

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, JANUARY 28, 2024

First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

**FOURTH SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME**

**GATHERING**

**PRELUDE**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

One: Come, people of God, to give thanks and sing!  
All: **We come in remembrance of all that God has done for us.**  
One: All around us the world shouts God's praises!  
All: **Let us join in the song of thanksgiving to God.**

**\*OPENING HYMN** "All Things Bright and Beautiful" GtG 20

Refrain: **All things bright and beautiful,  
all creatures great and small,  
all things wise and wonderful,  
the Lord God made them all.**

1. **Each little flower that opens,  
each little bird that sings,  
God made their glowing colors;  
God made their tiny wings.**  
*(Refrain)*

2. **The purple-headed mountain,  
the river running by,  
the sunset, and the morning  
that brightens up the sky:**  
*(Refrain)*

3. **The cold wind in the winter,  
the pleasant summer sun,  
the ripe fruits in the garden,  
God made them every one.**  
*(Refrain)*

*(continued...)*

4. **God gave us eyes to see them,  
and lips that we might tell  
how great is God Almighty,  
who has made all things well.**  
*(Refrain)*

Words: Cecil Frances Alexander, 1848, alt. *Public Domain.*

Music: ROYAL OAK, English melody, 17<sup>th</sup> cent.; adapt. Martin Shaw, 1915.  
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#### **UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

**God, you are everlasting, the creator of all that is, and we give you thanks and praise. But we confess that we have sinned against you and our neighbors. We turn from your ways and do as we please. We bear grudges against those who deceive us. We seek revenge on those who hurt us. We are kind only to those who are kind to us, and we fail to love all people, even as you love us all. Forgive us, kind and gracious God. Love us and transform our hearts that we might reflect you and your way in our lives. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.**

#### **SILENT CONFESSION**

#### **ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

**One:** God does love us. We know this for certain because of Jesus Christ.

**All:** **In Christ, God seeks the lost and forgives the sinner and loves the world.**

**One:** So let us hear and believe this wonderful, good news.

**All:** **That in Jesus Christ we are forgiven. In Jesus Christ we are loved. 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** Ecclesiastes 3:1-8  
Mark 1:29-39

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 (New Revised Standard Version)

*One: For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:*

**All: a time to be born,**

*One: and a time to die;*

**All: a time to plant,**

*One: and a time to pluck up what is planted;*

**All: a time to kill,**

*One: and a time to heal;*

**All: a time to break down,**

*One: and a time to build up;*

**All: a time to weep,**

*One: and a time to laugh;*

**All: a time to mourn,**

*One: and a time to dance;*

**All a time to throw away stones,**

*One: and a time to gather stones together;*

**All a time to embrace,**

*One: and a time to refrain from embracing;*

**All: a time to seek,**

*One: and a time to lose;*

**All: a time to keep,**

*One: and a time to throw away;*

**All: a time to tear,**

*One: and a time to sew;*

**All: a time to keep silence,**

*One: and a time to speak;*

**All: a time to love,**

*One: and a time to hate;*

**All: a time for war,**

*One: and a time for peace.*

MARK 1:29-39 (New Revised Standard Version)

<sup>29</sup> *As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. <sup>30</sup> Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her at once. <sup>31</sup> He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.*

<sup>32</sup> *That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. <sup>33</sup> And the whole city was gathered around the door. <sup>34</sup> And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.*

<sup>35</sup> *In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. <sup>36</sup> And Simon and his companions hunted for him. <sup>37</sup> When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." <sup>38</sup> He answered, "Let*

*us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.”* <sup>39</sup> *And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.*

## PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON “Wisdom of the Rhythm” by Pastor Bill Vincent

The waves on the beach, washing in and out.  
The tide at the seashore, going up, going down.  
Night and day, waking and sleeping.  
From Fall to Winter to Spring to Summer, and back to Fall.  
The rhythm of life.  
The wisdom of the rhythm.  
Not only a wisdom *to* the rhythm itself.  
But also a wisdom to *discerning* the rhythm.

A rhythm we see in our passage – with Jesus' day – almost like scenes in a play.

SCENE 1: A time to be sick, and a time to serve.

Have you ever been in a group of people and had someone sit beside you who is obviously sick – with a runny nose, coughing and sneezing and blowing their nose the whole day – and they have no energy, and they're not contributing anything to the group, and not getting anything out of the time together. But, hey! they're there. And their record of perfect attendance is intact. And you wish – not only for your sake but for theirs – that they'd just go home and take the time to get better, rather than so "graciously" sharing their germs with you and everyone else.

There's a time to be sick: to admit I am not well, to deal with the illness, and take the time to recuperate. It's okay to take care of yourself, to focus on yourself to get better.

Like Simon's mother-in-law. She's in bed with a fever.

When Jesus heals her, then she serves as a model of serving:

**a picture of discipleship: one who has been touched by Jesus and who responds with service, just as Jesus himself came to serve (10:45).** (Brian K. Peterson, “Exegesis,” *Lectionary Homiletics*, February 2000)

She uses her renewed health in service to others.

A time to be sick, and a time to serve.

SCENE 2: A time to speak and a time to be silent.

We're not exactly sure why Jesus is, so often, telling the demons and unclean spirits to be quiet and not say anything. But it is quite obvious that he does. (Scholars call it the "Messianic Secret.") Perhaps because he wanted the people to find out on their own. Perhaps because what the demons said would only confuse people – for the moment, at least. Perhaps because, as some say Mark portrays it, the people simply could not understand Jesus until the crucifixion and resurrection.

There is also the scene in the Gospel where Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up a mountain, and there he is transfigured before them; and they experience this wondrous vision with Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus and this voice says, "*This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!*" (Mark 9:7) Now you'd think this would be a wake-up call to the disciples: that this would be just what they needed to hear for themselves, and just the ammunition they needed to fire off convincing tributes and testimonies to Jesus, and convince more people. But on the way down from the mountain Jesus strictly forbids them from telling anyone what has happened *until after the Son of [Humankind] had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves....* (Mark 9:9-10)

Sometimes we may not understand why now is the time to be silent. But it is important to recognize those moments when we DO need to be silent, and respect the appropriate rhythm for the appropriate time. Maybe we don't know something we need to know before we speak, and we don't even know we don't know it. Sometimes we simply have to trust the wisdom of others to know that now is the time to be silent, and not to speak.

Of course, the opposite is also true – at different times – when it IS the time to speak. We may not think so. We may feel awkward, embarrassed, not want to get involved. We may believe we don't have a clue what to say. We may think there's much we don't know so maybe we should just keep our mouth shut. Still, it may be time for us to speak: when someone is picking a fight with another simply for sport; when injustice is being done for whatever reason; when the dignity of another and their identity as a child of God is being run over and ground in the dirt. Then – whether we feel up to the task or not, whether we think we know what to say or not – then it is we DO need to speak, and speak up and speak out. For then it is that being silent speaks volumes about acquiescence and giving in to the evils of our day. Then it is that being silent is the crime, and speaking up is the truth.

In another instance later in the Gospel, Jesus is teaching the disciples about upcoming times of trial and persecution. And Jesus tells them not to worry about what they may say when they are dragged in front of the magistrates and leaders and rulers, for the Spirit will give them voice and tell them what they need to say (see Mark 13:9-11). Now, is this an excuse for slacking off, and not preparing, and not knowing what you believe and why? I don't think so. It is, I believe, a challenge to trust God to guide us and equip us to do and say the right thing at the right time.

A time to speak, and a time to be silent.

SCENE 3: A time to turn in and a time to go out. A time to withdraw, and a time to engage.

We see this on a personal level when Jesus goes by himself to pray: a rhythm of withdrawing for prayer and engaging with others; being with people, being by oneself.

**If prayer was necessary for Jesus, how much more must it be necessary for us?** (William Barclay, The Gospel of Mark, Daily Study Bible Series, rev.ed., 1975)

Now I realize people have different personalities. Some people love to be with other people and hate being by themselves. And there are those who love being by themselves and really don't care to be with other people. But we are made for both: not one or the other, but both.

If we are always in the thick of it with others, then we miss the opportunity to be by ourselves, alone with God.

If we are always off by ourselves, then we miss the opportunity to share with others and give of ourselves to others – to serve.

A reminder to us of the need for prayer to guide and strengthen us for our ministry among others. But also, our ministry with others informs our prayers and even sometimes drives us to prayer.

We also see this on a community level: see it in our passage as a rhythm of 'here' and 'there'.

*Here* in Capernaum, in their own community.

*There* "throughout the surrounding region of Galilee."

*Here* with those who know Jesus and know what he can do for them and know his healing touch.

*There* in "the neighboring towns," "throughout Galilee" with those who don't know, where Jesus also needs to "proclaim the message" and "cast out demons."

It is a visual reminder for us in the church that Yes, we need to pay attention to our life together, *here*; at the same time, we must never overlook our call to serve and minister to those outside the fellowship, *there*, beyond the walls of the church.

So the sign over the entrance to many sanctuaries says:

**Enter to worship.**

**Depart to serve.**

A time to draw in, and a time to go out.

The rhythm of life. We see it all the time.

Do we pay attention to it in our life of faith? Will we be alert to the rhythms and their wisdom? That we might work together with God, that God may be at work in our life and our ministry...and in us?

**\*HYMN** "Take Time to Be Holy"

**1. Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord;  
abide in him always and feed on his word.  
Make friends of God's children; help those who are weak;  
forgetting in nothing his blessing to seek.**

**2. Take time to be holy, the world rushes on;  
spend much time in secret with Jesus alone.  
By looking to Jesus, like him thou shalt be;  
thy friends in thy conduct his likeness shall see.**

*(continued...)*

**3. Take time to be holy, let him be thy guide,  
and run not before him, whatever betide.  
In joy or in sorrow, still follow thy Lord,  
and, looking to Jesus, still trust in his word.**

**4. Take time to be holy, be calm in thy soul --  
each thought and each motive beneath his control.  
Thus led by his Spirit to fountains of love,  
thou soon shalt be fitted for service above.**

Words: William D. Longstaff, ca. 1882

Music: LONGSTAFF/HOLINESS, George C. Stebbins, 1890  
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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.**

**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 "Kum ba Yah" GtG 472**

- 1. \*Kum ba yah, my Lord, kum ba yah!  
Kum ba yah, my Lord, kum ba yah!  
Kum ba yah, my Lord, kum ba yah!  
O Lord, kum ba yah!**
- 2. Someone's crying, Lord, kum ba yah!  
Someone's crying, Lord, kum ba yah!  
Someone's crying, Lord, kum ba yah!  
O Lord, kum ba yah!**

*(continued...)*

3. **Someone's singing, Lord, kum ba yah!**  
**Someone's singing, Lord, kum ba yah!**  
**Someone's singing, Lord, kum ba yah!**  
**O Lord, kum ba yah!**

4. **Someone's praying, Lord, kum ba yah!**  
**Someone's praying, Lord, kum ba yah!**  
**Someone's praying, Lord, kum ba yah!**  
**O Lord, kum ba yah!**

*\*Come by here.*

*Words and Music: African American spiritual  
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### **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*

**Dear God, in joy we proclaim your name. In thanksgiving we serve your purposes. In gratitude we offer ourselves and our gifts -- all that we have and all that we are -- to you and your work in the world. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.**



## SENDING

\*CLOSING HYMN “Lord, Dismiss Us with Your Blessing” GtG 546

1. **Lord, dismiss us with your blessing;  
fill our hearts with joy and peace;  
let us each, your love possessing,  
triumph in redeeming grace.  
O refresh us,  
O refresh us,  
traveling through this wilderness.**
2. **Thanks we give and adoration  
for your gospel's joyful sound;  
may the fruits of your salvation  
in our hearts and lives abound.  
Ever faithful,  
ever faithful  
to your truth may we be found.**
3. **Savior, when your love shall call us,  
from our struggling pilgrim way,  
let no fear of death appall us,  
glad your summons to obey.  
May we ever,  
may we ever  
reign with you in endless day.**

Words: Attr. John Fawcett, 1773, alt.; stanza 3, alt. Geoffrey Thring, 1880, alt.

Music: Sicilian melody, 18<sup>th</sup> cent.

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### \*CHARGE AND BLESSING

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

All: ...Amen.

### POSTLUDE

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