

Chris Murphy

October 5th, 2025

Scripture: Psalm 42

Sermon Title: Hope for the World

Psalm 42

Longing for God and His Help in Distress

1 As a deer longs for flowing streams,

so my soul longs for you, O God.

2 My soul thirsts for God,

for the living God.

When shall I come and behold

the face of God?

3 My tears have been my food

day and night,

while people say to me continually,

“Where is your God?”

4 These things I remember,

as I pour out my soul:

how I went with the throng[a]

and led them in procession to the house of God,

with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving,

a multitude keeping festival.

5 Why are you cast down, O my soul,

and why are you disquieted within me?

Hope in God, for I shall again praise him,

my help 6 and my God.

My soul is cast down within me;

therefore I remember you

from the land of Jordan and of Hermon,

from Mount Mizar.

7 Deep calls to deep

at the thunder of your torrents;

all your waves and your billows

have gone over me.

8 By day the Lord commands his steadfast love,

and at night his song is with me,

a prayer to the God of my life.

9 I say to God, my rock,

“Why have you forgotten me?

Why must I walk about mournfully

because the enemy oppresses me?”

10 As with a deadly wound in my body,

my adversaries taunt me,

while they say to me continually,

“Where is your God?”

11 Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?

Hope in God, for I shall again praise him,
my help and my God.

Prayer...

Introduction:

Today is World Communion Sunday. I will begin my message by sharing from an article about the beginning of this special Sunday celebration that seeks to bring churches together in worship, unity, and peace. It is a great story about how one Presbyterian church created something that led to an ongoing worship event worldwide.

World Communion Sunday is on the first Sunday of October each year. First adopted as a denominational practice in the Presbyterian

Church (U.S.) in 1936, churches in other denominations were later invited to join. It wasn't until 1940, when the Department of Evangelism of the Federal Council of Churches (a predecessor of the National Council of Churches) extended the celebration to several churches around the world, that the practice became widespread.

The idea originated with Dr. Hugh Thompson Kerr, pastor at Shadyside Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, PA, in 1933. Kerr first conceived the notion of World Communion Sunday during his year as moderator of the General Assembly in 1930. But this nascent idea came to fruition through the work of the Stewardship Committee at Shadyside. They dreamed of bringing churches together in a service of Christian unity to lift up the global Church and to remember that by virtue of our baptism, we are connected to a worldwide community. One congregation is connected to every

other congregation, united in “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5).

The vision gradually caught on in the denomination and with our ecumenical partners. Ecumenism only emerged after the First World War as churches struggled to respond to the devastating humanitarian and theological crisis brought on by the war. Dr. Kerr’s son, the Rev. Dr. Donald Craig Kerr (who was a pastor emeritus of the Roland Park Presbyterian Church in Baltimore), shares that “the concept spread very slowly at the start. People did not give it a whole lot of thought. It was during the Second World War that the Spirit caught hold because we were trying to hold the world together. World Wide Communion Sunday symbolized the effort to hold things together in a spiritual sense. It emphasized that we are one in the Spirit and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Today, organized by the National Council of Churches, World Communion Sunday is celebrated worldwide, demonstrating that

the church founded on Jesus Christ peacefully shares God-given goods in a world increasingly destabilized by global market economies based on greed. It is fitting that on this Sunday, we will receive one of the Special Offerings of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The Peace and Global Witness Offering encourages congregations to address the anxiety and discord prevalent in a broken and fearful world. Twenty-five percent of what we receive remains with our congregation for local efforts. Together, we make a difference. Let us gather around the Lord's table and entrust our lives to the one who holds the world together, giving generously to the work and witness of Christ through the life of the Church.

Here at Newberg First Presbyterian, we remember our connection to the Global Church. On this World Communion Sunday, I want to remember the role of hope within the Universal Church. As followers of Jesus, we are to bring hope to the world.

Maybe you hear this invitation and respond with a sigh of sadness.

How can I have hope for the world? The news reminds us of the perils within Palestine, the longing for peace in the Ukraine, the ongoing violence in the South Sudan, earthquakes in the Philippines, the struggle for immigrants and refugees across the globe, and many other circumstances that cause us to lose hope.

I certainly think we need to stay aware of the news and to mourn the lack of peace and justice across our world, but I think as Christians our engagement in the world needs to foster hope.

I want to share a few quotes about hope from some significant voices in our world. The first is from Jane Goodall, who passed away last week. She was a tireless voice for the Earth, animals, and stewardship of creation. Here is one of her quotes on hope.

“Optimism says everything will be fine.” And pessimism says ‘nothing will work out’. Hope, on the other hand, has no certainties.

It is the dogged determination to do what is in our power to make the

better future we wish for actually happen.” I will add that Jane Goodall spent much of her later years speaking about hope and she found hope especially in young people who were concerned about the environment and social justice work.

Next, I want to reflect on hope from the perspective of a couple Popes.

Pope Leo XIV recently spoke of hope as part of the World Day of the Poor. He said,

Amid life’s trials, our hope is inspired by the firm and reassuring certainty of God’s love, poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

That hope does not disappoint (cf. Rom 5:5). Thus Saint Paul could write to Timothy: “To this end we toil and struggle, because we have our hope set on the living God” (1 Tim 4:10). The living God is in fact “the God of hope” (Rom 15:13), and Christ, by his death and resurrection, has himself become “our hope” (1 Tim 1:1). We must

never forget that we were saved in this hope, and need to remain firmly rooted therein.

Pope Leo's predecessor Pope Francis said this about hope.

Hope, on the other hand, is a gift and a task for every Christian. It is a gift because it is God who offers it to us. Hoping, in fact, is not a mere act of optimism, like when we sometimes hope to pass an exam at university ("Let's hope we make it") or when we hope for good weather for the trip out of town on a Sunday in the spring ("Let's hope for good weather"). No, hoping is waiting for something that has already been given to us: salvation in God's eternal and infinite love. That love, that salvation that gives favor to our lives and that constitutes the hinge on which the world remains standing, despite all the wickedness and nefariousness caused by our sins as men and women. To hope, then, is to welcome this gift that God offers us every day. To hope is to savour the wonder of being loved,

sought, desired by a God who has not shut Himself away in His impenetrable heavens but has made Himself flesh and blood, to share our lot.

The Rev. Jihyun Oh the current Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church USA national headquarters shared this message of hope at the Young Adult Advocacy Conference. She shared...

“as we continue to think about how we engage in this world, how we engage in our words, in our actions and our advocacy, may we be grounded in Christ’s ministry of justice that was also grounded in love and compassion and to continue to live out a counter-cultural narrative that it is not just for specific people but for all people.”

As I ponder the wisdom of Jane Goodall, two Popes and the Stated Clerk of the PCUSA, I recognize on this World Communion Sunday that there is always reason for hope. Like the Psalmist in Psalm 42, it is natural to have moments of discouragement. We need to express

our sadness and confusion to God, but ultimately we need to also encourage ourselves to hope in God.

Like the Psalmist we might say to ourselves, “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.” (Psalm 42: 11) This is a Psalm attribute to David who experienced moments of joy and sorrow in his life and leadership.

There is always reason for hope because God is here in this world and God is love. When we recognize God’s presence of love we can find reason to hope and we can have eyes to see how God is actively seeking to restore the world through peace, love, compassion, and justice especially for the poor and oppressed.

A couple recent stories of hope:

Caroline and Jane Kurtz visit to Friendsview earlier in September. – Maji Development organization in Ethiopia and education through literature.

Together Lab call inviting clergy to support immigrant rights in downtown Portland.

Where are you seeing signs of hope in our world? How might we join together to become more resilient in walking in hope as we put our hope in God, who is unconditional love.

During the month of September I preached on grace and I spoke of grace as God's unmerited favor and God's unconditional love in all circumstances. I want to remind us that a faith rooted in the grace offered to us in Jesus will ultimately lead us to walk in hope even when life brings us sorrows and grief. Like the Psalmist we need to express our sadness to God in prayer, but like the Psalmist we may also discover that our hope is restored as we remember the goodness of God in the past and the love of God that remains active in the present. By God's grace may we walk in hope together as the worldwide church on this holy World Communion Sunday. It is fitting that World Communion Sunday lines up with our Peace and Global

Witness offering each year, since our great hope for the world is to be a community of peace. With that hope and prayer in our hearts, I would like to read the prayer for peace attributed to St. Francis of Assisi. Today in the Catholic church is a special day to celebrate the life of St. Francis.

Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi (Prayer for Peace)

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:

where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

to be consoled as to console,

to be understood as to understand,

to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. AMEN.

And now let us sing a hymn with words attributed to Saint Francis from his poem A Canticle of the Sun, which he wrote in 1225, the last year of his life.

All Creatures of Our God and King