



**Westminster Presbyterian Church**  
Eugene, Oregon  
“At Home” Worship  
**10th Sunday after Pentecost: August 09, 2020**

*Gathering Around God’s Word*

*If you are worshipping with another family member or with children, you are invited to have different voices share and read the various parts of the service. You can also call/FaceTime someone to worship together.  
(If you have a prayer request you would like added to the At- Home Worship service, please email Brooke office@wpceugene.org)*

CALL TO WORSHIP (from Psalm 105:1-6,16-22)

Let the hearts of those who search for the Lord rejoice.

**Seek the Lord and His strength.**

Remember the works that He has done.

**Give thanks and call upon His name.**

Make known His deeds among the people.

**Let us worship God.**

OPENING HYMN

*Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy*

#415

CALL TO CONFESSION

You call us to be a Light in the World. And we hide in the shadows to shield our sins from view. You promise us Daily Bread and we worry over restaurants closing and wearing masks. You ask us to love our neighbors as ourselves. And we wonder if “neighbor” means everyone. We have fallen into a ditch of despair and we hope the “good Samaritan” who finds us looks like us. We remember singing “God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending” while we have a mentality of fear, scarcity, and despondency. We are aware of our shortcomings and know that our sinfulness separates us from You. Call us to confession and into Your forgiving presence. And being forgiven, let us rejoice in community with You and one another.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Happy are those whose sins are forgiven! Be glad in the Lord and shout for joy that in Jesus Christ we are forgiven. And with forgiveness, let us rejoice in reconciliation.

*The Word*

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

God, give us spiritual insight and a yearning for hearing your word. Help us listen for ways we can be examples of the Word lived here and now. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

*Old Testament Reading:* Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28

Jacob settled in the land where his father had lived as an alien, the land of Canaan. This is the story of the family of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was shepherding the flock with his brothers; he was a helper to the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father. Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a long robe with sleeves. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him.

Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." He answered, "Here I am." So he said to him, "Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock; and bring word back to me." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron. He came to Shechem, and a man found him wandering in the fields; the man asked him, "What are you seeking?" "I am seeking my brothers," he said; "tell me, please, where they are pasturing the flock." The man said, "They have gone away, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers, and found them at Dothan. They saw him from a distance, and before he came near to them, they conspired to kill him. They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; then we shall say that a wild animal has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams." But when Reuben heard it, he delivered him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him" —that he might rescue him out of their hand and restore him to his father.

So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the long robe with sleeves that he wore; and they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it. Then they sat down to eat; and looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels carrying gum, balm, and resin, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers agreed. When some Midianite traders passed by, they drew Joseph up, lifting him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

*Old Testament Reading:* Psalm 85:8-13

Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts.

Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land.

Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other.

Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky.

The Lord will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase.

Righteousness will go before him, and will make a path for his steps.

REFLECTION

*God, are you sure this is where we're supposed to be?*

Dr. Karen Young

Good morning Westminster, on this second -- and final -- Sunday before David and Marta return, I was certainly overjoyed to walk into the sanctuary today and I want you all to know that the grounds are lovely, the pews are here with songbooks and sign in pads, the organ and piano are here and the Pulpit, Table, and Font are in place. Although the sanctuary is empty it feels expectantly waiting. So take a minute to think of where you

usually sit and who sits close to you. If you are a virtual visitor please know that we would love to share a pew with you when we can occupy our sanctuary safely again.

The lectionary passage of Joseph is quite timely I thought. Joseph, at age 17, is living a privileged life in the context of family stories of his great grandfather Abraham being called by God out of his land of origin into a separate land with promises of a blessed extended family. Stories of his grandparents Isaac and Rebekah - who were the parents of the twins, Joseph's father Jacob and his uncle Esau. And so many stories about Joseph and his 11 brothers. How could you not feel special at those family discussions? Joseph had his share of earthly disappointments also - his mother died when Benjamin was born and he likely heard stories of family discord about Ishmael, and the competition between Esau and Jacob. But Joseph must have felt very special with his gift of prophetic dreams and his father's special attention as evidenced by his famous coat of many colors. Basically he anticipated living out his life in this extended family with anticipated years of his father's attention and the 12 brother's intertwined lives and God's blessing. A heavenly father whose call for establishing a separate, chosen nation was given to his family just 4 generations ago... and an earthly father who is wealthy, powerful, and holds you in a special place in his heart.

But in one afternoon, the course of his life is drastically changed. At the hands -- and jealous hearts -- of his brothers, his coat is taken from him and used as part of the lie to his father that he was killed. He is thrown in a pit and only Reuben's intervention saves him from being killed. Saved from death to be sold to a traveling band of Ismaelites who take him to Egypt and sell him as a slave. No identifying coat of many colors, no proof of your important family, no sign of any rescue from God or from your family.

Now if I had been in Joseph's position I would have likely been yelling many things from the bottom of that pit. Yelling to God -- "This isn't where you want me to be, God." "Send my rescuers!" Yelling to my brothers -- "Is this what you would do to our father?" And as I was headed to Egypt I would have been looking over my shoulder expecting to see my rescuers approaching. And when I was delivered to my meager quarters in Egypt, I likely would have wept tears of a broken heart as I felt myself surrounded by the coldness of isolation and filled with empty hopelessness.

Well don't you sort of feel like we have all fallen in a pit? Where were you when the mid-March news of change came? I was on my way to Choir practice for the Easter cantata when I heard practice was cancelled. I then found out that the normal routines of life were cancelled. Shelter in place in isolation beginning then. No communal worship. No volunteer activities. No social activities. Then began the TV scenes of the suffering and death because of a virus overwhelming the health system with no cure or real prevention. Followed by TV scenes of one man dying before our eyes, violence and divisive ideologies, and an erosion of trust in our earthly institutions. All of this compounded by the lonely isolation. And so we spent Easter week without our shared spiritual experiences. And I was like I imagined Joseph, looking over my shoulder for the quick rescue. And now 4 and a half months later I feel like I am in Egypt and there is no rescue in sight.

And these thoughts bring about the reflection that we all have had pits in our personal lives. The moments after we get the news from the doctor that the biopsy says it is invasive cancer. The change in life circumstances when a self-centered husband abandons his family for his secretary and a new job in another state. The unbelievable blow to our heart when we find out there has been an accident and our loved one is no more. Perhaps the accumulation of many ongoing assaults on our being: a child on drugs, financial losses, the deceit of a friend, a broken promise from a loved one, and then the call that mom has broken a hip -- and you just sit down and wonder how you will ever get up.

A friend from Arkansas contacted me this week. Sheila is a well-known artist in the south. Her mother and father were artists - mom in oil painting and dad in music. She has led art adventures all over Europe and has

water colors hanging in many important buildings. She is a lifelong Presbyterian and has a heart of service for people who need help and support. She called to say she has been told that she has Parkinson's -- the tremor will curtail her watercolor talent and the stiffness will curtail her travel. She said, "Karen, I never thought the end would be like this." Later I began having memories of Sheila and her husband on Sunday mornings. They were usually just on the edge of being late, because they had been out picking up those people that would not be at church without their help. One Sunday the congregation was already seated, the prelude was being played, the choir was lined up to go down the aisle on the right and the pastor, music director and liturgist lined up on the left - when up pulls Sheila's car. And she and her husband are opening the trunk for walkers and wheelchairs and getting 3 ladies out of the car and through the doors and way down the center aisle to about the fifth pew to worship. And as Sheila and her husband help the lady who is recovering from a stroke with impaired strength and speech, and the lady with need of a walker for ambulation and the very elderly lady in the wheelchair into their pews all in view of the entire congregation and with the accompanying prelude --- I remember thinking "Well, I think we just viewed a sermon." But right now Sheila is wondering how to be of service to her people who have been sequestered in nursing homes and assisted living since March.

I imagine you have been remembering past shared events in this building. Like last year's VBS final program where the lessons from the VBS safari had examples of lessons learned presented by teenage leaders and all ages, including the 4 little preschoolers in their delightful cow and sheep costumes. Or, perhaps the events of the Presbyterian women at movie night where in the darkened Fellowship Hall lit by the large movie screen, all of a sudden about 30 movie goers are on their feet dancing around the room while singing "The Time of Your Life" loudly! Or perhaps confirmations, or weddings, or baptisms, or funerals. We are missing community. And God is aware.

As Children of God we believe that God shares our suffering. That God is with us in the despair of deep pits and on the mountain tops of celebration and in the level life experiences of ordinary life. In Genesis 3 in Eden when Adam and Eve are cast out of the Garden, God did not lose his creation, nor abandon us. The Triune God has been and is still with us,

You remember that even the events in Egypt were not the end of Joseph's story. His greater life story was still to be. Parkinson's and Covid and world unrest will not stifle Sheila's service to her calling - she just sent a text saying that she is now planning a drive by birthday celebration for one of her people who is in hospice. The civil unrest and health crisis will eventually calm down and the new way of being will emerge. Hopefully this emergence will be guided by the people who will step up and lead as servants and neighbors. And, this community of faith will celebrate together in physical community in worship and service one day.

I told you that the sanctuary feels both empty and with expectant anticipation. I think our hearts can also. We can feel the sadness and isolation of our current circumstances, as well as the feeling that as Children of God we will leave this pit behind in the future. And we can free our thoughts and hopes to anticipate the future of our community of faith and its mixture of old and new ways of being. Let's not waste this time in mourning, but ask the Holy Spirit to speak to our hearts and minds in ways to comfort us and challenge us with the expectation of hopefulness and in joy. Amen.

#### AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

**We believe in God, our Creator, who at the beginning of time made us to be sons and daughters: who, after we separated ourselves from God, did not abandon us. We believe in God, our savior, Jesus Christ, who is one with the Creator; who in love limited himself to life as a human; who was born at Bethlehem, lived in Galilee, walked in Palestine and Israel; who through his life and death and resurrection reunited us with God, bringing to us, in his person, God's all encompassing love and peace. We believe in God, the**

**Holy Spirit, who feeds us with wisdom, strength, faith and love so that we can return to God restored to the wholeness for which we were created.**

*Responding to God's Word*

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER**

Holy Father, we pray for the societal and physical illness in the world. We ask your presence in the sorrow of families who have lost loved ones, in the anxiety of the financial strain of uncertain times, and in the anger in the division of ideologies. We pray for healing and unity.

We pray for your guidance as the gathering in worship, that we love, is affected in the separation of community and the isolation of loneliness. We pray for your comforting presence and assurance that you are here with us as we face this difficult time in the history of your church. We pray for hope and joy.

Comfort those with great sorrow. Strengthen those with fear. Nourish those who are hungry. Guide those that seek your will. Protect the powerless and disenfranchised. Hear our prayers for those whom we name in our minds and hearts today. We pray for your presence and protection.

And strengthen us as we join together in the prayer that Jesus taught us: 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.

**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.**

*Sending of God's Word*

CLOSING HYMN

*Lord, Bid Your Servant Go in Peace*

#545

**Charge and Benediction**

Let us find ways to reach out into the world in service to the church with the comfort and knowledge that God is with us in times of trouble and in times of joy. And let us find hope with the love of God the Father, in companionship with Jesus Christ, and with the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Amen.