



**Welcome to First Presbyterian Church  
Online Worship for November 22, 2020**

This service is one of two options during the Coronavirus time of physical distancing in which worship is happening only online. At 9:00 am on Sundays we will livestream through ZOOM an informal conversational time of worship like our First Light Worship. You can find the link to that on our website or Facebook page: [fpcboise.org](http://fpcboise.org) or [facebook.com/fpcboise](https://www.facebook.com/fpcboise)

This service is live streamed at 10:45 am from our Sanctuary and you can follow along with this bulletin or use this bulletin to guide your own service of worship. The live stream is available for view at <https://www.youtube.com/fpcboise> or [facebook.com/fpcboise](https://www.facebook.com/fpcboise)

**Prelude** *Simple Gifts* arr. Virgil Fox

**Welcome**

This is the day the Lord has made.  
Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

**Choral Introit** *Cause Me to Hear* Melvin West

*Cause me to hear Thy loving kindness in the morning, for in Thee do I trust.  
Cause me to know the way wherein I shall walk, for I lift up my soul to Thee.  
--Psalm 143:8*

**Call to Worship** (adapted from Psalm 90:1-2)

Lord, you are our dwelling place in all generations;  
You are our home throughout all the ages.  
You were there before the world was made and will be forever.  
From everlasting to everlasting, you are God.  
Let us worship the Lord our God with thanks and praise.

**\*Hymn 336** *We Gather Together* KREMSER  
(insert on next page)

## We Gather Together

336

1 We gath - er to - geth - er to ask the Lord's bless - ing;  
 2 Be - side us to guide us, our God with us join - ing,  
 3 We all do ex - tol thee, thou lead - er tri - um - phant,

he chas - tens and has - tens his will to make known;  
 or - dain - ing, main - tain - ing his king - dom di - vine;  
 and pray that thou still our de - fend - er wilt be.

the wick - ed op - press - ing now cease from dis - tress - ing.  
 so from the be - gin - ning the fight we were win - ning;  
 Let thy con - gre - ga - tion es - cape trib - u - la - tion;

Sing prais - es to his name; he for - gets not his own.  
 thou, Lord, wast at our side; all glo - ry be thine!  
 thy name be ev - er praised! O Lord, make us free!

First published among songs celebrating the end of Spanish control of the Netherlands, this text's blend of patriotism and piety has made it popular at (often ecumenical) Thanksgiving Day services. The tune is named for the Viennese arranger whose male chorus popularized it.

## Prayer of Confession

Loving God, we confess that we have sinned against you by not honoring you or one another. As we stand in awe of your constancy for us, we ask your forgiveness for our waywardness towards you. We are fickle and fearful where we would be faithful, and we are selfish and shallow where we would be servants and stewards of creation's abundance for all. O Lord, have mercy on us... (Silence) Forgive us, O God, and move us to trust, that we may boldly live your grace and love; through Jesus Christ our Savior, Amen.

## Assurance of God's Grace

Friends, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. But to say we are first and foremost sinners goes too far. Our identity rests not in our brokenness but in God's love. Know that, whatever you believe separates you from God, God's love is more than enough to bridge the gap. Jesus died for you, rose for you, lives and reigns in power for you. Jesus is praying for you. The good news of all that is? We are forgiven. You are forgiven. So be at peace.

## Anthem

*Make Me an Instrument*

Craig Courtney

## Prayer for Illumination

Come, Holy Spirit, open our minds and hearts this day, that we may be illumined by your living Word and walk together as children of light. Amen

## Listen to the Word:

Psalm 100

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come into God's presence with singing. Know that the Lord is God. It is God that made us, and we belong to the Lord; we are God's people, and the sheep of God's pasture. Enter the gates of the Lord our God with thanksgiving, and the courts with praise. Give thanks to the Lord, bless God's name. For the Lord is good; God's steadfast love endures forever, and God's faithfulness to all generations.

## Reflection on the Word and Life: "Tis a Fearful Thing... to Love"

The second of a two-part sermon on Expectations, Resentment, and Gratitude"

Last week we started with the idea of Great Expectations. Hearing from the prophet Isaiah we engaged God's expectations for us and for the community God is trying to create through us. God's love, mercy, and forgiveness are real – but that doesn't mean that God gives up on expectations. God expects justice, faithfulness, care, stewardship... God expects us to live with undivided mind before God in the way of God. That is a high bar. And God yearns for us to be live up to these great expectations.

And then the wisdom cracks our illusions: "Expectations are premeditated resentment." Because in life we will always fail each other's expectations... and nothing happens simply because we wish that it were so. And we experienced God's disappointment, resentment, and anger through the prophet and the love-song for the vineyard.

How do we hold on to our expectations? How do we maintain our hopes and dreams and our yearning to live the better angels of our nature... without ending up in resentment... and even... despair?

I believe the antidote we need is gratitude... appreciation... and love.

The Psalm we read today is one of those around which I get very sentimental. Growing up we would often read Psalm 100 at the Thanksgiving table with all the family gathered. In a very 'house church' moment, this was a celebration of the harvest, of family, and of gratitude and generosity and we were literally naming this gathered table the courts and gates of God as we filled it with praise and thanksgiving.

Gratitude is a powerful tool in our belt. Like any tool it can be misused and abused. Gratitude need not – should not – look like rose colored glasses. It doesn't mean we have to be grateful for everything, or see every moment, set-back, and disappointment as something for which to be grateful... because it taught us something, or because it helped us see what was good, or because life isn't fair so get over it already. We need to maintain our ability to lament. And some things are just bad. They are just 'not the way its supposed to be' and we should not try to redeem them by finding some philosophic gymnastics move we can make to turn it to good. I do not want that kind of gratitude. But also... let's not throw out the tool just because we get annoyed at the way some folks use it.

Gratitude. Appreciation. And Love. These three. They are a deep and relational gift to see the whole story. In our expectations we are quick to only look for what isn't there... and when we are only looking for what is not there, we miss seeing what is right before us. Gratitude is a commitment to acknowledge the whole of a life, the whole of another, the whole of the harvest from the bounty God has grown all around us.

Years ago, my wife's best friend was getting married and we were hanging out at her house the whole day of the wedding. I was the husband of the matron of honor... I had no job. So I was sitting useless in the family room most of the day. And there was a TV on in the background and I kept listening to its constant running news broadcast. There was a town in danger because flood waters were rising and threatening to overwhelm the dam upriver from this town. Every five minutes a new report was issued about the status of the waters... and the beleaguered dam. They interviewed all sorts of experts about how bad this could be in all the varying scenarios of destruction. They would go on with other news and then return to keep us aware of the eminent peril.

We expect dams to hold. We should expect dams to hold. And we rightly are more than disappointed when they fail. Interestingly... I have almost never said to myself – when passing a dam, large or small, - "hello dam, I'm grateful for you. I'm grateful for those who designed you and built you and that you do your job day in and day out without fail. So... thank you, I appreciate you." But wow. If that dam fails – we will all rightly curse the dam.

...Long about the afternoon of our friend's wedding the waters peaked and began to subside. The dam held. They reported that in one, single, 3-minute news segment... and then we never heard the story again. It is a wonder that we say the news is all negative – it is. But they are only selling what we will buy... and we are far more interested in being consumers of bad news... why is that? Are we so unpracticed or so unwilling to be practitioners of gratitude and good news? It is literally our calling – to be people of good news.

I will often say that I believe my job is about 50% being a cheerleader. I'm all about creative-credit giving. Cheer people on... find a way to express appreciation, seek out things for which to be grateful and name them in as public a way as possible. It's amazing that when we look for it how easy it is to find. Its like when you buy a new car you have never seen before... and suddenly you realize its exactly what everyone else is already driving. We find what we are looking for... and when we look for reasons to be grateful, when we seek ways to appreciate and express that appreciation of others in the world around us? That is what we will find.

If my child meets my expectations 99 times... and I say nothing – and then fails them once and I get mad - what have I taught my child? Nothing good. We can and should hold our expectations... but that means praise the achievement of them with at least as much gusto as we lament their failure.

We need to cultivate a deep appreciation for the wonder and wonderful around us. We need to become cheerleaders of the good, and champions of the just. And encourage the world to want to achieve all that we expect... rather than to fear the failure that we focus on so much we will make it happen even as we wonder how we did not avoid it.

People will fail you. The world will fail you. The institutions we build will fail us all.

I promise you they will. One by one... one and all. But this is not the whole of the story. Gratitude and appreciation and love teach us to hold the whole story together – to lend as much, and maybe even more, energy to the good than we harbor for the ill. In the prophet Hosea God is OVER it all. Over Israel's never-ending disappointment of God's most basic hopes for the world. And God is ready to hit the giant reset button in the sky... and then God is stopped in God's tracks by.... love. By deep and abiding appreciation and gratitude.

“I held you in my arms from the moment of your birth... I cradled you... fed you... loved you... and.... I can't give up on that. I will not give up on that... and so... and so... lets do this again. Let's try this again... because I resolve to give more energy to love than despair.”

In my sermon teaser I shared a poem from Yehuda Halevi, “Tis a Fearful Thing”... and those words echo still in my heart.

*'Tis a fearful thing  
to love what death can touch.  
A fearful thing  
to love, to hope, to dream, to be –  
to be,  
And oh, to lose.  
A thing for fools, this,  
And a holy thing,  
a holy thing  
to love.  
For your life has lived in me,  
your laugh once lifted me,  
your word was gift to me.  
To remember this brings painful joy.  
'Tis a human thing, love,  
a holy thing, to love  
what death has touched.*

Loss hurts. Disappointment stings. Resentment lingers.

A dream differed and hope unrealized... these are all real – and I would never ask us not to feel, express, and lament them. But what we cannot do is give them even more power than they are due... we cannot let them fester into despair, or callous our hearts against future pain, another loss, and resentment re-ignited. We cannot define our reality by the worst case scenarios – nor lock us in with our deepest hurts and let them have unwavering sway over our livelihood. We must put them alongside them the whole story. Where we remember that there is pain... but also joy. A laugh lifted... and word gifted. And we must resolve to let love abide... and to participate in unrelenting gratitude. Never to cover up our hurt... but to be the balm we need in Gilead.

Enter God's gates with thanksgiving, and the courts with praise... for the steadfast love of the Lord endures forever... and it is good.

This is the word of the Lord, thanks be to God.

**\*Affirmation of Faith** (adapted from the Brief Statement of Faith)

In a broken and fearful world the Spirit gives us courage to pray without ceasing, to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior, to unmask idolatries in Church and culture, to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace. In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit, we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks and to live holy and joyful lives, even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth, praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

**\*Doxology** (Tune: Old Hundredth, Hymn 607)

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God, all creatures here below;  
Praise God for all that love has done;  
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One. Amen.

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**Prayers of the Community**

The Lord's Prayer (traditional)

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.

**\*Hymn 643**

*Now Thank We All Our God*

NUN DANKET

**\*Charge and Benediction**

**Choral Response**

*May the Words of My Mouth*

Melvin West

*May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart  
be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.  
--Psalm 19:14*

**Postlude**

*Now Thank We All Our God*

Sigfrid Karg-Elert

**Leading Worship**

Rev. Dr. Andrew Kukla  
Luann Fife, Pianist

Ryan Dye, Minister of Music  
Sally Sabino, Liturgist

**Chancel Ensemble Choir**

Micaela Hulse  
Anne Marie Boyd  
David Le  
Erik Noyce

Heather Dye  
Veronica Noyce  
Colin Cho

THANKSGIVING

# 643 Now Thank We All Our God

1 Now thank we all our God with heart and hands and voic - es,  
 2 O may this boun - teous God through all our life be near us,  
 3 All praise and thanks to God, who reigns in high - est heav - en,

who won - drous things hath done, in whom this world re - joic - es;  
 with ev - er joy - ful hearts and bless - ed peace to cheer us;  
 to Fa - ther and to Son and Spir - it now be giv - en:

who, from our moth - ers' arms, hath blessed us on our way  
 and keep us in God's grace, and guide us when per - plexed,  
 the one e - ter - nal God, whom heaven and earth a - dore,

with count - less gifts of love, and still is ours to - day.  
 and free us from all ills in this world and the next.  
 the God who was, and is, and shall be ev - er - more.

Although this hymn is often used on large and festive occasions, its first two stanzas had much humbler beginnings: they originated as a family table prayer during the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648). These words have been associated with this tune since the mid-17th century.