

Camp and Conference Ministry  
Emphasis Sunday  
January 23, 2005

Prelude

Welcome

Call to Worship (from Psalm 27)

One: The Lord is our light and our salvation:

Many: Whom shall we fear?

One: The Lord is the stronghold of our lives;

Many: Of whom shall we be afraid?

One: The Lord will hide us in the cover of his tent.

Many: We will sing and make melody at the campfires of the Lord.

One: Teach us your way, O Lord.

Many: And lead us on hikes through level ground.

ALL: We believe that we shall see the goodness of the Lord in God's creation.

One: Wait for the Lord!

ALL: Be strong, take courage, wait for the Lord!

Hymn

Call to Confession

Prayer of Confession

God you spin the whirling planets, the moon and stars are your celestial jewelry. You have given us the beautiful earth as our inheritance. Yet we confess our stewardship has been lax. We have abused creation and its beauty. We fail in our care for neighbor and stranger. Our actions are toward consuming not conserving. Forgive us, we pray.

We confess our lives are busy whirlwinds of email, driving, working, and stress. Help us to see your handiwork and harmony in nature. Let the birds of the air and the lilies of the field guide us in lives of discipleship. May we, like Jesus, seek times apart to reflect and pray. Lord make us instruments of your peace. Hear our confession and in your grace and mercy forgive us. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Gloria – Sing Halle Halle Hallelujah (New Song Participants Hymnbook, page 23)

Prayer of Illumination

First reading of Scripture – Isaiah 9: 1-7 (NRSV)

9:1 But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness-- on them light has shined.

3 You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.

4 For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

5 For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

6 For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

*Reflections on the first reading:*

*Scholars think this passage was first used for the coronation of a king, perhaps Hezekiah. In its continued usage in the faith, it has come to be seen as a foreshadowing of the Messiah. G.F. Handel's famous choral work by the same name has recitatives and choruses drawn from this text. Isaiah also uses several titles for the king which have come to be synonymous with Jesus.*

*The images used:*

*people living in darkness and emerging into the light*

*the nation multiplying*

*burdens and yokes being lifted*

*the characteristics of the Davidic king – peace, justice, righteousness*

*are all consistent and familiar themes in prophetic literature.*

*But perhaps the thing that resonates most for me in the midst of all these familiar images and thoughts is the final sentence. "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this." Now zeal is not a word we use very often, but here it is perfect. ZEAL, zealous, eager, fired up love, cannot wait to go love, God's zeal, God's leaving the 99 sheep to look for one, obsession with loving and saving us is a powerful word for us today. God **will do** all these marvelous poetic saving images. Light out of darkness – God's zealous love **will do** that. Bring a Prince of Peace - God's zealous love **will do**. Establish justice and righteousness forever - God's zealous love **will do**.*

Second Reading of Scripture Matthew 4: 12-23 (NRSV)

12 Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee.  
13 He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali,  
14 so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:  
15 "Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles--  
16 the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned."  
17 From that time Jesus began to proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."  
18 As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea--for they were fishermen.  
19 And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people."  
20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him.  
21 As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them.  
22 Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

*Reflections on the second reading:*

*PCUSA through the Committee on Outdoor Ministry of the National Council of the Churches of Christ cooperates in producing summer camp curriculum. This year's curriculum is "God's Calling" and will be in used in many of our PCUSA camp and conference centers. Matthew's version of the call story is the lectionary text for today, while the Mark version will be used this summer.*

*Matthew, of course, uses more verses to tell the story of the call of the disciples than Mark. But this is cool for lectionary folk since Matthew conveniently echoes the Isaiah text to get Jesus situated in Galilee. Matthew's gospel does this in order to help his Jewish Christian audience understand that Jesus is the fulfillment of Hebrew Scriptures.*

*It is important to note that this passage occurs immediately after Jesus is tempted in the desert. Calling disciples is the first act of Jesus' ministry in the synoptic gospels. Theologically this is important because although Jesus is the Messiah, he is not the king that many sought. Jesus will not run a "from the top down" organization. He recruits disciples to help spread the message and builds a bottom up organization. As committee forming Presbyterians we might do well to take heed.*

*Jesus immediately forms community. He walks by the sea and calls two sets of brothers to come and join him. The text is silent about who these people are, other than their profession. We do not know if they had previously known or*

*heard Jesus. Nor do we know if they had personal lives or relationships and what shape those were in. The text is silent as to whether they knew each other in the fishing community. We just know they were at work, fishing. We can speculate from the text that James and John the sons of Zebedee were somewhat more prosperous. Their father had fished before them and they had a boat.*

*What we do know is that Jesus called them with an imperative and a promise. Follow me says Jesus. No sales pitch or promise of salary plus benefits and bonus. Just the imperative follow me. Follow me and I will make you fish for people. People. Jesus needs people. People to catch people. People are the essence of Jesus ministry. Jesus, like the zealous God in Isaiah, wants and needs people to love and to spread the good news.*

*In camp and conference ministry we need people. People to come and enjoy the beauty of God's creation. People to come and get away from daily life and listen for God's call. People to fill the woods or the seaside with laughter and squeals of enjoyment as we live together in community. People to gather around tables and campfires and tell again the stories of God's love and care for us. People to fish. People to catch people.*

*Peter and Andrew, James and John heard the call and immediately left what they were doing to follow Jesus. The immediacy of their response to Jesus' call is puzzling to us. But we can open our own ears and eyes to be alert to the call of God in our lives. Camps and conference centers are places where lives are changed and discerning God's call can occur. **Presbyterian Panel research shows that 70% of members recall one particular spiritual growth experience that had great significance in shaping their Christian life. The most common setting for such an experience was at a camp.***

*Camps need Peter and Andrew and Sally and Mary from your congregation to go to camp. Camps need your prayers and support. The church leaders of tomorrow are at camp today.*

Sermon

Affirmation of faith

Offering interpretation

Your congregation may want to consider dedicating the offering to scholarships to send campers from your church. Many churches also directly support your local church camp. Please also remember the gift of people. Camps and conference centers are always in need of volunteers who are willing to fund and execute work projects. They need people to serve on Boards and committees, adult leaders to help in events, and those who tell the story of camps to others.

Prayers of the people

**LEADER:** Give thanks to the Lord who is good.

**PEOPLE: God's love is everlasting.**

Come, let us praise God joyfully.

**Let us come to God with thanksgiving.**

For this wonderful world in which we live; for things great and small, beautiful and awesome; for seen and unseen splendors;

**Thank you, God.**

For the freedom to worship you in spirit and in truth in our churches, in our homes, and in the sanctuary of the outdoors;

**Thank you, God.**

For the ministry of camp and conference centers across the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) denomination; including those General Assembly centers, Ghost Ranch, Montreat and Stony Point;

**Thank you, God.**

For the ministry of our local camp or conference center;

**Thank you, God.**

For the service of all servants working in this ministry; employees and volunteers, directors, counselors, cooks, maintenance workers;

**Thank you, God.**

For the opportunity to serve as partners in the stewardship of the land;

**Thank you, God.**

Above all, O God, for your Son, Jesus Christ, who, by example, has taught us to set ourselves apart from the world to pray and meditate.

**We thank and praise you, Eternal God for all your goodness to us.**

**Amen.**

— *Adapted from "A Litany of Thanksgiving," Book of Common Worship.*

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn

Charge and Benediction

Postlude

Music notes/Suggested Songs

Camp songs are appropriate

From the Presbyterian Hymnal:

# 306 Fairest Lord Jesus

# 473 For the Beauty of the Earth

# 358 Help Us Accept each Other

# 324 Open My Eyes

# 377 Lord You Have Come to the Lakeshore