

What Are We Called To?

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Preacher: Pastor Sherry Mahar

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F ■ ■ ■ Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
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- [2 : 27] Thank you.
Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
Sometimes I think What will people say of me When I'm only just a memory When I'm
home where my soul belongs Was I love When no one else would show up Was I Jesus
to the least of us Was my worship more than just a song I want to live like that And give it
all I have So that everything I say and do Points to you If love is who I am This is where I'll
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- [5 : 41] The madness we abandoned Never holding down I want to live like that I want to live like
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You are who you say you are If grace can really change the heart Do I live like your love is
true?
People ask Even if they don't know my name Is there evidence that I've been changed
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And give it all I have So that everything I say can do Points to you If love is who I am Then
this is where I stand Recklessly abandoned And a normal morning night I want to live like
that I want to live like that I want to live like that Amen The Lord be with you And also with
you Please be seated Good morning friends

[8 : 46] Good morning I am Scott Also part of the pastoral team Here at Pendleton Center In Niagara Falls First United Methodist Churches It is indeed a great day To be worshipping our God together Whether we are here in person Or we are gathered online As we come this morning There are so many things That are exciting That are happening around us We see God's handiwork As the seasons change We also see smiles Whether they are above our masks Or we can see them In our friends faces at home We want to be mindful today Of the different ways We can support our ministries We are asking everyone To fill out a friendship card And ask for some Basic contact information If you are watching us online And that way You can also share joys Concerns And the pastoral and prayer team Will be in prayer for you As we continue to walk with you In your faith journey We also would ask that If you are watching online You can download The children's activity sheet

And that way Your young people Who are watching with you Can also be engaged In our worship service We ask you that you Also be mindful Of your willingness To give your gifts to God And you can give In a variety of ways You can either give online At pendletonchurch.org Slash give You can also give in person By putting your offering In one of the boxes At the church Or you can still mail Your gift in to the church If that is your preferred way This morning we are also Taking time for a mission moment And today's mission moment Is about United Methodist Student Day This is an offering done To support students Throughout the world So these will provide loans And scholarships for folks Who are doing their best To advance their education While holding on To our Methodist tradition So with that said Please take this time now And fill out your offering Through the pastor

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Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[13 : 34] Amen.

Amen. Lord God, we are mindful that all we have is yours.

And we are also mindful that as we give back to you, this is only one way we show our love. We hear your voice calling us to go to those who may not have these types of gifts to give.

But Lord, in your gift, we give you thanks for all that you are and all that you have done. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Please be seated. As we move today to our conversation with God, we are also mindful of so many different things that God is doing, ways in which we are excited in some of the good things that are happening.

[14 : 47] Sam and Diana Fritz becoming grandparents, we want to lift that up. We certainly want to lift up Pastor Kathy and her family. As they are celebrating Katie's wedding, and that is the joy.

So as we come to God today, we know that there are things for which we must give God. No matter the burdens on our hearts as well, we also want to make sure we can lay those down at God's feet.

And so with that, and I open our hearts to the movement of God as we go to him in prayer. Lord, as we come today, we are so amazed by your grace, amazed by your beauty, amazed by your kindness.

And we are grateful for the ways in which we can experience the comforts of this time, the comforts of family and friends, the comforts of warm, the comforts of warm, the comforts of warm, the comforts of warm, the comforts of warm, with our friends together, the comforts of familiar activities and familiar places and things.

And Lord, as we gather, we are also mindful of the things that bring us exceptional joy, like births and weddings and so many exciting new things that are happening in our lives.

[16 : 10] But Lord, as we come, we also know that we hear your voice calling us, calling us to be the body of Christ for those who do not have such comforts, those who may not have that blanket to wrap themselves in, those who may not have enough for that comforting meal.

Those who may be far removed from family and unable to experience those precious times together. We, as your people, hear you calling.

We, as your people, feel you moving. And we will respond. As we come in prayer today, Lord, we are also mindful of all those who are suffering.

We pray for all of those with COVID-19. We pray for all of those who are hurting. from other injuries or illnesses. Those who need to be healed by you with your unique and powerful touch.

Those who need that healing, whose hearts are broken. Whether it be for relationships or whether it be towards grief. Lord, we know that only you can heal the broken heart.

[17 : 25] We know that only you can heal the broken spirit by you and your gifts, by your presence, by your love. That which is lost and that which is somehow wandering or wounded can find wholeness again.

Lord, we know that there are those among us and we know that there are so many in the world who need that touch today. So we come on behalf of those we love, seeking your movement, seeking that healing for those who need it.

And Lord, as we come, we know that we will be your people working for justice in all ways as we hear our brothers and sisters and see them continuing to work for that day when we have that beloved community among us.

Lord, all these things we ask in the name of your precious son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. Good morning.

Today's reading is from the book of Isaiah, chapter 1, verses 12 through 17. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts?

[19 : 20] Stop bringing meaningless offerings. Your incense is detestable to me. New moons, Sabbaths, and convocations. I cannot bear your worthless assemblies.

Your new moon feasts and your appointed festivals I hate with all of my being. They have become a burden to me. I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I hide my eyes from you.

Even when you offer many prayers, I am not listening. Your hands are full of blood. Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight.

Stop doing wrong. Learn to do right. Seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless. Plead the case of the widow.

This is the word of our Lord. Thanks be to God. Thank you, Linda. So when Pastor Kathy said, well, I'm going away for my daughter's wedding.

[20 : 30] Would you be willing to preach? I was like, sure. And then I looked at this scripture and was like, oh, that's a hard word. That's a harsh word. That's a word that's like, not really the joyful up type of thing that we usually want to hear.

And yet, it's an important word. I mean, think about what this word was saying. It's kind of depressing. God cannot bear our worthless assemblies.

Hates with all his being, our feasts and our festivals. It's become a burden to him and he's weary of them. And it's like, meaningless and detestable? What are you talking about?

And it even starts off and says, when you come before me, who's asked this of you? And I thought, you did, God. You're the one that asked us to do this. So what are you saying to us?

And God in this is saying, you got the wrong message. You're doing the actions, but you're not doing the actions. You're missing the point.

[21 : 34] You're missing the why. Now, some would say, well, this is Isaiah. This is the Old Testament. And so, you know, things were messed up back then. Not like now, right?

And so, we don't really have to pay much attention to that because it's in the Old Testament. And when Jesus came, it all changed. And we're New Testament people. And yes, when Jesus came, everything did change.

And we are New Testament people. But Jesus actually taught from Isaiah. In Luke 4, he opens up with his mission statement and says, taken straight from Isaiah, proclaim the good news to the poor, freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.

He's speaking right out of Isaiah. Isaiah. This is what we need to be doing. So, this was not an idea that went away with Jesus. This was an idea that became magnified with Jesus.

Justice, peace, caring for those in need is throughout the entire scripture. In fact, did you know that justice is found 130 times within the entire canon of scripture?

[22 : 47] Throughout the entire canon of scripture, it talks about standing up for the oppressed, taking care of the poor, the weak, the vulnerable, the needy. Do we see that kind of brokenness today?

I mean, what do we see? I mean, some of the brokenness and the pain today is easy to see. You can look around. You can see it. It's a mess. But it's obvious.

But other times, you know, it's not so easy to see. It's hidden away. It's kind of like when a kid cleans their room and you start really looking and it's like, oh, there's stuff under the bed and such.

And there's also things that are just right under our noses and we've just never really seen it before. The Holy Spirit can give us a sensitivity and an awareness to see the mess, the stains, the pain, the struggles, the needs that are right in front of us, but we've never really seen it before.

It's kind of like this. Anybody know what this is? It looks like a flashlight, but it's actually a black light. A black light will, if you take it into the darkness and you shine it on something, it's going to reveal things left behind.

[23 : 59] It is not for the faint of heart. Okay? So it will reveal things that were back from spills and all kinds of ugliness and whatever was left behind. And it's especially scary if you've ever had pets or children or any other living creatures in your household.

Okay? To look at it and say, whoa, didn't know that was there. Right in front of us all along, we had no idea, no idea that that was there, that that mess was there.

It's the same sort of thing with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can open up our eyes, our spiritual eyes, to see what's been in front of us all along, and yet we've never really seen it.

So the question is, what do we see? And when we do see it, we have to understand that we can't unsee it. We, as the people of God, need to see it.

Racism, sexism, ageism, every kind of ism, addiction, poverty, joblessness, homelessness, hunger, bullying, abuse, hatred, violence, disease, grieving, loneliness, depression, anxiety, fear.

[25 : 06] Do we see it? Do we see it? And when we see it, then what? Then what do we do?

We see it. Jesus was once asked what the greatest commandment was of all of them, and he narrowed it down to two. And you all know this.

Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, all of your soul, with all of your mind, with all of your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself.

That's right. Love your neighbor as yourself. So there was one time when a religious leader decided to challenge Jesus, saying, ah, well, who is my neighbor? When Jesus decided to tell this story, the story to illustrate who the neighbor actually was, and he told the story of the Good Samaritan.

He said, there was this man who was heading down the road, and some robbers came, and they beat him up, and they took his clothing, and they left him on the side of the road, bruised, beaten, bleeding, left for dead, laying there weak, vulnerable, hurting.

[26 : 17] And then, a priest comes by. A priest, the biggest symbol of worshiping community.

A priest comes by, and a priest comes and sees the man laying there on the side of the road, and chooses to go across the street and pass on the other side.

Then he added a second person, a Levite, a Levite who is also one of the highest people in the worshiping community. The priest and the Levite together exemplify worship, worshiping community.

And the Levite, same thing, came up, saw the man bleeding, saw the man laying there, and chose to go to the opposite side and pass by, leaving him there.

Hurting, vulnerable, and in need. An epitome, an example of worthless worship. Worthless worship.

[27 : 21] And some people will say, well, they just need to care. And it's like, well, caring isn't enough. Can you imagine how the story changes if we have, the priest comes up, and he sees the man laying there, and he cares deeply.

And he chooses to go to the other side and walk by. Our caring and our compassion actually have to be translated into action. It's not a question of whether or not we can avoid it.

We can't avoid it. We have to walk in. The religious people saw and they chose to do nothing. And sometimes, let's admit it, it's easier to do nothing.

And we sometimes don't understand why. Why do I need to become part of this? Why do I have to do it? I wasn't the one who beat that person up. I wasn't the one who robbed them. Why is this my responsibility?

Why? I don't understand the why. My son Joshua told me that I could tell this story. He shared it at the youth retreat.

[28 : 25] And he talked about how when he was 14 years old, his mother, me, voluntold him to go on the mission trip. And he had a bad attitude about it.

A really bad attitude about it. He did not understand the why behind it at all. As he was there working on this, he's like, wait a minute, let me get this straight.

I'm in this camp with no Wi-Fi. A cruddy little camping cot thing. It's not comfortable at all. There's no air conditioning.

I'm taking a week's worth of my vacation. I'm not playing video games with my friends. I'm not going swimming. I'm not doing any of the fun things. I'm working my tail off. And I had to work to earn money to pay for this.

Why am I doing this? Why am I doing this? I don't understand. And throughout the week as he was working his tail off and still kept questioning why?

[29 : 29] Why? Why? Why? Why are we doing this? I'd rather be doing anything else. And throughout the week it started to become revealed who we're doing this for. The people that we were serving had a story.

Their story involved addiction, violence, abandonment, poverty. They were hurting people. And in the ministering to them it became very clear as they responded to our acts of mercy, as our acts of love, as they responded to that.

And we saw them with change and open hearts going from hopeless to hopeful. With tears of gratitude Joshua said that he heard God say, this, this is why.

this is why. This is why we do it. And he said now, now he chooses to serve. It's not a question of why anymore.

He gets the why. It's still not easy. It's never easy. But you still choose that because of the why. We choose to step into brokenness and bring healing through the love of God.

[30 : 47] God, like the opening song said, is my worship more than just a song? More than going through the motions? More than practicing the form of religion?

I want to live like that so that everything I say and do points to you, God. So Jesus brings in another character, the final character of the Samaritan.

And he chose the character of the Samaritan because the people listening would have thought the Samaritan was someone who was godless. Certainly this person has no God within him. Certainly this person would also have walked on by.

But instead Jesus said, that person, that Samaritan, that person that you've judged actually went out and he helped that man. He bandaged his wounds.

He took him to an inn. He paid his way. He made sure that he was cared for. And the whole story started off with the man asking, who is my neighbor?

[31 : 49] And Jesus turned it around at that point and said, who was a neighbor? Who was a neighbor? And the man said, the one who had mercy on him.

And Jesus said, go, go, go, and do likewise. It's not easy.

And sometimes I think we've all not done that. And I invite you to a prayer of confession along with me. When we pray, Lord, I have sinned. I've sometimes ignored or avoided the pain of others.

I've had a heart and heart. I've not always acted in love. I've not always cared for others. Forgive me, Lord.

Fill me with your love. Give me your heart for others. And empower me to love boldly in this world.

[33 : 01] Amen. Now hear the good news. Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. And this proves God's love for you and for me in the name of Jesus Christ.

Your sins are forgiven. Glory to God. Amen. And that's the why.

That's the why. That's the point. That's what we're doing. That's what worship is all about. Worship and church in and of itself is not the place where religious people gather in perfection but it is instead if we're real about it it's messy.

It's messy. It's broken. It's a hospital. We come here to be healed. We come here to remember how we've been healed and to carry that healing out.

This is not a place for all the perfect pretty people. This is the place where we recognize who we are, what God has done for us and because of that that why is why we go out to others.

- [34 : 08] It's a story of our love for God and God's love for us. We are sinners saved by grace forgiven, redeemed, healed, restored, growing. Our story of love and that story of love is not confined to a church building.
- We are called to be change agents in the world bringing a positive impact. The kingdom of God, the love of God released upon the world through us.
- It's not enough to just not be a part of the problem. The priest and the Levite were not part of the problem until they chose to not do anything about it.
- It's not enough to just stand by and say, I'm avoiding it, I'm not doing it, it's fine. No, we as Christians are called to be part of the solution.
- We carry that grace, we carry that love, we have the solution of God's love in this world and we are called to be more than just avoiding the problem but to be called to be the solution, bringing a positive change, help for the helpless, hope for the hopeless, standing up for those who cannot stand on their own, standing in the way of evil.
- [35 : 24] For those who are Lord of the Rings fans, I just imagine Gandalf standing there and evil is rising up in front of him and he says, you shall not pass.
- No, evil shall not pass when Christians are on the move. Evil will not take a foothold when Christians are on the move, when we are bringing the love of God out there.
- Shall not pass. We have that power because greater is the one that is in us than the one that is in the world. Amen? And we shall not be overcome.
- Evil shall not overcome because we are the people of God Almighty and we are victorious over evil.
- This passage says we are to do right, to seek justice, to defend the oppressed, to take up the cause of the fatherless, to plead the case of the widow.
- [36 : 26] Are we there? Are we there for the poor, the vulnerable, the hurting, the lonely, those who have been harmed by circumstance and those who have been harmed by others?
- Those who have mess and stains that are easy to recognize and those whose pain is buried deep. our love with God opens us to see.
- Our love with God opens us and empowers us that when we see, we do. That's the why.
- And we then can become that neighbor showing mercy to others. That's the worship that God desires. That's the worship.
- It all comes down to love. It's always about love. The idea that we experience God's love and God's love flows through us which empowers us to go and love others.
- [37 : 25] And we bring positive change and healing because of God's love. We live as Jesus' hands and feet. And when God says, whom shall I send?
- Whom shall I stand? We stand here and we respond, here I am, Lord. Send me. Amen?
- Amen. Amen. As we prepare to respond to that powerful word this morning, I want to share that today is also a special day on the church calendar.
- It is World Communion Sunday. For those who may not know, World Communion Sunday was a day begun in the 1940s pushed primarily by the Presbyterian denomination to celebrate the union of Christians around the world in this precious sacrament we all share.
- And so as we come today, I would hope that we would be mindful of our brothers and sisters doing the same in other places around the world. But not only that sense of unity with others who are part of the body of Christ, what it means to be the body of Christ as we have just heard.
- [39 : 11] The Lord be with you. And also with you. Lift up your hearts. Lift up your hearts. Lift up the Lord. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. Give us your heart in your eyes and prayer.

It is right and a good and joyful thing always and everywhere to give thanks to you. Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth, you formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life.

When we turned away and our love failed, your love remained steadfast. You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, and spoke to us through your prophets who looked for that day when justice shall roll down like waters.

and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. When nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

And so with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn. Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and light, heaven and earth are full of your glory.

[40 : 30] Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. Holy are you and blessed is your son, Jesus Christ.

Your spirit anointed him to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to announce that the time had come when you would save your people.

He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners. By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection, you gave birth to your church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the spirit.

At his ascension, you exalted him to sit and reign with you at your right hand. And on the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, and gave it to his disciples, and said, take and eat.

This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, and gave it to his disciples, and said, drink from this, all of you.

[41 : 56] This is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sin. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.

And so, in remembrance of these, your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ's offering for us as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here and on these gifts of bread and wine.

Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood. By your Spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other and one in ministry to all the world until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly bank.

through your Son, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy church, all honor and glory is yours, Almighty God, now and forever.

[43 : 14] Amen. And now, with the confidence of the children of God, let us pray together the prayer that our Lord taught us. 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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. Please stand if you're able.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. I'm the Lord of sea and sky.

[44 : 35] I will make the stars of night. I will make their darkness bright. Who will bear my mind to them.

[45 : 32] I am, Lord, of snow and rain. I am, Lord, of snow and rain. I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them.

Amen.