

GAYLORD UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
318 4th STREET, BOX 385, GAYLORD, MN, 55334
Tenth Sunday after Pentecost
August 9, 2020



A.A. Milne, 20th century

"Piglet sidled up to Pooh from behind. 'Pooh?' he whispered.
'Yes, Piglet?' 'Nothing,' said Piglet, taking Pooh's hand. 'I just wanted to be sure of you.'"

THE CALL

Psalm 105:1-6

O give thanks to God, call on God's name, make known God's deeds among the peoples.
Sing to God, sing praises to God; tell of all God's wonderful works.
Glory in God's holy name; let the hearts of those who seek God rejoice.
Seek God and God's strength; seek God's presence continually.
Remember the wonderful works God has done,

PRELUDE

STACY PAULY

WELCOME AND NEWS OF THE CHURCH

NEXT SUNDAY, AUGUST 16TH, WE WILL BE MEETING FOR WORSHIP IN THE SANCTUARY.

IT WILL BE A JOY TO SEE YOU IN WORSHIP. MASKS WILL BE REQUIRED AND SUPPLIED IF YOU DO NOT HAVE ONE. FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT SAFETY PRECAUTIONS ARE LISTED AT THE END OF THE BULLETIN.

Worship services will be recorded on Sunday so online access to services will not be available until Monday or Tuesday. Once the new video equipment is installed we will be able to stream live services on Sunday morning.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Come, let us celebrate the One who calls us to love and speak truth to power:

People: No one can stop us from speaking the truth.

Leader: We are called to love and defend our brothers and sisters who suffer in silence:

People: No one can stop us from speaking the truth.

Leader: We must rise up, stand up, and speak up for righteousness:

People: No one can stop us from speaking the truth.

Leader: Come, let us celebrate together the power to love and to speak truth:

**People: We are ready to worship our God who is still speaking!
No one can stop us now!**

GATHERING HYMN

"Come Now, Almighty God"

NCH #275

**Come now, Almighty God, help us your name to laud; our songs we raise;
Ruler all glorious, o'er all victorious, come and reign over us, Ancient of Days.**

**Come now, Incarnate Word, by heaven and earth adored; our prayer attend:
Come, and your people bless, and give your word success,
grant us your holiness, Savior and Friend!**

**To you, great One in Three, eternal praises be forever more.
Your sovereign majesty may we in glory see, and to eternity love and adore.**

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Spirit of the living God, fall fresh upon us; allow your presence to fill us with power from on high. Come, Holy One, and dwell among us. We need your authority to love our neighbor and speak to the powers of this world. Give us a special anointing to stand and be witnesses in our homes, our schools, and on our jobs. Come into this place and make us one with each other. It is in your name we pray. **Amen.**

CALL TO CONFESSION

Leader: In the lives of neighbors who suffer brokenness and pain:

People: We confess you are still speaking!

Leader: In the struggle of the poor whose rights are not honored:

People: We confess you are still speaking!

Leader: In a world crying out for wisdom, love and mercy:

People: We confess you are still speaking!

Leader: In a world calling for the blessing of truth:

People: We confess you are still speaking! Bless us to hear!

Leader: Let us confess together:

People: We confess that in our lives we often hide behind our work and play, schools and jobs, fun and fashion. We let ourselves get so busy that we forget the cause of the poor, the suffering, the oppressed. We confess we allow the powers of this world to seduce us into selfishness and silence our witness. Teach us to champion the cause for justice for all, strengthen us to love our neighbor and speak truth no matter the penalty. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S LOVE

The Word of God assures us that we are able to love through the Spirit of Christ. Let us go from this place with authority, knowing that God's Word gives us strength to love our neighbors near and far and power to speak up for those who are broken. Thanks to the Word of God!

**Doxology Praise God from whom all blessings flow
Praise God all creatures here below
Praise God above you heavenly hosts
Praise God and Christ and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

LECTIONARY TEXTS

1 Kings 19:9-14a

At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there. Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He answered, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away."

He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He answered, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts;

Matthew 14:22-33

Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. And early in the morning he came walking towards them on the lake. But when the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So, Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came towards Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

SERMON

"Something to Hold on To"

Pastor Dennis

My friends in Christ, grace to you and peace. Amen.

I've been told that it is a true story. There was a family in Michigan who lived on a cliff overlooking a cooling water outlet from a power station. Over the years many swimmers had drowned in the unexpected deep trough carved by the fast, flowing waters near the outlet. The family assessed the dangerous situation and made a decision. They found and bought a large Newfoundland dog. These dogs are good swimmers and prone to save people swimming into threatening waters. And this family, clearly gifted with an uncanny insight and a sense of humor, named their new dog, "Help." And now, you guessed it, when a swimmer has gotten caught in the swirling whirling waters, they instinctively cry for "Help!" and this enormous dog comes and leaps in to their aid! He becomes something to hold on to.

Beloved people of God, as we journey through life, we need something to hold on to. And what we need to hold onto is not just anything, but we need something solid and sure and life giving. We need something to hold onto-and perhaps we need this more at this present time.

In our gospel reading we see that the disciples of Jesus also needed something to hold onto. Jesus and his disciples are at the Sea of Galilee. Jesus needs some alone time. And so, he sends his disciples out on the boat and goes up on one of the hills surrounding the Sea of Galilee. And while the disciples are out on the water- perhaps 3 or 4 miles from shore, a violent storm breaks out. Now storms can quickly occur on the Sea of Galilee. And so, there are the disciples caught in one of the fierce storms. For nine straight hours they are in the boat being tossed around because of the wind. Don't you think that they were searching for something to hold onto? They were filled with fear and needed something to hold onto.

And then as if this nightmare couldn't get any darker, the disciples look up and see someone walking on the water toward them. They assume that it is a ghost. Just when they thought they couldn't feel any more fear their terror gets turned up yet another notch. And then through the wind and the waves and their cries of terror and creaking of the boat, Jesus speaks, "Take heart", he says, "It is I. Do not be afraid." Not knowing what to make of this, Peter cries out, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." And Jesus simply says, "Come."

So, Peter swings his legs over the side of the boat. You have to applaud him. He's willing to get out of the boat while the others just sit there with their hearts beating in their mouths. Peter places his feet on the face of the water. He takes a few hesitant steps. But then a gust of wind almost topples him over and Peter gets scared. Reality set in for Peter. And down he goes, sinking like a rock. And Peter

cries out, "Help, Lord, save me." Peter is desperately filled with fear and certainly needs something to hold on to.

We see in this story, the power of fear. Peter doesn't just flounder because he takes his eyes off of Jesus, but because he grows afraid. And quite frankly, that fear is justified. It's a storm, for heaven's sake, raging powerfully enough to sink the boat, let alone drown a single person. Peter and the other disciples have perfectly good reason to be afraid. And my friend, so do we. Whether it is fear of what the future will bring, of loneliness during loss and this time of isolation, of whether we will fare well in a new chapter in our lives, of not being accepted by those we esteem, of the return of illness, of the stability of a fragile relationship, of the direction of our country. You name it, there is a lot in our lives, especially at this present time that can make us afraid.

In response to Peter's fear, notice that Jesus doesn't simply urge him to have courage or instruct Peter to keep his eyes on him. Rather when Peter begins to sink, Jesus reaches out. He grabs Peter. And it is Jesus who holds Peter. Jesus doesn't lecture Peter in this moment but he grabs him and holds him, saving him from drowning. And so also with us! Jesus will not let us go. Jesus is with us. Jesus will never give up on us. This is the heart of our gospel, all of Matthew's gospel, and indeed of our faith: that God, in the end, will do what we cannot. And this promise is the one thing I know of that can help us cope with and transcend fear. Transcend, not defeat. Because fear is a part of our lives, and we should take care that being fearful is not equated with faithlessness.

I have heard too many sermons on this text that try to give people advice. Advice like, keep your eyes on Jesus, don't be like Peter, keep your eyes on Jesus and be more courageous and have more faith. Now, honestly it is good to have our eyes on Jesus and to be courageous. But let's be honest, we are human. And no matter how hard we try, there are times, when we all take our eyes off of Jesus. There are times, aren't there, when we struggle with trust and courage. Again, we don't need to equate our fear with faithlessness. Because what we need is not more advice but what we need is promise. And that is what Jesus gives Peter and the other disciples. Even though Peter took his eyes off of Jesus, the eyes of Jesus were never off Peter. Even though Jesus was up on the hill praying as the disciples were being tossed to and fro in the storm, the eyes of Jesus were never off them. But Jesus came to them, Jesus reaches out to Peter, Jesus gets in the boat with the disciples. It is Jesus who comes to them. We often want to make these texts about us when there're really about God- a God who came to the disciples. And the very same God who comes through our storms to us.

We all do need something to hold on to in life. And to this need that we all have; God offers us not just something but Someone. God's self, made known to us in Jesus the Christ. We need something- someone to hold onto- and when it's all said and done, it is truly Jesus who is holding onto us. That is what we hold onto!

Back in May of 1932, the USS Akron, a dirigible (lighter than air craft) was landing in San Diego. Thousands of people had gathered to see the huge airship and to witness the landing. As the ship descended, many 400-foot docking ropes were dropped to the ground to be caught by several men who were part of the landing crews. The men were to hold on to the ropes that would keep the airship in position. But suddenly the ship's tail rose up, threatening to stand the Akron on its nose. When the sharp angle suddenly released tons of water from ballast bags, the airship rose. As it did, several crewmen let go of their ropes. Thousands of onlookers watched in horror as one man, then another, fell from between 100 and 200 feet. Eventually only one man was still holding on to his rope. He kept going on with the airship. People thought that any moment he'd lose his strength and fall to his death. But no. He kept holding on. Hours later when they finally could rescue the man and the ship, they asked him, "How did you hold on so long? How did you keep on holding on?" He answers, "I didn't. I didn't hold on. When I saw that I was too high from the ground to let go, I held the rope with one hand and with the other I put the rope around me and tied it. I didn't hold the rope, said the rescued man, the rope held me!"

This is the promise of Jesus. This is our faith! It's not so much that we are holding on in life, as it is that God is holding on to us. Holding on to us with a grasp so strong and sure and steadfast. A grasp that come what may, God will never let us go. And with this promise, we can step forward living with courage and hope, even get out of our boats and trust that God is with us and holding us. Amen.

Hymn

"Sweet Hour of Prayer"

NCH #505

**Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer! that calls me from a world of care,
and bids me at my Maker's throne let all my needs and wants be known.
In seasons of distress and grief, my soul has often found relief,
and oft escaped the tempter's snare by your return, Sweet hour of prayer!**

**Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer! the joys I feel, the bliss I share
of those who's anxious spirits burn with strong desires for your return!
With them I hasten to the place where I would know my Savior's face,
And gladly take my station there, and wait for you, Sweet hour of prayer!**

**Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer! whose wings shall my petition bear
to One whose truth and faithfulness engage the waiting soul to bless.
And since I'm bid to seek God's face, believe God's word, and trust God's grace,
I'll cast away my every care, and wait for you, Sweet hour of prayer!**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Leader: Gracious God, who loves all and forgets none, we bring to you our prayers for all your children. For all whom we love, watch over, and care for.
Lord in your mercy ...

Response: Hear our prayer.

Leader: For all prisoners and captives, and all who suffer from oppression, that you will manifest your mercy toward them, and make all hearts as merciful as your own;
Lord in your mercy...

Response: Hear our prayer.

Leader: For all who bear the cross of suffering, the sick in body or mind;
Lord in your mercy...

Response: Hear our prayer.

Leader: For all those who are troubled by the sin or suffering of those they love;
Lord in your mercy...

Response: Hear our prayer.

Leader: For all perplexed by the deeper questions of life and overshadowed with doubt, that your light may guide them;
Lord in your mercy...

Response: Hear our prayer.

Leader: For all who are tried by temptations or weakness, that your mercy may be their strength;
Lord in your mercy...

Response: Hear our prayer.

Leader: For all who are lonely and sad in the midst of others' joy, that they may know you as their friend and comforter; Lord in your mercy...

Response: Hear our prayer.

Leader: For all forgotten by us, but dear to you:
Lord in your mercy...

Response: Hear our prayer.

Leader: O compassionate God, hear our prayers, answer them according to your will, and make us channels of your infinite grace; through Jesus Christ we pray,

Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

THREE-FOLD AMEN

Amen, Amen, A-A-A-Amen

INVITATION TO SHARING

We are called to love and obey God's still-speaking voice.
Let us give freely to the building of God's kingdom on earth.
Come now and share your gifts, tithes and offerings.
Let us give as God has blessed us to give.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

**O God, we offer these gifts, tithes, and offerings for the building of your kingdom on earth.
Bless the gift and the givers.
Bless all who offer time, talent and treasure in your service.
We offer this prayer in your holy name.
Amen.**

***Unison Choral Closing**

"Go Now in Peace"

**Go now in peace, never be afraid. God will go with you each hour of every day.
Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true. Know God will guide you in all you do.
Go now in love and show you believe. Reach out to others so all the world can see.
God will be there, watching as the dove. Go now in peace, in faith and in love.
Amen. Amen. Amen.**

BENEDICTION

Now as we leave from this place, but not from your presence, let us remember your still-speaking voice.
Send your grace to go with us, your peace to keep us, and your love to surround us as we travel.
May we leave empowered to love and speak your truth each day.
Amen.

Postlude

Stacy Pauly

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Remember in Prayer: Bill Cowell, Eunice Gasow, and Aggie Schue. We pray for others who have been ill or are home bound and those at Oak Terrace and Golden Hearts. We pray for health and healing for all people everywhere. Pray for the ministries of our church. Pray for those serving in the military and for our local and national leaders during these trying times.

If you have a prayer request or would like to receive a call from Pastor Dennis call his office at 237-2595 (leave a private voice mail) or his cell 763-258-3371.

Giving our Gifts to God:

**Tithes and Offerings can be sent to Gaylord United Church of Christ
P.O. Box 385 Gaylord, MN 55334 or
Dropped by the church office on Wednesday between 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
*Thank you for your continued support for the ministries of this church.***

**Pastor Dennis is usually in the office each Wednesday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
He can be reached at the office, 237-2595 (private voice mail) or his cell: 763-258-3371.**

E-mail: dmckee545@gmail.com

Website at listen2god.org

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- ❖ **You can view our August 9 Church Service online by Friday or Saturday this week. Click on the link to view Service at: <https://listen2god.org/weekly-message/>**
- ❖ **We will begin worshipping together on Sunday, August 16th at 9:30 a.m. in the church building. We will be doing all we can to create a safe environment in which to gather.**

The following are guidelines each of you is being asked to follow for our gatherings:

1. Masks will be required. They will be provided for people who do not have one.
2. Entrance will be accessible only through the main entrance on 4th St.
3. There will be hand sanitizer at the main door for use upon entering/exiting.
4. There will be no bulletins; all worship info will be on the big screen.
5. Social distancing will guide seating for worshippers. These seats will be in the sanctuary and in the fellowship hall if needed.
6. There will be no singing but some creative talking!
7. There will be no fellowship hour before/after worship.
8. Pastor will not be sharing handshakes or hugs following worship. Warm smiles and well wishes will be abundant!
9. Offering trays will not be passed but you can still give! Offering plates will be located at the entrance to the sanctuary.

- ❖ ***From the Heart Offering in August* will be moved to the 16th instead of the 9th, since we plan to meet again in church on August 16. This special offering will go to our Church Nursery to help purchase toys and furniture. What a wonderful project for our church!**

