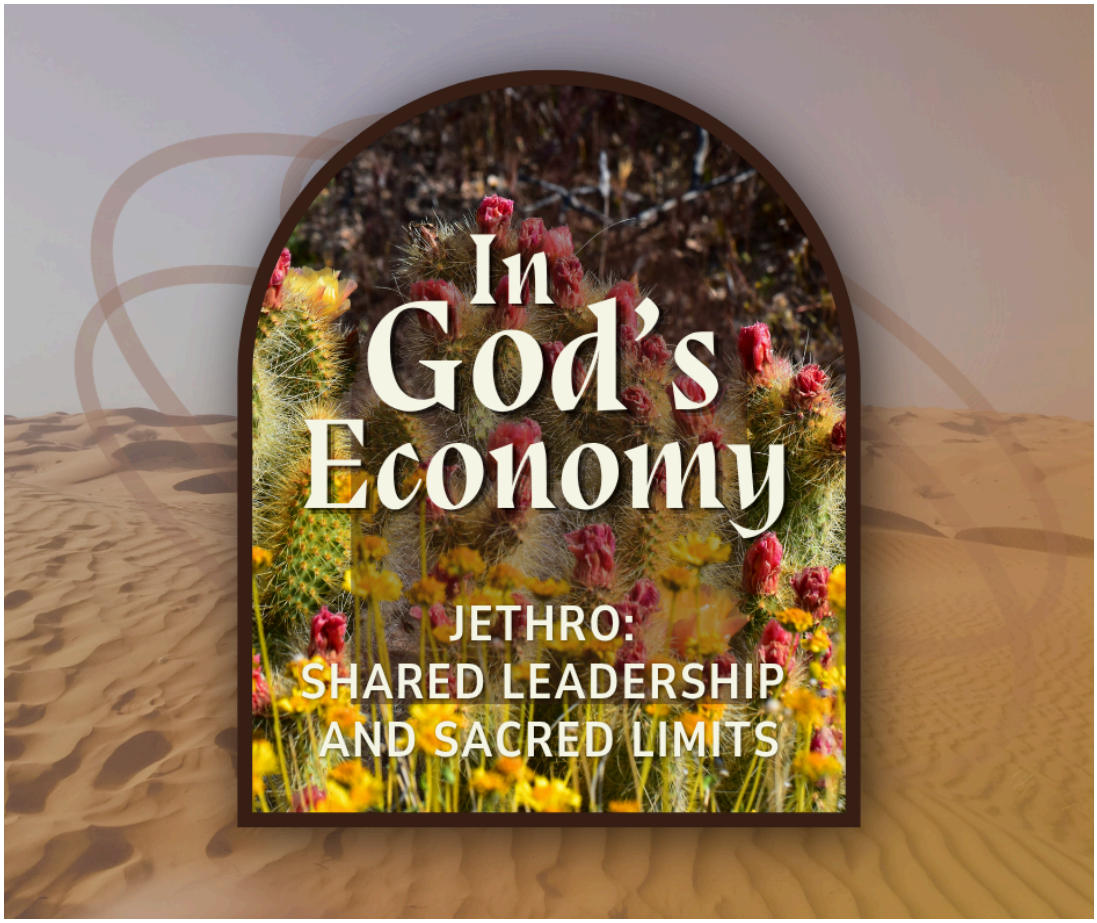
Sunday Worship - November 8, 2026

A Service of Word & Prayer



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In God's Economy: Week 5

Jethro: Shared Leadership and Sacred Limits

Exodus 18:14-23

First Presbyterian Church of Mount Vernon, Iowa

"Striving to live as Jesus lived –
confronting injustice with love, compassion, service."

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Leader: The Lord be with you

ALL: And also with you.

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Each day we must choose:

All: purposely seek good, or just coast along the way things are.

Leader: Each day we have opportunities:

All: to do justice and to build on love.

Leader: Each day we can live the truth:

All: our gracious God is with us.

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*HYMN #79 Light Dawns on a Weary World

1: Light dawns on a weary world when eyes begin to see all people's dignity.
Light dawns on a weary world: the promised day of justice comes.

REFRAIN

The trees shall clap their hands; the dry lands gush with springs;
The hills and mountains shall break forth with singing!
We shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace,
as all the world in wonder echoes shalom.

2: Love grows in a weary world when hungry hearts find bread
and children's dreams are fed.
Love grows in a weary world: the promised feast of plenty comes.
REFRAIN

3: Hope blooms in a weary world when creatures, once forlorn,
find wilderness reborn.
Hope blooms in a weary world: the promised green of Eden comes.
REFRAIN

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Leader: Let us confess our woundedness to God and one another:

ALL: God of justice,
we come to glorify you in our worship and praise,
and you call us to glorify you with our everyday lives.
We confess that we like to separate the two,
but you demand that we live ALL the hours of the week
in alignment with your kingdom values.

We admit that we don't know where to begin.
We don't personally break the big commandments,
but we have no idea how to extricate ourselves
from the unjust systems that benefit us.
If we're honest, we're not sure we want to.
And so we have made "sin" a personal thing, a private matter,
the things we can easily control, and easily judge others for.
But your vision is justice that flows through everything,
washing away the privileges hoarded by some,
nourishing life where everything was parched.
Forgive us for building a dam to hold your goodness for ourselves.
Forgive us for refusing to even acknowledge that we play a part in the big issues.
Forgive us for ceremonies and songs that never translate to the rest of the week,
let alone to how we spend our money or how we vote or how we post online.
Set us free from all that holds us back from following you more faithfully,
and guide us in building lives that honor you,
every hour of every day, not just this one.
We ask in the name of Jesus,
who was obedient even when it meant challenging the status quo,
who loved beyond borders, who leads us into life.
Amen.
~silence~
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ASSURANCE OF PARDON
Leader: Friends, God is committed to us — even in all our flawed human-ness.
Hear and believe this good news: God's eternal grace is for you.
ALL: Thanks be to God. Amen.

*RESPONSE #59 The Steadfast Love of the Lord

> The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases;
> God's mercies never come to an end.
> They are new every morning, new every morning;
> great is your faithfulness, O God, great is your faithfulness.

THE PASSING OF THE PEACE

Leader: The peace of Christ be with you!
ALL: And also with you!

SCRIPTURE READING

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.

Exodus 18:14-23 (Common English Bible)

Reader 1: 14 When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What's this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, while all the people are standing around you from morning until evening?"
Reader 2: 15 Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. 16 When a conflict arises between them, they come to me and I judge between the two of them. I also teach them God's regulations and instructions."
Reader 1: 17 Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing isn't good. 18 You will end up totally wearing yourself out, both you and these people who are with you. The work is too difficult for you. You can't do it alone. 19 Now listen to me and let me give you some advice. And may God be with you! Your role should be to represent the people before God. You should bring their disputes before God yourself. 20 Explain the regulations and instructions to them. Let them know the way they are supposed to go and the things they are supposed to do
Reader 2: . 21 But you should also look among all the people for capable persons who respect God. They should be trustworthy and not corrupt. Set these persons over the people as officers of groups of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. 22 Let them sit as judges for the people at all times. They should bring every major dispute to you, but they should decide all of the minor cases themselves. This will be much easier for you, and they will share your load. 23 If you do this and God directs you, then you will be able to endure. And all these people will be able to go back to their homes much happier."

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

TIME OF PRAYER

Song #470 There Is a Longing in Our Hearts

REFRAIN
There is a longing in our hearts, O Lord, for you to reveal yourself to us.
There is a longing in our hearts for love
We only find in you, our God.

Leader: You are a God who hears and responds,
and so we come with gratitude and praise
for your care made visible
in the hands of friends and strangers
in the help sent to those who suffer
in the beauty that persists through the hard times.
You know what we need, O God,
and you provide more than we can ask or imagine.

REFRAIN

Leader: We pray this day
for those who don't get to experience your providing,
those who are oppressed by powers beyond their control,
those at the bottom of the world's ladders,
those focused only on the next breath while bombs drop around them.
We cry out for them, for justice, for peace, for hope.

1. For justice, for freedom, for mercy: hear our prayer.
In sorrow, in grief: be near; hear our prayer, O God.
REFRAIN

Leader: And we pray this day for those who hoard,
who believe they deserve abundance while others go hungry,
who use their power over instead of for,
who set borders that keep people away from your goodness.
We cry out for them, to break their hearts of stone,
to learn the ways of mercy, to act on your word.

2. For wisdom, for courage, for comfort: hear our prayer.
In weakness, in fear: be near; hear our prayer, O God. REFRAIN

Leader: We pray this day for those who are exploited,
those whose labor is a bargaining chip in a game they cannot play,
those who will never enjoy the fruits of their work,
those who are deemed expendable in the pursuit of power, wealth, or glory.
We cry out for them, for strength and courage
and a communal commitment to what is right.

3. For healing, for wholeness, for new life: hear our prayer.
In sickness, in death: be near; hear our prayer, O God.
REFRAIN

Leader: We pray this day for those who suffer,
whose bodies, minds, or spirits are weighed down,
whose relationships are strained,
who feel disconnected from themselves or others,
who feel boxed in by expectations or health or circumstances.
We cry out for them, for healing and wholeness and liberation from all that harms.

4. Lord, save us, take pity, Light in our darkness.
We call you; we wait: be near; hear our prayer, O God.
REFRAIN

Leader: And we pray this day for your Church, O God,
your Body meant to reveal your kingdom and enact your love in the world,
so often afraid, so often constrained,
celebrating reformation yet unwilling to be reformed,
doing all we can under our own power…
We cry out for your Church, for renewal of connection to you,
for redirection of our attention,
for courage to walk your way.

REFRAIN

Leader: You are a God who hears and responds,
and a God who speaks and expects a response.
ALL: May our prayers today be ever before you,
and may your word ever be before us,
that together your kingdom might indeed be seen.
We ask in the name of the One in whom your fullness dwelt among us,
Jesus the Christ.

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Leader: And we pray together as Christ taught us, saying:
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.

CLOSING HYMN #842 The Lord Is My Light (may sing Theme I or II)

The Lord is my light, my light and salvation:
in God I trust; in God I trust.

*BENEDICTION

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

Scott Larson & Gerald Gerber, AV system
Pat Hogan, Penny Gerber & Rozanne Petrick, Bread & Soup Meal

First Pres Mount Vernon Staff:

Lori Wunder, Pastor
Cristina Galán, Office Manager
Rebecca Nickles, Music Director
Nona Hutchinson, Treasurer
María Seda, Nursery
Teresa Sullivan, Custodian