

An Order for Worship at Home

Sunday, January 25, 2026

Prepare

As you prepare to worship at home this morning, light a candle if you are able – welcome the Holy Spirit into your home and heart as you worship. You might also consider having in front of (or near) you, a bible, some paper, and something to write with. Silence your phones, place them in a different room, and allow yourself to be fully present with the Lord on this day.

Opening/Centering Prayer

As you and your family begin a time of worship consider praying the following prayer, or one of your own extemporaneously.

Almighty God, though we are unable to be gathered as the body of Christ in-person this morning, we ask that you might join us together in your Spirit. As we pause on this day, we ask that you might fill our hearts and homes. Speak to us through your scriptures, be present in our conversations, and strengthen us in our time of reflection. Through Christ's holy name we pray, Amen.

Turning to the Scriptures

As you turn to the scriptures this morning, you might consider reading them aloud in your home. You might also consider reading one, or all of them, twice – follow the prompting of the Holy Spirit as you worship.

- Psalm 27: 1-9
 - Psalm 27 is a chapter of lament, divided into three parts. The first part (v.1-6) is a statement of trust. The second part (v. 7-12) is a plea for deliverance. The third part (v. 13-14) is an expression of trust. The psalm is bookended with the Psalmists trust in God.
 - As you hear the words of the Psalm this morning – how might you describe your trust in the Lord? Do you trust the Lord entirely, or are you plagued by doubt and worry this day?
 - The middle part of the Psalm is one in which the Psalmist craves deliverance. From what are you in need of delivering this day or season?
- Isaiah 9: 1-4
 - Isaiah 9 begins with celebrating the reign of a new king, possibly King Hezekiah. After the collapse of the monarchy (587 BCE), the poem takes on messianic interpretation. Verses 3-4 shows a people rejoicing after God has rescued them from Assyrian oppression. Isaiah references Gideon, particularly his victory at Midian as an example of God's strength and power.
 - Where have you witnessed God's power and strength? From what has God delivered you?

- Consider writing a list of times where you have witnessed or experienced God's power. How many times could you list? Were these instances major milestones in your life – or everyday occurrences?
- Matthew 4: 12-23
- Jesus' ministry begins in the light of his relative John the Baptists arrest. Historically speaking, John the Baptist was arrested for his vocal opposition to King Herod, and particularly Herod's marriage to his brother's wife – John declared the act to be unlawful and adulterous according to Jewish law.
- Shortly thereafter we read that Jesus relocates to make "his home in Capernaum by the sea." (v.12) This serves as a confirmation of that messianic prophecy we find in Is. 9. Notice the cross-reference between V. 15-16, to the passage we read from Isaiah.
- Jesus then calls 4 disciples – Peter, Andrew (brother of Peter), James, and John (the sons of Zebedee). To Peter and Andrew, Jesus says he will make them fishers of people. James and John leave their boat, their nets, and their family to follow Jesus as well.
- As we read this story of Jesus calling these four disciples this morning – pause for a moment to consider to what Jesus has called you. In your work – how has or how did God call you to that work? Was it easy to follow that call? Consider jotting down some examples of how that call has been filled with joy – in a separate column, you might consider ways that this calling has been difficult.
- As you consider God's call upon your life – how would you share with someone advice on following God's call?

Sermon

Attached to this order is a copy of this morning's sermon. You're invited to read it and use it as you wish for further reflection.

Prayers of the People

As you continue to worship, what joys have you experienced since you last worshipped? Are there concerns that weigh heavy on your heart? Consider writing those down or sharing them aloud with your family.

Go before God in prayer – giving thanks, asking for your needs, and lifting up the needs of those around you.

Closing Hymn

Had we met in person this morning, the choir's anthem would have been Be Thou My Vision. Below is a copy of the words of that hymn – if you're familiar with the tune, consider singing it aloud if the Spirit prompts you. You might also read the stanzas as a prayer, reflecting on God's call upon your life.

Be Thou My Vision

Words: Ancient Irish; translated by Mary E. Byrne, 1905, versed by Eleanor H. Hull, 1912
Music: Traditional Irish Melody; harmonized by Carlton R. Young, 1963

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that thou art.
Thou my best thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word;
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord;
Thou and thou only, first in my heart,
Great God of heaven, my treasure thou art.

Great God of heaven, my victory won,
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heavens Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

Sermon

Rev. Ben Van Staalduin

1/25/2026

“Disruption”

The passage that we have for this morning is one that is broken down into two parts. The first part of the passage explains when and how Jesus began his ministry—and it does so while explaining how Jesus fulfills part of Isaiah's prophecy. That may have sounded familiar because it was part of the passage that we read earlier from Isaiah. The second part of the passage covers Jesus calling his first disciples.

What might be most interesting about this passage, is that there are tiny details in this passage that make things very interesting. We find these small little nuggets of info that we read, which seem innocuous at first, but really are meant to clue us in to something greater. In fact, the first little detail like this is found in the very first verse. We learn that Jesus' ministry begins when he hears about John the Baptist getting arrested. It's at that point that Jesus begins preaching, and at the end of that scene, we see that Jesus is preaching essentially the same message that we have heard John proclaiming: “Change your hearts and lives! Here Comes the kingdom of heaven.” -that's how the CEB (Common English Bible) puts it.

Now—the significance here is that the reader is meant to link Jesus and John the Baptist through this message. Jesus begins when John is arrested and begins by preaching essentially the same message that John was preaching. As readers, we're supposed to notice that, and conclude that if John was arrested for preaching it—then Jesus will also likely be arrested for preaching it. From the onset we're meant to see Jesus' ministry and message as something that, at the very least, is mildly seditious in the minds of the ruling class. His message details a new kind of kingdom—and anything that is in opposition to Rome, would not be tolerated. Jesus is preaching a gospel that would have been considered treasonous. Jesus was saying there is something greater than the Roman empire.

And, truthfully, we can't fully grasp the significance of this because we live in a country founded on religious freedom. No matter what faith you adhere to—you can practice that openly and without fear of persecution. And with incredibly limited government involvement—if any. But, Jesus—his words were confronting an empire. They were meant to be divisive. They were meant to be controversial. Rocking the boat is something that Jesus does. Interpret that however you will. But there are parts of Jesus' ministry that if they were in our news cycle would be interpreted by some as inciting riots. He went into the temple and turned over tables, drove people out with whips. Jesus knew that he would be arrested for the things that he preached, and the way that he lived – and he did it anyway.

Now, a second point that I think reinforces this revolutionary ministry that Jesus began, is that he goes out and invites people to join him. Last week I mentioned that during the 1st century, people would align themselves with teachers that they agreed with or wanted to follow. Jesus breaks from that tradition and actively goes and says to people—follow me. A very odd thing for this time—and something that would no doubt gain the attention of those in power.

We often think of Jesus as a sweet, meek, and mild petting a baby sheep kind of guy. But—it's far more likely that, while Jesus was incredibly loving—he was also very divisive, perhaps he was even rough around the edges. I'm highlighting these things, because I think it's important for us to have a well-rounded understanding of who Jesus is. We need to take into consideration all the evidence that clues us in to the nature of Jesus. Jesus doesn't appear to be a status-quo, typical rabbi—he is seditious in a way that perhaps other rabbis were not, he is revolutionary, perhaps, in comparison to other rabbis who may have sought to remain in the good graces of the Roman Empire. Jesus is proclaiming that God's kingdom stands above and beyond the kingdom of Caesar and Rome. Which is undoubtedly controversial.

Jesus' ministry while it may be controversial, is also one of hope. Jesus' teachings were hope-giving to those who had been burned and persecuted and oppressed by the empire. Jesus' message was one of hope to any and all who were desiring to change their lives. Even today, in our own lives – aren't we a people who take hope in the things that Jesus says? Right off the top of my head the Beatitudes come to mind—and we'll be looking more closely at that passage next week. Jesus brings a message that, while some may consider it controversial – it is full of hope for those who need it. However—if we look from the perspective of the disciples that he called, we might also see Jesus' ministry as disruptive.

We read that Jesus is walking alongside the sea of galilee, and he sees two brothers—Peter and Andrew, and he says to them, “Come, follow me, and I'll show you how to fish for people.” And just like that the two brothers drop what they're doing, and they follow Jesus. Jesus continues on and sees another set of brothers James and John who were in a boat mending nets with their father. Now—there's some important details there. 1) this is a family business; you have a father and two sons working together. And 2) it was a successful business. The fact that they're mending nets shows that their nets have seen action. Jesus calls them, and these two brothers leave their part of the business, their boat, and even their father behind and they follow Jesus.

I can't help but to wonder and ask – to what extent are meant to do the same? What does leaving everything behind look like for us? In that same vein – what does it mean for us to follow Jesus? Are we meant to simply drop everything when we sense Jesus calling us to something? Several years ago when this scripture came up in the lectionary I probably had different feelings about it. I probably would have said yes. If we're going to follow it means we must drop everything, surrender all we have, forego relationships with family – whatever it takes. But—I'm older now. I have two children, and a stable life. Disruption is not ideal. I can only speak for myself, but I don't want to be disrupted. Certainly not in the way these disciples are disrupted.

What does it mean to follow Jesus in the present age, some 2000 years later?

For starters – I don’t necessarily think following Jesus means we have to change our location. There’s plenty of places, and people, and organizations that we can support and be involved with right in our own back yard. I think following Jesus today is more about noticing the places around us where God seems to be at work—and getting involved there. Supporting them through our prayers and gifts and service. As United Methodists, we are able to see God at work through some of the organizations within our institution. God is at work through UMCOR and the work they do when disaster strikes—so much so that people of other faiths join us in our work. God seems to be at work at the various food drive in our area – and through us as we collect and bag items to distribute to folks in need. We have postponed our 40th anniversary celebration of FMP a week – but we’d be remiss to not consider God’s work through the preschool. And perhaps you may be thinking of places, or people as well. Where do you see God at work? What would it mean to follow Jesus there?

The truth of the matter is that I think Jesus is doing things all round us. Leading us to all hosts of places, urging us to give generously, and live faithfully, and be Christian examples. And I suppose that we ought to be mindful of the faith that these first disciples displayed. They left behind structure, family, security, comfort. And they did so—on faith. Following Jesus is an exercise in faith. It leads us into places and situations that may test our limits. It invites us to see Jesus in others. It calls us to be willing to get uncomfortable for the sake of the kingdom.

As we go this week, I invite us all to be especially aware of where and to who Jesus is calling us. To step out on faith if we can. To live and love generously. To make our whole being available to the gospel and see just how far Jesus multiplies those efforts.

And by God’s grace—may each of us consider with the courage to answer Jesus’ call as he says, “Come, follow me.”

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
AMEN.