

Sermon June 28, 2026

Words of Welcome

Gathering Words

One: Take a moment to breathe the air, feel the ground beneath you, notice the trees, the sky, the birds.

Beloved of God, welcome to this gathering in God's wide cathedral.

Many: The heavens declare God's glory; the earth sings God's praise.

One: We gather under open sky, trusting the One who meets us in every landscape—mountain, meadow, wilderness, and home.

Many: God is here. God is near. God is with us.

Prelude

*Call to Community

One: Come, you who seek rest.

Many: God meets us in the open places.

One: Come, you who carry questions or burdens.

Many: God receives us with compassion.

One: Come, you who long for courage, justice, and joy.

Many: Christ walks with us on every path.

One: Come, beloved community

Many: Let us celebrate the One who breathes life into all creation

*Prayer of Peace

One: God of open skies and open hearts, let Your peace settle on us like gentle rain. Where the world is parched with conflict, let justice flow. Where communities are cracked by

division, let compassion rise. Where hearts are dry with fear, let courage bloom.

Make us bearers of peace— in our words, in our choices, in the way we show up for one another. Let Your peace begin in us and ripple outward into the world You so love. Amen.

***Passing of the Peace**

One: May the Peace of Christ always be with you.

Many: And also with you

Matthew 10:40-42

‘Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.’

Holding onto Faith

We are told that God holds the whole world in God’s sacred hand, but sometimes our own faith can be hard to hold on to. Over the past few weeks, we’ve heard how Sarah’s faith faltered. How her doubts took over and the people around her paid the consequences – just ask Hagar and Ishmael as they wander in the wilderness. Just ask Abraham as he was forced to sacrifice one son for the other.

Despite Sarah and Abraham’s lack of faith, God was still true to them. So, imagine Abraham’s surprise when God directed him to take his precious Isaac up to the top of the mountain... and kill him. Sacrifice him, as he’d been so willing to sacrifice Ishmael. Kill Isaac... And in so doing, sacrifice all of his own hopes and dreams. We can all picture the moment with the vultures hovering in the distance and Abraham lifts the axe... ready to do whatever God calls him to do.

It's a brutal story... one that many people skip as they read through scripture. Definitely not the story we expect as we sit outside and revel in God's creation. It seems so harsh, even abusive, and no one is portrayed well. Not Abraham who leads his son to slaughter and not God, who makes such a horrible demand, only to change his mind in the last moment, as Abraham stands with the knife over his beloved son's throat. And what about poor Isaac, who will live with this trauma for the rest of his life.

This story has withstood the test of time because it is not just a story of sacrifice or abuse. This is a story of Faith... faith that endures even when it seems like the demands are too costly. Faith that empowers and strengthens us... faith in the simple fact that God will provide.

Abraham and Isaac learn a painful lesson. Abraham willing risks what he values most – his son and all the hopes and dreams for a beautiful future... and why? Because God asked him too. Or as Leonard Cohen writes in his song about this story:

When it all comes down to dust
I will kill you if I must
I will help you if I can.

We all face difficult decisions and choices in our lives. And when it all comes down to dust, it is hard to know if our actions will hurt or help those people around us... even the people we love most. It's hard even to know if our schemes are blessed by God or just our own wrongheaded visions. Sometimes the outcomes are clear, but often we have no idea how a moment now can impact our future. All we can do is move forward and have faith that God will provide.

Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac all remind us today that we need faith strong enough to endure the many challenges in our lives. We are called to examine how we view God and our relationship with God in the light of the very real challenges we face. Isaac's own son, Jacob, learned that during a dark night

of wrestling with God. When the dawn broke through, he emerged with a blessing, but with a painful limp as well. And even Jesus, filled with tears, wished that he could avoid drinking from the cup of suffering that lay before him on the cross. But with a sigh on his lips and faith in his heart, he said, "Not my will, but yours, be done."

Abraham bargained, Jacob wrestled, Jesus pleaded... but in the end each one put their trust in God... they dared to believe that God could be counted on to provide, especially at times when all seems hopeless.

God promises to provide what we need, but God never promises that it will be an easy journey. Ours is a resurrection hope, but first we face Gethsemane and the cross. Easter comes, but only after we endure Good Friday.

We all face dark times. We all experience doubts and fears. But even in the darkest valleys, we are not alone. We can hold tight to the promises given, generation after generation. "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me."

We are never truly alone.

And those sacred promises endure throughout time. As Jesus prepared his own disciples for the hardships of ministry, he reminded them of the promises and dreams of the generations. Jesus knew that all of us will sometimes suffer, but in faith we can help pave the way to share in Abraham's dream of nations filled with God's children. And the dream will be fulfilled every time we share in God's welcoming love.

All are welcome, Jesus tells us. You are welcome, and so are you. And whoever acts in a welcoming way, shares God's love in new and profound ways. And in this welcome, God's dreams will take hold. We are called to provide for the basic needs of our neighbors, and to do so in a loving way. In the gift of a cold cup of water on a hot day or the gift of food from our community garden or a fun activities at a Block Party or participating in a

Visibility Rally to support our Trans siblings... the extravagant welcome continues. And when we are the ones in need of hospitality, the circle of welcoming love will include us too. That is how we live into our faith... that is how we God's love grows... encircling us... holding us in faith... just like God holds the world in God's sacred hand. Amen

Sending Forth

One: Go now, walking with purpose— with Christ beside you, the Spirit before you, and God's love within you.

Many: May our steps be steady, your heart be brave, and our path be filled with opportunities to bless and be blessed.

One: Go in peace, and walk in the way of love.

Lunch is Blessed and Shared