

Sunday Worship - September 20, 2026

Noisy Offering & September Birthday Blessing



Won't You Be My Neighbor? Week 1

Just the Way You Are - Loved

Mark 12:28-34, 1 Corinthians 13

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

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Leader: The Lord be with you.

ALL: And also with you.

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Praise the Lord!

People: The Lord's name be praised!

Leader: The love of God is greater far
than tongue or pen can ever tell.

People: Though tongue and pen falter, our hearts overflow.

We long to fill the skies with praise to God.

Leader: Then let us give thanks to God with all our hearts.

Let us tell of all God's wonderful deeds!

All: We will be glad and exult together.

We will sing praise to the Most High God!

~Diane Zaerr Brenneman, Words for Worship 2, #20

*HYMN #366 Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

1. *Love divine, all loves excelling, Joy of heaven, to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling; all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, thou art all compassion; pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation; enter every trembling heart.*
2. *Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit into every troubled breast;
let us all in thee inherit; let us find the promised rest.
Take away the love of sinning; Alpha and Omega be;
end of faith, as its beginning, set our hearts at liberty.*
3. *Come, Almighty, to deliver; let us all thy life receive;
suddenly return, and never, never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing, serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray, and praise thee without ceasing, glory in thy perfect love.*
4. *Finish then thy new creation; pure and spotless let us be;
let us see thy great salvation perfectly restored in thee:
changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise.*

*PRAYER OF RECONCILIATION

L: In a sermon, Fred Rogers said, "For Jesus, the greatest sin was hypocrisy. He always seemed to hold out much greater hope for a person who really knew the truth about himself or herself even though that person was a prostitute or a crooked tax collector. Jesus had much greater hope for someone like that than for someone who always pretended to be something he wasn't." Jesus' message, according to Fred, is "Be who you are. We'll grow from there."

Let us pray together:

**All: Loving God, take all the broken bits of our lives
Our broken promises; our broken friendships; our differences of opinion;
Our different backgrounds, and shapes and sizes,
And arrange them together,
Fitting them into each other to make something beautiful
Like an artist makes a stained glass window.
Make a design—your design—
Even when all we can see are the broken bits.**

~Anonymous, from *The Classic Treasury of Children's Prayers* (1999), p. 133

Time of silence

*WORDS OF ASSURANCE

L: Fred Rogers wrote, "When we hear the word that we are not lovable, we are not hearing the Word of God.

No matter how unlovely, impure or weak or false we may feel ourselves to be, all through the ages God has still called us lovable."

Friends, hear this good news:

P: In Jesus Christ we are forgiven, and loved. Amen.

*RESPONSE #796 You Are Holy

You are holy, you are whole. You are always ever more than we ever understand. You are always at hand.

Blessed are you coming near. Blessed are you coming here to your church in wine and bread, raised from soil, raised from dead.

You are holy, you are wholeness; you are present.

Let the cosmos praise you, Lord!

Sing hosanna in the highest!

Sing hosanna! Sing hosanna to our God

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

Leader: With the assurance that we are loved and accepted exactly as we are, let us share the peace of Christ with one another.

The peace of Christ be with you.

ALL: And also with you.

DISCOVERY TIME - Noisy Offering for World Communion Offering

SCRIPTURE

L: In the beginning was the Word.

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

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

Mark 12:28-34 (NRSV) – The Greatest Commandment

Reader 1: One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him,

Reader 2: “Which commandment is the first of all?”

Jesus (congregation): “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

Reader 2: “You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that ‘he is one, and besides him there is no other’; and ‘to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,’ and ‘to love one’s neighbor as oneself,—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

Reader 1: When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him,

Jesus (congregation): “You are not far from the kingdom of God.”

Reader 1: After that no one dared to ask him any question.

1 Corinthians 13:1-7a (NRSV) – Paul Writes About Love

Reader 2: If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Congregation: Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends.

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

P: Thanks be to God.

REFLECTION

Rev. Lori Wunder

HYMN # 692 Spirit, Open My Heart (*we have altered gendered language in verse 3*)

REFRAIN: Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.

As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving. Spirit, open my heart.

1. God, replace my stony heart with a heart that's kind and tender.
All my coldness and fear to your grace I now surrender. REFRAIN
2. Write your love upon my heart as my law, my goal, my story.
In each thought, word, and deed, may my living bring you glory. REFRAIN
3. May I weep with those who weep, share the joy of friend and neighbor.
In the welcome of Christ, may we welcome one another. REFRAIN

SHARING JOYS & CONCERNS AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

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: God has shown us the meaning of generosity
in the beautiful diversity of creation,
in the overflowing love of Jesus Christ,
in the never-ending gift of the Holy Spirit.

God has abundantly blessed us and called us
to be a community that honors each other,
to serve others with joy,
to share our love and material possessions.

Let us rejoice in what we have been given and in what is ours to give.

*Offerings may be placed in the basket located at the back of church
or given online at www.firstpresmv.com*

We are grateful for all the ways you support our mission and ministry! Thank you!

OFFERTORY

*HYMN OF THANKSGIVING #70 What Does the Lord Require of You?

Low Voices: What does the Lord require of you?
What does the Lord require of you?

Middle Voices: Justice, kindness,
walk humbly with your God.

High Voices: To seek justice and love kindness
and walk humbly with your God

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

**O Generous Provider, accept these small gifts,
tokens of our great love for you.
Multiply them to do your good work
in this church and in your world. Amen.**

*HYMN #549 May the Love of the Lord

May the love of the Lord rest upon your soul.
May God's love dwell in you, throughout every day.
May God's countenance shine upon you and be gracious to you.
May God's Spirit be upon you as you leave this place.

*SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAY BLESSING

*BENEDICTION

You always make each day such a special day, by just your being you.
Friends, go in peace to love and serve the Lord by loving and serving your neighbors!

*BENEDICTION RESPONSE

*It's such a good feeling to know you're alive
It's such a happy feeling, you're growing inside
And when you wake up ready to say,
"I think I'll (love my neighbor today)"
It's such a good feeling, a very good feeling,
The feeling you know that
We'll be back when the week is new
And Fred will have more ideas for you.
And we'll have things we'll want to talk about.
Lori: I will, too.*

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

Scott Larson & Gerald Gerber, AV system

Beth Simon, Coffee Hour

First Pres Mount Vernon Staff:

Lori Wunder, Pastor

Cristina Galán, Office Manager

Rebecca Nickles, Music Director

Nona Hutchinson, Treasurer

María Seda, Nursery

Teresa Sullivan & family, Custodial team