



Westminster Presbyterian Church  
Eugene, Oregon  
“At Home” Worship  
January 24, 2021

*Leading in Worship Today:*  
*Ursula Damgaard, Director of Music*  
*The Rev. Marta Z. Ukropina*  
*Liturgist: Jim Mitchelmore*  
*Vocalists: Ann Miller*  
*Darlene Valtinson*

*Gathering Around God’s Word*

Call to Worship

from Psalm 62

From God comes my salvation.  
**For God alone my soul waits in silence.**  
God alone is my rock and my salvation.  
**God is my fortress; I shall never be shaken.**

Opening Hymn

For the Beauty of the Earth

#14

Call to Confession

Trusting in the promise of grace, let us pour out our hearts before God.

Prayer of Confession

**Forgiving God, we repent of all the ways we turn from you. You call, but we do not listen; you show us your path, but we prefer our own way. Forgive**

**us, heal us, and lead us back to you, that we might show mercy to others. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.**

### **Assurance of Pardon**

**This is the word of the Lord: In Jesus Christ we are forgive and given new life.**

### ***The Word***

### **Prayer for Illumination**

**Speak to us your word, O God, that we may hear Jesus' call to be his disciples. Amen.**

### **Scripture Readings**

#### ***Old Testament Reading: Psalm 62***

**For God alone my soul waits in silence;  
from him comes my salvation.  
He alone is my rock and my salvation,  
my fortress; I shall never be shaken.**

**How long will you assail a person,  
will you batter your victim, all of you,  
as you would a leaning wall, a tottering fence?  
Their only plan is to bring down a person of prominence.  
They take pleasure in falsehood;  
they bless with their mouths,  
but inwardly they curse.**

**For God alone my soul waits in silence,  
for my hope is from him.  
He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress;  
I shall not be shaken.  
On God rests my deliverance and my honor;  
my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.**

Trust in him at all times, O people;  
pour out your heart before him;  
God is a refuge for us.

Those of low estate are but a breath,  
those of high estate are a delusion;  
in the balances they go up;  
they are together lighter than a breath.  
Put no confidence in extortion,  
and set no vain hopes on robbery;  
if riches increase, do not set your heart on them.

Once God has spoken;  
twice have I heard this:  
that power belongs to God,  
and steadfast love belongs to you, O Lord.  
For you repay to all  
according to their work.

*New Testament Reading: Mark 1:14-20*

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

**Anthem**            *How Can I Keep From Singing?*

Darlene Valtinson, Vocals  
Ursula Damgaard, Piano

**Sermon**

***Trust and Follow***

**The Rev. Marta Z Ukropina**

A theme that runs through both of our scripture readings today is trust. Trust is something that is essential to relationships as well as so many other areas of life. But, as we all know, trust can often be hard to find, difficult to keep, and easily broken. Even within the best of all relationships, trust can be tested and severed. The strongest relationships of course, whether friends, family, romantic, or work are ones that have a certain level of trust at their core, but even the best ones have their moments where trust is doubted and questioned.

If you have put your trust in much of anything lately, I have a feeling you've been a bit disappointed. You do not have to look very far around you to see places of broken trust or maybe more honestly, mistrust. Our society is filled with conflict and mistrust right now—between political parties, between groups, between families. Trusting that people will treat each other with human decency and kindness unfortunately keeps on disappointing us no matter what side of the political fence you are on. We have not been treating each other as children of God. We have strayed from trusting in God to help us do what is right.

Really the only thing we can fully depend on or trust in is God. I am not speaking about some empty platitude here. We all are aware that people throw comments around about putting their trust in God without really meaning it or doing much about it. I *am* talking about a deep, abiding trust that has stood the test of time and has been present throughout creation. Personal experiences and history have taught us that we can trust God. Studying God's gracious acts through scripture, seeing redemption throughout history, experiencing goodness and joy in life—all of these teach us that we can and should trust in God. Trusting in God does not mean that everything is easy or that all the pain

and sadness and injustice in this life goes away. Unfortunately, as we are living in a fallen world, these things are all still there competing for our attention and attempting to turn our trust away from God. Trusting in God or having faith in God does not allow us to shut our eyes to the pain and sorrow that is all around us. Instead, trusting in God's goodness and mercy should open our eyes to the pain and sorrow and call us to action. In fact, it is a call to active discipleship within and to our world.

As I said, trust is at the core of both of our scripture readings today. The Psalm is a confession of trust in God alone. In verses 3 and 4 the Psalmist describes being a victim of persecution and describes being ganged up on or bullied by those thought to be friends. The Psalmist turns their trust to God as God is the only one worthy of trust. The call to a life of faith is to recognize God's steadfast love and trust in God with one's whole being. And in the gospel text we find the call of the first disciples. No one could argue that for the disciples to leave their lives behind and follow Jesus took a certain amount of trust. Trust is not an easy, simple endeavor, however, as there are things that try to get in the way of trust—things that try to break trust or things that distract us from placing our trust in God.

A real risk to both trusting in God and answering the call to discipleship is focusing on our self and forgetting the call to "other." As Professor of Religion Timothy Beach-Verhey stated in an essay published in 2008:

[If we] orient toward self rather than God and neighbor, the constricted heart falls away from its true peace into the restless and ultimately fruitless quest for immortality—to be like God. And so individuals and nations, ethnic and class groups, religious communities and political parties betray God's orderly and good creation in a self-deluded

attempt at self-preservation that finally produces destruction and disorder.<sup>1</sup>

Like many of you, during this year of social distancing and staying at home, we have been watching more movies. With our youngest being in 3rd grade, we have crossed into that time where we can watch more than just kid movies! A whole new movie world has opened up. We just finished watching the Lord of the Rings Trilogy. I had seen the movies years before, but spread out over several years as they were released in theaters. Watching them back to back over the course of a few weeks was a different experience for me. I didn't forget what happened between movies—something I have a hard time with! Just ask poor David—I always have to ask him to remind me what happened. The good part of this is that I can often see a movie multiple times without it becoming boring!

In the Lord of the Rings, the hobbit, Frodo, has a task to do—to destroy the ring whose power everyone sought. The ring promised the owner absolute power and immortality, at a grave price, of course. Time and time again, Frodo had to choose to not give into the ring but to keep going on his seemingly impossible and dangerous quest to restore peace and order to Middle Earth. Others helped him along the way—they formed a mismatched community—dwarves, elves, kings, men and women, wizards, trees, and hobbits. But as mismatched and diverse as the community was, they all came together with one goal—to fight the power of evil and seek peace, hope and restoration.

They supported Frodo and the cause, helping him destroy the ring and defeat the powers of evil. Themes of faith and good vs. evil were not coincidental—Tolkien's strong Catholic faith was a huge influence on his work. Frodo left his comfortable, idyllic life in the Shire when

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<sup>1</sup> Feasting on the Word , Year B, vol. 1. p.276

Gandalf came and called him to destroy the ring. He left without much question—he left knowing the task seemed almost impossible for a mere Hobbit. But he listened and followed. The disciples may not have been answering a specific task—to destroy a ring—but like Frodo, they dropped everything when Jesus called. They left the comfort of their known lives for the unknown.

Just as Frodo knew Gandalf and was ready to listen to what he had to say, the disciples probably knew Jesus. Galilee was not some huge, bustling metropolis. Jesus had been around, teaching, healing, proclaiming the good news— maybe even hanging out at the local dive with all the fishermen...Jesus was someone they had come to know. So when he called and said “the time has come,” they followed. They changed the whole trajectory of their lives to follow Christ and to share that good news with others. It was the beginning of a new life and a lifelong journey.

We, too, are like the fellowship in the Lord of the Rings, but thank goodness we don't have to fight any Orcs....

But maybe we do. Maybe the Orcs in our world are all the suffering in our midst. The Orcs are sexism and racism, suffering and violence, hate and bigotry, division and injustice. The Orcs are what distract us from trusting in God and beckon us to trust in ourselves—to seek selfish endeavors. The Orcs are anything that stand in the way of God's goodness and kingdom.

Disciples in our world may not consist of elves and talking trees, but we are definitely as diverse. We all must band together to carry God's message of hope and peace to our world that is often worn down by forces that can seem evil. If we fully put our trust in God, we almost have no choice but to answer the call to follow— to be modern day disciples in and to our hurting world. To not only fish for people, but to care for people as God calls us

to do. Being a disciple is an identity deeply rooted in deep trust of God.

That trust will face challenge and adversity and needs to continually be reclaimed and remembered. The early disciples had their times of doubts and misunderstanding and they were there living with Jesus! So, too, we of course will have our times of doubt, misunderstanding and even turning away. Jesus will continue to call and to beckon us to follow him, to trust in the Lord with our whole being. And hopefully, we find ourselves within a community of faith that will continue to help direct and redirect us toward God. It is in trusting God and following God that we can find hope, peace and salvation.

God's kingdom is the now and not yet. We live here, on this side of heaven, aware of the promises God has for us. But, we also live in the midst of the chaos and the brokenness of this world. However, as believers we trust and we have faith that all will be made right in the end. This is not a call to complacency, of course, but the opposite. We need to do all we can to allow God's Kingdom to break into our hurting world. Jesus is inviting us to be agents of good, of peace, of hope, of challenge and of love. Jesus is inviting us to join him and to work alongside him to help be the change that our world so desperately needs. How will you answer that call? How will you place your trust in God? And how will you be a disciple to our hurting world?

With God all things are possible. Trust in God at all times; put down your nets, and follow.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.



## *Responding to God's Word*

### **Affirmation of Faith From A Brief Statement of Faith**

**We trust in Jesus Christ, fully human, fully God. Jesus proclaimed the reign of God: preaching good news to the poor and release to the captives, teaching by word and deed and blessing the children, healing the sick and binding up the brokenhearted, eating with outcasts, forgiving sinners, and calling all to repent and believe the gospel. Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition, Jesus was crucified, suffering the depths of human pain and giving his life for the sins of the world. God raised this Jesus from the dead, vindicating his sinless life, breaking the power of sin and evil, delivering us from death to life eternal.**

### **Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer**

**God of new visions, we pray for people highly placed in power, that they may focus their eyes on you. And we pray for the lowly victims of power, that they may also focus their eyes on you.**

**We pray for those who bless with their lips but curse with their mouths, including ourselves.**

**We pray for those who are ill and those facing the end of life. Give them the gift of prayer that they may pour out their hearts to you.**

**We pray for your church and its leaders, that we may hear and respond to your call to be fishers of people.**

**Rock of our salvation, through Christ and your Holy Spirit bring us into the new world that you are**

shaping even as this world is passing away. We pray all this through Christ, who taught us to pray:

**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: *You Walk Along Our Shoreline #170*

**Benediction**

Trust in God and follow. Go in peace. Amen.