

GAYLORD UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
318 4th STREET, BOX 385, GAYLORD, MN, 55334
18th Sunday after Pentecost and Communion
October 4, 2020



MEDITATION

Dorothy Soelle, 20th century

"God dreams for us today. Today, at this moment, God has an image and hope for what we are becoming. We should not let God dream alone."

THE CALL

FROM PSALM 19

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. The ordinances of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

PRELUDE

STACY PAULY

WELCOME AND NEWS OF THE CHURCH

NO MATTER WHO I AM, NO MATTER WHERE I AM ON LIFE'S JOURNEY, I AM WELCOME HERE.

NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE, NO MATTER WHERE YOU ARE ON LIFE'S JOURNEY, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

ONE: WHO ARE YOU?

ALL: I AM A BELOVED CHILD OF GOD!

ONE: WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

ALL: I AM A PERSON OF WORTH TO BE VALUED!

ONE: THEN WHAT WILL YOU DO?

**ALL: I WILL LIVE A LIFE OF LOVE AND ACCEPTANCE OF MYSELF
AND ALL GOD'S PEOPLE!**

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Come all who are leaders in a turbulent time

All: Explore God's ways of justice, mercy, fairness.

One: Come all who are leaders in a confusing time

All: Hear God's call to honesty, clarity, wisdom.

One: Come all who are leaders in a dangerous time

All: Trust God's ways of challenge, courage, presence.

GATHERING HYMN

"COME, LET US JOIN WITH FAITHFUL SOULS"

NCH #383

Piano: Play through

**All: Come let us join with faithful souls our song of faith to raise:
One family in heart are we, and one the God we praise:**

Piano: Play through

**All Faithful are all who love the truth and perfect truth proclaim,
Who steadfast stand at God's right hand and glorify God's name.
And faithful are the gentle hearts to whom the power is given
Of every hearth to make a home, of every home a heaven.**

Piano: Play through

**All: O God of hosts, our faith renew, and grant us, in your grace,
To join the songs sung by the saints in every time and place.**

Piano: Play through

INVOCATION

One: O Holy One, you have created us and placed us in community, complicated, fallible, searching. Open your words of life for us today as we gather to hear your Gospel, and sing your praises; show us the way to justice and peace that we may follow you joyfully into the future you hope for our world.
In Jesus' name, **Amen.**

LECTIONARY TEXT

Philippians 3:4b-14

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

SERMON

“Pressing On!”

If there is an activity which can characterize our day, it is running. For several years now, it seems like more and more people are hitting the pavement and running. Marathons nearly every weekend in the summer, cross country, magazines on running, running shoes. Personally, I can relate to someone who said that whenever the idea of running comes to mind, I just lay down until the idea goes away. Maybe running isn't for all of us but even so it is a very popular activity.

Not only is running popular today. . .but back in the first century when the apostle wrote our reading for today, running was also a very popular activity: Olympic games, 776 BCE through 393 CE. The biggest event at these games was not platform diving, or figure skating, the biggest event was running. And so, it's not surprising that when Paul wants to help the people of his day understand the Christian life, Paul uses the metaphor of running. In fact, Paul imagines his whole life as being like a marathon, “forgetting what lies behind,” he says, “and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.”

The Greek word that we translate as “press on” in this passage has the connotation of chase or being in hot pursuit. Initially, Paul had been running after followers of Jesus, trying to exterminate them. And at this time, the prize he was running toward was that of being a religious success. He wanted to follow the Jewish rules and laws perfectly. And so, he trained hard and by outward measures, he succeeded.

He lists his spiritual resume, circumcised on the 8th day (not a convert but a life-long member of the faith) born of the tribe of Benjamin (a blueblood with a good family name) a Hebrew born of Hebrews (dyed in the wool, fluent in the native language) as to grades in following the religious rules and laws, accepted into Phi Beta Pharisees.

But then one day while Paul was walking on the road to Damascus, God, loving Paul, hunted Paul down and Paul was transformed. Paul realized that he had been running in the wrong direction. . .the direction of trying to be good enough. . .of striving to keep all rules. . .of judging others who did not

measure up. But there on the road to Damascus, Paul's eyes were opened and he was transformed to the truth. . .that God simply and absolutely desires us and loves us, not because of what we've done or haven't done. . .but because of God's love for us, shown so visibly in Jesus the Christ. And Paul realized that he had been running for the wrong prize, that he had been running in the wrong direction.

Maybe some of you remember a 1964 NFL game, The Vikings defensive lineman Jim Marshall scooped up a fumble by a San Francisco 49ers receiver and saw daylight ahead of him: none of the opposing team's red uniforms stood between him and the end zone, some 60 yards away. And Marshall took off running, as fast as a big defensive lineman could go. He heard the crowd roaring around him. He saw his teammates running alongside him waving their arms on the sideline. He cruised the last few yards into the end zone and celebrated his touchdown by jubilantly tossing the football up into the stand. But then a player on the other team walked up and gave him a hug. His eyes were opened. You see, Jim Marshall had just run to the wrong end zone, and scored 2 points for the guy in red. When you watch the replay, you hear the announcer yelling, over and over, "He's running the wrong way! Marshall is running the wrong way!" The only person in the stadium who didn't realize Jim Marshall was running the wrong way was Jim Marshall. Marshall was like the man driving down the highway whose wife called him on his cell phone to tell him to watch out, because she heard on the news that there was a crazy person driving the wrong way down that same highway. The man replied, "you're not kidding, honey. . .there is not just one crazy person going the wrong way; I can see hundreds of them!"

Paul realized he had been running the wrong way. And so he did what you do when you realize you're going the wrong way in your life; he turned around, made a 180. And Paul had a new prize, a new focus and that was Christ. Now what mattered for Paul was running after Christ, knowing Christ, seeking to live his life with the heart and mind of Christ. And so forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, Paul pressed on. If you've run a race you know that often you just have to keep going. You may be in discomfort or even feel some pain, but you keep on keeping on. You keep pressing on. And it's the same in our faith life; things aren't always easy, are they? But we press on, focusing on the prize of God's unconditional love for us made known to us in Christ Jesus.

Beloved people of God, heading out on the first day of the week to run again the race of life. . .today God would just want to encourage you and me to keep on pressing on. . .wherever life is hard for you right now and you are weary, know that God is right there with you. Keep pressing on. Or maybe you've been praying about something for a long time, wondering if prayer is really worth it, does prayer make a difference? Yes, keep praying . . . prayer helps us to know that whatever it is that we're going through we are not alone. God is right there in the journey with us. Keep pressing on as we see the events of this week and wonder what the world is coming to. As we more and more look to Christ, our hearts like Paul's soften and we begin to see the face of Christ in those around us.

Heard of a Special Olympic event a while ago. People lined up, race began, and one of the runners tripped and fell. The others heard crying and every one of them stopped running, turned around and went back to help their fellow runner. Brushed her off, got her up and together they all walked to the finish line. Does it get any better than that? As we live in this day where it is easy to be consumed with greed and self-absorption, we need images like this to remind us that the Christian life is not just about us. . .but we press on together. . .not alone. . .but as community knowing that Christ has made all of us his own, and together in hope and joy we can strain forward because of the prize which is already ours in Christ Jesus. Thanks be to God. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

CALL FOR THE OFFERING

One: Paul reminds us of the “labor and toil” which flow into the proclamation of the Gospel. Let us share generously with the community gifts of time, talent and treasure which will help to underwrite the ministry of this congregation and the wider church.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

All: Loving God, Creator of all that is. Bless the gifts we share today to be as you intend: help for all who are in need of loving care. May they do the work of your will on this earth in your holy name. Amen.

SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION



PRAYER OF CONFESSION

One: For the times when we have let complacency about our own circumstances take the place of advocacy for a just world for all

All: Lord, have mercy.

One: For the times when we have let the appearance of faithfulness stand in for truly faithful effort

All: Christ, have mercy.

One: For the times when we have created burdens of injustice and unfairness for others to bear

All: Lord, have mercy.

Silence

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

One: In Jesus Christ, our Messiah and teacher, we are forgiven and sent out to the world to model a leadership of justice for all, and joy in the reign of God.

COMMUNION HYMN

“LET US BREAK BREAD TOGETHER”

NCH #330

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

All: Gracious and loving God, you have made us one in the body of Christ, and nourished us at your table with holy food and drink. Now send us forth to be your people in the world. Grant us strength to persevere in resisting evil, and to proclaim in all we say and do your Good News in Christ Jesus. Amen.

CHORAL BENEDICTION

“GO NOW IN PEACE”

[HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/HEGHQvSGXJU](https://youtu.be/HEGHQvSGXJU)

BENEDICTION (1 Thessalonians 2:9-13)

God calls us to be thankful for the Word of truth we have received.
God calls us into the world to witness in truth to the reign of Christ.
God calls us to let the Gospel of Christ work through us, to bless the world.
Let us go forth as leaders into this troubled world—honest, courageous and hope-filled—
To love and serve our God.

Postlude

Stacy Pauly

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Remember in Prayer: Sandy Wentzloff recovering from surgery, Dick Carlson, Ewald Keller, Bill Cowell, Eunice Gasow, Aggie Schue. We pray for others who have been ill or are home bound and others 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.

Our sympathies, thoughts and prayers go out to Kathy Tourtellott and family for the loss of her two brothers Don and Ken.

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.

Pastor Dennis is usually in the office each Tuesday and 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

Giving our Gifts to God:

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

- ❖ **Offering plates will *not* be passed but you can still give! You can deposit your offering in the plate located at the entrance to the sanctuary.**
- ❖ Our **From the Heart Offering** in **October** goes to **Neighbors in Need**. Deposit your donation in the Heart basket near the Sanctuary doors.
- ❖ **Men's Fellowship meets every Wednesday at 2:00 p.m. in church in the Fireside Room.**
- ❖ **Gaylord UCC will once again be delivering Meals on Wheels during October.**
Volunteers are as follows:

Oct. 1 & 2	Dale & Cindy Johnson and Jan Walsh
Oct. 5-9	Chuck Klimmek and Pauline Marlinski
Oct. 12-16	Harriet Troidahl & Jan Walsh
Oct. 19-23	Howard and Fran Armstrong
Oct. 26-30	Donnie Swenson

Thank you for volunteering your time!

