

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, MAY 3, 2020

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

FOURTH SUNDAY of EASTER

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Followers of Jesus,
by his cross we are redeemed from the futility of sin.
All: Alleluia!
One: By his rising we are free from the fear of death.
All: Alleluia!
One: By his love we are made new in the living and enduring Word of God.
All: Alleluia! Thanks be to God!

***OPENING HYMN** "The Day of Resurrection!" GtG 233

- 1. The day of resurrection! Earth, tell it out abroad,
the Passover of gladness, the Passover of God.
From death to life eternal, from sin's dominion free,
our Christ has brought us over with hymns of victory.**
- 2. Let hearts be purged of evil that we may see aright
the Lord in rays eternal of resurrection light,
and listening to his accents, may hear, so calm and plain,
his own "All hail!" and hearing, may raise the victor strain.**
- 3. Now let the heavens be joyful; let earth its song begin;
the round world keep high triumph and all that is therein.
Let all things seen and unseen their notes of gladness blend,
for Christ the Lord is risen, our joy that has no end.**

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***UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Almighty God,
our world is filled with corruption:
power disguises itself as truth;
convenience masquerades as goodness;
selfish pleasure imitates love.
We confess to you, O God,
that we have been caught in the web of the world's sin.
By the power of the Holy Spirit,
save us from these deceptions and free us for glad obedience,
that we may see the joy of Jesus' resurrection
and receive the promise of everlasting life. Amen.

***SILENT CONFESSION**

***ASSURANCE OF PARDON** *(from I John 4)*

One: "In this is love, not that we loved God but that God loved us and sent the Son to be the means by which our sins are forgiven."

All: **Because Christ died, we receive forgiveness for our sins. Because he was raised from the dead, we receive new life in him.**

One: So rejoice and be glad, and believe the good news of God's grace!

All: **For in Jesus Christ we are forgiven, we are loved, we are given new life. Amen. Alleluia!**

***RESPONSE OF PRAISE** "Halle, Halle, Hallelujah!" *(refrain)* GtG 591

Halle, Halle, Halleluja!
Halle, Halle, Halleluja!
Halle, Halle, Halleluja!
Halleluja! Halleluja!

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THE WORD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Lord,
you opened the meaning of the Scriptures
to the disciples on the road to Emmaus
and set their hearts ablaze.
By the power of your Spirit
kindle our hearts as we hear your word proclaimed,
that we may receive you with joy. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING Luke 24:13-35

LUKE 24:13-35 (*various*)

Following the morning of that first Easter, when the women discovered the empty tomb and reported their finding to the others but it seemed to them an “idle tale,” we read this story.

¹³ Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking to each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed, Jesus himself drew near and walked along with them; ¹⁶ but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” ¹⁹ He said to them, “What things?” They said to him, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people; ²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death, and they crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²² In addition, some women from our group amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³ and didn’t find his body. They came to us saying that they had even seen a vision of angels who said he was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.” ²⁵ Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and then to enter his glory?” ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself.

²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, he acted as if he were going farther; ²⁹ but they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. ³² They said to each other, “Were not our hearts on fire while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” ³³ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and those with them, gathered together, ³⁴ and saying, “The Lord really has risen! and he appeared to Simon!” ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

SERMON “Showing Up” by Pastor Bill Vincent

“God still shows up.”

That’s what Joy J. Moore says, a professor at Luther Seminary in St. Paul MN. She writes,

Resurrection...means God still shows up.

Wouldn’t that be something?

In the midst of all we’re going through -- in the midst of life in general, with all its ups and downs, good days and bad -- wouldn’t it be nice to think that God would show up every now and then?

When I am down and out, feeling like the world rests on my shoulders, it sure would be nice for God to show up.

When I am lost and lonely, without a friend and with plenty of doubt, wouldn’t it be nice for God to show up?

When I am frightened by the prospects for the future -- whether we stay at home or risk going out into public -- it sure would be nice for God to show up along the way.

Well, maybe God has.

In fact, I’m sure of it.

Far more sure of God showing up than of our ability to recognize that.

“Two of them” were walking along the road from Jerusalem. The weight of the world felt heavy on their shoulders: the weight of their world having been shattered, the weight of unfulfilled expectations and broken dreams, the weight of a dismal present and a dire future.

They sure would have liked God to show up for them.

And wouldn’t you know? God did. But they didn’t see it.

And that’s one of the first things to notice about this story of two walking on the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus: the one they hunger for, the one they yearn for, the one they long for shows up for them ... and they don’t recognize him.

Why? We’re not told for certain. It may have been they were so overwhelmed with grief that they could not see straight, physically or otherwise. It may have been they were so focused on how life was supposed to be that they would not look to see another opportunity present itself, would not give a second thought to a different path, a different possibility, a different future.

Whatever the case may have been, they did not recognize him -- even though he was standing there right in front of them.

“Resurrection means God still shows up.” Even when they do not or will not or simply cannot see and understand, still -- still! -- God shows up for them. God in Christ is there, available to them, present with them.

Can we grasp the significance of that affirmation for us today?

In the midst of our worries, in the midst of our questions, in the midst of our uncertainty, we may not see God showing up, -- we may not feel God walking beside us, we may not sense

God present -- but God is still here nonetheless, regardless of whether or not we see or hear or sense God's presence.

God is still here. With you. With me.

"But I want to feel God near me!" we say.

Well, I'm sorry. We may not always have that luxury. Either because that's not always the way God works. Or maybe (more likely) because we're too insensitive to the workings and 'walkings' of God.

God does not necessarily show up the way we want God to show up.

But I'm here to tell you, God still shows up, whether we feel it, or not.

And we need to hold on to that conviction: hold it more in the forefront of our minds. We need to lift up that conviction in the hallowed halls of our hearts, and rest assured in that: God still shows up -- always has, always will, is even now.

And with that conviction -- in that comfort and that encouragement -- we take another step on our journey, and another, and another, and another.

The power of the resurrection proclamation is the insistence that tragedy cannot stop God from showing up; death cannot stop God from showing up; difficulties and worries -- even our dense-ness and insensitivity and hardness of heart -- cannot stop God from showing up.

God is here. In the midst of this chaos and unprecedented-ness, in the midst of our worry and uncertainty. We are not alone.

We just need to be far more open to seeing the divine in our midst.

And there are two hints in this story that point us in the direction of seeing more clearly, and noticing God's presence more readily.

First: Notice the importance of scripture in this story.

"How foolish you are, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" (v.25)

And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself. (v.27)

"Were not our hearts on fire...while he was opening the scriptures to us?" (v.32)

Not that reading the scripture is a magical talisman to ward off tragedy and give me the specific answer to all my questions.

But there is power, and wisdom, in the words of scripture.

Always, though -- notice from the story -- always most clearly interpreted and understood through the witness of Christ himself. Take away the witness of Christ -- try to discern the guidance of the scripture without the witness of the life and words and deeds of Christ -- and the words on the page will assuredly lead you astray.

But with his guidance -- for we do seek to be Christian (i.e., Christ-like) do we not? -- with his guidance, they will lead you to embrace 'life and that abundant' (John 10). Life in communion with God. Life in the presence of God.

Second: Notice that final, clear revealing...around the dinner table.

Yes, many people point out that the telling of the story around the table is reminiscent of both Jesus' feeding of the 5000 and his Last Supper with the disciples.

But also, even more simply, it's a meal.

Eating is one of the most basic of human needs. Jesus knew that. You can see that with all the instances during his ministry where he gathered around the table and ate, and fellowshiped, with others.

Could it be that it is precisely as we gather around our most basic needs that we will more clearly see God present? recognize God showing up in our midst, and even showing up in each other?

Matthew seems to think so, when he describes Jesus telling that story of the sheep and the goats...

“When the Son of [Humankind] comes in his glory ... All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.” (Matthew 25)

And the question asked by both the sheep and the goats:

‘when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison?’ (Matthew 25)

And the answer is, “In the least of these.” “That’s where you saw me,” the King replies. In those who have the greatest need. In those we too often overlook or pass over. In those on the fringes, on the edge not only of life but also of our vision.

Perhaps if we made room in our hearts for the same caring Jesus showed to all in his ministry, and even to these two on the road to Emmaus -- if we made more room in our hearts for compassion and less room for fear, if we made more room in our hearts for mercy and less room for resentment, if we made more room in our hearts for each other and less room for only ourselves -- maybe we would recognize the divine spark in the slob across the table, maybe we would discern the image of God in the foe across the picket line, maybe we would see the working of God in the life as broken as is mine. And then maybe we would see God show up for them and for us, and even show up in them and in us.

“Resurrection means God still shows up.” Even in the most unimaginable and unexpected of circumstances...or people.

That means you and I can experience resurrection, even here, even now.

My prayer for you is that God would open up your eyes and hearts -- and mine -- that we might see and embrace how and when and where, and in whom, God shows up for us...and in us.

Amen.

***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.**

**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

Let us unite our hearts in prayer, saying,
God of resurrection, **hear our prayer.**

For the church throughout the world,
that, in the joy of that first Easter morn,
and even in the difficulties of this Sunday morn,
we may renew our faith and strengthen our witness
in Jesus' name.
God of resurrection, **hear our prayer.**

For leaders of the church -- pastors, elders, deacons --
that they may recognize the risen Christ in Word and Sacrament
and lead your church with wisdom, humility, and courage;
God of resurrection, **hear our prayer.**

For the governments of the world and their leaders,
especially our President, the governors, mayors, legislators, and judges,
that they may resist the corruption of greed and self-serving and serve
the common good;
God of resurrection, **hear our prayer.**

For our planet home, Earth,
that all people may seek to be good stewards of its resources
that together we may share in its abundance;
God of resurrection, **hear our prayer.**

For the poor and the stranger,
that they may receive a place of refuge and hope,
and that the church may offer the hospitality
the first disciples offered to Jesus
on the road to Emmaus;
God of resurrection, **hear our prayer.**

For the sick and those in distress,
that they may find healing for their pain
and comfort for their souls
and be restored to fullness of life;
God of resurrection, **hear our prayer.**

For care-givers and first-responders,
that they may be protected for your purposes
encouraged in their work
and comforted in their limits;
God of resurrection, **hear our prayer.**

For our neighbors,
that we may live together in peace and share with one another;
God of resurrection, **hear our prayer.**

For our enemies,
that they may receive good things,
and that we, your servants, may not return evil for evil;
God of resurrection, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God,
receive these prayers we offer,
and by the power of your Holy Spirit
make us witnesses to the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ,
through whom we pray.
Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**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

Our stewardship of God's gifts to us
can provide a place at the table for some who are hungry,
and shelter for some who have no place to lay their heads.
But most of all, our offerings express thanks to God
for the bounty we enjoy
and the loving acceptance we have known through Christ.

**Doxology GtG 606*

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise God, all creatures here below;
praise God above, you heavenly host;
praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

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**Unison Prayer of Dedication*

**Almighty God,
by your grace, accept the fruit of our labor
and the offering of our lives.
Let us be a sacrifice of thanksgiving
in union with our risen Lord,
who lives and reigns with you forever.
Amen.**

SENDING

***CLOSING HYMN** "Be Known to Us in Breaking Bread" GtG 500

- 1. Be known to us in breaking bread,
but do not then depart;
Savior, abide with us, and spread
your table in our heart.**
- 2. Here share with us, in love divine,
your body and your blood,
that living bread, that heavenly wine
be our immortal food.**

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***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

One: Christ has sat among us and walks with us;
we are assured that God's presence goes with us.
All: We face the world with renewed faith and hope.
One: Let your hearts burn within you as you dare to trust;
embrace God's promises as you believe and care.
All: God's love is real and alive in us.
One: Live in gratitude each and every day.
All: We will love sincerely and live confidently.

One: May the grace of Jesus Christ our risen Lord,
the love of God who raised him from the dead,
and the power of the Holy Spirit
who fills the world with new life
bless and keep you.
All: Alleluia!

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