

**The Green Hill Presbyterian Church**  
**Sunday, May 17, 2026 – Table Copy**

**SILENT PREPARATION**

When I was interning at a Lutheran church in north Minneapolis, I had the privilege of sharing an office with Bob Evans, a retired pastor who served our congregation as a voluntary “evangelism consultant.” One week he had an insert in the Sunday worship bulletin that simply stated, “Surveys show that the average Lutheran invites someone to church once every 14 years.” At the bottom, he asked the tongue-in-cheek question: “How many of you are past due?” – Mike Nelson

**PRAYER OF INVOCATION (*Unison*)**

**Our great and awesome God, we worship you with joy. Through times of trial and suffering, your love has sustained us. You have restored our self-confidence when we floundered in doubt and fear. You have been our protector when we walked in the wilderness. Meet us now in the particular situation each of us faces. Pour out your presence that we may be resources to one another, finding both our oneness – and our purpose – in Jesus Christ. May our worship both honor you, and equip us for your service. Amen.**

**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

Eternal and everlasting God, God of all times and places,  
whose promise of the Holy Spirit is for us –  
as well as for generations past:  
Let your blessing fall on us while we are together;  
through your Word clothe us with the resources we need –  
to be your witnesses, through the Church.  
May we – as Christ’s body – share with all the world the glorious inheritance  
that is ours through the gift of faith. Amen.

**FIRST READING:**

Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35

*Our first Scripture Reading is selected verses from the 68<sup>th</sup> Psalm.  
It speaks of the glorious majesty of God....*

Let God rise up; let his enemies be scattered;  
let those who hate him flee before him.  
As smoke is driven away, so drive them away;  
as wax melts before the fire, let the wicked perish before God.  
But let the righteous be joyful;  
let them exult before God; let them be jubilant with joy.

Sing to God; sing praises to his name;  
     lift up a song to him who rides upon the clouds –  
         his name is the LORD – be exultant before him.  
 Father of orphans and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation.  
     God gives the desolate a home to live in;  
         he leads out the prisoners to prosperity,  
             but the rebellious live in a parched land.  
 O God, when you went out before your people,  
     when you marched through the wilderness, *Selah*  
         the earth quaked,  
     the heavens poured down rain at the presence of God, the God of Sinai,  
         at the presence of God, the God of Israel.  
 Rain in abundance, O God, you showered abroad;  
     you restored your heritage when it languished;  
         your flock found a dwelling in it;  
             in your goodness, O God, you provided for the needy.  
 Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth; sing praises to the Lord, *Selah*  
     O rider in the heavens, the ancient heavens;  
         listen, he sends out his voice, his mighty voice.  
 Ascribe power to God, whose majesty is over Israel,  
     and whose power is in the skies.  
 Awesome is God in his sanctuary, the God of Israel;  
     he gives power and strength to his people. Blessed be God!

**SECOND READING:                      Acts 1:1-14**

*Our Second Scripture Reading provides a description of the activities  
 of Jesus – and his followers – during the 40 days after his resurrection;  
 and – then – immediately after his Ascension into heaven....*

In the first book, Theophilus,  
     I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught –  
         from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven,  
             after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit  
                 to the apostles whom he had chosen.  
 After his suffering,  
     he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs,  
         appearing to them over the course of forty days,  
             and speaking about the kingdom of God.  
 While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem,  
     but to wait there for the promise of the Father.  
 ‘This’, he said, ‘is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water,  
     but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’

So when they had come together, they asked him,  
"Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?"  
He replied, "It is not for you to know the times – or periods –  
that the Father has set by his own authority.  
But you will receive power –  
when the Holy Spirit has come upon you –  
and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem,  
in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."  
When he had said this – as they were watching –  
he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.  
While he was going – and they were gazing up, toward heaven –  
suddenly two men in white robes stood by them.  
They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand – looking up toward heaven?  
This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven,  
will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."  
Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet –  
which is near Jerusalem – a Sabbath day's journey away.  
When they had entered the city,  
they went to the room upstairs where they were staying:  
Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas,  
Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus,  
and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James.  
All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer,  
together with certain women,  
including Mary, the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

SERMON                    "Calendar Chaos, or Calendar Consecration?"

Love it – or hate it – we most often live by our calendars.

And we are – it seems – almost always in a hurry....

[*Amen? Anyone?.....*]

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One day – pastor, a doctor, and a time-management guru –  
were playing golf together.

And – before long –  
they got stuck behind a particularly slow-moving group –  
playing ahead of them.

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The **time-management** guy said,

“What’s with these people?

We’ve been waiting on the tee for more than 30 minutes –  
and they’re still not on the next green!”

The **doctor** agreed,

“They’re hopeless.

I’ve never seen such rambling around a golf course.”

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The **pastor** then spotted the approaching greenskeeper –  
and asked him what was going on:

“What’s happening with that group ahead of us?

They’re surely too slow and useless to be playing, aren’t they?”

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The greenskeeper replied,

“Oh, yes, that’s a group of blind fire-fighters.

They lost their sight saving our clubhouse from a fire last year,  
so we always let them play for free anytime.”

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The three golfers fell silent for a moment.

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Then, the **pastor** said,

“Oh dear, that is so sad.

I shall say some special prayers for them tonight.”

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The **doctor** added – rather meekly –

“That’s a good thought.

I’ll get in touch with a friend of mine – an ophthalmic surgeon –  
to see if there’s anything that can be done for them.”

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Then – after pondering the situation for a few seconds –

the **time-management expert** turned to the greenskeeper....

and asked, “Why can’t they play at night?”

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**Time** – it seems – is *always* of the essence!

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In the past, paper calendars – large or small –  
showed us *when* we had to be *where*.

And, there was a time – when many of us carried them in our pockets,  
briefcases, or purses.

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I still get pocket-sized versions  
from a number of (hopeful) charitable organizations....

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Indeed – to tell the truth – that’s where I remain today:  
no charging, no crashing, and no complications!

And, all of that thanks to my Presbyterian Planning Calendar –  
which I keep in pencil –  
unless I am recording history.....

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But – despite me – came the digital revolution:

Many – then – traded in their leather-bound planners for PDAs –  
*personal digital assistants*.

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And – with them – a new way of writing the alphabet had to be learned –  
so that appointments could be entered, using a stylus.

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Then, **Steve Jobs** – and the people at **Apple** –  
combined PDAs, phones, and MP3 players into smart-phones.

And – while we might have left our planners or PDAs  
at home on a Sunday morning –  
today many of us may have our calendars with us – even in worship!

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[I will not ask for a show of hands.....]

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Now – to be sure – digital calendars can do things  
that our paper calendars never could.

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That is, they can remind us of things we need to do –  
based on our time, and/or our location:

“**Siri / Cortana / Alexa / Google,**  
remind me when it is time to leave for my doctor's appointment.”

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Then – based on our location, and – even – the traffic –  
our phone can tell us exactly when it is time to leave.

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And so it is that – once we put an appointment into our phone –  
we never have to look at it again:

We can simply wait for that little buzz to interrupt us –  
perhaps even during worship –  
to remind us of what we need to attend to later in the day.

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Our calendars – whether digital, paper, or – even – in our heads –  
tend to drive large portions of our lives.

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Indeed, many people – in their Monday-through-Friday lives –  
are actually required to be connected to their company's calendars:

Through Outlook – or some other calendar – or planning – app.

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And – I have heard – employees' supervisors and colleagues  
can even put things on their calendars, and – then –  
expect them to be in the appropriate place –  
and at the appointed time.

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The truth is that we rely heavily on our calendars to organize our lives.

And so – whether we are in the boardroom, or the classroom –  
it is very hard to get by without some idea  
of *what* will be happening – and *when*!

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So – with all of this in mind –  
let’s try to imagine how the very first followers of Jesus must have felt –  
about Jesus’ answer –  
when they asked him about “what was next.”

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To begin, we should remember the context of the conversation:

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In essence, Jesus is giving the disciples a final debriefing –  
before leaving on a trip –  
albeit, a vertical, and heavenly, one.

And, of course, they have some – very natural – questions.

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“Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” (v. 6)

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And – to be sure – the question makes great sense.

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For three years, the disciples had been following Jesus.

They had heard him talk – quite frequently –  
about a special time to come.

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Indeed, he had started his ministry by telling them that the kingdom of God –  
the kingdom of heaven – was at hand.

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And, they had listened as he told stories –  
about banquets,  
mustard seeds,  
and treasure – buried in a field.

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And all of these – he had said –  
were ways of describing this new reality – that was to come!

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Furthermore,  
they had been on an emotional roller coaster with Jesus in recent days.

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They were with him when he entered Jerusalem, several weeks earlier.

They saw the crowd – waving palm branches, and shouting their praises.

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And – by riding a donkey into the city –  
Jesus had fulfilled a prophecy:  
one which announced the coming of God's rule and reign.

Surely – they thought – this must be the time.

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And – at the Last Supper – Jesus seemed to confirm it.

“I will not drink the fruit of the vine again,  
until I drink it – with you – in my Father's kingdom.”

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So – they must have thought – the very next stop will be the kingdom of God!

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But – instead of a *coronation* – there was a *crucifixion*.

Certainly, it must have appeared to be over.

Their hopes were dashed.

Their dream – of the restoration of the kingdom – seemed to vanish.

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*What now?*

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But then – as quickly as it seemed to be over – it was back on!

Jesus was alive.

Hope was not lost.

Certainly, the kingdom must now be coming.

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And, now – after 40 days of being with a post-resurrection Jesus –  
during which he continued to teach them about God's kingdom –  
Jesus calls a special meeting.

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Expectations must have been high.

What was he going to do?

What was he going to say?

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It certainly had to be time for him to announce  
how the kingdom of God would come on earth, as it is in heaven –  
just as Jesus had taught them to pray!

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And – so it was – that the question must have hung in the air on that day –  
much as similar questions can saturate the space –  
among and between us –  
in some of our interactions:

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+ When the company calls an all-employee meeting –  
during a down economy –  
everyone wants to know,  
“Are there going to be layoffs?”

+ When the person you are dating – or your spouse –  
says, “We need to talk,”  
you want to know, “What – exactly – is on the horizon?”

+ When a teenager enters the room – head down –  
and says, “Mom?... Dad?...” our heart rate accelerates.  
We want to know: “What might be wrong?”

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Similarly, for the disciples – on that day – the tension is almost palpable.

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“Now?”

We want to get this on our calendars!

And – if not now – when?”

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The disciples – quite naturally – want to pencil in the kingdom-coming day.

They want to know which week they need to clear –  
to be ready for this world-altering event.

They want to know the deadline – so they can be sure to be prepared.

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But – to all such questions –  
Jesus gives a most bewildering answer:  
“That’s none of your concern.”

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Actually, Jesus says it more politely.

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But – nevertheless – that’s the gist of it.  
“Let me worry about the timing,” –  
he seems to say –

“You just get to work – you just focus – on what you are supposed to do.”

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And then – without further ado – he is gone!

The disciples – and the rest of Jesus’ followers – are left bewildered,  
staring up, into the sky.

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The disciples – then – have a scheduling problem.

Or – we might say – a disconcerting case of calendar chaos!

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For the disciples – and for those of us who live by our calendars –  
Jesus’ attitude can be quite frustrating!

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That is:     + It’s hard to leave things in the hands of God;  
  
                  + It’s hard to let go – and let God take care of the details;  
  
                  + It’s hard to trust in divine providence –  
                          to trust that God will be faithful to promises made....

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So, the questions for us – this morning are these:

How are we to respond to this?

If it is not for us to know “the times and the seasons,”  
how are we supposed to function – with so little information?

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Or – in other words – what entries do we make –  
on our calendars – for the work of God?

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The problem is that the kingdom of God just does not fit into our kind of calendar.

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Our calendars measure only *chronos* time:  
the routine – the one-minute-is-the-same-as-every-other-minute –  
kind of time that we can “tell” by wearing a watch.

Rather, God’s time is *kairos* time –  
the special, often unforeseeable, teachable moments –  
moments in which the Holy Spirit is doing something special.

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So – if *chronos time* is time that “we can tell” –  
we might say that *kairos time* is time that “tells us”!

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Indeed, this reality is why I often introduced educational gatherings –  
such as Confirmation Classes, and New Members’ Seminars –  
with a disclaimer:

“I have a lesson plan for this time together,  
but I will only use it if nothing more important –  
if nothing better –  
comes up...”

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The reality is that the Holy Spirit often moves during the distractions from –  
and – even – during the disruptions of –  
what we had in mind to do!

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Nor does Jesus give us a detailed list of tasks –  
lists like “to do” lists –  
that we often like to maintain on our electronic devices.

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Rather, Jesus simply calls his followers to be his witnesses --  
in Jerusalem,  
in all Judea and Samaria,  
and to the ends of the earth.

(v. 8)

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And -- along with the lack of details -- there is also the denial of a deadline!

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That is -- Jesus says -- there is absolutely no timetable  
concerning the ultimate -- physical --  
expression of the reign of God on earth.

Rather -- he says -- he himself does not know!

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And so it is that our concern -- today --  
is to live into the call of God, and the mission of the church.

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In other words, our sole concern  
is to be the people of God -- each and every day --  
and to do what God wants us to, do right now.

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Friends, Jesus calls his followers -- both those on the hill, on that day,  
and those in our pews -- today,  
to live for him.

And, to do that wherever we find ourselves --  
at home, at work, at school;  
in our traveling, while running errands, wherever else life takes us.

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And this -- of course -- includes both our calendars, and our schedules.

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It is -- therefore -- essential for us to take our calendars and bless them,  
to say a prayer over them,  
to do something to sanctify our time,  
and to put it wholly in the service of God -- for God's work.

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To be sure, this means penciling in time for worship, for prayer,  
for Bible study, and for fellowship.

But it also means being flexible enough to perform random acts of kindness,  
and to respond when God interrupts us,  
messes with our calendars,  
and provides an opportunity for us to minister –  
perhaps, in some wholly unexpected way.

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As Jesus taught Nicodemus,  
“The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it,  
but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes.

“So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:8)

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And so it is that we can attempt to live life by our calendars –  
bounded by our own plans and desires, and –  
when things do not go our way – contend with chaos.

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Or, we can consecrate our calendars –  
and be willing to yield ourselves to the control of the Holy Spirit.

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Over one hundred years ago, **Thomas O. Chisholm** put it this way:  
Living for Jesus, a life that is true,  
Striving to please Him in all that I do;  
Yielding allegiance, glad hearted and free,  
This is the pathway of blessing for me.

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The choice – the pathway of blessing – is clear!

And, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit are always available –  
to guide, and enable us!

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**In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit:**

*Amen.*

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## AFFIRMATION OF FAITH *(Please join responsively)*

From the Heidelberg Catechism (1563)

One: How do you understand the words: "He ascended into heaven"?

**All: That Christ was taken up from the earth into heaven before the eyes of his disciples, and remains there on our behalf until he comes again to judge the living and the dead.**

One: Then, is not Christ with us unto the end of the world, as he has promised us?

**All: Christ is true man and true God. As a man he is no longer on earth, but in his divinity, majesty, grace, and Spirit, he is never absent from us.**

One: What benefit do we receive from Christ's ascension into heaven?

**All: First, that he is our Advocate in the presence of the Father in heaven. Second, that we have our flesh in heaven as a sure pledge that he, as the Head, will also take us, his members, up to himself. Third, that he sends us his Spirit as a counterpledge by whose power we seek what is above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God, and not things that are on earth.**

## CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

In the words attributed to **British novelist E. M. Forster**,

"We must be willing to let go of the life we have planned,  
so as to have the life that is waiting for us."

Or – we might say – so as to live the life that God has planned for us!

Indeed – in so doing – we will both be freed from calendar chaos,  
and – by calendar consecration – we will enter into the joy of our Lord!

Remember – as the writer of the letter to the Hebrews says –

"Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering,  
for he who has promised is faithful."

(10:23)

Let us receive the Lord's benediction....