

10-19-2025 Worship Service

Morning Prayer –

Loving God, we thank you for this Sabbath morning; a time when we can gather to fellowship, sing, listen, learn and worship you. Thank you for your Spirit that moves in our midst, nudging us, encouraging us, helping us to use the gifts that you've given, so that people can see and know your love more clearly and learn what you're like and feel invited to become apart of your faithful people.

We thank you for the gift of music and the ways it helps us to experience the beauty in this life. Thank you for each member of Open Road and their presence with us this morning. Thank you, especially for the ways they share their music with us. Bless them as they sing; may they also know your love even as they share it with us.

Gracious God, as we listen and watch and experience the painful divisions between people that seem to become deeper by the day, help us – your people everywhere, to bring more kindness, more humility, more goodness and understanding into our daily lives and relationships. We know, God, that we can only do this with your help. And so we pray for openness to your guidance each day.

God, we pray for those we know and love who are struggling with health concerns – illness and dis-ease of the body, the mind or the spirit. In these moments of silence we think of them by name and we ask for your healing, your love and comfort...

We thank you God, for life passages and celebrations. This morning we pray especially for Brook and Eli as they anticipate their wedding this coming Saturday. Bless their love and commitment to one another. Bless them and their families as they begin this new relationship.

And now we pray your blessing on us as we continue to worship you as we give our gifts and tithes. Amen.

The photos that Delton will show us during the offering are of Tina, Chelan, Bob and Brendon as they painted the walls of the choir loft that were repaired last week. Thanks to each of them as they overcame their fear of heights and spent a couple of long evenings here, offering their time.

Offering prayer –

Generous God, you gave us life; now we give our lives back to you.
We present ourselves: Our work and play, our joys and sorrows,
Our thoughts and deeds, our gifts and resources, to be used by you
For the sake of all people everywhere, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Luke 18:1-8; 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5 – *persistence and resistance* **Pastor Lois Harder**

One of the threads that connects our two scripture passages for this morning is the idea of persistence... perseverance... stick-to-it-iveness. Remember Frank Sinatra...?

Just what makes that little ole ant think he can move that rubber tree plant?
Everyone knows an ant – can't – move a rubber tree plant.
But he's got high hopes, he's got high hopes,
he's got high apple pie in the sky hopes.

So any time you're gettin' low, 'stead of lettin' go
 Just remember that ant!
 Oops there goes another rubber tree.... plant!

Another story of persistence is the one about two frogs that fell into a jar of buttermilk. One frog gave up and drowned, but the other one continued to struggle. Its persistent efforts churned the buttermilk into butter. This created a solid surface that helped it to jump from the jar.

Then there's also the story about Thomas Edison, the great inventor, who was told by his elementary school teachers that he was "too stupid to learn anything" and then went on to prove them right by failing thousands of times before inventing a working light bulb. But he didn't give up and when he was asked about his failures, he famously responded that he hadn't failed, but had simply found about 10,000 ways that didn't work.

The scientific theories of Charles Darwin and Louis Pasteur were publicly ridiculed during their lifetimes as complete nonsense. Emily Dickinson wrote almost 1,800 poems but she only had 10 published in her lifetime. Van Gogh only sold one painting (that we know of) during his lifetime. The editor of the Kansas City Star fired Walt Disney for "lacking imagination" and Michael Jordan was cut from his high school basketball team as a sophomore which motivated him to work harder. He made the varsity team in his junior year and then went on to become... well, Michael Jordan.

Timothy was a young leader of a young church in an empire in which the Emperor Augustus Caesar demanded to be worshipped and to have complete allegiance and loyalty shown to him and him alone. Timothy's mentor was Paul the Apostle, a dynamic, charismatic convert who, at the time of the writing of this letter, was likely in a Roman prison, awaiting his execution for preaching persistently that Jesus is Lord, not Caesar.

Paul wrote this second letter to Timothy as an encouragement to persist, to not give up, to not be ashamed of the gospel and to be prepared, if necessary, to suffer for it. He wanted to remind Timothy to keep going, stay steadfast with all that he'd learned from his teachers about scripture and to remember the ways he'd been equipped by the scripture he'd learned.

In Timothy's case this would have been primarily what we know as Old Testament scripture – there was no New Testament yet! Timothy's scripture was Paul and Jesus' scripture and they would have learned it at Ye-SHEE-vuh, the Jewish school for boys. Like our Sunday school. They learned what we've learned. We can easily name the top few most significant lessons from scripture.

God created everything that is; and it was good. God continues to reach out, to make covenants, to try to be in relationship with humanity, longing for people to choose God's love and grace. Love God. Love people. Do justly. Love mercy. Walk humbly with your God. And the big 10! God is God – don't put any other gods before him. Don't take God's name in vain. Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy. Honor your father and your mother. Don't kill. Don't commit adultery. Don't steal. Don't gossip or bear false witness against your neighbors. Don't covet your neighbor's wife or your neighbor's stuff.

A person can go a long way and be well-equipped by remembering just those basic points from scripture. And like any good teacher, Paul really wanted his student, Timothy, not to get discouraged or side-tracked with what was going on all around him in the culture. There were false teachers, telling people what they wanted to hear, making it seem acceptable to be self-centered and self-serving. Paul was preparing to meet his death and he wanted Timothy to persevere faithfully in the preaching and the ministry.

Paul wrote this letter of encouragement to a specific student, but I'm grateful that this letter is in the Biblical canon, because we're ALL students, called to share in the liberating news of Jesus. And so, in whatever ways we're each gifted we can count on God's Spirit to help us "Preach the word whether it's convenient or inconvenient", to help us follow Jesus persistently and faithfully, using what we know from scripture to move us.

In the Gospel passage Jesus was the teacher and he also wanted his students to persevere and not get discouraged. So, as he did, he told them this story to make his point. Once upon a time there was a rotten judge who didn't fear God or respect people. A widow persisted in asking this judge to advocate for her, because she had no one else. She wasn't asking for special favors or abundant wealth. She was only asking for what she needed to live. She wore him down with her persistence until even this unjust judge finally gave her the life-sustaining justice she deserved.

This can be a hard story for us to get our heads around. Partly because we might want to equate the unjust judge with God. After all, the judge was, finally, the one who gave the widow what she was asking for. But Jesus clears up that misperception as he wraps up the story – with a couple of questions, as per usual. He asks, "Won't God (give) justice to his people who cry out to him day night? (And) will he be slow to help them? No! God will give justice quickly." But the real question is, is there anyone on earth who prays as faithfully and fervently *for justice* as this woman?

In this story, the woman could represent ALL women, all people, all around the world, who plead with God, who pray fervently, ceaselessly, because they have no one but God to advocate for them. In this story, the woman represents faithfulness – God's creation that has total trust in their Creator. And this story isn't really about the woman. It's about God and the nature of God. If this lousy judge finally gives the woman what she needs, won't our loving Creator God all the more? This story is about trusting who God is and then living out our response to God.

God is love. And *God* is persistent (with that love). God keeps on loving Creation, including humanity, in spite of what we deserve. As one writer put it, "All we know in the life of prayer is asking, seeking, knocking and waiting, trust sometimes fainting, sometimes growing angry." (Fred Craddock, *Luke* – Louisville, KY; John Knox Press, 1990, pg. 210) But each time we pray, each time we say, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done", we are faithfully putting our longings into God's hands, acknowledging that God's love reaches far beyond our ability to see it or understand it.

"The widow kept coming to the judge, hoping against all odds, persistent, determined, and relentless. The believers keep praying, hoping against all odds, persistent, determined and relentless. Not because they're 'good Christians' or because they (have) such a great and strong

faith... but because The Spirit has given them the courage to... pray without ceasing in a broken and fearful world... This hopeful courage that (we) receive from The Spirit as a gift not only leads to (strong prayers) but to active resistance to injustice..." (Feasting on the Word, Year C, Volume 4, pgs. 191-192)

I read about a woman named Kay Krause in Cottonwood Falls who was "searching for a way to make a difference with so much 'craziness happening around us'. She meditated", the article said. And then "came up with the idea to try to make life better for immigrants who are housed at the Chase County Detention Center a half-mile from her house." She said, "You don't have to take a political stand to support people that are imprisoned. That's a love stand." Kay Krause has raised money "to support ICE detainees, providing them with postcards and stamps, so that when they get transferred to a different location they have a way of letting their families know where they are... She's also organized jail-sanctioned donations of soccer balls and other items, through an Amazon gift registry. Yesterday she hosted a 'love in action' rally at her house. There were 13 people there around a campfire in her backyard." Referring to the current rounding up and imprisoning of immigrants, she said "At some point, this whole mess is going to be over, and then what are going to do? We've got to start building bridges. We've got to start seeing our neighbors as neighbors and not enemies. We've just got to start reaching out and looking for the good in each other, because it's there. It's just covered up with all this craziness." The article goes on, "Krause led the group in meditation. She asked them to take deep breaths, to be aware of the smell of the campfire and the sounds around them..." (Kansas Reflector, October 18, 2025)

As we continue to read and discern the scripture together and pray faithfully, may The Spirit also give us persistence and resistance in just the right measures all along the way. Amen.