

At Home Worship
January 24, 2021
First Presbyterian Church-Sweetwater

Find a Sacred Space

Sit comfortably, perhaps with something warm to drink, where you can look out on the beauty Of God's creation today. Read aloud or quietly to yourself, or as a family share the various parts of the service.

Greeting - The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Call to Worship and Prayer of Praise

Let us come together and celebrate God's love and grace in our hearts.

The strength of the Lord is our hope and our salvation.

The powers and the wealth of the world will all pass away,

But the glory and the love of the Lord will endure forever.

Then let us lift our voices in praise and song for God's glory!

Blessed be the name of the Lord!

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul ... Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long. Amen. (Psalm 25:1, 4-5)

Sing, Listen, or Read Hymn "I Know Whom I Have Believed" VSS 1,2,4

1. I know not why God's wondrous grace to me He hath made known, nor why, unworthy, Christ in love Redeemed me for His own.

Refrain:

But "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I've committed Unto Him against that day."

2. I know not how this saving faith to me He did impart, nor how believing in His Word Wrought peace within my heart.

Refrain:

But "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I've committed Unto Him against that day."

4. I know not when my Lord may come, At night or noonday fair, Nor if I walk the vale with Him, Or meet Him in the air.

Refrain:

But "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able To keep that which I've committed Unto Him against that day."

A Time of Confession and Assurance

Lord, so often we have let the world set the standards we have chosen to follow and we have ignored all You came to teach us. Too often we have forgotten You hold our eternity in Your loving hands and we have set our focus on ourselves. We have not heard Your Word calling us to reach out and follow Your example of caring for others. Forgive us, Lord.

(silent prayer of personal confession).....**Amen.**

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” We believe and although we fall short, we must persevere to the end. Hold tight to His Word. Friends, believe the good news of the gospel. In Jesus Christ we are forgiven!

Sing, Listen, or Read Hymn “Here I Am, Lord”

#69

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 the darkness bright. Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?

Refrain: 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, fill their hearts with love alone I will speak my word to them. Whom shall I send?

Refrain: 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 send 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?

Refrain: 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.

Finding Something Amazing To Live For

Mark 1:14-20

On January 1, 2002, John Guth, 32, and Jeff Teiten, 24, set up camp outside the Cinerama theater in Seattle. They announced they intended to await the public sale of tickets for Star Wars Episode I; Attack of the Clones, scheduled for release May 16, 2002.

Teiten said he was actually involved in an art project which involved "waiting for something." He was keeping a log of his experience and originally wanted to await the film for two years. "I'm becoming very aware just how long an hour is," he said, and "what happens in an hour." At the time of the report on this pair of young Star War devotees, the film's distributors had not even confirmed that the film would be shown at the Cinerama.

My first reaction to this story is that these young men need badly to get a life. Surely there is something more profitable they can do with their time than waiting in line for five months to get tickets for a movie.

But maybe neither one of them had anything better to do. That really is a scary thought.

It's like a PEANUTS comic strip by Charles Schultz. Snoopy the dog is typing out his latest attempt at great literature. He wraps up his story like this: "And so our hero's life ended as it had begun . . . a disaster. "I never got any breaks,' he had always complained. He had wanted to be rich. He died poor. He wanted friends. He died friendless. He wanted to be loved. He died unloved. He wanted laughter. He found only tears . . . He wanted answers. He found only questions."

At this point, Snoopy--with an exasperated look--thinks to himself, "I'm having a hard time ending this . . ." Like many would-be writers, he had dug a hole he couldn't get out of.

THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO ARE DISSATISFIED WITH THEIR LIVES. That's what we need to see. There are people who are unhappy with their situations. Maybe you are one of them. If so, you are not alone.

In 1957, as John Galbraith was about to describe us as "the affluent society," our per person income, expressed in today's dollars, was less than \$10,000. Today it is around three that--making us The More Than Affluent Society. Compared to 1957, we have more than three times as many cars per person; we have digital TVs, satellite dishes, cell phones and \$15 billion a year worth of brand name athletic shoes.

So are we happier than sixty-four years ago? We are not. In 1957 thirty-five percent of Americans told "The National Opinion Research Center" they were very happy. By 1991, our per capita income had already doubled and yet only thirty-one percent said they were very happy. And the trends continue. "Judged by soaring rates of depression, the quintupling of the violent crime rate, the doubling of the divorce rate, the slight decline in marital happiness among the marital survivors, and the tripling of the teen suicide rate, we are richer and unhappier."

Many people are dissatisfied with their lives. This does not mean they are bad people. Many of them are very good people. They just don't have what we sometimes call "a fulfilling life." They have all the material necessities, they have a respectable job, they have people who love them, but still they feel something is missing in their lives.

Many of us look at other people who live more glamorous lives and think, "If I had what they have, then I would be happy." But close examination shows them to be no more fulfilled than we are.

We look at someone like Cher, the actress and pop singer, who seemingly has it all. Wealth, fame, physical attractiveness. And yet here is how Cher, herself, described her life:

"I'm growing older. I hated my 50s . . . I never felt older until I hit 50. When you turn this age possibilities are fewer. You've been there, done that. You've bought the t-shirt. You've bought the poster. You've been the poster. And then you have to figure new creative ways to stay vital and interesting and have new dreams. Maybe next time I'll come back as a cowboy. Next time I'll do better." Cher is 74 now.....wonder if her view has changed?

MAYBE THOSE FIRST DISCIPLES OF JESUS WERE DISSATISFIED WITH THEIR LIVES. Think about it. You know the story.

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

"At once," says the Gospel of Mark, "they left their nets and followed him."

Doesn't that seem a bit abrupt to you? They're working at their nets and a stranger comes by, and he says, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." And they drop their nets and immediately they follow.

Jesus goes a little farther and he sees James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he calls them, and they leave their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and follow him.

What, no discussion? No "Let me think about this and I will get back to you in the morning" hesitation. We don't know about the others but we know that Simon was married. Didn't he at least try to phone home? Didn't he feel he needed to discuss this with his wife? I mean this is a major decision. Leave your job? Leave the only life you know and follow an itinerant preacher around the countryside? What got into these men?

Maybe they were tired of fishing for fish. That's hard for some of us to imagine, but it's possible. Even fishing would get old if you had to do it day in and day out. I'll bet that there are professional football players who dream of having a Sunday afternoon off in the fall so that they can rake their leaves. It's possible. Anything you get paid to do, that demands you show up for a certain number of hours each week, could get old--even if it is something other people do for recreation.

But it strikes me that these men were somewhat dissatisfied with their lives or they would not have been so quick to jump at this stranger's invitation. They certainly were not bad men or irresponsible men. They just had an itch that nothing in their present situation could scratch. They wanted something more out of their lives--something that could fill a void that nothing else could fill.

LISTEN. THIS IS HOW YOU AND I WOULD BE IF WE DID NOT HAVE CHRIST. This is the universal human condition, permanently restless--until we find our rest in God.

Life today is so stressful. There are so many demands on us. It's like an American racing enthusiast who entered his horse in Britain's famous Epsom Downs Steeplechase.

Just before the race began, he slipped his horse a white pellet. The Duke of Marlboro, who was serving as steward, caught the owner in the act and objected. "I say, old man, really you can't do that sort of thing over here!"

"Just a harmless sugar lump," the American assured him. He gulped one down himself. "Here, try one," he said. The Duke took a pill, swallowed it, and seemed satisfied.

As the jockey mounted the American horse, its owner whispered in his ear, "Son, keep that horse on the outside and stay out of trouble, because once he starts running, there ain't nothing that can catch him . . . except me and the Duke of Marlboro!"

That's how many of us feel. Run, run, run. We need that sugar pill just to meet our responsibilities. And then one day we open our hearts to Christ and he comes into our lives and helps us reorder our priorities.

These disciples were dissatisfied with their lives. So when Christ showed them something better--when he offered to give them a dynamic new purpose for their lives--they did not hesitate. They dropped everything and followed him.

AND MY GUESS IS THAT, YOU AND I WOULD TOO.

Let's face it, most of us would like to get something more out of life. We want that abundant life that Jesus promised--and we've come to discover in our life experience that the affluent life is not the abundant life. We thought it was, but it's not. How we long for God to speak to our lives and give us a new understanding of life, a new ministry or mission that will fill our cup and our heart to overflowing. To say to us while we are mending our nets, "Follow me."

At fifty-two Bruce Kennedy was the chief executive officer of the highly successful Alaska Air Group, the parent company of Alaska Airlines.

During twelve years under Kennedy's leadership, the corporation's revenues grew tenfold. When he took the helm the airline was floundering and nearly bankrupt. But in those twelve years he brought transformation to the organization and saw it become one of the most profitable and best-run airlines in the entire world. Then, at the peak of his success, he made a shocking decision. He stepped down from his lofty corporate position to become the board chairman of the Redlands, California-based Mission Aviation Fellowship, an international Christian organization that specializes in flying missionaries to remote locations. Kennedy's new position has no salary at all; he is a volunteer.

Though Bruce Kennedy is quick to admit that his was a scary decision, it was also a decision that was driven by a clear inner sense of calling. After twelve years as a CEO he decided he wanted to spend the rest of his life doing what God wanted him to do. Here is how he explains this move: "If I say that I trust God and put my life in his hands . . . then I shouldn't have any reservations about proving it with my life."

Most of us think that if we could be the CEO of a major corporation-- respected by our peers, admired by our stockholders--then that would be enough. But it's not enough. There is something more. It is to lay our lives at the foot of the cross. It is to say to God, "Use my life, Lord. Give me something mighty that I can do for You."

OF COURSE, THE MOST NOBLE THING YOU CAN DO IS TO BRING SOMEONE ELSE TO JESUS. I don't mean you have to go door-to-door or stand on street corners asking people if they are saved. But there is someone in your workplace, or in your family, or a neighbor who is hurting--who needs to know that you care and who will be helped if they knew that the reason you care is because you are a follower of Jesus Christ.

What did Jesus call these first disciples to be? Fishers of men. Please don't let the language confuse you. If they had been carpenters, he might have said, "I will make you builders of men." If they had been educators, he might have said, "I will make you teachers of men." The point is that you will find your greatest fulfillment when you take the love that you have received from Christ and pass it on to someone else.

You and I are dissatisfied with our lives because we have been focused on the humdrum tasks of living rather than on the call of God to be God's people. Let's turn that around and put our call first.

Thanks be to God! Amen.

Sing, Listen, or Read Hymn "I Love To Tell the Story" # 462

1. I love to tell the story of unseen things above, of Jesus and his glory, of Jesus and his love. I love to tell the story, because I know 'tis true; it satisfies my longings as nothing else can do.

Refrain: I love to tell the story, 'twill be my theme in glory to tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love.

2. I love to tell the story; 'tis pleasant to repeat what seems, each time I tell it, more wonderfully sweet. I love to tell the story, for some have never heard the message of salvation from God's own holy Word.

Refrain: I love to tell the story, 'twill be my theme in glory to tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love.

3. I love to tell the story, for those who know it best seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest. And when, in scenes of glory, I sing the new, new song, 'twill be the old, old story that I have loved so long.

Refrain: I love to tell the story, 'twill be my theme in glory to tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love.

Blessing

Now to the One who is able to keep you from falling, and to make you stand without blemish in the presence of God's glory with rejoicing, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. Jude 24-25