

*As we unite in worship today, we extend a warm welcome to each one present.  
May we together experience the presence of God*

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**We Gather to Prepare Our Hearts to Meet Our Lord**

**Prelude**

**Welcome**



**“We Are Witnesses”**

**Announcements/Joys & Concerns**

What do you do when you encounter something new?  
Do you stand in the way of change, or get on board?

This was a choice that we will study today pertaining to Peter and certain believers in Jerusalem faced when God gave the Gentiles the same gift of the Holy Spirit that he had given to the Jewish Christians earlier.

Should the Jewish Christians unite with Gentiles in Christian fellowship?  
Should they go as far as to break bread in Gentile homes too?

Many questions, many opinions but what we must first acknowledge is that:  
God’s thoughts are not our thoughts.  
God’s ways are not our ways.  
God’s ways are higher than our ways.  
God’s thoughts are higher than our thoughts.  
(Isaiah 55:89)

We can either humble ourselves before the Lord, trusting His thoughts and His ways,  
AND (here’s the key...) we can follow Him!

— or —

We can allow that ancient sin of pride to take control, to harden our hearts to the winds of God’s changing work, and we can deceive ourselves into thinking that we have it all figured out, and that we know better than God —  
and we may in reality find ourselves in a position where we may hinder (or prevent) God from working!

God’s work cannot be hindered, but we can hinder God’s working through us. And if we prevent the work God wants to do in us, God will do His work in someone else!  
When God reveals what he wants to do, we must decide — will we follow him? Or stand in his way? Will we be known as ambassadors of His Kingdom, or obstacles?

Much to consider as we gather in Worship today. So, let us begin our time together by uniting first in our call to worship...

### **Call to Worship:**

We come today from different places, different moods, different mornings.

**Some are hectic and rushed, others quiet, perhaps forlorn. Regardless, we are loved equally in God's eyes.**

We pray for health or happiness; some pray for strength or support.

**We pray in joy and hope and longing, and God hears each prayer the same.**

We worship with different voices and talents, and we lift up our hearts united in praise.

**Each one of us is unique and beloved; together we praise God who welcomes our worship as one.**

### **Opening Prayer:**

**Life-giving Father, Almighty God, you created us in your image, and with a rich diversity of character and personality. We are loud and quiet, we are excited and reserved, we are energetic and reflective. Inspire us to embrace our individuality; to give thanks for the quirks and abilities that make us who we are. Guide us to respect and value difference in each other and to appreciate the variety that makes life interesting; that makes friendship vibrant; that sparks creativity. Encourage us to love without judgment or fear, and with confidence in your eternal love for us.**

**Amen.**

### **\*HYMN OF PRAISE, UMH 152 "I Sing the Almighty Power of God"**

*Author: Isaac Watts (1715)*

*Publication Date: 1989*

*Tune Information*

*Name: FOREST GREEN*

*Arranger: Ralph Vaughan Williams (1906)*

**1. I sing the almighty power of God,  
that made the mountains rise,  
that spread the flowing seas abroad,  
and built the lofty skies.**

**I sing the wisdom that ordained  
the sun to rule the day;  
the moon shines full at God's  
command,  
and all the stars obey.**

**2. I sing the goodness of the Lord,  
who filled the earth with food,  
who formed the creatures thru the  
Word,**

**and then pronounced them good.  
Lord, how thy wonders are displayed,  
where'er I turn my eye,  
if I survey the ground I tread,  
or gaze upon the sky.**

**3. There's not a plant or flower below,  
but makes thy glories known,  
and clouds arise, and tempests blow,  
by order from thy throne;  
while all that borrows life from thee  
is ever in thy care;  
and everywhere that we can be,  
thou, God, art present there.**

## ***We Hear God's Word***

**New Testament Reading..... Acts 11:1-18**

**New Revised Standard Version**

***Peter's Report to the Church at Jerusalem***

11 Now the apostles and the believers[a] who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God. 2 So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers[b] criticized him, 3 saying, "Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?" 4 Then Peter began to explain it to them, step by step, saying, 5 "I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. There was something like a large sheet coming down from heaven, being lowered by its four corners; and it came close to me. 6 As I looked at it closely I saw four-footed animals, beasts of prey, reptiles, and birds of the air. 7 I also heard a voice saying to me, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.' 8 But I replied, 'By no means, Lord; for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' 9 But a second time the voice answered from heaven, 'What God has made clean, you must not call profane.' 10 This happened three times; then everything was pulled up again to heaven. 11 At that very moment three men, sent to me from Caesarea, arrived at the house where we were. 12 The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us.[c] These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. 13 He told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, 'Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter; 14 he will give you a message by which you and your entire household will be saved.' 15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. 16 And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' 17 If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?" 18 When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, "Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life."

The Word of God for the People of God, **Thanks be to God!**

## **CHILDREN'S SERMON**

### **FAITH HYMN UMH #561 "Jesus United By Thy Grace "**

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**Jesus, united by thy grace  
and each to each endeared,  
with confidence we seek thy face  
and know our prayer is heard.**

**Help us to help each other, Lord,  
each other's cross to bear;  
let all their friendly aid afford,  
and feel each other's care.**

**Up unto thee, our living Head,  
let us in all things grow;  
till thou hast made us free indeed  
and spotless here below.**

**This is the bond of perfectness,  
thy spotless charity;  
O let us, still we pray, possess  
the mind that was in thee.**

## “Message”

### Prayers of the People

Holy God,  
you have called us to follow in the way of your risen Son,  
and to care for those who are our companions,  
not only with words of comfort, but with acts of love.  
Seeking to be true friends of all,  
we offer our prayers on behalf of the church and the world.

*Prayers of the People, concluding with:*

Guide us in the path of discipleship,  
so that, as you have blessed us,  
we may be a blessing for others,  
bringing the promise of the kingdom near  
by our words and deeds.  
In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray the prayer  
your beloved Son taught us to pray, our Father...

### **Departing Hymn UMH #388 “O Come and Dwell in Me”**

*Author: Charles Wesley (1762)*

*Publication Date: 1989*

**1. O come and dwell in me,  
Spirit of power within,  
and bring the glorious liberty  
from sorrow, fear, and sin.**

**3. I want the witness, Lord,  
that all I do is right,  
according to thy mind and word,  
well-pleasing in thy sight.**

### **Benediction**

May God’s grace awaken your soul and inspire you to see the world as God sees it. May the Holy Spirit open your heart to see the dignity and needs of others. And may the love of Christ comfort and sustain you through the days ahead. Amen.

### **\*POSTLUDE**