

Sunday Devotion

June 14, 2020

Find a quiet place by yourself or with another and come to God.

(this service was created and conducted by Peter Jonescu, Director of Youth and Family Ministry at Forest Grove Church, in honor of high school graduates)

CALL TO WORSHIP

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

“The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.”

The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him.

It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end;

CALL TO CONFESSION

We come before God not as despised sinners, But as beloved children. With the Confidence of Children of God Let us humbly confess our sin.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Almighty God, you love us, but we have not loved you. You call, but we have not listened. We walk away from our neighbors in need, Wrapped in our own concerns. We condone evil, prejudice, warfare, and greed. God of grace, help us to admit our sin, so that as you come to us in mercy, we may repent, turn to you, and receive forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our reformer. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Do not fear, says the Lord, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. God is doing a new thing; now it springs forth! By the Grace of Jesus Christ we are forgiven! For in the waters of our baptism we are reminded that Jesus died for me, Jesus loves me, Jesus forgives me, Jesus is good to me. Amen.

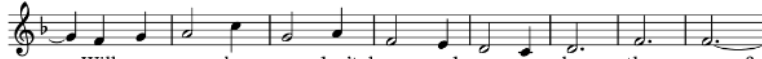
HYMN

Will You Come and Follow Me

The Summons



1 "Will you come and fol - low me if I but call your name?
2 "Will you leave your - self be - hind if I but call your name?
3 "Will you let the blind - ed see if I but call your name?
4 "Will you love the 'you' you hide if I but call your name?
5 Lord, your sum - mons ech - oes true when you but call my name.



Will you go where you don't know and nev - er be the same?
Will you care for cruel and kind and nev - er be the same?
Will you set the pris - oners free and nev - er be the same?
Will you quell the fear in - side and nev - er be the same?
Let me turn and fol - low you and nev - er be the same.



Will you let my love be shown; will you let my name be known;
Will you risk the hos - tile stare should your life at - tract or scare?
Will you kiss the lep - er clean, and do such as this un - seen,
Will you use the faith you've found to re - shape the world a - round,
In your com - pa - ny I'll go where your love and foot - steps show.



will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?"
Will you let me an - swer prayer in you and you in me?"
and ad - mit to what I mean in you and you in me?"
through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?"
Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

FIRST SCRIPTURE LESSON Psalm 130

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.

² Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my supplications!

³ If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities,
Lord, who could stand?

⁴ But there is forgiveness with you,
so that you may be revered.

⁵ I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,
and in his word I hope;

⁶ my soul waits for the Lord
more than those who watch for the morning,
more than those who watch for the morning.

⁷ O Israel, hope in the Lord!
For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
and with him is great power to redeem.

⁸ It is he who will redeem Israel
from all its iniquities.

HYMN Here I am, Lord

1. I, the Lord Of Sea and Sky,
I Have Heard My People Cry.
All who dwell in dark and
sin, my hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness
bright.
Who will bear my light to
them? Whom shall I send?

Here I am Lord, is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in
the night.
I will go Lord, if you lead
me.
I will hold your people in my
heart.

2. I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them,
they turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them.
Whom shall I send?

Here I am Lord, is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the
night.
I will go Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my
heart.

3. I, the Lord of wind and
flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them,
my hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide,
till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send?

Here I am Lord, is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the
night.
I will go Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my
heart.

SECOND SCRIPTURE LESSON 1 Kings 19:1-15

19 Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. ² Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." ³ Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there.

⁴ But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." ⁵ Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat." ⁶ He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. ⁷ The angel of the Lord came a second time, touched him, and said, "Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you." ⁸ He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the

strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. ⁹ At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there.

Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” ¹⁰ He answered, “I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.”

¹¹ He said, “Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.” Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; ¹² and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. ¹³ When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” ¹⁴ He answered, “I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.” ¹⁵ Then the Lord said to him, “Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram.

SERMON by Peter Jonsescu

We encounter Elijah right after his victory. Elijah put the prophets and priests Baal to the test. Who's god is more powerful? Elijah's God, Adoni, or Baal? Baal had supporters throughout the northern kingdom at the time. Queen Jezebel who married into the Israelite Nobility, despised Elijah's God. She slaughtered Adoni's prophets. To protect themselves Elijah and the other hid, until the time was right.

Elijah made his presence known to the king, he marched even as threats of death and suffering waited for him. There was work to be done, and he knew what he must do. God spoke, and Elijah heard. God commanded, Elijah followed. Oppression of God's people was happening, to be a servant of Adoni meant death. Elijah walked not only through the valley of death, but walked through the valley to sheol. There he confronts death and its servants.

He challenges Ahab's priest, “Let us find out who's God is the God of justice here? Which god will love and rescue their people?” Rituals for Baal required blood, the priests stood there cutting themselves, harming themselves to appease their god. Nothing happened. Elijah then took his turn. Calling all the people near to congregate, they did. They drew together, wanting to see the works of Adoni. The power of the god who gave Sarai the child she wanted, the God who protected Rahab as the walls of Jericho fell down, the God who stands on the side of the suffering. Elijah lights the fire and wins this competition.

This though is not the main victory. Israel at that time, was in a drought. The people were hungry and thirsty. Crying for water so they may live. God responds here too, for this is a God who cares for all parts of the world. Who does not only care that we worship them. This is the God who knows our physical needs and cares so much about them. This is our God for us. The people had a bright future, they were looking towards 2020.

We often have moments in our life, where we feel hopeful. Moments after success or there is other reason for hope. For some this occurs when they get a new job, other when they retire and excited for the new possibilities, some when we graduate, and almost everyone always looks towards the new year with its new possibilities. We feel overjoyed in these moments, the presence and action of God becomes so apparent. We feel the Holy Spirit alive in us, we feel her beauty and her vision guiding us. Her beauty is in the world of possibilities we are about to enter. Hope is a central aspect of our beliefs.

How could we not be hopeful? We see God raining down food to the hungry, bringing life to a community in drought. God does wonderful things through their beloved, those who feel and act upon God's love. We enter these times of transition, we God forward knowing God is with and for us. God loves us and will always speak for. Atleast Elijah thought that.

We return now to where our scripture lesson picks up. 2020 happened to Elijah, threats of war, disease and death reach his ears. The current monarchy seeks his death for the role in the priests of baal death. Elijah ran away, he needed to leave the area he was in and stay away from the places he used to be. He ran and ran and ran. Until his belly became empty and he had no food to nourish himself with. In the story an angels guides him to food but he still is little hangry. So the angels guides him to more food. He ran into cave and holed himself up. He isolated himself from the rest of society to protect himself. The prophet who called a crowd around him, so all could see the wonders of Adoni now needed to self-isolate from the crowds. Isolated.

Elijah was in a time of transition. Adoni and the accompanying message were spreading. The power and awe-inspiring nature of it. Everything appeared like it was on the uptick, but a descent happened. This victory came with changes, there was a new reality to his life.

Our transitions bring about a new reality. A new job, there is now a new routine. Possibly a different schedule, hours, boss, copy machine that's weird, all you work friends are gone. A wonderful thing may have happened but there is also loss in this transition. Everything is different.

In retirement we experience similar things, change of routine, work friends are not seen every day, and if you have grand children you may find that you are a full time baby sitter now.

When I graduated from college and high school, there was a sense of excitement. The world seemed completely open to me. Yet, life changed. I had no idea who I was around, I had no idea where to get food, and for some reason I was the responsible one who knew how to do laundry. For those of you who have heard my call to ministry, this may sound familiar and feel free to tune out. For everyone else, you can also do the same if this gets boring.

I entered College, as an Environmental Science Major. I took an AP, advanced placement, course in environmental science and I enjoyed it so why not? I mean I liked trees, and animals, maybe I would get to do research in the ocean and I would spend my days scuba diving. This was not that moment. I understood nothing in my science classes, I felt as if I was supposed to do this work. That through it I would be able to make the world a better place. I received an F on my first ever test there. I spent hours in my cave attempting to understand chemistry, yet I could not. I struggled more and more in my cave of a room. I was an 18 year old wanting a purpose, and my previous plan had been flipped. I wanted someone to just tell me...silence. What am I to do?...silence...

Silence, is where God speaks. It is where God works in us to discover what to do next. Elijah only wanted to know what to do next. His world had been dismantled, all he was left was an empty stomach and silence. There were some instruction from God, go up the mountain you are at. This is significant because he was at Mount Horeb. While this may not be the actual Mount Horeb because it would have been a half year journey from the Northern Kingdom, that name has significance. Horeb is the mountain of revelation, where Adnoi's will became apparent to Israel. This is where Elijah waits, at the Mountain of Revelation. But wait in silence upon the hill.

All the noise around could not guide Elijah. He had to wait for the most uncomfortable noise, nothing. Silence is disturbing, true silence of not even a bird chirping seems haunting. If we watch movies, it has an extremely dramatic effect. Star Wars the Last Jedi, had a scene where it was perfectly silent. Then drama, a life changing plan happened where one person sacrificed their life for others.

We encounter silence all the time. It happens in both the dramatic and mundane ways. God appears silent when all is crumbling, when everything changes. When our foundations seem shook, we only feel silence from God. That is the time we sit, we sit in the silence, sit in the awkwardness. I do not mean this to say we need to be stoic, I am actually saying the opposite. We sit and listen, we sit and grieve, we are active in our sitting. If this were stoic sitting, we would let the noise around us drown out the silence. We would put on the tv, the radio, go see a movie, or anything else. To sit in silence is work, it is tiring, even for the most introverted person like me, silence is deafening. It tires and drains you from what you do, but we sit patiently waiting for how we are to act.

That is the second difference between sitting and stoicism. Stoicism means nothing changes, sitting in silence means we sit until we are called to action. Then in that call to action we are moved.

In my silence of college, I sat for months wondering what I should do. I heard my parents in the silence, as my dad grew frustrated by the lack of morality displayed at his new job. High School seniors are graduating and their lives are about to change dramatically. Moving to new states, friends are moving away, different people around them. Everything may appear different and strange. Some will thrive and others will sit in silence, I sat in silence.

Many of us are sitting in silence waiting. Right now we are all sitting in silence as Covid-19 spreads. Our lives have been utterly changed at some level. Everything is new and sometimes we feel lost, we want direction and all that is heard is silence. In this silence we begin discernment just as Elijah did. We leave our caves, let the silence come upon us, and find God's voice in the silence.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of the Father, and will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER

God, you have called us to be a people of prayer—to continue the ministry of intercession handed on to us by Jesus Christ. And so I come before you with confidence, bringing my prayers for the world you love. In your mercy, hear and answer.

I pray for those who find themselves surrounded by high winds and stormy seas; those who feel overwhelmed by events and circumstances—

the loss of a job,
the death of a loved one,
serious accident or illness,
chronic pain,
depression,
or divorce—

and who don't know where to turn.

I pray for those who find themselves deeply wounded by people they love—people they thought they knew and trusted—and who are struggling to know how to respond.

I pray for those who are experiencing a crisis of faith; who long to whole-heartedly trust in God but are held back by questions and doubts.

I pray for those who, have fallen into despair; who have begun to doubt God's presence and power; or question God's call in their lives.

I pray for those who have had their hopes and dreams crushed; those whose lives have suddenly taken a different turn, and who now wonder what lies ahead for them.

Loving God, it is not your will that any should suffer. I offer my prayer for all those who hunger and thirst, those who live in the midst of violence or poverty, and those who feel abandoned or ignored by the world around them.

Through the life-giving power of your Holy Spirit, make your sustaining presence known to all who are in pain or need, so that they, too, may know your love and live.

In the name Jesus Christ, our Savior, who lives to intercede for us, Amen.

BENEDICTION

Wait for the Lord with deep longing;
stand in his word waiting in hope.

With the LORD there is steadfast love and great power to save.

Go into the world with assurance, hope and promise:

the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ rest upon you;

the love of God, creator and giver of life, embrace you;

and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit uphold you,
this day and all your days. Amen.