

**Preview for Service of Word and Sacrament, January 11, 2026**  
**Ordinary Time**  
**Liturgical Color: Green**  
**Westminster Presbyterian Church, Tiburon, California**

Visit the church website: [www.wpctiburon.org](http://www.wpctiburon.org), 415-383-5272  
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*This weekly study guide seeks to help members, friends, and visitors prepare for the upcoming Sunday service and teaching.*



**Call to Worship (8:30)**

**One:** We have arrived at this moment by grace as well as grit.

**Many:** **Let us be thankful. Let us find rest.**

**One:** Let us be aware of what we do not know about the paths of those around us.

**Many:** **May they experience in us a generous spirit and may we grow in grace through**

**worship with one another.**

**Opening Prayer (10:00)**

Let us pray,

Let us pause and recognize how we have arrived at this moment by both grace and grit. Let us be thankful and rest in that gratitude. Let us be aware that we do not know the paths those around us have traveled. May they experience in us a generous spirit and may we grow in our own graciousness as we worship together. Amen.

**Community Prayer**

**We ground ourselves in your grace, dear God, calling to mind goodness shown us, unearned favor, pure gifts we have been presented in this life. Let us be mindful of them that we might not be resentful of that experienced by others. We acknowledge we can be jealous, we can root against our neighbors, we can secretly lament their success. Free us from the heavy burdens of bitterness. Teach us the art of rejoicing in the path of the other, freeing more energy for us to use on our own. Amen.**

**Sermon Focus & Title**

Whose Journey? - On the Road Revisited

Robert

McClellan

We look at our tendency to focus on others' journeys and the sense of unfairness we can rightly feel. We explore the resentment of favorable treatment of others, resentment that can run so deep we bemoan not only grifters, but good people's genuine growth. We sit with the realization that harboring this resentment does nothing to further their or our own journeys. In fact, it consumes precious energy that could be used to make our own way toward goodness and God. We seek to be gracious to the journeys of others that we might lean into the path before (and within) us.

**Scripture(s)****First Reading (omit?)**

Jonah 1:1-2, 3:4-4:1

1 Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying, <sup>2</sup>'Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me.'

'Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, 'Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!' <sup>3</sup>And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.

6 When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. <sup>7</sup>Then he had a proclamation made in Nineveh: 'By the decree of the king and his nobles: No human being or animal, no herd or flock, shall taste anything. They shall not feed, nor shall they drink water. <sup>8</sup>Human beings and animals shall be covered with sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God. All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands. <sup>9</sup>Who knows? God may relent and change his mind; he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish.'

10 When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

4 But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry.

**Second Reading****Luke 15:11-32**

11 Then Jesus said, 'There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup>The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me." So he divided his property between them. <sup>13</sup>A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. <sup>14</sup>When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need.

<sup>15</sup>So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his

fields to feed the pigs. <sup>16</sup>He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. <sup>17</sup>But when he came to himself he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! <sup>18</sup>I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; <sup>19</sup>I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.' " <sup>20</sup>So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. <sup>21</sup>Then the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son." <sup>22</sup>But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup>And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; <sup>24</sup>for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" And they began to celebrate.

25 'Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup>He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. <sup>27</sup>He replied, "Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound." <sup>28</sup>Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. <sup>29</sup>But he answered his father, "Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup>But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!" <sup>31</sup>Then the father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. <sup>32</sup>But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found." '

#### Rob's Notes

- We love grace when shown us, not so much with others.
- Reminds me of the laborers.
- EVERYBODY takes the side of the older brother. Not fair. Yes, I know. That's the point.
  - Amy Jill-Levine: "I should admit right up front: I don't like this kid," Amy-Jill Levine said. <https://chqdaily.wordpress.com/2011/08/18/levine-%E2%80%98prodigal-son%E2%80%99-forces-reassessment-of-bible%E2%80%99s-other-brother-pairs/>
    - AJL points out that term prodigal (see above link) doesn't come until Latin translation. The story begins with a statement about a parent who has two children. It's about the children, but still...
    - NOT about repentance. The older doesn't repent. --> makes it even stronger. May not have learned their lesson. Says he will say he has sinned. Does he really recognize it or just hungry? AJL suggests it may well just be desperation. Either way, still good not to get locked up.
    - AJL says it's all about wholeness which the party embodies. Wholeness not fairness., same with Jonah!

- Who is on the journey, not the older brother (who may not change) or the people of Nineveh who pretty promptly responded to the call to change, but the younger and Jonah the prophet!!
    - Something about boundaries/enabling (though it's God, not you). Aren't we supposed to imitate God? Not if you ask Paul (leave vengeance to God). So a less common def of faithful is not imitating God, but leaving to God what is God's etc.
- The road can be the great revealer
  - Jonah - cowardice, own growing up to do,
  - Older son - needed to waste (needed is a strong word)
  - Younger son - your road is internal. You can have your anger, but at some point you have to grow too. Take your own steps'
- **Rooting against others' growth is a lonely business**
- When you get consumed with resentment toward the other you get, well, consumed! Burned up. Lose self.
- When you spend all your energy resenting them, you lose the energy for your own walk.
- Yes, I bet you wanted to go take a walk. Fair enough.
- Illustrations
  - Camp, I went way, anti-gay, well, who did I punish with that?
  - Somehow finesse CPE intake. They're not the identified patient so you're going to get super annoyed with them. You can maintain perspective but you still have to honor people's path
  - Yeah, I get it, double standard for trouble maker in son's 5th grade class. True and yet, this is his path. More can come to peace with that better.
  - Therapy always focuses on what changes *you* can make. People gonna be on the journey on which they're gonna be.
- Bookends
  - "I don't like this kid" (or whatever) (so I need to change them) / I don't like them so I need to change my ppv, orientation.

## Hymns

Help Us Accept Each Other 754

Forgive Our Sins As We Forgive 444

## Quotes, Questions & Prompts for Reflection, Discussion, and Prayer

"The jealous are troublesome to others, but a torment to themselves."

- William Penn

1. What are some journeys on which you've been sent that you did not want?
2. Where are the spaces of envy or jealousy in your own life?
3. Who do you feel has had it too easy and has squandered much? What feelings do they stir in you?
4. What happens when we get consumed with resentment for the other?

5. How can we reorient ourselves to our own journeys when our eyes stray?