

Gospel lesson

We continue in the Gospel of Mark, after Jesus sent out the disciples in pairs to proclaim God's message and last week's interlude about Herod and John the Baptist. You may notice that we jump in the middle of this reading, skipping over the feeding of the five thousand and Jesus' walking on water, to when they had once again crossed the Sea of Galilee.



picture screencaptured from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ub9PRzyLLEI>;
credit: LUMO

Mark 6:30-34, 53-56 (NRSV)

³⁰ The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught.

³¹ He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.

³² And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves.

³³ Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them.

³⁴ As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many

things.

⁵³ When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat.

⁵⁴ When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him,

⁵⁵ and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was.

⁵⁶ And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

The word of God for the people of God

<Hymn "Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us" UMH #381>

<Interactive Time>



picture from <https://www.pexels.com/photo/man-taking-photo-of-sea-2106756/>;
credit: Hanif Abdulrasul

How do you take a picture? <Let them respond>

What is a camera lens used for? <Let them respond>

What happens if you take a picture when the lens is out of focus? <Let them respond>

I had a writing assignment for class this week to describe the signs and indicators of the true Church.

What do you think they are? <Let them respond>

Our class was pointed to reading material that listed three elements of the Church largely accepted by Christian scholars from the time of the Protestant Reformation: faith of believers, preaching of the Word of God, and participation in the sacraments; plus a fourth element of discipline/accountable discipleship which is insisted upon by Methodists.

What is missing from that list? <Let them respond>

John Wesley “urged Methodist communities to love like Jesus loved” that they might embody “genuine Christianity.” He identified three scriptural marks of the new believer: faith in Jesus, hope as children of God, and (greatest of them) love – “the love of God shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost” – which bears fruit in love of neighbor and love of God. It stands to reason the community of believers, the Church, would bear those same marks.

What happens if we do not use love as a filter or lens for how we approach worship? <Let them respond>

What happens when we do use love as a filter or lens for how we approach worship? <Let them respond>

We are called to worship our amazing God in love, joy, and fellowship – not just here, not just in the church building on Sunday mornings, but in all times and all places, with all that we say and do.

I think I need to listen to that call to worship more frequently and look at the world more clearly through

the lens of God's love. I encourage you to strive for that as well, to remind me (and each other) of God's love moving in our lives throughout the week.

Message: Call to Worship



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/worship-with-rejoicing/ninth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/ninth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Almighty God, we are called to come before you in worship. As we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

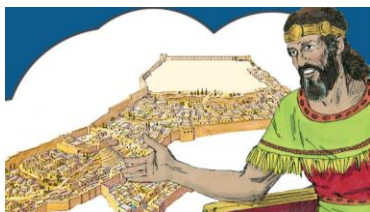
- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we answer Your call on our lives, to worship You in all times, all places, and all ways that we can.

Amen.

We continue the "Worship with Rejoicing" series today with "Call to Worship":

"[Here, we transition from gathering into a focus on why we have gathered.] Let us hear the call and live our worship in a new way of being."



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/solomon-temple/>

King David is renowned for his love for God and

faithfulness in worship. Yet what do we see him doing in today's lesson? Thinking he is doing something to mark his love of the Lord as permanent, he wants to build an immovable structure for the housing of the ark of the covenant, complete with rich trimmings and beautiful architecture, in his - David's - city.

Do you recall the story of the Israelites traveling in the wilderness? God directed the people where to go, and they brought the ark to that location. It was not God following the ark around as though it were a beacon for keeping track of the people. It was not a chain to which the Lord was bound or controlled, no matter who had possession of the ark.

Yet by building a temple to house the ark of the covenant and thus restrict the location of the holy of holies, the message the people would receive was that God was limited to that location. When called to worship, they would have to go to the conqueror David's - note, not called God's - temple.

David's lens was drifting subtly away from focus on God, but was corrected by his inquiring of God through Samuel before starting to build it. By having Solomon complete David's vision, the temple belonged to neither, and thus was God's temple after all.

It is important that we always ask our Lord before starting work in God's name, that we do not turn

others away from our one right focus. That is even true when we come together for worship, and why a call to worship or opening prayer typically comes at the start of the service.



picture modified from <https://LawandReligionAustralia.blog/2020/05/30/worship-in-coronavirus-time-the-latest-nsw-rules/>

After all, where did Paul tell the Ephesians in today's epistle that God has made the holy temple? In the faithful people, beginning with Jesus as the cornerstone, the apostles and prophets as the foundation, and connecting all of us together as one.

God dwells within you; never doubt your worth as a beloved child of God. Remember also that God is with every other person, calling them to relationship too (it's called prevenient grace if they are not yet a believer, justifying grace as they accept Jesus as their Savior, and sanctifying grace as they keep working to be better, seeking Christian perfection).

It is not for us to judge another person's worthiness when God is already at work with them. In Paul's day, it was Jew vs. Gentile as the main division in the Church. In our country today, there are other dividing factors. In every case, the arguments and divisiveness are driven by a focus away from God.

If we do not look to God and find Jesus's love &

compassion driving what we do, we will elevate something else - ourselves, money, power, whatever. We will not be caring how much we hurt some people because the thing elevated does not care about them. But God loves everyone.



picture screencaptured from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bkB-NotI8_s; credit: LUMO

Look at Jesus during His ministry. Everywhere He went, people flocked to Him, begging for help.

- † When He saw His disciples overworked, He gave them rest.
- † When He saw directionless people, He taught them.
- † When He saw the sick, He healed them - body, mind, and soul, helping them fit back into society.

After Jesus ascended, the Holy Spirit came to dwell with us, within us if we invite God in. God does not force us to do the right thing; God gives us a choice and lets us choose - and then people far beyond just us are affected by the outcome of our choice.

This highlights two things for me:

1. We should not force others to make the choices we want them to, even though we as well as they may be affected by the outcome. However, if they hurt others, we can choose to try preventing them from being able to hurt others in that way again (assuming we are not hurting others in what we do;

Wesley's 1st rule was "Do no harm" for a reason).
 2. We need to ask God for guidance - in *everything* - if we are to make good choices. Wesley's 2nd rule was "Do good," and if we love God and one another, we should certainly strive for that.

But how do we remember to check in with God? Wesley gave a 3rd rule, the final and arguably most important of his 3 general rules: "Attend upon all the ordinances of God," often shortened to "Stay in love with God." We do this by seeking God's grace through worship, searching the scripture, personal and family prayer, fasting, and the sacraments.



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/worship-with-rejoicing/ninth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/ninth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-graphics>

Our lives are most fulfilled when we serve the Almighty One, our Triune God. How do you respond to the call to worship upon our lives?

- † Do you try like David to honor God on your own terms, by setting aside time for worship only on Sunday and not worrying about the Spirit's call throughout the rest of the week?
- † Do you "take time to smell the roses," to notice God's handiwork, to give thanks and praise for the blessings in our lives?
- † Do you live your faith, your worship of God in ways that others can see and be invited in?

Last week, we talked about gathering. This week, I want you to gather in grace with your family, friends, or neighbors, outside of our normal worship time, and offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God where they can hear and join in with you. Better yet, invite them to join you, that they can hear the call to worship God in their lives more clearly.