

SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE

January 22, 2023

WORDS OF WELCOME

INTROIT: v. 1 “Fill My Cup, Lord”

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CALL TO WORSHIP: ☪*

L: Our ever-present God dwells in the sanctuary and in homes,
in public spaces and our interior lives.

**C: Behold the greatness of the Holy One
in the expansiveness of these sacred spaces.**

L: We seek God’s face on Sunday mornings and evenings...
and throughout the week.

C: We live in the presence of the Holy One all the days of our lives.

L: We call out for God’s grace, strength, and guidance.

C: We seek the face of the Holy One. Recognize God’s greatness.

L: Great God, we acknowledge your presence among us
and the ways you connect us as a community.

**C: You invite us to be receptive to your voice
and instruments of your love in the world.**

L: Creator of the Universe, thrill us with your majesty
and inspire us with your humility.

**All: We rejoice in this gathering as we bless your Holy Name in the assembly,
gathered across time and space as your people.
We seek you. We’re grateful to find you. Amen.**

GATHERING HYMN: #59 v.v. 1 - 2 “Holy Spirit Ever Dwelling” (Public Domain)

1. Holy Spirit, ever dwelling In the holiest realms of light;
Holy Spirit, ever brooding O'er a world of gloom and blight;
Holy Spirit, ever raising earthbound souls to glory high;
Living, life-imparting Spirit, You we praise and magnify.

2. Holy Spirit, ever breathing on the Church the breath of life;
Holy Spirit, ever striving through your people’s ceaseless strife;
Holy Spirit ever forming in the Church the mind of Christ;
In our worship we will praise you for your fruit and gifts unpriced.

PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE: ☪*

L: Sovereign God, how often do we turn toward ourselves or others for validation, salvation, and deliverance rather than seek your wisdom, will, and way? How often have we sought our own measure of greatness apart from the realm of your kingdom? How long have you waited for us to seek you?

All: Forgive us, O God, and call us back to your presence, plan, and purpose.

*Moment of Silent Confession, Listening to God &
Reflection on God’s Forgiveness. Redemption, and Restoration of our Lives*

WORDS OF ASSURANCE BASED ON SCRIPTURE:

L: God did not send Christ Jesus into the world to condemn the world but that the world might be saved through him. God freely offers us forgiveness so that we can remove the weight of the shame and guilt of our past and rise up into new life in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit to live lives that will bring honor and glory to God and carry God's life-giving ways into the world.

*All: Thanks be to God! May we accept God's gift of forgiveness,
shed the burdens of our past and rise up to new life in Christ.*

DOXOLOGY: #778

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God all creatures here below;
Praise God for all that love has done; Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One.**

SCRIPTURE:

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Isaiah 9:1-4

The Righteous Reign of the Coming King

9 But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.

3 You have multiplied exultation; you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.

4 For the yoke of their burden and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

Matthew 4:12-23

Jesus Begins His Ministry in Galilee

12 Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. **13** He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, **14** so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

15 “Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the gentiles—
16 the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light,

and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.”

17 From that time Jesus began to proclaim, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

18 As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishers. **19** And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people.” **20** Immediately they left their nets and followed him. **21** As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. **22** Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Jesus Ministers to Crowds of People

23 Jesus went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

TIME OF REFLECTION: “Come, Follow, Learn, Fish”

In the 1970’s John Denver wrote a song for his then wife Annie titled “Follow Me.” Though it is a love song the lyrics to it, especially the chorus, are quite fitting for today’s Gospel passage. If a musical were made of this passage the chorus to this song might be the song Jesus sings to the disciples as he calls them. “Follow me where I go, what I do and who I know, make it part of you to be a part of me. Follow me up and down, all the way and all around, take my hand and say you’ll follow me.” This song is about relationship. That is exactly what Jesus was asking of the disciples when he called them. Jesus didn’t say follow me so you can do all my grunt work. As we read through the entire Gospel we see that Jesus teaches and mentors the disciples in the task of fishing for people. Jesus in his invitation is asking the disciples to be a part of him and his ministry, to be a part of being the light for the people who walk in darkness, to be a part of the healing of the nation, to be a part of the kingdom of heaven that has come near. In this invitation he is also asking them to be in relationship not only with him but with all to whom they encounter in their ministry as they walk with Jesus at first, and then as they are sent to carry the gospel beyond their time with Jesus.

What was their response? They dropped what they were doing in their everyday lives to follow him. Though the narrative doesn’t say this, I, as well as most biblical scholars believe that these disciples must have had some encounters with Jesus before this that drew them into a belief that this person had something valuable enough to drop what they were doing and leave their families to be a part of it. These disciples were the first to be called into Christian community. We too are called to follow Jesus and fish for people. And we, like them, are given the choice to follow or not. Being that you are here in worship you have at least made a partial commitment to walk with Jesus.

Last week I asked you to share why you came to worship, this week I am asking you if you are willing, to share briefly about your experience of being called into Christian community. Anyone willing to share? For me I first encountered being called into Christian community in my home with my mother saying prayers at the bedside with us, saying grace before the meals, dad taking us to church and CCD to learn the stories of God. But I was also called into Christian community through the healing touch of my mother as she rubbed my back when my stomach was upset. The importance of relationship was mentored in the visiting of neighbors and going to nursing homes, and having block parties in our side yard just to extend hospitality and build relationships. As Jesus taught, “*whatever you do to the least of these, you do unto me.*” Like Jesus with the disciples, my first calling into Christian community was experienced through the mentoring of my parents and others. As my journey continued, I began being given opportunities to share the good news with others, to be that healing touch, and to be that light in the darkness of loneliness as I continued to grow and learn from others.

Jesus’ call to the first disciples is the same call to us still today. We like the disciples have the same freedom of choice. Let’s recall once again what that call is; “Follow me and I will make you fish for people. I don’t think it was any accident that Jesus uses that analogy of fishing for people. When you fish, in order to catch something, you need to have something that they want or need in order to draw them in. Sometimes there is no interest at all in what you are offering; other times they just nibble at the bait and leave, while still other times they are so drawn to the bait they are hooked and drawn in. Depending on conditions one might need to use a different bait to attract the fish. Through the ages God has offered the bait to be drawn into the ways of God but has never forced any to take it. If you noticed, I didn’t say God offered any old bait, but bait that was in alignment with the will of God; bait that promotes loving God and loving neighbor as God loves us. Throughout the ages, some are never interested in the bait, some nibble and then leave, while others grab the bait completely and are hooked and drawn into God’s plan of redemption. The same is true for ministry today; some will have no interest in the bait, some will nibble and swim away, while others will be hooked and drawn into God’s plan of redemption, salvation, and restoration. God has offered us redemption in Jesus.

God has not only told us about redemption but has become incarnate in the person of Jesus and mentored humanity in God’s ways and God’s plans. Jesus showed us a more excellent way, a way that teaches, mentors, and heals and above all, the way of God’s love; for God’s love is patient and kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it

keeps no record of wrongs. God's love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Helen Keller once said *"I must not just live my life; I will not just spend my life. I will invest my life."* The call to follow Jesus is a call of investment; an investment to be in relationship with God, with humanity and with all creation. It is a call to willingly invest and participate in the story of redemption. Though the disciples may have experienced their call in different ways, Jesus also gathered them to learn and work together as a group in participating in the story of redemption as they fished for people. Like the disciples we too may have received our call into Christian community in different ways, but God has called us together in this place and time to learn, and grow and fish for people together.

As people of faith, we are all called to follow Jesus and fish for people as a part of the body of Christ. As a part of that body of Christ we must discern how is God asking us to invest our resources of time talent and treasure of the collective group and as individuals to fish for people who will be drawn into God's plan of redemption, salvation and restoration? What teaching is God asking us to both provide and in what learning is God asking us to participate? What relationships is God asking us to establish? Even though the early church didn't have different denominations, they definitely struggled with different factions. The apostle Paul reminds them and us that we all serve the one God, that Christ has not been divided so let us find a way to serve Christ together among our differences. What mentoring might we be doing to help provide for the needs of others? How is God asking us to participate in curing the illnesses and dis-eases of individuals and of society? To whom and to where is God asking us to travel? As we move forward these are some of the questions we might be asking and discerning answers so that we don't just spend those resources entrusted to us by God carelessly but invest them wisely.

Through the lyrics of John Denver let us here the call of God to us once again. "Follow me where I go, what I do and who I know, make it part of you to be a part of me. Follow me up and down, all the way and all around, take my hand and say you'll follow me." God of all creation thank you for walking with us and leading the way. Grant us the wisdom, courage, and humility to not only follow you but to continue the fishing that you began. Amen.

SINGING THE FAITH: HYMN REQUEST

**A TIME OF PRAYER –
LIFTING UP PRAYER REQUESTS –
THE LORD'S PRAYER**

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY: *

L: When Jesus calls his disciples, he promises to transform the gifts they already possess to be used for the glory and kingdom of God.

*All: Let us offer our selves and our resources in following Jesus
and give joyfully and freely as the Spirit guides in gratitude for all God has done.*

PRAYER OF DEDICATION: *

L: Great God and Giver of All Good Gifts,

*All: receive our gifts of ourselves and our resources
for the benefit and building of the kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.*

SUMM-IT UP:

SENDING HYMN: #173 v.v. 1, 3 & 4 "You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore"

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CHARGE & BENEDICTION: *

Recognize the greatness within and around you.

Follow Jesus out into the world to spread the radiance of Christ,

to proclaim the good news, and to be instruments of healing and wholeness,


As you do that -

May God bless and keep you,

May God's face shine upon you and be gracious to you.

May God look upon you kindly and grant you the peace God alone can give.

POSTLUDE:

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