

GAYLORD UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Second Sunday after Epiphany January 17, 2021



Morning Meditation

“We are never short on opportunities to answer the call to assist the widows, support the homeless, stand up for justice, and to preach Christ crucified and resurrected. That is the true calling of every believer.” — Andrena Sawyer

Welcome and News of the Church

Statement of Welcome

**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!**

- **We will be meeting in person for worship starting this Sunday! We are *live streaming* our service this Sunday, and each time we meet, on our Facebook page. The service is also recorded and will be available later for viewing from our web page and Facebook. To view our service online click on the link: <https://listen2god.org/weekly-message/>**
- **There will be a brief *Annual Meeting* following worship next Sunday, Jan. 24th. Business will be conducted in the sanctuary to allow for distancing. Like worship, **distancing and masks will be required**. There will be *no* food provided.**

THE CALL

Psalm 139

O LORD, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know it completely. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it. For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed. How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! I try to count them—they are more than the sand; I come to the end—I am still with you.

Prelude

Stacy Pauly

Call to Worship

One: Something made the hairs stand up on our necks. Was it you, O God?
People: Was it you that we saw blowing over the water?
One: Was it you that we heard in those steps?
People: Was it you that we felt in the beating of our own hearts?
One: Was it you that called our names?
People: Come, O God. Come to search us. Come to know us again.
One: We were knit in your womb. We have tried to count your works.
People: Come, O God, so that we can hear you calling our names. Here and now.

Gathering Hymn

"ARISE, YOUR LIGHT IS COME"

NCH #164

Piano: Play through hymn

**People: Arise, your light is come! The Spirit's call obey;
Show forth the glory of your God which shines on you today!
Arise, your light is come! Fling wide the prison door;
Proclaim the captive's liberty, good tidings to the poor.**

Piano: Play through hymn

**People: Arise, your light is come! All you in sorrow born,
Bind up the broken-hearted ones and comfort those who mourn.
Arise, your light is come! The mountains burst in song!
Rise up like eagles on the wing; God's power will make us strong.**

Piano: Play through hymn

INVOCATION

One: Almighty God, you call us each by name and we respond to you this day in worship!
You call us each by name and we come in thanksgiving for all you have done.
You call us each by name and we acknowledge that you are our God.
Be present in this time of worship, empower us through your Holy Spirit, inspire us
To rise up and open our hearts, minds, and spirits to your leading! In the name of the
one who called the disciples along the sea shore, Jesus, the Christ. **Amen.**

Spoken Doxology (unison)

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow
Praise God all creatures here below
Praise God above, ye heavenly hosts
Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost Amen!**

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

One: Holy One, you have called us by name. You will not let us lounge in bed.
You wake us up in the middle of the night to remember your good works.
You will not let us hide under the tree. You summon us from the shade to be changed to
our better selves.
You will not let us bury our secrets within the earth. You unearth our fears and speak
them aloud to call on your aid.
Forgive us, O God, when we cannot speak. Reveal the words we need most.
In Jesus Christ, we pray. **Amen.**

Words of Assurance and Pardon

(inspired by Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18)

One: Our God knows you by name. Our God knows what you fear.
For you are fearfully and wonderfully made. In your name, God's works are revealed
again to us. You are a loved and forgiven child of God. **Amen.**

Scripture

1 Samuel 3: 1-10, (11-20)

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread. Then the LORD said to Samuel, 'See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle. On that day I will fulfil against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. For I have told him that I am about to punish his house for ever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever.'

Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. But Eli called Samuel and said, 'Samuel, my son.' He said, 'Here I am.' Eli said, 'What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you.' So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, 'It is the LORD; let him do what seems good to him.'

As Samuel grew up, the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the LORD.

John 1: 43-51

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow me.' Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.' Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.' When Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him, he said of him, 'Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!' Nathanael asked him, 'Where did you come to know me?' Jesus answered, 'I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.' Nathanael replied, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' Jesus answered, 'Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.' And he said to him, 'Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

Sermon

"Lives Knit Together"

As many of you know I am a knitter. I knit various shawls, scarves and hats many of which I donate to our Mitten Tree at Christmas time.

This morning, I brought a scarf that I have started in order to share with you some insights into knitting.

Knitting is a method by which yarn is manipulated to create a fabric. It is a series of loops placed inside other loops. That is done by the use of needles. Until it is finished and you bind off, or finish the end so as to not unravel, it can easily be undone, or unraveled, intentionally or accidentally.

All I have to do to unravel it is slip it off the needle and start pulling on the yarn. Like this. . .

The Psalmist reminds us in Psalm 139:13-14 that we were made by God.

¹³ For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

This image reminds me of all the work it takes to create a knitted piece and how easily it can fall apart or unravel. Life begins to unravel when we turn from the ways of the spirit to living the ways of the flesh. Or turning our sights from God to our own desires.

In our reading from I Samuel today, we find the story of the call of Samuel to be a prophet to Eli, the temple priest.

But to understand this story, we need to back up to chapter 2 and learn of the activities of Eli's sons who were to follow in the priestly tradition.

We find that the sons of Eli, priests themselves, took advantage of their religious position by forcing worshippers to relinquishing part of their sacrificial offerings for the sons' personal benefit. We also discover that the sons of Eli had sexual relations with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting. And we learn how Eli, despite the pleas of the people and the warning of a mysterious man of God, did nothing to discipline his sons or correct the injustices they perpetrated. So, when the narrator tells us at the outset of the third chapter that the word of the Lord has become

rare, it is difficult not to attribute the rarity of God's word to the disobedience of Israel's priestly leaders. To the failings of Eli and his sons.

The priesthood was unraveling because the priest had turned their sights from serving God to serving themselves.

Also at this time, scripture tells us that Eli's eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see. An analogy of the lack of spiritual vision because of turning his sight away from God.

This is what leads into the call of Samuel. During his sleep, God calls Samuel's name and Samuel, thinking it is Eli, goes to Eli. And Eli says he didn't call, go back to bed.

This happens three times and finally Eli begins to realize that it may be God calling to Samuel and instructs Samuel upon the next call by God to say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

Upon being willing to listen, the Lord spoke to Samuel, telling him all that the Lord was going to do to Eli and his sons. This set a path for Samuel from this day forward. A path that led to be a major role in the history of the people of Israel. God told Samuel:

"I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle. On that day I will fulfil against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. For I have told him that I am about to punish his house for ever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever."

Life for Eli and his sons have unraveled to the point of not being able to do enough to be saved from the act of God that had been prophesied. There was nothing to stop the unraveling.

You see in knitting, when the work begins to unravel, you can lose a lot of stitches very easily. And it can unravel until there is nothing left except a pile of yarn. When the unraveling begins to happen you can do one of two things. You can stop and begin to pick up the fallen stitches and put them back on the needle, or you can tie a knot and stop the unraveling. Eli did nothing to stop the decline of the priesthood of his sons. God used Samuel as a knot to stop the unraveling and to start picking up the stitches once again.

In the event of Samuel's calling, Samuel differs from Eli in that when Samuel heard the call of the Lord, he listened and responded accordingly. This willingness to listen is a key to understanding God's will for our lives. A willing mind and a willing heart are required to stay in touch with our God.

God is constantly speaking to us. Each day the Holy Spirit is present in our lives with vision and direction. The constant challenge is whether we are listening or not. You see, the spiritual aspect of life is real. We sometimes limit our willingness to listen to God to an hour on Sunday morning. But God is speaking every moment of the day. Realizing that the call of God to service, as with Samuel, is not limited to one time and place, but to our life in all times and places.

How do we tune into this God? How do we hear this daily call? By putting ourselves in a place where God can speak to us and we will listen. This is done through taking our spiritual life seriously. Daily prayer, meditation, and study. What we do on a daily basis forms us. We become what we spend our time doing, what dominates our thoughts. We can spend our time seeing with our own eyes, or with the eyes of God.

With spirit eyes, when we experience times that would frustrate us and challenge us to act out in anger and in rage against another person, we pause to see what God would lead us to do. We would wait to hear that wee small voice within that tells us to be calm, be still, and respond in love, not to react with rage. When we fail to pause and listen for God, life continues to follow the way of frustration and anger. And we live a life of disappointment, of our situation and of our selves. This in turn leads to more frustration, disappointment and anger.

Listening to God is the knot that keeps our lives from unraveling. When we find our lives unraveling, if we turn to God to seek God's word, we are tying the knot which prevents our lives from continuing on the downhill slope. It is like the saying that "When you find yourself at the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on!" For us, it is to hang on to God!

Each of us is called and most of the time we do not experience major disruptions in our lives. There are few Damascus Road experiences. Instead, we experience a slow awakening to something, be that a life of a particular office in the church, an injustice that needs to be addressed, or a task that needs attention. Like Samuel, we often experience a period of uncertainty about exactly what and why God is calling. We are called to bring about a better life in one way or another than there was before our call.

In knitting when the unraveling has stopped, you can begin to pick up the stitches that have unraveled and start getting your needles going in the direction to finish the project. In our lives, once we choose to hang on to God, we can begin to turn our lives around to get them on track once again. The knot that stops the unraveling, God, is the point where we can stop doing what is right in our own eyes, as the sons of Eli were doing and ask God to give us vision through God's eyes for our lives. When our vision improves so that we can see God at work in our lives, we can begin moving forward once again.

And who knows what life will look like once we turn our lives around.

Morning Hymn

"I, THE LORD OF SEA AND SKY"

WOV #752

Piano: Play verse

People: I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in deepest sin my hand will save.
I, who made the stars of night, I will make their 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.

Piano: Play Refrain

People: I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend 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:

Piano: Play refrain

Prayers of the People

Call for the Offering

God knows you by name. God knows all that you can do.
God appears in your works for justice. God is revealed in our hope for change.
Let us carry this spirit into our giving.
Let us praise God with our gifts of tithes and offerings.

Dedication of the Offering

**O God, you offer us wonderful gifts.
In these offerings, may we make for change that doesn't yet exist.
May we give it a name. May we move through our fears.
May we dare to call this hope wonderful, in the hope of Christ Jesus, we pray. Amen.**

PIANO: PLAY THROUGH HYMN

People: You have come down to the lakeshore seeking neither the wise nor the wealthy,
But only asking for me to follow,
O Jesus, you have looked into my eyes; kindly smiling,
You've called out my name.
On the sand I have abandoned my small boat;
Now with you I will seek other seas.

Piano: Play refrain

People: You know full well my possessions. Neither treasure nor weapons for conquest,
Just these my fishnets and will for working.
O Jesus, you have looked into my eyes; kindly smiling,
You've called out my name.
On the sand I have abandoned my small boat;
Now with you I will seek other seas.

Piano: Play Refrain

Benediction

Send us, O God.
Send us to search for your name.
Send us to count your works.
Send us to feel you calling our name.
Send us, O God, into your dream.

Postlude

Stacy Pauly

Remember in Prayer: Greg Armstrong (Howard's brother), Dick Carlson, Bill and Nancy Cowell, Eunice Gasow, and Aggie Schue. We pray for health and healing for all people. Pray especially for those serving on the front lines caring for those with COVID-19. Pray for the ministries of our church. Pray for those serving in the military and for our local and national leaders.

Our sympathy and prayers go to Cindy and Francisco Monsivaiz on the passing of Cindy's father and prayers for her mother who is ill.

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

- ❖ **Gaylord UCC Annual Meeting** – Sunday, January 24 after church.
- ❖ Our January **From the Heart Offering** goes to the **Salvation Army of Sibley County.**

**Tithes, Offerings and Pledges 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.**

