

Gettysburg United Methodist Church

May 13, 2020

Psalm 138

Of David.

- ¹ *I will praise you, Lord, with all my heart;
before the “gods” I will sing your praise.*
- ² *I will bow down toward your holy temple
and will praise your name
for your unfailing love and your
faithfulness,
for you have so exalted your solemn
decree
that it surpasses your fame.*
- ³ *When I called, you answered me;
you greatly emboldened me.*
- ⁴ *May all the kings of the earth praise
you, Lord,
when they hear what you have decreed.*
- ⁵ *May they sing of the ways of the Lord,
for the glory of the Lord is great.*
- ⁶ *Though the Lord is exalted, he looks kindly
on the lowly;
though lofty, he sees them from afar.*
- ⁷ *Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
you preserve my life.
You stretch out your hand against the
anger of my foes;
with your right hand you save me.*
- ⁸ *The Lord will vindicate me;
your love, Lord, endures forever—
do not abandon the works of your hands.*

Sunday worship video services are uploaded to our Facebook page every week. They are available by Sunday morning, and will remain on Facebook indefinitely. Search Facebook for Gettysburg United Methodist Church.

Meditation

Read Psalm 105.

When God’s people were slaves in Egypt, God determined to set them free. He punished Egypt with plagues and he led his people out of Egypt to freedom. When the Egyptians pursued them, he brought them to safety through the Red Sea. He led them into the wilderness on the way to the Promised Land. Their journey was supposed to be short, but they turned away from God and worshiped the golden calf rather than the one true God. As a result, their journey through the wilderness took a whole generation—forty years. After those forty years in the desert they were finally able to enter the Promised Land.

The wilderness is not a pleasant place to be, especially for forty long years. There is very little water to drink or food to eat. The environment is harsh and hostile, fraught with hardship and temptation. Their journey was a frustrating time of constant challenge and testing.

Sometimes I feel like we’re on our own journey through a wilderness that is caused by COVID-19. It’s a wilderness that we didn’t choose or cause (it’s not God’s punishment upon us or anyone else), but we have no other option than to pass through it. We may be spiritually hungry and thirsty, especially as we shelter at home. We feel frustrated and impatient. We fear the possibility of loss—loss of health, loss of jobs, loss of essentials (meat, toilet paper, and possibly more), maybe even loss of our own life or the life of someone close to us. The COVID-19 wilderness is harsh and hostile, a time of challenge and testing. It’s definitely not a pleasant place to be.

As we remember how God led his people through their wilderness experience, we may gain some insights that help us deal with our own wilderness times.

First, God gave his people a common goal and pur-

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Trust in the Lord.

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pose. Their vision was fixed on the Promised Land, the land of milk and honey. As they focused on their goal they found strength to overcome all obstacles. We also have a goal—to return to “normal”, even though the new “normal” will probably be different from the “normal” we remember. We long for the days when once again we can gather freely as friends, can come together for worship and concerts and sporting events, don’t have to wear masks, and no longer fear an invisible enemy. I think God has a deeper goal for us as well—the goal of sharing God’s love in this world, and making new disciples of Jesus Christ. Our real Promised Land is not just a return to “normal”, but the increased presence of God’s love and the hope we have in Christ.

Second, Israel traveled as a people, not as individuals. Each person and each tribe had their own role. Some were artists and craftspeople who built the tabernacle. Some were soldiers. Some were leaders, others were administrators, some invented 1,000 new ways to cook manna; each had a unique role to play even as they relied on the support of others. We are one people of God, and we rely on each other. We may be separated by social distancing, but we’re still one in Christ. We pray for each other, we interact by phone and internet, we long for the time when we can again come together. We have each other’s back as we support each other in Christian love.

Third God led his people through a number of road-

blocks and detours. The path was not always clear; they made some mistakes and took some wrong turns. Yet God always brought them back to the right path. The Promised Land was their final goal, but God led them there one day at a time. God marked his presence with a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day. When the pillar was stationary the people stayed where they were. When the pillar moved, the people moved—one day at a time. In the same way the Holy Spirit guides us. Our goal is to share God’s love and make new disciples of Jesus Christ. The Spirit leads us day by day to reach that goal. The Spirit opens doors before us, nudges our hearts to do God’s will, and shows us the opportunities that surround us.

The journey through the COVID-19 wilderness is not an easy one, but I think the most difficult journey may be through a wilderness that we face in our own hearts. Our inner wilderness may include times of despair and depression, times of hopelessness, and times of frustration and impatience. It certainly includes times of challenge and testing. God gives us the same gifts to lead us through our inner wilderness as he gives us to navigate the one around us. He calls us to share his love with others as we seek a new “normal”. He supports us through families and friends who help us bear our burdens (as we help them bear theirs). He guides and comforts us with the wisdom of his Holy Spirit. If you find yourself traveling through this inner wilderness, please don’t make the journey alone. Reach out to others so that we can make the journey with you.

Above all, in this desert time we have God’s presence and promise. He faithfully led Israel through the wilderness, and he will faithfully lead us through this time of distress and testing. God’s love did not fail them, and it will not fail us.

Pastor Rick



God will bring us through.

Prayer

Lord, we find ourselves in the midst of the wilderness. Give us strength and wisdom for the journey. Fix our eyes on the goal of your love; teach us to bear each other's burdens; guide us safely through the trials and snares that lie ahead.

Above all, keep us aware of your constant presence. Surround us with your love even as we love others in your name. Make us instruments of your peace.

Bless all who need your love and care. Heal those who are sick and comfort those who have suffered loss. Grant your hope and light to those who walk in darkness. Be with our nation and our world as we navigate these difficult and trying times, and lead us safely through; for this we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Crisis Hotlines and Helplines

During these trying times, it's good to be aware of some of the positive resources available in our community. Many people are under extraordinary stress because of the current situation. Please feel free to share this information with others as you feel appropriate.

CONTACT Helpline: (800) 932-4616

Suicide Prevention Hotline: (800) 273-8255

Substance Abuse Hotline: (800) 662-4357

Disaster Distress Helpline: (800) 985-5990
(for distress caused by natural disasters, including coronavirus)

Veterans Crisis Line: (800)-273-8255

Domestic Violence Hotline: (800) 799-7233

Wellspan Behavioral Health Helpline (Philhaven):
(800) 932-0359

Adams-Hanover Crisis Information Referral Hotline:
(717) 632-4900



Mission Can Offering for May

Our Mission Can Offering for May is designated for UMCOR Disaster Relief. UMCOR (the United Methodist Committee on Relief) is the branch of our church that helps people who suffer because of natural disasters both in America and throughout the world. Since administrative costs are met through other funds, 100% of what is given goes to people in need.

UMCOR reaches out to people affected by hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, etc., but is also reaching out to people impacted by the coronavirus. This includes support for:

- Food pantries in the U.S., Latin America, Africa and the Philippines
- Personal protective equipment, sanitation equipment and water
- Toilet paper, diapers, facial tissue and hygiene products
- Utilities assistance

Since we usually receive our Mission Can offering on the third Sunday of the month, we want to ensure that you have the opportunity to give during this third week of May. Second-mile giving may be included with your regular offering, and designated for "Mission Can" or "UMCOR". Please give prayerfully as the Lord leads.

HYMN

He Leadeth Me

Joseph H. Gilmore, William B. Bradbury

1 He leadeth me: O blessed thought!
O words with heavenly comfort fraught!
Whate'er I do, where'er I be,
still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.

Refrain:

He leadeth me, he leadeth me;
by his own hand he leadeth me:
his faithful follower I would be,
for by his hand he leadeth me.

2 Sometimes mid scenes of deepest gloom,
sometimes where Eden's bowers bloom,

by waters still, o'er troubled sea,
still 'tis his hand that leadeth me. Refrain

3 Lord, I would place my hand in thine,
nor ever murmur nor repine;
content, whatever lot I see,
since 'tis my God that leadeth me. Refrain

4 And when my task on earth is done,
when by thy grace the victory's won,
e'en death's cold wave I will not flee,
since God through Jordan leadeth me. Refrain

Joseph Gilmore was born in Boston in 1834 and died in 1918. He was an ordained Baptist minister who served churches in Philadelphia, New Hampshire, and New York. He later taught English at the University of Rochester and wrote several books. William Bradbury was born in York, ME in 1816 and died in 1868. He studied music in Boston as well as in Europe. He wrote a number of hymn tunes, including *Jesus Loves Me* and *Sweet Hour of Prayer*.

The hymn was written in Philadelphia during the Civil War (in 1862). The author was inspired by the Twenty-Third Psalm to write these words of assurance during a time of uncertainty and trial. The tune was written in 1864 to be used with this text. The hymn expresses our confidence that God will lead through any circumstance. God is always faithful and always present. The hymn may be found as No. 128 in our *United Methodist Hymnal*.

Thank you for your very generous donations to purchase grocery cards for families in need. So far, we have received \$7,819.98 for grocery cards. Your generous support of this project is greatly appreciated!

The *Upper Room* devotional guide for May-June is temporarily available as a [free PDF download](https://www.upperroom.org/news/1155) at <https://www.upperroom.org/news/1155>. You may also pick up copies of the May-June issue of the *Upper Room* at the church.

Our Wednesday morning Bible study is meeting on Zoom every week from 10:30 to noon. We are studying the second half of the Gospel of John. If you would like to participate please contact Pastor Rick, who will send you the link for each week's meeting.

Special thanks to everyone who has continued to send their weekly donations to GUMC. Your generosity is helping us to get through this difficult situation. Your faithful giving is deeply appreciated!

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