

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2024

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME

GATHERING

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP *(based on Psalm 104)*

One: Praise the Lord, for God is great indeed!

All: **Let us sing praises for God's glorious works.**

One: We give glory, honor, and thanksgiving to the Lord,

All: **who makes and sustains all things.**

***OPENING HYMN** "I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art" GtG 624 *(Verses 1, 3 & 5)*

1. **I greet thee, who my sure Redeemer art,
my only trust and Savior of my heart,
who pain didst undergo for my poor sake;
I pray thee from our hearts all cares to take.**

3. **Thou art the life, by which alone we live,
and all our substance and our strength receive;
sustain us by thy faith and by thy power,
and give us strength in every trying hour.**

5. **Our hope is in no other save in thee;
our faith is built upon thy promise free;
Lord, give us peace, and make us calm and sure,
that in thy strength we evermore endure.**

Words: *Psalms*, Strasbourg, 1545; trans. Elizabeth Lee Smith, 1868

Music: TOULON, Genevan Psalter, 1551

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UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Lord Jesus Christ, you know our sin.
We want you to do whatever we ask of you,
but we are unwilling to do what you ask of us.**

(continued,,)

We want reward without sacrifice,
privilege without pain.
We talk about serving you,
but we do not want the rank of servant.
Forgive our ignorant and arrogant ways, O Lord.
Pour out your mercy upon us
and help us to know your glory through servanthood.
Guide us to be true followers of your way.
Amen.

SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON *(from Psalm 91)*

One: Hear the promise of the Lord:
All: **“When you call me, I will answer.
I will rescue you from danger
and show you my salvation.”**
One: People of God,
the Lord hears, forgives, and saves.
Receive mercy and be forgiven,
in the firm assurance of pardon.
Be reconciled to one another
and walk humbly before God.

THE PEACE

One: The peace of Christ be with you all.
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 Mark 10:32-52

MARK 10:32-52 (New Revised Standard Version, updated edition+)

³² *They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was leading them; they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them what was to happen to him, ³³ saying, “Look, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Humankind will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the gentiles; ³⁴ they will mock him and spit upon him and flog him and kill him, and after three days he will rise again.”*

³⁵ James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." ³⁶ And he said to them, "What is it you want me to do for you?" ³⁷ And they said to him, "Appoint us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." ³⁸ But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" ³⁹ They replied, "We are able." Then Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized you will be baptized, ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to appoint, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."

⁴¹ When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. ⁴² So Jesus summoned them and said to them, "You know that among the gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³ But it is not so among you; instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Humankind came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many."

⁴⁶ They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting beside the road. ⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁸ Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁹ Jesus stood still and said, "Call him here." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; arise, he is calling you." ⁵⁰ So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. ⁵¹ Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again." ⁵² Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the road.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON "What Do We Know? What Don't We Know? Do We Care?"

by Pastor Bill Vincent

It's so simple.

Yet not.

Jesus says, "*You know...*"

Yes, we know the way the way the world works: lording it over others, exercising authority over others. Putting ourselves first, and placing us on a pedestal. Dominating others, either by raising our voice so ours is the only one heard, or manipulating in the background so that ours is the only idea supported. The lust for power; the striving for self-promotion.

We know.

Of course, earlier Jesus said, “*You do not know...*” Referring specifically to James’ and John’s request for positions of prestige in Jesus’ kingdom.

But did they really understand what they were asking for?

Do we?

We don’t know – not really – we don’t know Jesus’ way: of being servant of all and last of all; the way of humility and self-giving; the “**costly pouring out of one’s life for another**” (Lamar Williamson, *Mark*, Interpretation series); giving priority to the needs of others and how service – our service – can be rendered to meet those needs (Charles Cousar, *Texts for Preaching*).

We don’t know that way.

Not really.

I couldn’t help but note a certain irony with this message, this weekend.

Tomorrow is “Indigenous Peoples Day”: a day to celebrate the heritage and legacy and contribution of indigenous peoples, in this country and around the world.

Yesterday was “Columbus Day”: historically, a celebration of Columbus’ “discovering” the “New World.” In recent years, we have heard more of the context of that “discovery” with the “Doctrine of Discovery”: a papal decree granting authority to European powers to claim lands from non-Christians and even to enslave non-Christians “for the good.” And we continue to learn and become more aware of the harm, the injustice, the violence done in the name of “lording it over” others: to dominate and denigrate and dehumanize.

The Doctrine of Discovery is the very antithesis of Jesus’ call to serve, not to be served.

The stance, the attitude that tends toward saying, “I’m right and you are wrong; not only that, but I am right and fully human, and you are wrong and not fully human.”

Teri McDowell Ott notes,

the shaping of society by the competitive struggle for power, remains actively in play today. Evidence of this “Domination System” can not only be seen in the wars currently raging around the world, violent grabs for power and land, but also in our personal interactions. In this day of polarizing politics, we can’t even listen to differing views because we’re too busy trying to “win” the argument and dominate our opponent. (Teri McDowell Ott, editor and publisher of *Presbyterian Outlook*, “Looking into the Lectionary”)

We do know the way the world works.

We don’t know the way Jesus walks.

But do we care?

Now, I’m not asking “Do we care about what we know and what we don’t know?” though that, too, is a legitimate question.

But “Do we care...at all?”

I wonder: is that not the fundamental issue regarding serving vs. being served?

Jesus calls us to follow: to walk in this new, radical way. And to respond to that call has to do with obedience and loyalty to Jesus, with where we place our heart, our focus.

But I wonder, too, does it also, basically, have to do with caring...about others, about another, about someone besides me?

All this lording it over others, exercising authority over someone else, dominating – really, deep down, has to do with ‘me’: my feeling good, my satisfaction, my power, my prestige, my safety and security.

Do I care at all about anyone else?

It can be as simple as using your turn signal indicator.

I know that seems a stretch, but hang in there with me.

I’m driving down the highway and want to change lanes, so I flip on my turn signal indicator...or some of us do. But note, the turn signal indicator is not for me: it doesn’t do a thing for me; I already know I’m changing lanes. The turn signal indicator is not for me, but for the other person, so they can know what I’m doing and make the appropriate adjustments.

You and I have both experienced when someone changes lanes and we had no idea that’s what they were planning on; and we’re actually in their blindspot, so all of a sudden we have to put on the brakes or change lanes ourselves with little or no chance to see if the other lane is safe for us to move into.

The turn signal indicator is not for me; it’s for the other person.

Do we care enough to use it? to let the other person know, so they can make the appropriate adjustments?

Yes, the serving Jesus speaks about goes deeper than this. But it’s a start: an illustration of the road, so to speak.

Not too much longer into the story, Jesus will speak about

loving the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength; and loving your neighbor as yourself.

(12:30-31)

Love: the focal point, the motivation.

Do we care enough...to love?

And remember, this question – these questions – are not asked in a vacuum.

The disciples have been with Jesus all this time. They have heard his teaching. They have seen his working. They have experienced his power...and his caring.

He is “*on the road...to Jerusalem*” – the first time Jesus has been explicit about the goal of the journey.

He is on the way to show us the way, to reveal to us that he is the way.

This very Son of Humankind – Jesus, our Master, our Teacher and Messiah; this one we respect and look up to, who himself “*came not to be served but to serve*”...in love.

This is his way: the way that leads straight to our heart.

Will we receive that way – will we receive him? Will we embrace that road and take it to heart? And then, from the bottom of our heart, will we let it lead us straight to others – not to dominate, but to love, to care, to serve?

Perhaps, at this point in the story, Bartimaeus understands better than the disciples. He “*threw off his cloak*” – which for a beggar was part of his way of life – and “*followed him on the road.*” He knew the tenderness, the compassion, the caring touch of Jesus in his being healed; and he responded in the way.

Yes, we, too – like the disciples – might be “*amazed*” and “*afraid*” to follow down this road, when we see – and really know – this path; for the way is bumpy. There is resistance to this way – strong resistance – that we have experienced within ourselves, that we will definitely experience from others.

And it is far easier to sit comfortably in a seat of honor – at the right or the left – than to resist the resistance: to stand up for what is right and good and caring, and take the heat.

But maybe sometimes we have focused too much on the issue of persecution, and have scared people away...and ourselves. Not to make light of the very real possibility of persecution, and suffering. The resistance is real. And Jesus seems to suggest there is no way around this suffering and persecution.

But the fundamental issue, it seems to me, is not “Are we up to some righteous suffering?”

The fundamental issue is: “Do we care?” A question, remember, that is not asked in a vacuum. A question asked in the context of Jesus’ primary, and prior, care for us.

“Do we care?” Do we care for him? Will we care for others?

If so, then this is the way to go: to serve, not to be served. This is the way to walk: in Jesus’ footsteps. This is the way to live: as a servant, last of all. This is the way of life: to lose it...on the way to gaining real life.

***HYMN** “Lord, Whose Love Through Humble Service” (*Verses 1-3*) (*Tune 490*)

- 1. Lord, whose love through humble service
bore the weight of human need,
who upon the cross, forsaken,
offered mercy's perfect deed,
we, your servants, bring the worship
not of voice alone, but heart,
consecrating to your purpose
every gift that you impart.**

- 2. Still your children wander homeless;
still the hungry cry for bread;
still the captives long for freedom;
still in grief we mourn our dead.**

(continued...)

**As, O Lord, your deep compassion
healed the sick and freed the soul,
use the love your Spirit kindles
still to save and make us whole.**

- 3. As we worship, grant us vision,
till your love's revealing light,
in its height and depth and greatness,
dawns upon our quickened sight,
making known the needs and burdens
your compassion bids us bear,
stirring us to tireless striving,
your abundant life to share.**

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***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

**The life, death, resurrection, and promised coming of Jesus Christ
has set the pattern for the church's mission.
His human life involves the church in the common life of all people.
His service to men and women commits the church
to work for every form of human well-being.
His suffering makes the church sensitive to all human suffering
so that it sees the face of Christ in the faces of persons in every kind of need.
His crucifixion discloses to the church
God's judgment on the inhumanity that marks human relations,
and the awful consequences of the church's own complicity in injustice.
In the power of the risen Christ and the hope of his coming,
the church sees the promise
of God's renewal of human life in society
and of God's victory over all wrong.**

**The church follows this pattern in the form of its life and in the method of its action.
So to live and serve is to confess Christ as Lord.**

The Confession of 1967 [Book of Confessions] — *Inclusive Language Version*
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PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

One: God of mercy...
All: ...hear our prayers.

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*

**Holy God, we give you thanks
for all your gifts of goodness and grace.
These offerings are only a portion of all that you have given us.
We gratefully present these gifts
and entrust them to your work in this world:
to help build your kingdom on earth
and be of service to the body of Christ.
Teach us to honor you each day
by our obedience to your will;
through Christ our Lord we pray. Amen.**

SENDING

***CLOSING HYMN "Go to the World!" GtG 295**

(next page...)

**1. Go to the world!
Go into all the earth.
Go preach the cross where Christ renews life's worth,
baptizing as the sign of our rebirth.
Alleluia. Alleluia.**

**2. Go to the world!
Go into every place.
Go live the word of God's redeeming grace.
Go seek God's presence in each time and space.
Alleluia. Alleluia.**

**3. Go to the world!
Go struggle, bless, and pray;
the nights of tears give way to joyous day.
As servant church, you follow Christ's own way.
Alleluia. Alleluia.**

**4. Go to the world!
Go as the ones I send,
for I am with you till the age shall end,
when all the hosts of glory cry "Amen!"
Alleluia. Alleluia.**

*Go to the World, Text by Sylvia G. Dunstan, 1985.
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***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

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

***RESPONSE "Make Me a Servant" StF 2176**

**Make me a servant,
humble and meek,
Lord, let me lift up
those who are weak.
And may the prayer of my heart always be:
Make me a servant,
make me a servant,
make me a servant today.**

(next page...)

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POSTLUDE

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