

From the Pews, Jim Gettys

“Well...that just happened.”

In our text for today we read of the moments when Jesus last appears to his Apostles whom he has asked to wait in Jerusalem for “the promise of the Father”. Not suprisingly, they, seeing Him in His glory, immediately ask if this is the time for the restoration of Israel. Christ informs them that the “times or periods that the Father has set” are not for them to know but that they will not be left alone to wait. They will be given power and a task to perform until the redemption comes. The gift of power will be the Holy Spirit and the task is that of Witnessing to the authority and majesty of Jesus Christ. Following that, the Apostles are stunned to see Christ ascend into heaven in majesty. Leaving them I imagine, mouths agape, staring up at what they had just seen.

I know that I, and I expect all of us to one degree or another, can relate to an experience that so caught us off guard and reframed our perspective on the world that we were literally stopped in our tracks, standing dumbly while we tried to make sense of what we had just seen. We need look no further than the upheaval and disruption of the last 3 months to find an example, I'd bet. Although the experience of the Apostles and that of our own society have clear and obvious differences, some themes seem to run in parallel with one another.

Christ clearly tells the Apostles that only the Father has true authority over when things will begin and end in the lives of His people. The most powerful person in the world, apparently even Christ himself cannot, through will or desire, truly determine the course of history. As Presbyterians, we more than other denominations may accept this form of predestination with more ease than other traditions, but it still can be hard to swallow. One may look at this as making our experiences less meaningful and our efforts futile. One could drift into apathy, waiting for the Father to “fix it” in His time. During our own time of isolation, anxiety and illness and the need to wait on the natural course of the pandemic to pass, many of us are no doubt feeling abandoned and forgotten. Had not Christ followed this passage with one of inclusion and purpose the Apostles, like many of us, may have given up hope of a brighter future.

That purpose was to be for them, and can still be for us, that of witnessing to the power and love that is in Christ. Not only have we all been given a job to do while we wait on the Father, we are invested with the power to accomplish it. Christ is not leaving us to figure out how we will witness but has provided the Holy Spirit to empower, teach, comfort and guide us. Just as the Apostles were facing an uncertain and dangerous path, we are being asked to live in uncertainty and danger ourselves. Although we cannot change the future or determine when this plague will end, we can and should still call on the Holy Spirit to guide us toward how Christ would use us in this time to love, support and comfort one another. We have nothing but time on our hands, lets all use it with purpose to accomplish the work of Christ.



### Preparaton for **Worship**

“Now anxiety is the mark of spiritual insecurity.

It is the fruit of unanswered questions.

But questions cannot go unanswered unless they first be asked.

And there is a far worse anxiety, a far worse insecurity,  
which comes from being afraid to ask the right questions—  
because they might turn out to have no answer.

One of the moral diseases we communicate to one another in society  
comes from huddling together in the pale light  
of an insufficient answer to a question we are afraid to ask.”

—Thomas Merton

### Gathering and Preparing for **God's Word**

Prelude, *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing* arr. Bish  
Welcome and Announcements

Sentences of Scripture, *Selections from Psalm 68*  
Let the righteous be joyful!  
Let them rejoice before God.

Sing to God, all peoples of the world.  
Sing praises to God most high.  
From the sanctuary of heaven,  
God gives life and renews the face of the earth.

Hymn #366 *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling* HYFRYDOL  
**See hymn sheet.**

Prayer of Confession & Assurance of Pardon  
God of glory: we are so busy watching the skies for signs of your presence  
that we forget to look around to see those we can serve in your name.  
We are so intent on stating our own case that we neglect  
the love and reconciliation to which you call us.  
We are so convinced we can figure out your schedule  
that we fail to open ourselves to the presence of your Spirit within us.

Gracious God, forgive us for our forgetfulness, neglect, and failures.  
Fill us with the wisdom to resist evil in our lives  
and strengthen us in the faith of Christ who is our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Response *Gloria Patri*  
**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,  
and to the Holy Gost,  
as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,  
world without end, amen, amen.**

### Hearing **God's Word**

Prayer for Illumination  
Old Testament Lesson, *Micah 6:6-8*  
Time for Children  
New Testament Lesson, *Acts 1:6-14*  
Homily “Questions You Might Ask”  
Solo *What Is the World Like* Tice/Morris

### Responding to **God's Word**

Affirmation of Faith, *The Apostles' Creed*  
I believe in God the Father Almighty,  
Maker of heaven and earth,

And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord;  
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried;  
he descended into hell;  
the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven,  
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;  
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost;  
the holy catholic Church;  
the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins;  
the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

Morning Prayers  
The Lord's Prayer  
**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.**

Hymn #772 *Live Into Hope* TRURO  
**See hymn sheet.**

Charge and Benediction  
Postlude *Rondeaux* Mouret

### Leading Worship **this Morning**

Ben Dorr, *preaching*  
Mary Kathleen Duncan, Lauren Slingerland, Leigh Stuckey, *liturgists*  
Nancy Smith, *organist*  
Mark Kemp, *vocalist*

## 366 Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

1 Love di - vine, all loves ex - cel - ling, Joy of heaven, to  
 2 Breathe, O breathe thy lov - ing Spir - it in - to ev - ery  
 3 Come, Al - might - y, to de - liv - er; let us all thy  
 4 Fin - ish then thy new cre - a - tion; pure and spot - less

earth come down, fix in us thy hum - ble dwell - ing; all thy  
 trou - bled breast; let us all in thee in - her - it; let us  
 life re - ceive; sud - den - ly re - turn, and nev - er, nev - er -  
 let us be; let us see thy great sal - va - tion per - fect -

faith - ful mer - cies crown. Je - sus, thou art all com - pas - sion;  
 find the prom - ised rest. Take a - way the love of sin - ning;  
 more thy tem - ples leave. Thee we would be al - ways bless - ing,  
 ly re - stored in thee: changed from glo - ry in - to glo - ry,

pure, un - bound - ed love thou art; vis - it us with  
 Al - pha and O - me - ga be; end of faith, as  
 serve thee as thy hosts a - bove, pray, and praise thee  
 till in heaven we take our place, till we cast our

thy sal - va - tion; en - ter ev - ery trem - bling heart.  
 its be - gin - ning, set our hearts at lib - er - ty.  
 with - out ceas - ing, glo - ry in thy per - fect love.  
 crowns be - fore thee, lost in won - der, love, and praise.

This text and this tune occur in almost all English-language hymnals (though not always together). The transforming power of love motivates the unending praise of the life to come, and this fine Welsh tune (whose name means "delightful") gives us a foretaste of endless song.

772

Live into Hope

1 Live in - to hope of cap - tives freed, of sight re -  
 2 Live in - to hope! The blind shall see with in - sight  
 3 Live in - to hope of lib - er - ty, the right to  
 4 Live in - to hope of cap - tives freed from chains of

gained, the end of greed. The op-pressed shall be the  
 and with clar - i - ty, re - mov - ing shades of  
 speak, the right to be, the right to have one's  
 fear or want or greed. God now pro - claims our

first to see the year of God's own ju - bi - lee!  
 pride and fear, a vi - sion of our God brought near.  
 dai - ly bread, to hear God's word and thus be fed.  
 full re - lease to faith and hope and joy and peace.

This text on Luke 4:16-20, the author's first, was written for the United Presbyterian Women's National Meeting in July 1976 because the team planning worship could not find a suitable hymn on that passage. She wrote the words with this vigorous 18th-century tune in mind.