

Worship Resources - *A Different Perspective*

5th Sunday after Epiphany, Year B,

7th February, 2021

1 Corinthians 9:16-23 CEV / Mark 1:29-39 CEV

Prelude *Come, Now Is The Time To Worship*

Music by Brian Doerksen, Arranged by Carol Tornquist,
played by church musician Annie Center,
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<https://youtu.be/bbwz45dYNuE>

Intro / Call to Worship

Have you not known? **Our God is the everlasting God,
Creator of the ends of the earth.**

Have you not heard? **God does not faint or grow weary.**

Have you not known? **God's understanding is unsearchable.**

Have you not heard? **God gives power to the faint and strengthens the powerless.**

Have you not known? **Those who wait for God will renew their strength *they shall mount up with wings like eagles.***

We come to hear. **We come to know.**

Thanks be to God.

I'm glad to welcome you to online worship with Olympic View Community Church. We seek to welcome all of God's children to join us in bearing witness to the radically transforming power of God's love.

As we gather today, let's reflect on how we walk with and support each other as the body of Christ, as we listen to the following song Together We Serve, written by Daniel Charles Damon and performed by Josh Wilson of the Frenchtown Presbyterian Church.

Reflection video *Together We Serve - Lyric Video*

Music Director Josh Wilson plays Hymn #767 - Together We Serve
Text and Music: Daniel Charles Damon, 1996, posted to YouTube
by the Frenchtown Presbyterian Church,
used and reported under CCLI license 20261246

<https://youtu.be/85VcV6KqPBo>

Invocation

Gracious God, hear our songs. Gather us in as one people, that we may worship you as one body. Heal our broken hearts and bind up our wound. that we may come into your presence healthy and whole. As we seek your wisdom. Help us to discern your greatness, as we honor the power and glory of your love. Amen.

We light a candle today to represent the Spirit burning within us, and among us, guiding our time together. (light candle) Amen.

In our Epistle reading from First Corinthians today, we hear how Paul worked in his ministry to reach all people. As we listen to these words, let's reflect on our own efforts to connect with those who may be radically different from ourselves.

Epistle Reading 1 Corinthians 9:16-23 CEV

I don't have any reason to brag about preaching the good news. Preaching is something God told me to do, and if I don't do it, I am doomed.

If I preach because I want to, I will be paid. But even if I don't want to, it is still something God has sent me to do.

What pay am I given? It is the chance to preach the good news free of charge and not to use the privileges that are mine because I am a preacher.

I am not anyone's slave. But I have become a slave to everyone, so that I can win as many people as possible.

When I am with the Jews, I live like a Jew to win Jews. They are ruled by the Law of Moses, and I am not. But I live by the Law to win them.

And when I am with people who are not ruled by the Law, I forget about the Law to win them. Of course, I never really forget about the law of God. In fact, I am ruled by the law of Christ.

When I am with people whose faith is weak, I live as they do to win them. I do everything I can to win everyone I possibly can.

I do all this for the good news, because I want to share in its blessings.

Scripture Video

1 Corinthians 9:16-23

A Servant Of The Gospel

Lectionary bible reading

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1f-9zjaBLg>

A Time of Prayer

Today we come together as a community to share together our joys and concerns, and lift them to God in prayer. If you would like to share a specific request to be included in our communal prayer time, please leave a comment in the video below, or email myself at: vicarglenn@gmail.com, and I'll make sure to include that request in next week's service, as well as send a prayer chain email, if you would like.

Joys and Concerns

Today, let's remember Myrna in our prayers, as she was able to receive her second vaccination shot this past Wednesday, and keep her in prayer as her surgery has been rescheduled for this Wednesday. May her procedure be effective and uneventful, and her recovery brief.

Let's also keep those among us in prayer who are looking for work in these challenging times. May they find the support and security they need.

Let's also remember those who grieve today. May God comfort and support them in their loss.

But we also give thanks for all of those who have been able to receive vaccinations, and we pray that all will be able to benefit from such treatment.

Let's bring these concerns and others in our lives to God together in prayer.

Pastoral Prayer

God, we wait, we watch, we long for you. Renew our powers, refresh our spirits, restore our well being; for you give new strength to the faint and power to the powerless. May your church be found working among those who lack resources or rights. May we seek to care for those who cannot care for themselves. We pray for the lowly and the humiliated. We pray for relief organizations, especially.... God, be to them a tower of strength.

We pray for the great powers of the world, the strong nations, and mighty governments. May their power be used properly that the poor are protected, the

weak are not exploited, and no one is oppressed. We pray too for multinational corporations who often wield more power than many governments, that in their relentless pursuit of profit they may take those steps of compassion and concern which will benefit them as well as those powerless to stop them.

We give thanks for all who have cared for us in times of weakness; for those who have uplifted our spirits and given us new hope. We pray for our friends and families, especially any who are finding life difficult at the moment. We pray for any in our community that may feel neglected or rejected.

We pray for all who are in weakness of body, mind or spirit, all who have come to the end of their tether. We think of all who are losing their mobility or agility, those who are losing their memories, and all who have lost their grip on reality; of those who no longer trust in anyone, and those who doubt the love of God; we think of all who are caring for loved ones in illness.

We give thanks that Christ is our healer and our companion on the Way; he will not allow us to be lost. We pray for loved ones departed who are renewed and refreshed in the love and light of God. May the Light of the world truly be that lamp set out on the lampstand to them. Amen.

In our gospel lesson this morning, we hear of Jesus healing Peter's mother-in-law, and her subsequent selfless service of others. As we listen to these words from Mark, let's think about how we share the grace we've been given with others.

Gospel Lesson Mark 1:29-39 CEV

As soon as Jesus left the meeting place with James and John, they went home with Simon and Andrew.

When they got there, Jesus was told that Simon's mother-in-law was sick in bed with fever.

Jesus went to her. He took hold of her hand and helped her up. The fever left her, and she served them a meal.

That evening after sunset,^[a] all who were sick or had demons in them were brought to Jesus.

In fact, the whole town gathered around the door of the house.

Jesus healed all kinds of terrible diseases and forced out a lot of demons. But the demons knew who he was, and he did not let them speak.

Very early the next morning, Jesus got up and went to a place where he could be alone and pray.

Simon and the others started looking for him.

And when they found him, they said, "Everyone is looking for you!"

Jesus replied, "We must go to the nearby towns, so that I can tell the good news to those people. This is why I have come."

Then Jesus went to Jewish meeting places everywhere in Galilee, where he preached and forced out demons.

Gospel Video

Mark 1:29-39

The Healing Of Peter's Mother-In-Law

Lectionary bible reading

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h32E2sSylvnk>

Message – A Different Perspective

I'd like to start this morning by sharing a little anecdote with you illustrating the importance of perspective. A guy was crossing the street to visit his neighbor. As he started to cross the street, a car was bearing down on him, so he stopped and backed up to the curb. The car stopped, so he started to cross, and the car started to move toward him. He changed direction and went back to the curb and the car moved toward him. Then he moved to run across the street and the car swerved in that direction. He moved left and the car moved left. He moved right and the car moved right. Finally he just stopped in the middle of the road. The car screeched to a stop right in front of him. He walked around to the driver's window and the window rolled down. The man was surprised to see a squirrel behind the driver's wheel. The squirrel said, "I just wanted you to know what it feels like." Perspective can make a big difference, can't it? What we accept as the normal or proper way, can mean something completely different from someone else's perspective.

That's what Paul is getting at in our lesson this morning from his first letter to the church at Corinth. Paul's journeys across the Greco-Roman world led him to interact

with a great variety of people: people of different socio-economic backgrounds, people of a wide variety of faith and religious influences, people of different ethnicities and cultures, in short, quite the mosaic of humanity. These circumstances led him to write of his experiences like that of a chameleon. He states that “to the Jews I became a Jew... to those under the law I became as one under the law... to those outside the law I became as one outside the law... and to the weak I became weak... I have become all things to all people.” On the surface, it sounds as if his appearance and convictions change colors based on his environment, on those he’s trying to reach. And that would be an exhausting way to be, wouldn’t it?

Constantly changing who you are to meet the expectations of those around you. Does that sound familiar? Do you know people who live like that? I know I do. In fact, I’d wager that most of us, at one time or another, put on a different persona to “fit in” in certain situations, so that we don’t feel isolated, or excluded. It’s certainly something that teens struggle with in the high school world full of cliques and social circles. Who you are associated with and what your online persona is can define who you are to other people, and all too often, sadly, how you define yourself.

In such a life, one loses the bedrock of one’s values and identity, and can find themselves feeling alone and lost, even when they are “in” with the right crowd, and surrounded by the “right” people. So from that perspective, I seriously doubt that’s what Paul is suggesting. And to come to that conclusion misses some key elements of this passage. First of all, in the verses preceding today’s reading, he discusses his being commissioned as an apostle for the purpose of sharing the gospel. Throughout today’s reading he is consistent that his purpose in all these people he identifies with is to share the gospel with them, and lead them to Christ. Secondly, he also stresses that he is being consistent with his own beliefs and ethics. He stresses that while he places himself outside of common conceptions of God’s law in order to reach Gentiles, he remains under Christ’s law.

In saying that, he is contrasting Christ’s fulfillment of the Torah law with those who still practice all the hundreds of observances required under the previous interpretation of that law. In using the term “Christ’s law,” he’s not referring to another list of rules, but a new way of living. He’s modeling the way of Christ by following the same pattern of sacrifice on behalf of others. As I mentioned last week, a big part of the church in Corinth was made up of those who were sure they had it all figured out. They knew how to live in the world and still be true to Christ’s

teachings, so much so they had little time or patience for those who struggled to find the same understanding, for those they viewed as “weaker” than themselves.

Paul points out that he became weak so he could reach the weak to make the point that those who struggled had value. Which doesn't mean he faked struggling in his own application of the gospel but more that he made the effort to change his own perspective. He didn't actually change colors like some kind of Christian chameleon to fit in wherever he found himself in ministry. Instead, he took the initiative to step into the shoes of those he was addressing. If they were Gentiles, he would take the time and make the effort to imagine what the gospel of Christ would look like from their perspective.

What did it mean to give up the comfort and security of worshipping the mainstream gods of one's culture, of no longer participating in the festivals celebrating the deities of one's state religion. How could it benefit someone in that position to give that all up to follow Christ? Likewise, how would the gospel look to someone still enmeshed in following the Judaic religion and law? What benefit would there be for someone in those shoes to give that security up to practice what would be considered heresy from that perspective. Paul was making a point to those “holier than thou” Corinthians that they needed to get off their high horses and step into the shoes of those they witnessed to, to present a persona of empathy and compassion. His message was that they, like him, needed to live into Christ's law, to be willing to sacrifice self for the benefit of others.

What lessons can we take from this? How much do we resemble the church in Corinth in our attitudes? Are we willing to be “all things to all people” in the same sense as Paul? Well, the first step is to look at how we view “others” in our midst. When we see those who differ from us, in looks, in lifestyle, in faith practices, or without faith practices, is our first inclination to compare who they are with our own standards, our own perspective? Or do we take the time to imagine what their world is like? How did their life experiences make them who they are today? From that perspective, what does the gospel sound like to them? And how can we relay that gospel to them in a meaningful impactful way?

Instead of giving a disapproving look to those whose appearance, behavior, or lifestyle differs from our own, maybe our commission is to take a step back, and put ourselves in their shoes, to try to see things from their perspective. Perhaps we are

being called to see how we can connect with those very people from their own perspective, to make our own space welcoming to them as well, to change them from being “them” to being a bigger part of “us.” But in order to be all things to all people as Paul states, to change our perspective from “them to us,” we need to encounter other people different from us, and be welcoming to all who do come our way. Jesus in our reading from Mark today reached that same conclusion. In order to spread the gospel, the message and audience can’t remain static. I’d like to wrap up today with a story that highlights the importance of stepping outside our own perspective.

In 1873, a Belgian Catholic priest named Joseph Damien De Veuster was sent to minister to lepers on the Hawaiian Island of Molokai. When he arrived, he immediately began to meet each one of the lepers in the colony in hopes of building a friendship. But everywhere he turned, people shunned him. It seemed as though every door was closed. He poured his life into his work, erecting a chapel, beginning worship services, and pouring out his heart to the lepers. But it was to no avail. No one responded to his ministry. After twelve years, Father Damien decided to leave. Dejectedly, he made his way to the docks to board a ship to take him back to Belgium. As he stood on the dock, he wrung his hands nervously, recounting his futile ministry among the lepers. As he did, he looked down at his hands, he noticed some mysterious white spots and felt some numbness. Almost immediately he knew what was happening to his body. He had contracted leprosy. It was then that he knew what he had to do. He returned to the leper colony and to his work. Quickly the word about his disease spread through the colony. Within a matter of hours everyone knew. Hundreds of them gathered outside his hut, they understood his pain, fear, and uncertainty about the future. But the biggest surprise was the following Sunday. As Father Damien arrived at the Chapel, he found hundreds of worshippers there. By the time the service began, there were many more with standing room only, and many gathered outside the chapel. His ministry became enormously successful. The reason? He finally understood and empathized with them.

So what about us? Are we willing to step into the shoes of another? Can we see from another’s perspective or are we hopelessly chained to our own tunnel vision? The choice we have before us is what path we will follow: the Corinthian holier than thou road, or the empathetic way of Paul and Father Damien. May we make our choice wisely, as we only find Christ on one of those roads. Amen.

Call to Serve.

All of us have our thresholds – places beyond which it can be so difficult to move. For many of us, generous giving represents such a threshold. Some of us have given in the same way (sometimes even giving the same amount) as we did when we were little children. Some of us have never given before. Some of us want to give, but have no idea how. Giving takes so many shapes – but, like any spiritual discipline, the key is for that gift to grow. We grow in our knowledge of God, we grow in our faith. If we aren't already, may we not seek to grow in our giving, as well? In the time we give? In the money we give? In the love we give? Let us ponder this growth, and may God shine God's light across the threshold so that nothing can hold us back from this growth.

As we continue to seek to be a place of compassion and support to our community, we ask that you give prayerful consideration as to how you may support our efforts. If you would like to make a donation, gifts can still be mailed to our church office, or online donations can be made through the link in the video description. Thanks again for all your support, and may we continue to work together to keep being a place of ministry that seeks to promote the growth of God's shalom around us. This morning, as Annie shares the following song, let's give some thought as to how we, as individuals, and as a community of faith, can work to better understand the perspective of others different from ourselves, and how we can promote such understanding and grace.

A Time for Reflection

Reflection on the Word [Video] *How Great Is Our God*

Music by Brian Doerksen,
Arranged by Carol Tornquist,
played by church musician Annie Center,

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<https://youtu.be/y9gsvwrm5HY>

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

God of all that is, all we have, all we are – we give. We give these gifts as we reach across the thresholds of our concerns. We give these gifts, knowing that they will give so much more. Through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

God's steadfast love endures forever. There is no limit to God's great mercy. God showers you with kindness and compassion. Revel in it. Feel it wash over you. Soak it in. And knowing the abundance of God's love that is within you, share it with others. Go and share the love of God, the compassion of God, and the peace of God with the world. Amen.

As we extinguish this candle, carry its divine spark into your lives this week, sharing God's love and light with all you encounter. Amen.

Postlude *Forever*

Music by Chris Tomlin, arranged by Carol Tornquist,
performed by church musician Annie Center,
used and reported under CCLI Streaming License 20261246

<https://youtu.be/JBxzofwMyeM>