of the risk.

Like Peter: right words; wrong understanding?

And what does our answer say about us? And about Jesus?

Do our words and our actions, our choices and decisions, our assumptions suggest things about Jesus that we already know are not true?

Do our prayers suggest that Jesus is our fix-it man, at our beck and call – like a genie – to bail us out of trouble?

Do our choices suggest that Jesus is white, middle class, American...and of a particular political persuasion at that?

And so Peter *says* it right.

But, as is evident in the immediately following story, Peter doesn't have it quite right, Peter doesn't truly 'get it,' doesn't fully understand. He says the right words, but does he really understand, does he really know what he's talking about?

Jesus begins to talk about suffering, and Peter rebukes him, and Jesus in turn rebukes Peter.

Peter does not truly understand, even though he may be able to say the right words. Peter does not truly 'get it' about Jesus.

So, who defines Jesus?

With all the words thrown around – and sometimes thrown at each other – with all the verbiage written, who defines Jesus?

We do not.

Jesus does.

*From that time on Jesus began to say plainly to his disciples, "I must go to Jerusalem and suffer much from the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the Law. I will be put to death, but three days later I will be raised to life."*

All too often there is this disparity between who we say Jesus is and who Jesus says he is, not only in his words, but also in his deeds, his choices, his actions, his life...and his death.

Jesus may indeed ask us who we say he is. But in the end, it is not we who define Jesus; it is Jesus who defines himself. So, in the end, what really matters is not who we say he is, but who he says he is.

That is part of the truth about our confession – and Peter's – that to truly understand, we must let Jesus define himself for us.

As Mark Crumpler notes,

**We must hear the question that Jesus asks. ... But just as important as Jesus's question is the answer that he himself gives.** (Peachtree Presbyterian Church devotion, "Jesus and Jeans")

Makes sense.

I may introduce myself to someone and say, "My name is Bill." And they may remember my name and be able to call me by name the next time we meet. But do they really know me? Do they really know who I am just because they can call my name? Isn't it more likely the case that they get to know me by spending time with me and talking with me and even working together with me?

The only way to understand the one we call 'Christ' is to walk with him.

*“Who do you say I am?”* The question is really an invitation to step through a door and begin the process – a relationship, a life-long journey – to get to know this one we call by the name of Christ.

*“Who do you say I am?”* is, in many ways, a parallel to the story we read in John, when Philip comes to Nathaniel and says something about Jesus, and Nathaniel says, *“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”* and Philip says, *“Come and see”* (John 1:46).

*“Who do you say I am?”*

It is as if Jesus says, “Come and see. Come join with me. Come walk with me.”

And so we do. We join him and walk with him. And we hear him speak. And we ask him questions. And we watch him talk with others. And we see him touch and bless others. And we see his compassion, and we experience it ourselves. And we are touched and moved by him. And we even begin, not simply to walk beside him, but also to work alongside of him. And we get to know him – truly begin to know him.

So that when he asks me again – as he will – *“Who do you say I am?”* my answer has been transformed from when I first responded. Not that the one I call ‘Christ’ is different, but **I** am different, and my understanding has grown, and my sight is clearer, and my insight is deeper. And the name Christ – the answer ‘Christ’ – is fuller, and richer, and broader than when I first began. And that relationship, that understanding, that meaning, will continue to grow as I continue to grow in him: as I continue to walk with him and work with him and worship him and know him and love him.

*“Who do you say I am?”* is an invitation to join him in life: in Caesarea Philippi, in Union and Pacific, in Jacksonville and Lahaina, and beyond.

Will we walk with him and work with him, and begin to discover the answer to the question – and begin to discover him?

**\*HYMN** “O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee” GtG 738

1. **O Master, let me walk with thee  
in lowly paths of service free;  
tell me thy secret; help me bear  
the strain of toil, the fret of care.**
2. **Help me the slow of heart to move  
by some clear, winning word of love;  
teach me the wayward feet to stay,  
and guide them in the homeward way.**
3. **Teach me thy patience, still with thee  
in closer, dearer company,  
in work that keeps faith sweet and strong,  
in trust that triumphs over wrong.**

*(continued...)*

4. **In hope that sends a shining ray  
far down the future's broadening way;  
in peace that only thou canst give,  
with thee, O Master, let me live.**

Words: Washington Gladden, 1879  
Music: MARYTON, Henry Percy Smith, 1874  
*Public Domain*

**\*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH** (from "*A Declaration of Faith*")

**In forming his people and sending them into the world  
Jesus called individuals to be disciples.  
They were to share the joy of his companionship,  
to understand and obey his teachings,  
and to follow him in life and death.  
We confess that Christians today are called to discipleship.  
Life shared with Christ and shaped by Christ  
is God's undeserved gift to each of us.  
It is also God's demand upon every one of us,  
never perfectly fulfilled by any of us.  
Forgiven by God and supported by brothers and sisters,  
we strive to become more faithful and effective  
in our daily practice of the Christian life.**

"A Declaration of Faith" is Copyright 1977, 1991, the Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.); adopted (1977) "as a contemporary statement of faith, a reliable aid for Christian study, liturgy, and inspiration, with the clear understanding that" it is not approved as a part of the *Book of Confessions*.

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

One: Hear our prayer, O Lord...  
All: ...and walk with us in grace and love.

**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, we confess faith in your mercy and presence  
as we bring our offerings before you.  
Use them to further your work.  
May our talents be useful in serving your people.  
May our time be filled with obeying your will.  
May the money we give be in response to your graciousness.  
Accept it all as part of our renewed commitment to Christ.  
In his name we pray. Amen.**

## SENDING

**\*CLOSING HYMN** “Will You Come and Follow Me” GtG 726 (*Verses 1, 4, & 5*)  
(The Summons)

1. **“Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?  
Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?  
Will you let my love be shown;  
will you let my name be known;  
will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?”**
4. **“Will you love the ‘you’ you hide if I but call your name?  
Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?  
Will you use the faith you've found  
to reshape the world around,  
through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?”**
5. **Lord, your summons echoes true when you but call my name.  
Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.  
In your company I'll go  
where your love and footsteps show.  
Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.**

*The Summons, Text by John L. Bell and Graham Maule, Tune  
arr. by John L. Bell.*

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## **\*CHARGE AND BLESSING**

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

## **\*RESPONSE** “Go with Us, Lord” GtG 748

**Go with us, Lord, and guide the way  
through this and every coming day,  
that in your Spirit strong and true  
our lives may be our gift to you.**

Words: Mary Jackson Cathey, 1986. Copyright 1990 Hope Publishing Company.

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Music: TALLIS' CANON, Thomas Tallis; adapt. Parker's *Whole Psalter*, ca. 1561. *Public Domain.*

## **POSTLUDE**

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