

Sunday Worship - September 17, 2023
Narrative Lectionary Year 2, Week 2



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God Gives a Promised Child
Genesis 18:1-15, 21:1-7

First Presbyterian Church of Mount Vernon, Iowa

*“Striving to live as Jesus lived –
confronting injustice with love, compassion, service.”*

Welcome to Worship

**Please stand if you are able*

PRELUDE

RINGING OF THE HOUR

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Leader: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: In this holy ordinary place,
with these holy ordinary people,

All: God appears.

Leader: In this holy ordinary time,
in this holy ordinary life,

All: God is doing amazing, unexpected things.

Leader: In our holy ordinary hospitality,
in our holy ordinary laughter,

**All: God catches us unawares,
and provides the impossible.**

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*HYMN #24 God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens

- 1. God, who stretched the spangled heavens infinite in time and place,
flung the suns in burning radiance through the silent fields of space,
we, your children in your likeness, share inventive powers with you.
Great Creator, still creating, show us what we yet may do.*
- 2. Proudly rise our modern cities, stately buildings row on row.
Yet their windows, blank, unfeeling, stare on canyoned streets below,
where the lonely drift unnoticed in the city's ebb and flow,
lost to purpose and to meaning, scarcely caring where they go.*
- 3. We have ventured worlds undreamed of since the childhood of our race;
known the ecstasy of winging through untraveled realms of space;
probed the secrets of the atom, yielding unimagined power,
facing us with life's destruction or our most triumphant hour.*
- 4. As each far horizon beckons, may it challenge us anew,
children of creative purpose, serving others, honoring you.
May our dreams prove rich with promise, each endeavor well begun.
Great Creator, give us guidance till our goals and yours are one.*

*CALL TO CONFESSION

Leader: God is light and truth, yet too often we live among shadows and lies.

People of God, let us acknowledge who and whose we are;

let us ask our powerful God to illumine us with grace and truth in Jesus, our Lord.

Let us pray:

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**All: You appear, O God,
and we confess that we do not always look up to see,
nor do we spring into action in welcome.
Though we pray to get a glimpse of you,
we normally don't expect it will actually happen,
so we hold back our hospitality,
uncertain whether strangers deserve our effort.
You appear, O God,
and we confess that we do not always engage the conversation,
and when we do, we don't know how to believe it
so we dismiss what we hear,
unwilling to trust *those* people we don't know how to receive.
You appear, O God,
and we confess that our assumptions hold us back.
We confine you to what we have known,
scorning the idea you could do a new thing.
Forgive us, Lord God.
Make us open enough to welcome the stranger,
bold enough to be honest in community,
responsive enough to embrace the wonders you are doing,
even now.**

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Pause for silent prayer.

*WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Leader: Amen.

Hear the good news!

In Christ, God embraces us, forgives us, and strengthens us to live a renewed life.

All: Thanks be to God for this gift! Amen.

*RESPONSE #583 Gloria, Gloria (in Latin)

Gloria, gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Gloria, gloria, alleluia, alleluia!

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

Leader: The peace of Christ be with you.

All: And also with you.

DISCOVERY TIME – Noisy Offering

Today's collection is for Presbyterian Disaster Relief

SCRIPTURE

Leader: In the beginning was the Word.

All: And the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Leader: And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Genesis 18:1-15 (Common English Bible) - Visitors to Abraham and Sarah

Reader 1: The Lord appeared to Abraham at the oaks of Mamre while he sat at the entrance of his tent in the day's heat. He looked up and suddenly saw three men standing near him. As soon as he saw them, he ran from his tent entrance to greet them and bowed deeply. He said, "Sirs, if you would be so kind, don't just pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought so you may wash your feet and refresh yourselves under the tree. Let me offer you a little bread so you will feel stronger, and after that you may leave your servant and go on your way—since you have visited your servant."

They responded, "Fine. Do just as you have said."

Reader 2: So Abraham hurried to Sarah at his tent and said, "Hurry! Knead three seahs of the finest flour and make some baked goods!" Abraham ran to the cattle, took a healthy young calf, and gave it to a young servant, who prepared it quickly. Then Abraham took butter, milk, and the calf that had been prepared, put the food in front of them, and stood under the tree near them as they ate.

They said to him, "Where's your wife Sarah?"

And he said, "Right here in the tent."

Then one of the men said, "I will definitely return to you about this time next year. Then your wife Sarah will have a son!"

Reader 1: Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were both very old. Sarah was no longer menstruating. So Sarah laughed to herself, thinking, "I'm no longer able to have children and my husband's old."

The Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Me give birth? At my age?' Is anything too difficult for the Lord? When I return to you about this time next year, Sarah will have a son."

Sarah lied and said, "I didn't laugh," because she was frightened.

But he said, "No, you laughed."

Genesis 21:1-7 (Common English Bible) - Visitors to Abraham and Sarah

Reader 2: The Lord was attentive to Sarah just as he had said, and the Lord carried out just what he had promised her. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son for Abraham when he was old, at the very time God had told him. Abraham named his son—the one Sarah bore him—Isaac. Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old just as God had commanded him. Abraham was 100 years old when his son Isaac was born. Sarah said, "God has given me laughter. Everyone who hears about it will laugh with me." She said, "Who could have told Abraham that Sarah would nurse sons? But now I've given birth to a son when he was old!"

Leader: For the Word of God in scripture, for the Word of God among us,
for the Word of God within us,

All: Thanks be to God.

REFLECTION

Rev. Lori Wunder

HYMN #850 In a Deep, Unbounded Darkness

1. *In a deep, unbounded darkness, long before the first light shone,
you, O God, beyond all merit worked a wonder faith makes known:
in your mercy, in your mercy, you embraced us as your own, evermore and evermore.*
2. *Though our world is everchanging, you are constant, firm, and sure,
faithful to your covenant promise. Trusting you, we live, secure:
singing praises, singing praises, long as heart and breath endure, evermore and evermore.*
3. *Joy transforms our lips to boasting only in your matchless grace,
sending Christ to dwell among us, Word made flesh in time and space:
Friend and Savior, Friend and Savior, in whose life we glimpse your face, evermore and evermore.*
4. *God of Hagar, God of Sarah, God of nomad Abraham;
God of Miryam, God of Moses, Fiery Pillar, great I AM:
lead us homeward, lead us homeward, to the love-feast of the Lamb, evermore and evermore.*

SHARING OF JOYS & CONCERNS AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

All: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

CALL FOR THE OFFERING

Leader: With thankfulness we give in gratitude and joy.

With prayerfulness we give in sacrifice and love.

With hopefulness we give in commitment to God.

Let us be faithful stewards of our time, our talents, and our money, this day and every day.

OFFERTORY

~ Other offerings may be placed in the basket located at the back of church or given online at www.firstpresmv.com

*DOXOLOGY #70 What Does the Lord Require of You?

What does the Lord require of you? What does the Lord require of you?

Justice, kindness, walk humbly with your God.

To seek justice and love kindness and walk humbly with your God.

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

We offer ourselves with our gifts, Giver and Sustainer of Life, confident that you have a purpose for them and for us. Expand our limited vision to embrace new possibilities. We rededicate ourselves to you with our giving. May our offerings reach beyond the barriers of our former thinking and doing. In the Spirit of Christ, we would pray and live. Amen.

***HYMN #547 Go, My Children, with My Blessing**

1. *Go, my children, with my blessing, never alone.
Waking, sleeping, I am with you, you are my own.
In my love's baptismal river I have made you mine forever.
Go, my children, with my blessing, you are my own.*
2. *Go, my children, sins forgiven, at peace and pure.
Here you learned how much I love you, what I can cure.
Here you heard my dear Son's story; here you touched him, saw his glory.
Go, my children, sins forgiven, at peace and pure.*
3. *Go, my children, fed and nourished, closer to me.
Grow in love and love by serving, joyful and free.
Here my Spirit's power filled you; here my tender comfort stilled you.
Go, my children, fed and nourished, joyful and free.*

***SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAY BLESSING & BENEDICTION**

***POSTLUDE**

All are welcome in the Social Hall (lower level) to enjoy coffee, juice, treats and conversation.

Thank you to the following people for helping with our service this morning:

Mina Massaquoi, Accompanist

Ann Cannon, Liturgist

Gerald Gerber, AV

Pat Hogan, Fellowship Host

First Pres Mount Vernon Staff:

Lori Wunder, Pastor

Jonathan Walsh, Director of Christian Education

Position Vacant, Music Director

Donna Warhover, Office Manager

Trent Bowman, Custodian