

Worship Service “*Ordinary People*”

Epiphany 3, Year A, 22nd January, 2023

Isaiah 9:1-4 NRSV / Matthew 4:12-23 NRSV

Prelude (Video)

[Praise to the Lord](#)

Music by Lobe Den Herren, arrangement by Sharon Wilson

Opening Music (Video)

[The Bright Wind Is Blowing](#)

written by Cecily Taylor, John W. Maynard, CCLI SONG # 4372279,
Words: Stainer & Bell Ltd (Admin. by Hope Publishing Company),
Music: Stainer & Bell Ltd (Admin. by Hope Publishing Company),
arr by Richard Morrison, performed and posted to YouTube by the
Choir of Hendon St Mary, directed by Richard Morrison, used and
reported under CCLI Streaming License 20261246

Welcome Guests / Announcements

Pass the Peace

[We Gather Together](#)

Netherland Folk Song, arrangement by Sharon Wilson

(second video)

[Now Thank We All Our God](#)

Music by Johann Crüger, arrangement by Sharon Wilson
CCLI SONG # 7197414, Music: 2021 Reawaken Hymns
(Verwaltet von Reawaken Hymns LLC), used and reported
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Opening Hymn (Lyric Video)

[Sweet Hour of Prayer](#)

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music by William B. Bradbury, posted to YouTube by sda songs

Call to Worship [responsive]

One: When the news of the world brings despair,

All: **We remember that God always comes through.**

One: Through the Scriptures we hear the stories of perseverance,

All: **We sing songs of praise and faith.**

One: In our prayers we put our trust in God,

All: **In our love for one another we find our hope.**

One: We join our hearts in this time of worship,

All: **Knowing that God calls us in faithfulness to be one.**

Invocation

Gracious Light-Bearer, Into the shadows of our isolation you speak words of life and community. Challenger of our lives, you call us from places we call home to lead us more deeply into the world you love. With your gentle, healing touch you redeem the broken places of our lives and you heal the wounded places of the earth. Inspire our worship here this day, so that we may receive liberation in your word, and be filled to overflowing to share your reconciling love throughout the earth. We pray in Jesus' name, **Amen.**

Words of the Prophet **Isaiah 9:1-4 NRSV**

But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined.

You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.

For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

A Time of Prayer

Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

Eternal God, you are the maker of us all, and we are your creation, people formed in your image, as individuals, as community; formed and fed and furnished with understanding of who you are and of who and whose we are.

We worship you today in recognition of your calling, of your communicating, of your caring to invite us to share in your creative and healing work. We are here because we have heard you speak in us and through others. Help us, dear Lord, to ever respond to you and your invitation to your grace.

God of all our moments, of our days and our nights, you speak and you act in the world around us, not only to call all people to you, but also to direct and guide us in the way of healing and wholeness. Awaken us Lord, to hear what you would say to us.

Help us to open our ears, our eyes, and our hearts to your presence. Help us to know when it is your voice we are hearing and it when it is our prejudices and desires to which we are paying heed.

Lord, we pray that your church may rise up with renewed commitment in answer to your call, that your people may be instruments of your grace and love. We pray for those who consider themselves inadequate and dismiss or avoid your calling in their lives. Give them a new vision, a vision in which you are their strength and their hope.

We pray for those who, in answering your call, must leave the known for the unknown, the oasis for the desert, the comfortable for the uncertain. Grant them courage and steadfast faith.

We pray too, today, O Lord, for those in want and need – for those of us and of the larger community who suffer in body or in soul. We remember before you those who struggle with illness and injury. Those who suffer from the weight of sadness and grief, Those who live under the shadow of violence and oppression, Those without food and shelter security.

May your presence strengthen them and give them solace, May your healing hand bring healing and comfort to places of pain and emptiness. And may your love lift them to find the joy that come in relationship with you.

Loving Father, bless us all with an abundant faith, a fruitful ministry, a joyful life. Bless us and all those who gather together to continue the work of Jesus, who came to heal, save, and deliver us all, Amen.

Hymn (Lyric Video)

[*Take My Life*](#)

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text by Frances R. Havergal, music by Henri A.C. Malan, adapted by Lowell Mason.
Performed by Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, CA and posted to YouTube
by Martijn de Groot.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 4:12-23 NRSV

Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee.

He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali,

so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

"Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—

the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned."

From that time Jesus began to proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen.

And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people."

Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them.

Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

Message ***Ordinary People***

So today we meet on the Third Sunday after Epiphany. A few weeks ago, I was asked what those little notations meant in our bulletins and on the opening Powerpoint screens each week. So today I'm going to open with a little bit of liturgical education. Most pastors go by something called the Revised Common Lectionary which outlines four recommended scriptures for each week of the year, in a three year Gospel cycle.

So Year A primarily features Matthew for the Gospel reference, Year B highlights Mark, and Year C focuses on Luke. Poor John does not get his own year, he's just sprinkled in various places in the years of the other gospels. Each of the three yearly cycles is then split into seasons or days for major events in the gospel stories such as Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost, and the rest of the year is called "Ordinary Time." Generally we label Sundays in Ordinary time by how many Sundays they are after the last event or season. So we are on the Third Sunday since Epiphany, and we'll keep increasing that number until we begin our observation of Lent. So this week we are well into this little slice of Ordinary Time between Epiphany and Lent.

While the origin of "ordinary" is actually related to the term "ordinal" and meant to convey numbers and counting, such as the Third Sunday after Epiphany, it's also come to mean more of our everyday sense of that word, as something regular and routine in our lives. Ordinary Time is "ordinary" in part because of what it is not: it is not Advent or Christmas or Lent or Easter. It is not, therefore, the time during which the church is engaged in preparations for, or celebrations of, the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Ordinary Time is also ordinary because of what it is: it is the liturgical season that makes up most of our time – thirty-three or thirty-four weeks of every year, depending on the dates of Epiphany and Easter. It is the time we are called, like Peter and Andrew in this account from Matthew, to follow Jesus, not because of the star that announced his birth, nor, yet, because of the excitement of a trip to Jerusalem, but simply because he has said, "Follow

me.” It is not a liturgical accident that today, in the “after Epiphany” period and before Lent and Easter, that Jesus tells us to follow him and that for the next six weeks we will be listening to him preaching from the Mount.

There is a sense we are being reminded in these weeks between Christmas and Easter that, for all their wonders, neither of these great celebrations is sufficient to sustain us in the hard work of following Jesus during the daily ordinariness of our lives. In this first slice of Ordinary Time, we are called to step back from the anticipation, joy, and celebrations of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany and reflect on who this Jesus or Emmanuel, God with us, is, and what impact that has on our “ordinary” lives. We are called, like Andrew and Peter, to follow Jesus, to listen to him as he commands repentance and proclaims the good news of the kin-dom, in the absence of bright stars and wise men. Just a voice that strikes our ear amid the ordinariness of our lives and announces that God is with us. How we respond to that voice is what our gospel lesson this week is all about.

In last week's lesson from John, Jesus encouraged those who had questions to “come and see.” In today's reading he calls disciples directly, encouraging the fishermen to “follow me.” Jesus calls them to step out of the ordinary into something new. And starting a new endeavor can be exciting, can't it? The hope and anticipation of a new adventure can have a strong appeal. So it's not necessarily surprising that these guys felt drawn to this new guy offering something new and exciting. As I mentioned last week, it's very likely that fishing is all that they've known. They were fishermen; their fathers were most likely fishermen. This was the only life they've known and was probably their preordained lot in life in the class strata of their day, their ordinary life. And the ordinary can often be defined as routine and predictable, but it can also feel stifling and mundane, particularly if it's a daily struggle to make ends meet and get by. But it's not just a new adventure Jesus is offering, but a different way of living.

When he says the kin-dom of heaven draws near, he's not referring to the utopian vision of the afterlife, but the perfection of God's created order, God's original intent for Creation becoming manifest in the teachings and life of Jesus. It's a chance to leave what once was for what could, or should be, and follow that life that entered the world at Christmas. When Jesus says to “repent,” we need to keep in mind the original meaning of that word which is a change of mind or a reorientation. Jesus is offering them the chance to join in this reorientation of the world to something God-oriented instead.

As I worked on this sermon I couldn't help but think of where the bigger church is today, and where we find ourselves as a congregation. For many, the established ordinary church life has become mundane and stifling. Numbers continue to drop across all denominations. Likewise, we as a congregation have seen the same thing occur in recent years. The question is, how is that light that so appealed to the first disciples shining through us? Because if the light can't be seen, how do we expect to be the fishers of people we are called to be? What will attract them if that light has faded? As we head out into a new week, let's reflect on what adventures Jesus might be calling us to, and how might we “repent” and reorient ourselves to the kin-dom that draws near, in something that may

seem quite out of the ordinary, dare I say extraordinary. I hope and pray as we come to the conclusion of our current visioning process that we will find where Jesus wants to lead us, and enable his light to shine brightly through us as his disciples in this world. Amen.

A Call to Serve

With a clear voice, Jesus calls us to accept the costs and joys of Discipleship, and the challenges of living in peaceful unity with those who are different from one another. As we take time to reflect on how we can live out that life of service, let us remember that we give and work and love on behalf of Christ's whole and undivided body on earth, and let us celebrate the gift of unity that is ours through the Spirit and our generous hearts.

A Time for Reflection (*Video interlude*)

[Deserted Garden](#)

written by Florence Price, Rachel Matthews,
piano; Annie Center, viola

Prayer of Thanksgiving

God, to you we give thanks for the many gifts and blessings you provide to this community every day.

May our acts of giving inspire other ways that we may "fish for" your people, seeking out those who need your nourishing spirit. And we pray that you will multiply them and the gifts of all your faithful people like loaves and fishes, that your love may be revealed on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

HYMN (Lyric Video) [Here I Am, Lord](#) 395

words and music by Daniel Shutte, performed by the Choir of Hexham Abbey and congregation, posted to YouTube by donhenri01

Benediction

Go now in peace, for Christ has called you to live in peace among your brothers and sisters in Christ. Go now in courage, for Christ has called you from the places of your life to be agents of redemption and partners in healing. Go now in joy and thanksgiving, for Christ is our light! Go now as one body, to love and serve God as you love and serve the world!

Postlude (Video) [Count Your Blessings](#)

Music by Edwin Excell, arrangement by Sharon Wilson