

Straight from the "Hart"

Worship Service from February 6, 2022



Welcome Thank you for choosing to participate and enhancing our worship to God by being here or online or reading this script: to listen, to read, to sing, to pray, We really do appreciate it.

Apostle's Creed

Opening Prayer Heavenly Father, you are Lord of our lives. Your Son Jesus, by washing the disciples' feet, gave us the example of how to love one another. May our offerings of our resources, our time, our energy, our worship, our very selves - - serve to wash away fear and distrust - that as we gather, we may hear and heed your call, grow our faith, be bathed in your love, finding peace and inspiration for our lives ... in Jesus' name, Amen.

Call to Worship

Lay Reader: Come. Receive a clear vision of his path and strength for the journey. Be refreshed in the love of Christ and mutual care for each other as we gather in this place or online to worship. (Ad. from Jane V. Doull © 2000 United Church Publishing House in UM Worship & Song, Leader's edition.

Music Leader: Today we focus on gaining confidence in God's call and mission on our lives – so let's begin by singing "Standing on the Promises"

Music (vv 1,2,4) Standing on the Promises

Music Leader: You may be seated. Our confidence in his promises is strengthened when we are assured of our secure relationship within the love of Jesus. Let's sing Blessed Assurance...

Music (vv 1,3) Blessed Assurance



Theme

Once upon a time there was little, disabled, 6-year-old boy, the son of a poor cleaning woman and they lived in a tiny room several stories up on a narrow street of a large city. All day long he sat in his highchair looking out the window. If he leaned forward, he could see a bit of blue sky above the warehouse on the opposite

side of the street. Every once in a while a white cloud would drift by, but most often it was -- dull gray.

The street down below was much more interesting. There were people down there. In the early morning men and women hurried to work. Later, children came out and played on the pavement and gutters. Sometimes they danced and sang, but most often they were quarrelsome, 😡 as kids can be. In spring, the street-organ man came, and then everybody seemed happy down there. But the little boy could only sadly look out all day long.

It was only when he saw his mother coming that he smiled and waved his hand. One night he told his mother, "I wish I could help you. You work so hard, and I can't do anything for you."

"Oh, but you do! It helps me to see your face smiling down at me from the window. It helps me when you wave your hand. You make my work lighter all day to think you will be there waving to me when I get home."

"Then I'll wave harder," said the little fellow.

The next night a tired workman, saw the mother looking up and waving as she arrived at home. So he looked up too. He saw such a little, pinched face in the high window. But how cheery was his smile! The man laughed to himself and waved his cap. The boy, a little shyly, returned the greeting.

And so it went. The next evening the workman nudged his workmate to look up the poor little chap, sitting so patiently at the window." The boy's smile shone out as two caps below him waved in the air.

Days came and passed, and the boy had more friends. Women went out of their way to send a greeting to him. Life didn't seem quite so hard to them (or him) when they saw his bright smile and thought what his life must be like. Sometimes a flower found its way to him, or an orange, or a colored picture. When the children saw that he was watching them, they would stop their quarreling and played games to amuse him. It made them happy to see how he enjoyed their good times.

One night, one of the weary laborers told the mother, "Tell the lad we couldn't get on without him. It is a great thing to have a brave heart. It makes us all brave, too. Tell him that." And you can be sure that she did.

(ad. from *The Lame Boy* by Mrs. Charles A Lane in *The Moral Compass: Stories for a Life's Journey*, ed. with commentary by William J Bennett).

We've been looking at "God calls". We started by hearing how God calls us beloved and precious; and with that reassurance we have moved into God calling

Jesus to the mission as Messiah and Savior, but beyond that, we have also discovered that whether it was God calling prophets in the Old Testament or Jesus calling disciples in the New Testament, there is often involved in these calls an overwhelming sense of awe combined with a heightened awareness of our own limitations. This is followed by reassurances by action or word or both that we need not to fear but can indeed do what he is calling us to do if we only remember that he is with us -- no matter how bleak the circumstances.

We've heard the prophet Isaiah preach to a nation in crisis with an unhappy message about their future. Now we move forward in history and turn to Jeremiah who is the prophet of record beginning about 30 years prior and up to the time the nation encountered yet another consequence of their corruption and religious rebellion: falling to Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian Empire. It was during the beginnings of this new wave of tumultuous times, times when the norm was that God's people were not following God's covenant expectations -- that Jeremiah was born into a long family line of Jewish priests. And when the time came, he heard God's call.

Responsive Reading (Pstr - Pastor, LR - Lay Reader, **C - Congregation**)

Pastor: But he felt so intimidated in those difficult days that he had some serious doubts about his ability to do what was certain to be an unpopular, poorly received ministry. But God came to him anyway.

Pstr: The Lord's Message came to Jeremiah...

LR: "Jeremiah, I am your Creator. Before you were born, I set you apart to speak for me."

C: "But Lord, I am not a good speaker and I am too young."

LR: "Do not say you are too young. You will go to whomever I send you and say what I tell you to say. Do not be afraid of them, for I will be with you and protect you."

Pstr: Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched Jeremiah's mouth, and said,

LR: "I am giving you the words to speak for me. Know for certain that I am sending you with my authority."

C: "I've been given a job -- today my work begins."

Pastor: And for that to happen, it is important that God's breath, God's Spirit infiltrates every corner of our hearts and lives. Let's prepare our hearts for prayer by singing...

Prayer Music (vv 1,2,3) Breathe on Me, Breath of God

Pastor's Prayer Lord, you are our defender, our protection. We look to you for our every need, for you enable our very lives. Look favorably on we who gather in your name, for it is only your pleasure that matters. It is you who brings true honor by leading us to honorable living, and whatever our circumstances, we need never be afraid or ashamed of who we are.

Instead, we put our hope in you, for you formed us and watched over us from day one. You are our strength and fortress. This is why we crave your presence among us, with us, and within us. As we rely on you, rescue us from those things that weigh us down and deliver us to the freedom of new beginnings.

Praises and Petitions * We continue to pray for Lone Bennett, * for Jim Mallott, * for the family and friends of Roy McGaha, and * Jan Jepson, and * Rachel, all who passed away recently. * and for those supporting Michelle Matthee, and for her as she battles MS and cancer, and for Bill who is fighting with a coma and covid, and GBS. * we also add today, the family and friends of Larry Crook School, a friend of Bill Martin, who died January 26, * and for Karen Nowak's sister Rita who is hospitalized with multiple health issues. * and for those who have been named previously or not named at all but are on our hearts and minds, and we ask that you would undertake in all of these needs of people here, watching at home, in our communities, wherever we may be -- you know the needs. You know the joys. We just ask that you would be with us and through them all. For Lord, we are blessed, for you bless all those who find their strength in you, and whose life is a journey toward your heart, moving from strength to strength until our trust finally finds us face to face with the one who taught us to pray **LORD'S PRAYER**

One thing I hope that we are learning is that when we respond to God's call, our lives do not remain the same. So before the reading and sermon, let's and sing...

Music (1,2,33a-4b,5) The Summons

Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?
 Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?
 Will you let my love be shown? Will you let my name be known,
 will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?
 Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?
 Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare?
 Will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name?
 Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?
 Will you use the faith you've found to reshape the world around,
 through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?

Lord your summons echoes true when you but call my name.
 Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.
 In Your company I'll go where Your love and footsteps show.
 Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

CCLI # 2561297

Bible Introduction Jesus had already been successfully healing and teaching and becoming well known in the region, including the fishing village of Capernaum when he came back to visit Nazareth, his hometown. We heard two weeks ago that he entered the synagogue and taught them that he was fulfilling Isaiah's words of an anointed king who would usher in an age of gracious salvation and peace for all people. The people among whom he grew up were duly impressed, but they also asked, "Isn't this Joseph's son?" We inferred that they had doubts about Jesus' claims about himself. Today, this inference is confirmed as we pick up the story. Jesus has sensed or overheard their skepticism and responds to it.



Bible Reading Jesus said to them, "I know you will tell me the old saying: 'Doctor, heal yourself.' You want to say, 'We heard about the things you did in Capernaum. Do those same things here in your own hometown!'" Then he said, "The truth is, a prophet is not accepted in his own hometown. "During the time of Elijah it did not rain in Israel for three and a half years. There was no food anywhere in the whole country. There were many widows in Israel during that time. But the fact is, Elijah was sent to none of those widows in Israel. He was sent only to a widow in Zarephath, a town in Sidon. "And there were many people with leprosy living in Israel during the time of the prophet Elisha. But none of them were healed; the only one was Naaman. And he was from the country of Syria, not Israel." When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were very angry. They got up and

forced Jesus to go out of town. Their town was built on a hill. They took Jesus to the edge of the hill to throw him off. But he walked through the middle of the crowd and went away. (Luke 4:23-30 (ERV))

Sermon Called to Overcome Doubts

Jesus' message on that day in his hometown *sounded* wonderful. On the other hand, the Nazarenes had watched him grow up and they had their doubts he could rise to that kind of greatness. Maybe that wasn't only their opinion of Jesus, but of their self-image of their whole community. In Jesus' day, Nazarene was an actual synonym for the word "despised." When Philip came to his brother Nathaniel and told him he had found the one Moses and the prophets had written about, and that it was Jesus of Nazareth, Nathaniel expressed the popular opinion of the place: "Nazareth! Can anything good come from Nazareth?" (John 1:46)

Jesus uses a typical teaching style -- he puts to their face the arguments they thought and spoke behind his back. **God, Prove Yourself** He puts it into their mouths by saying, "You say, 'Doctor, heal yourself.'" Or to put it in the more generic terms we often hear today -- "If God would only prove himself by doing such and such, then I'd believe in him" -- of course the conditions of proof are such that even if God did comply with what they demanded, they'd probably write it off as something else and still not believe that God did it." In their case, Jesus said his childhood neighbors were saying, "Jesus, you struggled against poverty and the difficult conditions and reputation of Nazareth just like the rest of us. Now prove you've risen above all of that (and therefore can lift us from our that as well). Prove it by doing the kind of miracles we heard that you did over in Capernaum."

To be clear, there is nothing wrong with seeking God's compassionate help for anything, for healing, for his gracious salvation, or his timely rescue and intervention -- but concern for needs was not their concern -- they were simply seeking proof of power. God is not concerned about proving himself to anyone. He will not be coerced to submit to tests of his existence or power or love. He may choose to do so, but he will not do it because of coercion. **My motivations for my requests are...?**

Jesus moves right on to another well-known saying describing why exceptional people are not recognized as such by those who know them best. He illustrates with two powerful Old Testament prophets who were also seen skeptically by those who lived with them in their days. For this reason, they were not sent to their own

people but to foreigners who would recognize their greatness. Jesus is warning the Nazarene synagogue members (and maybe us?) that if they did not accept him as God's chosen Messiah, he too would be sent to outsiders.

Before these Old Testament stories that Jesus gave, Jesus' claim to be God's anointed only nagged the Nazarenes with doubts. The idea that God's grace and salvation could be diverted to other people and those others would become God's people -- people they considered not religious and therefore even more despised than themselves -- this enraged them to what they considered a justifiable murder. Nazareth is tucked up in a hollow, -- three sides of the town had mountain around it -- so they had plenty of options from where to throw Jesus off and fulfill their hopes -- to throw him to his death.

This blood thirsty hate was shared by the synagogue leaders in Pisidian Antioch and in Jerusalem against Paul when gave the same warning about their rejection of Christ leading to God's salvation being offered to the Gentiles. (Acts 13:45-47 ff, 22:21-22) But on this day in Nazareth, Jesus (perhaps miraculously, perhaps not) walks away from the crowd unscathed and went again to Capernaum to resume his ministry and call the fisherman to become disciples as we heard last week.

Jesus had no doubt about who he was -- or that he was going to bring God's salvation to the world. His challenge was overcoming the doubts of religious leaders -- a conflict from which he escaped death today, but doubts and disbelief would spread and grow (no matter what he did to prove himself) and when Jesus knew the time was right, the people conspired with political leaders leading to his death --- and salvation for us.

The prophet Jeremiah would face similar challenges. He knew right up front that people would doubt him and the truth of his mission -- that he was in service of a

<p>Jeremiah's Challenges Doubted by others Scope of Mission</p>
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global Creator, pronouncing God's word without compromise, even when it was uncomfortable and dangerous -- for example, he told King Zedekiah that he would be handed over (and exiled) to the Babylonian king (Jeremiah 37:16-17; 38:14-18) he would be speaking God's determinations about the rise and fall of great threatening nations like Assyria, and Babylon, and Egypt, and even the smaller surrounding nations that were often violently attacking Israel. (Jeremiah 1:10), and if that wasn't enough, add to it the religious leaders and false prophets who had their doubts and stirred up doubts in the crowds about Jeremiah's message by

offering an alternative message that sounded a lot better than what Jeremiah was warning them about. Just as people stirred up public opinion to oppose Jesus, and to oppose Paul later on. All this together and more added up to an intimidating formidable task for Jeremiah and as we heard, it stirred up plenty of self-doubts within the young prophet.

In fact, the opposition and pressures of his position would lead him into dark times in which he was, at times, overcome by despair (See **Despair** Jeremiah 20:7-18), (Most tradition holds that he wrote the book of Lamentations (poems of Lament, poems of grief and loss and pain and suffering).

And though that had not yet happened, it is not surprising that Jeremiah hesitated -- he could see that coming down the road, he hesitated, saying he lacked training and experience as a speaker, and that he was too young. (Jeremiah 1:6) **Self-Doubt**

The good news is that human inadequacy and inexperience give space for divine equipping. Paul argued that God's grace was sufficient, and God's power is all the more obvious in those who are weak. Therefore, Paul boasts and delights in weaknesses, in insults, persecutions, hardships and difficulties, because when he is weak, then God is strong through him, because Christ's power would be seen as it rested on him. (See 2 Corinthians 12:9-11)

Jeremiah needed a call so strong that it would reassure and sustain his faith in God and God's mission during dark, difficult days. In the first half of my ministry, it seemed like every clergy gathering I attended, we were asked to break into groups and tell each other our call stories. There seemed to be an understanding that at some point in most of our ministries, we would probably need to have our call stories so deeply engrained within us, in the forefront and foundation of our memory if we were going to make it through ministry. And Jeremiah faced much worse than we ever experience. **Call of Assurances**

This call (like many prophets) is a dialog between Jeremiah and God. It is strikingly familiar with the call of Moses, sends an underneath message --- for all who heard the message as well as Jeremiah himself -- that Jeremiah authentically stands in the succession of Moses - which puts him on solid ground as a valid spokesperson for God -- an assurance that both he and those who believed him would need in the years that would follow.

The first assurance is a direct word of God that came to him. (Jeremiah 1:4) The Word of the Lord came to me. **Direct word from God**

The “word” is not just words. For them, what a person thinks, and plans, and says and does are all part of “word” -- so that whole experience as God came to him: his message was heard, his presence was felt, it gave him confidence so that he would be able to speak and act in declaring what the message was.

The second assurance comes from knowing that God’s purpose and destiny for Jeremiah was set before he was even born. (Jeremiah 1:5) Remembering this in dark, desperate days may not have made Jeremiah feel comfortable and at peace in those dark and desperate days, but it was something he could hang on to, and help him from second guessing himself and thinking that he might be on the wrong track. Much like Jesus knew his destiny was to die for the world. It still gave him a sorrow that he’d rather not experience (as we know from the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36 ff)), but knowing that that was his destiny also gave him the courage to boldly move toward it and face it anyway.

Destined before birth

The third assurance comes in the same sentence -- and it is that we are known. (Jeremiah 1:5) I know you, I knew you; God says. The word does not mean just intellectually (I know who you are) -- it means I *know you* intimately, in relationship -- a deep personal, unwavering committed relationship.

Known

The fourth assurance is that God set Jeremiah apart for God’s exclusive use. (Jeremiah 1:5) We often use the word consecrated -- something dedicated only for sacred use (thus altar candles are never used for anything other than altar candles - they are dedicated to that purpose alone). Jeremiah himself used this phrase of the nation, often translated as “holy” -- the nation is set apart for God for God’s purposes, and Jeremiah is an individual set apart for God’s service as well.

Set apart

Closely related, the fifth assurance is that Jeremiah is appointed as a prophet to the nations. (Jeremiah 1:5) God authorizes Jeremiah to represent him, to be his voice to the world -- since God’s sovereign scope is not limited, neither will be the prophet’s declarations -- they will be for everybody.

Appointed

The sixth assurance on the surface doesn’t sound so much an assurance, but it invalidates Jeremiah’s reasons for not doing it. God says, “Don’t say you are too young.... you must go and do what I say.” (Jeremiah 1:6-7) Jeremiah belongs to God, so this wasn’t just a “Are there any volunteers out there?” It was a “summons”, which is why we sang that song.

No excuses

Excuses are dismissed, but that doesn't mean they aren't yet felt. The call's description is an all-encompassing summons, a call to full commitment -- but it is also vague and uncertain -- he hasn't given him everything he needs to say for the next 30 years, much less how people will respond to it. It will be one of those "learn as you go"... and for most of us, being asked to a full commitment to something we don't know exactly what we are committing ourselves to is a scary thing. Therefore, the seventh assurance, right on the heels of no **No fear** excuses is: "Don't be afraid, Because with every order I give," God says, "I will be with you and protect you and rescue you. (Jeremiah 1:8). Just as he rescued the nation from Egypt, as he rescued David from the bear and the lion, as the temple songs repeatedly sing about "rescue" in ways that went far deeper into the soul than mere physical circumstances.

And the final assurance is expressed almost as a direct quote from **His touch** Deuteronomy (18:18) where the Lord reaches out, touches the mouth, and says "I have put my words in your mouth" (Jeremiah 1:9) We just heard similar imagery in Isaiah, and it is also seen in the prophet Ezekiel. It is a powerful expression of God's commitment to be personally involved and connected with everything that God asks them to do.

In Jesus, Jeremiah and even in Paul, as well as many others; God's involvement covered the whole of their life – their family, their experiences, their training, those who influenced them, their grasp of cultural movements – all their past, bad or good, shaped them and prepared them for God's service.

Jesus' call, Jeremiah's call, these are not our calls – we are not called to be the Messiah, we aren't called to tell everyone what is going to happen to the nations in the next 70 years -- not even our own. He may or may not be calling us to full time professional ministry, but he has called us all to be Christian and serve as an important part of his kingdom team, and he certainly calls us to our families, our friends, and those we interact with on a regular basis, and he calls us to treat them all and others with the love of Christ. Our calls may not all be alike, may not all have the same elements within them, the same assurance, the same purposes and destiny -- but we are all called in some way -- and there are some consistent principles in how God calls and works through and with his people:

He knows us and is committed to us. He knows what we are capable of in his equipping hands. He may use our past experiences, good and bad, to shape us and prepare us. He will direct us to our highest purpose in him. He will go ahead

of us and prepare the way for us and be with us and involved in whatever and wherever and to whomever he sends us, regardless of what results (or lack of results) he is creating through us. And to do all this, as I said last week -- All he needs from us -- is all of us. A willingness to die to sin, to live the Christ ethic, and to reply positively to his call of this moment, of this hour, in this day, in this week, in this month – each day we rise and answer the call again by asking, “What Lord, do I do today -- and for who?”

Communion

Invitation This is in essence, the Communion covenant that Jesus establishes with us – that he is committed to us in love and direction, and we are committed to him in love and obedience. So all who are willing to say yes to him are invited to participate at the Communion table. Let’s prepare our hearts by singing... just one verse of “Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah...a prayer for God to nourish us with his power and abundant provision...

Music (v 1) Guide, Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land.

I am weak, but thou art mighty; hold me with thy powerful hand.

Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
feed me till I want no more;
feed me till I want no more.

Confession

Let’s continue to prepare our hearts by a time of confession... Dear holy and awe-inspiring Father, we come into your presence aware of our sins and failings. Though there is greatness in us and a deep longing for goodness, we too often deny our better selves and refuse to hear your voice calling -- calling us to rise to the full height of our humanity. At times, we find ourselves walking in darkness with our vision obscured. We do not look within, and we are unwilling to look beyond to those who need us. We are too weak to walk without your help. But with us as a strong friend, you teach us to walk by the light of your truth.



Assurance

For you are merciful and gracious, endlessly patient, loving, and true, showing mercy to thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and granting pardon. On this promise, and in the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven, so we confidently say

The Great Thanksgiving (Pastor **Bold text - with Congregation**)

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

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. From everlasting to everlasting, you alone are God. You created light out of darkness, formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we fail, your love remains true. You deliver us and covenant to be our God and speak to us through your prophets.

And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Holy are blessed is your Son Jesus Christ. Your Spirit anointed him to be and preach the good news of salvation and peace with God through his suffering, death, and resurrection, delivering us from sin and death, and made with us a new covenant. In remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and cup and at home as well. Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body. The bread which we break is a sharing in the body of Christ. The cup over which we give thanks is a sharing in the blood of Christ.

When the Lord Jesus ascended, he promised to be with us always, in the power of his Word and Holy Spirit. On the night in which he gave himself up for us,

Receiving of Bread and Cup

He took the bread, and he lifted it up and he gave thanks for it, and he broke it, and he gave it to his disciples, saying -- “This is my body, which is broken for you. As often as you eat it, eat it in remembrance of me.” Take and eat.

And when the supper was over, he took the cup, and he lifted it up and he gave thanks for it, then he gave it to his disciples, saying “This is my blood, the blood of the new covenant which is offered for the forgiveness of your sins and the sins of many, as often as you drink it, drink it in remembrance of me.” Take and drink.

Communion Blessing/Prayer

Lord, it is by our love that we are known to be your followers. It is by trusting that we become fully human, It is by changing that we hope to grow. What we were when we came we will not be when we leave, for we have met each other in your presence at your table, have heard you call our name, and we will never be the same. Because we stand on the foundation of Jesus Christ, we can overcome doubts about you, doubts that others have about us, and our own doubts about ourselves. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Music (vv 1,2,3) My Hope is Built

Blessing

Now as you go, may you be strengthened, comforted, and inspired to live lives worthy of God, who calls you [to fulfill his purpose and your destiny] and covenant[s] with you [and assures you as you] to participate in his kingdom and family. Amen.

