

Hymns for Single Service

Spirit of the Living God #393, Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart #500, Go Light your World

Call to Worship

L: God's glory is pouring forth from the heavens.

P: Earth below receives the good news with great joy.

L: The promise is sure and true, that Jesus has come to show us the best ways to serve God.

P: By serving and caring for others, we truly serve God.

L: Come, let us prepare ourselves for joyful service.

P: Lord, make us ready for great service in your name. AMEN!

Prayer of Confession

Waiting God, you know us all too well. We listen to this episode in the life of Jesus. We hear the astonishment of the people gathered in worship as Jesus proclaims the mandate and scope of his ministry. It is what they had hoped for and also what they have feared.

Change and challenge are always difficult. We are more inclined to turn our backs on opportunities of service than pitch in to affect the needed changes that will promote healing and wholeness. Give us courage to be willing disciples. Help us to be people of promise and hope. In Jesus' Name, we offer this prayer. AMEN.

1 Corinthians 12:12-31a

12 Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

15 Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. 19 If they were all one part, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

21 The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” 22 On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, 24 while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, 25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 28 And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.

Luke 4:14-21

14 Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside.

15 He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

16 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

18

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,

because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

The Word of God for the People of God

Message **“Holy Spirit Living”**

In the previous passage, we saw that after His baptism by John, He was driven by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness of Judaea. There He fasted for forty days. At the end of this period, while he was as humanly weak as was possible, He was tempted three times by Satan. Unlike the children of Israel who had succumbed to temptation in the wilderness, Jesus resisted Satan and rebuked him. The Devil then departed, looking for an even better opportunity to tempt Him. We will see that it would be at the Garden that Jesus, in a moment of even greater weakness facing the horrible death on the cross would be tempted again to save Himself.

In-between these two events was the vast bulk of Jesus' earthly ministry. He would teach and heal the people. He would cast out demons. This He would do by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus could have performed these miracles and wonders in His own authority as the Son of God.

But at the Temptation, He refused to use His own power. Instead, He relied on the power of the Holy Spirit. This is yet another example for us. Even Jesus relied on the Holy Spirit, and He didn't have to. This tells me that we need to rely more on the Holy Spirit. We cannot stop Satan in our own authority, but the Holy Spirit is able to deliver us from him. If Jesus expects His church to minister in the power of the Spirit, then He as our example, chose to rely on the same power. Acts 1:8 talks about the Gospel of Luke as being what “Jesus began to do and to teach.” Acts is the continuation of the ministry of Jesus. Acts ends at Chapter 28, but as someone has said, we are in the 29th chapter of Acts.

I am a firm believer that if we allow the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, our whole attitude can change. We will treat others kinder showing more respect to those around us.

I'm reminded of a story of a woman with a baby who got on a bus and sat down. She was carrying the baby in one of those baby-carrying thingies on her back. I don't know what they are actually called. But anyway, when she got to her seat, it was obvious she was worn out and frazzled from carrying her baby on her back all day. Once seated, she pulled him off her back and held him in her arms. This little rascal started squirming and fussing which only added to her frustration.

At the next bus stop, a man got on the bus and when he looked at the fussy little boy he said to the woman, “Ma'am, that is the UGLIEST baby I've ever seen in my life!”

She was naturally offended as he just walked by and sat down. Almost to the point of tears, another man boarded and sat down beside her. Seeing she was upset, he asked, “What's wrong ma'am? Are you okay?” She said, “That man over there was so rude to me. I am so upset. I want to go back there and give him a piece of my mind.”

The man said, “Well I think you should. No one has the right to be that rude, especially to people you don't know. You shouldn't put up with that. Go tell him off.”

And she asked, “Do you really think I should?” And he said, “Yeah, go ahead and give him a piece of your mind. You go on and I'll hold your monkey for you.”

This is definitely not Holy Spirit living. Saying things without thinking of the offensive or adverse effects. It matters how we talk to others and treat others. There are times when we carry things on our back that do weigh us

down and we allow those things to cloud our minds. When our minds are clouded, and we are exhausted, hurtful things can spew from our mouths. God wants us to unload that baggage and get rid of it.

I know God wants us to start now with freedom and hope, courage and joy, strength, boldness and a renewed passion for God. I know God wants you to experience some things you've never experienced before, but you won't be able to until you ask God for help. Ask Him to help get that baggage off your back.

There was a young woman that carried around a lot of baggage on her back. She had experienced abandonment from her dad who deserted his family when she was just four years old. She had experienced rejection from her mother who told her almost every day she was a mistake and she wished she had never been born. She had suffered from sexual abuse from a male-babysitter her mother left her with after school who raped her every day as he watched her for two years in her preteens. She had recurring nightmares after once witnessing a man being shot right before her eyes in her teens while on vacation at a motel.

After hearing this sad story, one can't help but question what's going on here. How can so many horrible things happen to one person? Why did this young woman end up with so much baggage on her back? The true question is how do you get rid of it?

Not all of us have as much baggage as this young woman, but all of us more than likely have something that is bothering us. We carry it around like it doesn't matter. But it does matter. Even the smallest thing can show it's ugly head at any given moment. God does not want us to carry this around weighing us down. He wants us to be free of our baggage.

God wants us to turn it over to Him. We can give all our burdens and baggage to Jesus Christ and in turn we receive freedom.

The young woman I spoke of earlier, gave her life to Jesus, with all of those things she was carrying and her baggage was gone. Her abandonment, her rejection, her abuse, her fear and hurt all gone.

This has to be why Jesus in His first recorded sermon said, "I came to preach deliverance to the poor;... to heal the brokenhearted... to preach deliverance to the captives... to recover sight to the blind... to set at liberty them who are bruised."

Psalm 23 is no doubt the most well-known and beloved Psalm in the book of Psalms. In it, David begins with, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want, He restores my soul, He guides me in paths of righteousness, we don't have to fear evil because God is right there with us all the time, and He gives us comfort. Surely goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our life: and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

These are such comforting words of all the wonderful things we experience by having Him as our Savior. David does not say, "Surely worry and hurt and anger and envy and regret and mistakes follow me all the days of my life and I'm not experiencing a lot of this joy and peace in the Christian life everyone's talking about."

Maybe it's time to get rid of some of that baggage that God never intended you to carry around anyway. Maybe it's time to have a heart to heart conversation with God. Once that baggage is removed, only then can we focus on Holy living which is what God intended all along.

Jesus instructs us to, "Love God and Love our neighbors. How can we expect to fulfill this commission unless we are loving those who are, quite literally, our neighbors?"

God has placed you and me, this congregation, on this plot of land, in this building at 101 N Altamont Ave. in this very time of history for a very specific reason. We are to be Christ in our community. We are to reflect God's light and love to those around us.

And the homes that surround this building are filled with people who are suffering, lonely, lost, poor in Spirit, poor financially, prisoners to sin and addictions and unable to see any way out of the mess they are in.

What can we do? We are one body with many parts. What can we do? In 1st Corinthians 12:27 Paul says to the church, "you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." What can we do? We are the body of Christ gathering here at Weller United Methodist Church. What can we do?

This is a huge responsibility, and challenge but it is also a gift and a honor.

And so, we are to be the body of Christ to the people on Altamont Ave., Four Points Rd., Main St., Westview Dr., Kelbaugh Rd., Laurel Ave., Moser Rd., Smith Rd., Motters Station Rd., Catocin Furnace Rd., Colliery Dr., Roddy Rd., Hammaker St., Stull Dr. We are to be Christ's body to all these people and to all the people on the roads I didn't mention.

We must be something real, something tangible, something that pervades this community with the love of Christ. Jesus has chosen us to build His Kingdom and that includes those around us in this community.

Saint Teresa of Avila put it this way years ago: "Christ has no body now on earth but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which compassion of Christ is to look out on a hurting world. Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which to bless now."

Before our passage this morning Jesus was baptized in the Jordan river by John the Baptist. And we are told that Jesus returned from His baptism "full of the Holy Spirit" and then was led by the "Holy Spirit" into the wilderness for a time of testing as Jesus refused the pathways that the devil offered. In the wilderness Jesus refused to be lured by wealth, power and spectacle.

Then we are told, at the beginning of our lesson for this morning, that "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit of Galilee." And Jesus went into a synagogue in Nazareth, His hometown. And this is where Jesus read from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. "He unrolled and found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Then Jesus rolled up the scroll and began to tell the people: "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Nearly every biblical scholar I've read, will tell you that in reading and interpreting these Words from Isaiah, Jesus is stating His mission.

Therefore, it should go without saying that, as Christ's Body, this is our mission statement as well.

When Jesus announces: "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing," He is proclaiming that the promised liberating work of the Holy Spirit is present in Him. And the author of Luke, who is the same guy who wrote down the words in the book of Acts, traces that continuing fulfillment through the acts of the church. And it continues in us today through the power of the very same Holy Spirit.

In this world today, so many of us spend so much time acting as if we have it all together. We spend so much money trying to look better, get fitter, appear younger. There is so much pressure on us externally from the culture at large and internally from ourselves to not need anything or anyone.

It's no wonder that the Good News of Jesus is often rejected or ignored by so many. And you know what? The stories we tell ourselves about being perfect, the commercials we pay attention to telling us that if we just purchase this product, we'll never feel insecure again, these are lies. And deep down, we know it, don't we?

Today, are we Holy Spirit living? Are we willing to get that baggage off our back and live like we have truly heard the Good News? Jesus does not want us to walk around and be weighted down. He wants us to be free, to be His body, His hands, His feet. He wants us to love those around us and be there for them.

Holy Spirit living is relying on the Holy Spirit to guide us. Holy Spirit living is taking Jesus' mission and living it out for Him. Preach Good News to the poor, proclaim freedom for the prisoner, recover sight for the blind, and to release the oppressed.

There are many around us in our neighborhood, in the world who are hungry for the Word of God. I leave you with one question. What can we do?