

Gettysburg United Methodist Church

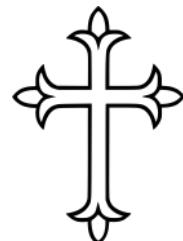
January 6, 2021

Psalm 63

(NRSV)

A Psalm of David, when he was in the Wilderness of Judah.

- 1 O God, you are my God, I seek you,
my soul thirsts for you;
my flesh faints for you,
as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.
- 2 So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary,
beholding your power and glory.
- 3 Because your steadfast love is better than life,
my lips will praise you.
- 4 So I will bless you as long as I live;
I will lift up my hands and call on your name.
- 5 My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast,
and my mouth praises you with joyful lips
- 6 when I think of you on my bed,
and meditate on you in the watches of the night;
- 7 for you have been my help,
and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy.
- 8 My soul clings to you;
your right hand upholds me.
- 9 But those who seek to destroy my life
shall go down into the depths of the earth;
- 10 they shall be given over to the power of the sword,
they shall be prey for jackals.
- 11 But the king shall rejoice in God;
all who swear by him shall exult,
for the mouths of liars will be stopped.



Meditation

Read Deuteronomy 30:11-20

Covenant is a Biblical way of understanding our relationship with God. Sometimes a covenant is likened to a contract—a legal relationship that spells out the duties and responsibilities of each party. But I think Biblical covenants are more like the covenant of marriage. There are legal aspects of marriage, to be sure (such as filing a joint tax return). But the essence of the marriage covenant is love. Marriage vows express the height and depth of all-encompassing love with phrases such as “to love and to cherish”, “for better, for worse”, or “in sickness and in health”.

God’s covenant with us is like a marriage covenant. There are obligations on each side, to be sure, but the heart of God’s covenant with us is love. On God’s part, he so loved the world that he gave us his only Son. On our part, we love God with all of our heart and mind and soul and strength, and our neighbors as ourselves. (Scripture uses the marriage covenant as a metaphor for our relationship with God in Is. 62:5; Rev. 19:6-9, 21:2, 9). It’s a relationship founded on God’s love for us, ratified by our love for God, and tangibly expressed in our love for others.

Covenants thrive when they are renewed from time to time. Covenants are never static. Marriages grow as individuals grow and change. Our relationship with God grows as our faith increases. A married couple may renew their marriage covenant every year when they celebrate their anniversary, or may even hold a more formal renewal of vows on a

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Covenant Renewal

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twenty-fifth or fiftieth anniversary. In same way, it's good to renew our covenant with God regularly. The beginning of the year is an ideal time to do so.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, commended an annual Covenant Renewal Service to the people called Methodist. A modern version of the core of that service is found below (this is the same Covenant Service we used in Facebook worship on Jan. 3). Please take some time prayerfully to consider your relationship with God, and to renew your covenant with him using this prayer:

Covenant Renewal Service

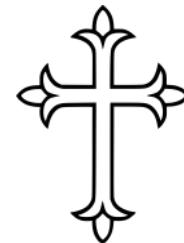
All: God, you have appointed our Lord Jesus Christ as mediator of a new covenant: give us grace to draw near with fullness of faith and join ourselves in a perpetual covenant with you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: In the old covenant, God chose Israel to be a special people and obey the law. Our Lord Jesus Christ, by his death and resurrection, has made a new covenant with all who trust in him. We stand within this covenant and we bear his name. On the one side, God promises in this covenant to give us new life in Christ. On the other side, we are pledged to live not for ourselves, but for God. Today, therefore, we meet to renew the covenant which binds us to God.

Friends, let us claim the covenant God has made with his people, and accept the yoke of Christ. To accept the yoke of Christ means that we allow Christ to guide all that we are and do, and that Christ himself is our only reward. Christ has many services to be done; some are easy, others are difficult; some make others applaud us, others bring only reproach; some we desire to do because of our own interests, others seem unnatural to us. Sometimes we please Christ and meet our own needs, at other times we cannot please Christ unless we deny ourselves. Yet Christ strengthens us and gives us the power to do all these things. Therefore, let us make this covenant

of God our own. Let us give ourselves completely to God, trusting in his promises and relying on his grace.

All: I give myself completely to you, God. Assign me to my place in your creation. Let me suffer for you. Give me the work you would have me do. Give me many tasks, or have me step aside while you call others. Put me forward or humble me. Give me riches or let me live in poverty. I freely give all that I am and all that I have to you. And now, Holy God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours. So be it. May this covenant made on earth continue for all eternity. Amen.



Prayer

Almighty God, your love is eternal and your grace unbounded. You seek us as a Good Shepherd seeks lost sheep; you find us and draw us close to your heart; you lead us through dark valleys and bring us safely into the quiet meadows of your peace.

As we renew our covenant with you, keep us daily in the center of your will. Enable us to experience your infinite love for us that we may respond with love for you. Strengthen us as we reach out in love to those around us.

Touch the lives of those who need you today. Heal those who are sick, strengthen those who are weak, sustain those who despair. Help us to reach out to all who struggle through these trying times.

May we walk with you every day. Fill us anew with your Holy Spirit that we may love and serve you in all things; for this we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

“I give myself completely to you, God.”

Ruth's Harvest Schedule

Thank you to all who helped fill backpacks for Ruth's Harvest in 2020. Your efforts helped in the process of getting much needed nutritional weekend meals to area food insecure school children. The volunteer list for 2021 has been set. Our team is scheduled to help on Wednesdays, January 27 and April 28. Face masks are worn and social distancing is maintained in the pantry. The pantry is accessed directly through an outside entrance. If you are willing to help on January 27 at 4:30 PM at Lincoln Elementary, please contact Julie McGeary, 717-398-2740 for details.

In-Person Worship Suspended

Due to the great increase of COVID rates in Adams County, Church Council voted to temporarily suspend in-person worship for a period of 4 weeks beginning after the Christmas Eve Services. Church Council will re-evaluate this decision toward the end of January.

Online Worship Services will continue to be available weekly on Facebook.

Zoom Fellowship Time

Some people have expressed a desire for a fellowship time when they could gather with church friends on Zoom to see each other “face to face” and catch up on how people are doing. We will hold a weekly Zoom Fellowship Time every Sunday in January (starting with 1/10/21) at 10:00 a.m. At the end of January we'll decide whether we continue or not. Each week we'll end with a brief time of prayer.

If you're interested in joining with us, please contact Pastor Rick (pastor@gettysburgumc.org) each week for a Zoom link and information.

Weekly Prayer Concerns

To add someone to this prayer list, please call the church office.

This week's list (as of 1/5/2021) is:

Rev. Jay and Linda Zimmerman; Pastor Jay is in Gettysburg Hospital ICU with COVID-19; Linda has tested positive with no symptoms so far; several family members are also infected.

Joyce Dye

Rodney Truscott

Penny Daugherty

Scott Bowers

Imogene Hunt's brother

Jeanne Nunamaker

Don Fortnum

Jim Nett

Members in Assisted Living / Skilled Care Homes:

Edith Bulman (SpiriTust Lutheran, York); Shirley Hammond (Morning Glory, Littlestown); Missy Legay (Moul Home, York); Bob Reed (Lorien, Mt Airy, MD); Peggy Reynolds (Quincy-cottage, Waynesboro); Gloria Swin-gler (Country Meadows-apartment, Mechanicsburg)

Members with Limited Mobility:

Butch Carter, Betty Cook, Joyce Dye, Barbara Evans, Pearl Keckler, Raymond Koenig, Chuck Lutz, Ruth Anna Polley, Wilma Schai-ble, Betty Schulteis, June Spencer, Virginia White

Sock Tree

Thanks so much for your generous donations to our Christmas Sock Tree! Over 200 pairs of socks were donated to South Central Community Action Programs (SCCAP) through your gifts. We pray that they will help to keep many people warm this winter.

HYMN

O God, Our Help in Ages Past

Isaac Watts, William Croft

1. O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
our shelter from the stormy blast,
and our eternal home!

2. Under the shadow of thy throne,
still may we dwell secure;
sufficient is thine arm alone,
and our defense is sure.

3. Before the hills in order stood,
or earth received her frame,
from everlasting, thou art God,
to endless years the same.

4. A thousand ages, in thy sight,
are like an evening gone;
short as the watch that ends the night,
before the rising sun.

5. Time, like an ever rolling stream,
bears all who breathe away;
they fly forgotten, as a dream
dies at the opening day.

6. O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come;
be thou our guide while life shall last,
and our eternal home.

Isaac Watts is known as the “father of English hymnody”. Born in Southampton, England in 1674, he was educated at a nonconformist academy at Stoke Newington. He served as pastor of Mark Lane Independent Chapel in London until he was forced into semi-retirement by ill health. He pioneered writing hymns based on personal faith and experience rather than strictly paraphrasing psalms. He wrote around sixty books, and died in 1748. William Croft was born in 1678 in Warwickshire, England. He served as organist at Westminster Abbey and wrote a number of hymn tunes.

O God, Our Help in Ages Past is a metrical setting of Psalm 90. Published in 1719, it was promoted and slightly altered by John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. The tune (*St. Anne*) was published in 1708 and was originally matched with a metrical paraphrase of Psalm 42. Some changes to its rhythm and bass were made by William Monk in 1861, when it was first matched with this text. The hymn is a marvelous expression of God’s strength and providence. As we begin a new year, it’s good to remember that God is “our help in ages past, our hope for years to come.” It is found in our hymnal as No. 117.

We greatly appreciate your continued faithful donations to GUMC during this time of change and crisis. Your faithfulness has enabled us to continue to pay all of our expenses, and we are very grateful for your continued generosity.

Thank you so much for your many Christmas cards and wishes! They are greatly appreciated. It is truly a blessing to serve as your pastor at GUMC!

—Pastor Rick

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