

## Worship Service “Letting Go”

Pentecost 3, Year C,

26th June, 2022

Galatians 5:1, 13-26 MSG / Luke 9:51-62 NIV

### Prelude

Opening Music (Video)

[Free](#)

written and performed by Ginny Owens,

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### Welcome Guests / Announcements

### Pass the Peace

### Opening Music *God is Here Among Us* 16

### Call to Worship *[Responsive]*

One: Holy seekers whom God loves,  
Come to receive your goodly heritage.  
Here among your gathered family  
Take refuge in the Divine.

All: **We come to know the presence of a loving God**  
**We are here to be shown the path of life**  
**Let us bless the One who gives us counsel.**  
**Let us together celebrate the ways of the Holy God. Amen**

### Invocation

Come, Holy God  
Offer us your mantle of love and power in this place.  
In the shelter of its love let us lay before you  
our troubles, our longings, our hopes.  
Let its power open us to new ways  
through difficulty, struggle and loss  
into your Spirit's realm of joy and peace.  
Come, Holy God,  
in your presence there is fullness of glory. Amen.

## Epistle Reading - Galatians 5:1, 13-26 MSG

Christ has set us free to live a free life. So take your stand! Never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you.

It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life. Just make sure that you don't use this freedom as an excuse to do whatever you want to do and destroy your freedom. Rather, use your freedom to serve one another in love; that's how freedom grows.

For everything we know about God's Word is summed up in a single sentence: Love others as you love yourself. That's an act of true freedom.

If you bite and ravage each other, watch out - in no time at all you will be annihilating each other, and where will your precious freedom be then?

My counsel is this: Live freely, animated and motivated by God's Spirit. Then you won't feed the compulsions of selfishness.

For there is a root of sinful self-interest in us that is at odds with a free spirit, just as the free spirit is incompatible with selfishness. These two ways of life are antithetical, so that you cannot live at times one way and at times another way according to how you feel on any given day.

Why don't you choose to be led by the Spirit and so escape the erratic compulsions of a law-dominated existence?

It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time: repetitive, loveless, cheap sex; a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage; frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness;

trinket gods; magic-show religion; paranoid loneliness; cutthroat competition; all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants; a brutal temper; an impotence to love or be loved; divided homes and divided lives; small-minded and lopsided pursuits;

the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival; uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions; ugly parodies of community. I could go on. This isn't the first time I have warned you, you know. If you use your freedom this way, you will not inherit God's kingdom.

But what happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard - things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments,

not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely. Legalism is helpless in bringing this about; it only gets in the way.

Among those who belong to Christ, everything connected with getting our own way and mindlessly responding to what everyone else calls necessities is killed off for good - crucified.

Since this is the kind of life we have chosen, the life of the Spirit, let us make sure that we do not just hold it as an idea in our heads or a sentiment in our hearts, but work out its implications in every detail of our lives.

That means we will not compare ourselves with each other as if one of us were better and another worse. We have far more interesting things to do with our lives. Each of us is an original.

## **A Time of Prayer**

### **Joys and Concerns**

#### **Pastoral Prayer**

Lord our God,

we Your people come to You this day fully aware that we need your presence and your help in our lives, yet aware as well that we often fail to stop and to turn to you for that help. We get caught up in the troubles and the turmoils of daily living—we become busy with the goals that we have set for ourselves and those that come to us from our work and our families and our friends. We strive to be loving, we seek joy and peace, we desire to be gentle and patient and kind, to show goodness, and to have self-control—and yet these things all too often elude us. Help us, Lord, to root ourselves more deeply in you; to seek your will for our lives; to stop and to listen for your voice when we are troubled; to fully rely on you when we strive to do what is right; to remember you and trust in you when we are assaulted; to meditate on your goodness and your gracious will when we begin each day—so that like trees by a stream which send down their roots to the water, we may produce by your power the fruit of your Spirit.

Gracious God, we remember the concerns and prayers that have been lifted up this past week by members of this congregation and our community— concerns and prayers that we now pray for with them:

- \* For all those who are lonely, fearful or in pain
- \* for those who struggling with addictions and dependencies that cripple their living and harm the world about them...

We pray too, O Lord, for those who come fresh to our minds and hearts this day: perhaps a family member we have prayed for over many weeks or years, or a friend who is struggling to find meaning in his life, an acquaintance who needs healing, a stranger who needs the comfort of your Spirit as they grieve. Lord, hear now your people as they pray and name those names, those concerns, before you.

Thank you, Lord, for being our God and making us your people. Thank you for growing in us and for helping us to grow. Thank you for the ministry you entrust to us. May your will be done in us and by us, both now and forevermore. **Amen.**

## **Hymn**

***Spirit of God, Descend***

**502**

## **Gospel Reading**

**Luke 9:51-62 NIV**

As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.

And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him;

but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem.

When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?"

But Jesus turned and rebuked them.

Then he and his disciples went to another village.

As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go."

Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

He said to another man, "Follow me." But he replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family."

Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

## Message – "*Letting Go*" - by Pastor Glenn



Freedom. What does that mean to you? That word is bandied about a lot in our common language. From Janis Joplin's "Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose" in the song Bobby Magee to Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Free as a bird now..." we can mean many different things when we think of being "free." While very different in flavor, both of these examples highlight a sense of being unencumbered, of not being weighed down in some fashion.

We often think of freedom in a political sense as the ability to do as we choose, without a lot of rules telling us what is possible and what is not. President Herbert Hoover once said that "Freedom is the open window through which pours the sunlight of the human spirit and human dignity" and Nelson Mandela said "For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others."

Recent events have brought the issue of freedom to the forefront of the political debate. Regardless of your convictions, the level of passion involved is largely rooted in the issue being considered an issue of personal freedom. Clearly the concept of freedom plays a big part in our lives. We often view it as something positive, and as Americans, something we often think of as vital to our happiness and satisfaction.

But are we really free? Does what we think of as independence and freedoms really lead to our being satisfied? In our culture many of us have a great amount of freedom available: we can choose where we live, what work we do, what we choose to say, who we spend our time with, and on and on. Yet often, those very things we cling to as our cherished freedoms, can also wear us down. We get caught up in our careers, our bills, our houses and our stuff. Our home lives can dominate our minds and worry can creep in to consume us. We can find ourselves suffering mentally and physically from the stress we find ourselves in.

But what are we to do? We have to work, we have to care for our family and loved ones, we have bills to pay. But do we keep those worries in perspective? Is there a sense of balance? We often think that we need to obsess over the everyday problems of life but what does that get really get us?

In our gospel lesson this morning, Jesus is talking about those very kinds of concerns. While his examples may seem a little extreme, I think we miss the overall point if we focus too much on the specifics. These were all people who were stuck worrying over those parts of their lives that lead to so much stress for many of us. Family duties and connections, those things that dominate such a big part of our lives. And don't get me wrong, these are important things. But a big part of the gospel message is not to let those things bring us down. We are meant not to spend our lives obsessively worrying about our obligations and commitments, how we will make ends meet.

In Matthew 6, Jesus tells us "do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'"

Jesus is urging his followers through these vignettes to seek balance in how we live our lives. Likewise Paul, in his letter to the Galatians gives us a laundry list of behaviors to avoid because they focus our attention too much on ourselves, on behaviors that lead us to be too self-focused and caught in our own little dramas. Instead we are to turn our attention outward, to the love of our neighbors that is to be our greatest commandment, and to love God with our whole being. And the biggest part of that love is the faith and trust that we will be cared for, that God will provide.

So where do you find yourselves today? Do you find yourself worrying about how things will turn out, full of doom and gloom for tomorrow? Or do you focus on today, the here and now, seeking joy in every moment you are blessed with? As people of faith, we're given freedom to make that choice.

Author Robert Young once said, "I have on my table a violin string... it is free. I twist one end of it and it responds. It is free. But it is not free to do what a violin string is supposed to do--produce music. So I take it, fix it in my violin and tighten it until it is taut. Only then is it free to be a violin string. By the same token, we are free when our lives are uncommitted, but not necessarily to be what we were intended to be. Real freedom is not freedom "from," but freedom "for." He makes a good point that we often view the freedom we have as being freedom from something: freedom from tyranny, freedom from excessive control,

freedom to live our own lives. But what if we viewed our freedom as freedom for something? What is that purpose, why are we given this freedom?

Both Jesus and Paul tell us that our freedom is for living out the gospel, for showing the world what it means to live a kin-dom life here and now. Is the life we lead one of faithful confidence in the here and now, or is it one of worry about tomorrow? Where are you this morning? It is a tough road to walk at times. We are beset by so many things that lead us into “freedom from” thinking instead of “freedom for thinking. We have legitimate things to worry about. We have responsibilities to our family, our jobs, our community. We can’t help but worry sometimes. But we also have a different path in front of us. One that leads to a kin-dom life here and now. One that offers hope and confidence that we can live a life of joy right here and right now.

Do we make our focus the freedom to live free in Christ, or on our own?!’d like to close today with sharing with you an unfortunate malady that often affects many people.



It’s called the Eeyore Syndrome. People with this syndrome walk around acting like Eeyore from Winnie the Pooh. They choose to look at the gloomy side of life. Their eyes are cast down, their countenance is cheerless, and they have no enthusiasm or anticipation for life. Joyful people cannot have The Eeyore Syndrome.

The Eeyore Syndrome is not a Fruit of the Spirit. The Eeyore Syndrome is not a realistic view of life nor faith-filled.

William Ward writes words about the discouragement that can apply to the Eeyore Syndrome. He says, "Discouragement is dissatisfaction with the past, distaste for the present, and distrust of the future. It is ingratitude for the blessings of yesterday, indifference to the opportunities of today, and insecurity regarding strength for tomorrow. It is unawareness of the presence of beauty, unconcern for the needs of our fellowman, and unbelief in the promise of the kin-dom of God ushered in by Jesus.

We can contrast the Eeyore Syndrome with the example of Pooh. Someone who is satisfied with the freedom for the here and now he’s given. Someone who is content with whatever honey he comes across and is always happy with whatever transpires, because he knows he can be confident in the providence that all will be cared for, whether he worries about it or not. We all have a choice to live as Eeyore or Pooh. Which freedom will you choose?

## **A Call to Serve**

We have inherited a double share of God’s Spirit and we are grateful. May we, as we live by the Spirit, also be guided by the Spirit to provide for those who have need for charity or justice. Give generously in Jesus’ name from the riches you possess.

## **A Time for Reflection - *Musical Interlude***

### **The Prayer of Thanksgiving**

Our hearts are glad as we help work your wonders through our gifts.  
We ask your wisdom as we put our hands to the plow  
and look not back but only forward,  
visioning the kin-dom of God.

**Hymn**

***For Christ and the Church***

**416**

### **BENEDICTION**

Wherever two or three are together, Christ is among us. Wherever two or three are together, the kingdom of God is at hand. Wherever two or three are together, love sustains us. Wherever two or three are together, we reflect the image of God's oneness. Wherever we are together, we know God's love, grace, forgiveness, and peace. Go and share the good news, together, that we are God's beloved community, in which all are forgiven, all are restored, and all shall be made well. Amen.