

GIVING OF OUR OFFERINGS AND TITHES

Carleton Philbrick

In freedom and joy, let us present the offerings of our lives to the Lord. You may choose to give by dropping off your offering in the plate as you exit worship in the sanctuary, or by mailing your offerings to the church, or giving online. Your gifts maintain our ministries, and make it possible to help others in need.

If you know of someone in need—physical, financial, emotional or spiritual... especially if it is yourself, please speak with our pastor or the elder for Congregational Care, Mary Henry.

*Doxology “Praise God, From Whom All Blessings Flow” Video
Praise God, from whom all blessings flow. Praise God, all creations high and low.
Praise God above ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

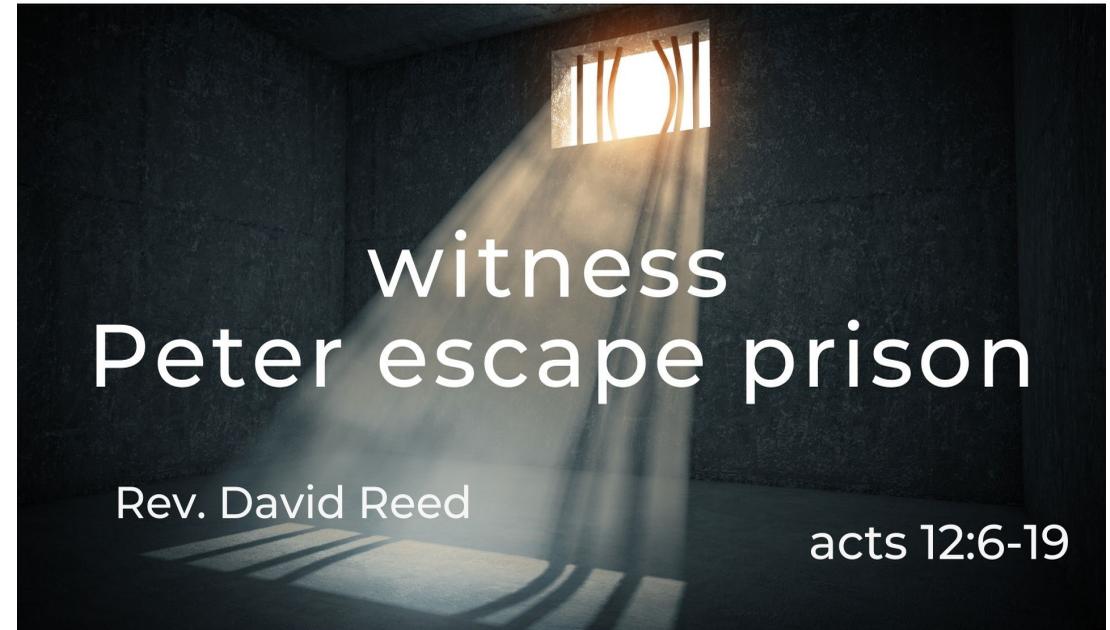
* PRAYER Carleton Philbrick
Lord, please bless the offerings of our lives, that they may be multiplied to your service. In Christ’s name we pray, Amen. And now, please turn to hymn _____

*HYMN OF SENDING “I Love To Tell The Story,” vs. 1, 3 organ
**I love to tell the story of unseen things above, of Jesus and his glory,
of Jesus and his love. I love to tell the story, because I know 'tis true;
it satisfies my longings as nothing else could do. I love to tell the story; '
twill be my theme in glory to tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love.**

**I love to tell the story, for those who know it best seem hungering and
thirsting to hear it, like the rest. And when, in scenes of glory, I sing the new,
new song, 'twill be the old, old story that I have loved so long. I love to tell the
story; 'twill be my theme in glory to tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love.**

* PASSING THE PEACE, CHARGE AND BENEDICTION
“The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD’s face shine upon you, and be
gracious to you; The LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.”

*POSTLUDE



witness

Peter escape prison

Rev. David Reed

acts 12:6-19

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

July 25, 2021, 11am

Park Hill Presbyterian Church (PCUSA)

3520 JFK Blvd. North Little Rock AR
501-753-9533; Parkhillpres@sbcglobal.net

Visit our website at parkhillpres.org

PRELUDE

Handbells video

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Welcome and thank you Rev. David Reed
2. Mary Henry will be out July 22-31st, please call member Becky Webster or Rev. Carol Clark and the church office with any pastoral care needs.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Carleton Philbrick

Our God is waymaker, redeemer, the breaker of chains

Lord, free us from our bondage to serve You!

Our God is merciful, mighty, and all-seeing of our pain

Lord, free us from our bondage to serve You!

Let us worship God!

*HYMN OF PRAISE “You Are My All In All” (ASL) Annabel Stavey video
You are my strength when I am weak; you are the treasure that I seek,
you are my all in all. When I fall down you pick me up;
when I am dry you fill my cup, you are my all in all.
Jesus, Lamb of God, worthy is your name! (2x)

CALL TO CONFESSION and CONFESSION

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Let us confess together, saying, “Merciful Savior, **Forgive our sins.**”

Merciful Lord, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. Merciful Savior, **Forgive our sins.**

We have not loved you with our whole heart and mind and strength. We have not loved our neighbor as ourselves. Merciful Savior, **Forgive our sins.**

We have doubted your power, denied your strength, and not looked for your Holy Spirit at work in our lives to make a way and connect us to your purpose. Merciful Savior, **Forgive our sins.**

In your mercy, forgive what we have been, help us to amend what we are, and direct what we shall be, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways to the glory of your name. Merciful Savior, **Forgive our sins.**

Hear us as we pray in silence...

HYMN OF FORGIVENESS “No Longer Slaves” (bridge and chorus)

I’m no longer a slave to fear. I am a child of God. I’m no longer a slave to fear.
I am a child of God. You split the sea so I could walk right through it. My fears were drowned in perfect love. You rescued me so I can stand and sing. I am a child of God. I am a child of God. Yes, I am a child of God

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Carleton Philbrick

Hear the good news! Who is in a position to condemn? Only Christ, and Christ died for us, Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us. Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation—the old life has gone and a new life is

Almighty God, who taught us to pray not only for ourselves but for people everywhere, hear us as we pray for others in the name of Christ, saying we pray to you O Lord, **Lord, have mercy.**

Inspire the whole church with your power, unity, and peace. Grant that all who trust you may obey your Word, and live together in love; we pray to you O Lord, **Lord, have mercy.**

Lead all nations in the way of justice and goodwill. Direct those who govern, that they may rule fairly, maintain order, uphold those in need, and defend oppressed people; that this world may claim your rule and know true peace; we pray to you O Lord, **Lord, have mercy.**

Awaken all people to the danger we have inflicted upon the earth. Implant in each a reverence for all you have made that we may preserve the delicate balance of creation for all coming generations; we pray to you O Lord, **Lord, have mercy.**

Give grace to all who proclaim the gospel through Word and Sacrament and deeds of mercy, that by their teaching and example they may reveal your love for all people; we pray to you O Lord, **Lord, have mercy.**

Comfort and relieve, O Lord, all who are in trouble . . . sorrow . . . poverty . . . sickness . . . grief . . . especially those known to us, whom we name before you in silence. . . . Heal them in body, mind, or circumstance, working in them, by your grace, wonders beyond all they may dream or hope; we pray to you O Lord, **Lord, have mercy.**

Bring to our remembrance all those who, having served you on earth, now sing your praises eternally. May their endurance give us courage and their faithfulness give us hope; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who taught us to pray, saying,

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

MOMENT FOR MISSION Giving Tree Sandee Pinkstaff or Carleton Philbrick
For this month and next, our giving tree is dedicated to the students at Boone Park Elementary and their school supply needs. You can drop off your donations of pencils, paper, markers, and other supplies in the Narthex or make a donation to serve their direct needs on a check with the memo line “Boone Park School Supplies.”

get to next Sunday.” Maybe. But Acts is more interested in unleashing imaginations than it is in fostering caution and prudence. Let different biblical books take care of those other tasks. But make those books wait until Easter is over, first.

ANTHEM “Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)” Annabel Stavey live

Amazing grace how sweet the sound. That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost but now I'm found. Was blind but now I see

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear. And grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that grace appear. The hour I first believed

Chorus

My chains are gone I've been set free. My God my Savior has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy rains. Unending love amazing grace

The Lord has promised good to me. His word my hope secures
He will my shield and portion be. As long as life endures

Chorus

My chains are gone I've been set free. My God my Savior has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy rains. Unending love amazing grace

*APOSTLE'S CREED

Video

Please rise and join together in saying the Apostle's Creed as you see it on the screen.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth,

and in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord;

who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,

born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,

was crucified, dead and buried; he descended into hell;

the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven,

and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;

from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic* church;

the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins;

the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

(*or universal)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Carleton Philbrick

begun. I declare to you, In Jesus Christ you are forgiven—**Thanks be to God!**
Amen!

TIME WITH YOUNG DISCIPLES

VBS Song “We are Brave Enough”
video by Annabel

READING

Acts 12:6-19

The very night before Herod was going to bring him out, Peter, bound with two chains, was sleeping between two soldiers, while guards in front of the door were keeping watch over the prison. ⁷ Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He tapped Peter on the side and woke him, saying, “Get up quickly.” And the chains fell off his wrists. ⁸ The angel said to him, “Fasten your belt and put on your sandals.” He did so. Then he said to him, “Wrap your cloak around you and follow me.” ⁹ Peter^[a] went out and followed him; he did not realize that what was happening with the angel's help was real; he thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰ After they had passed the first and the second guard, they came before the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went outside and walked along a lane, when suddenly the angel left him. ¹¹ Then Peter came to himself and said, “Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hands of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.”

¹² As soon as he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many had gathered and were praying. ¹³ When he knocked at the outer gate, a maid named Rhoda came to answer. ¹⁴ On recognizing Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed that, instead of opening the gate, she ran in and announced that Peter was standing at the gate. ¹⁵ They said to her, “You are out of your mind!” But she insisted that it was so. They said, “It is his angel.” ¹⁶ Meanwhile Peter continued knocking; and when they opened the gate, they saw him and were amazed. ¹⁷ He motioned to them with his hand to be silent, and described for them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he added, “Tell this to James and to the believers.”^[b] Then he left and went to another place.

¹⁸ When morning came, there was no small commotion among the soldiers over what had become of Peter. ¹⁹ When Herod had searched for him and could not find him, he examined the guards and ordered them to be put to death. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there.

SERMON

Rev. David Reed

COMMENTARY BY Matt Skinner

<https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching-series/preaching-acts-in-easter-year-a>

With all of its thrilling adventures and bold sermons, Acts can exhilarate an audience. But those same features make the book difficult for many to stomach. Lots of people experience the narrative more like a comic book than a helpful or nuanced depiction of the life of faith.

Esteemed New Testament theologian Paul Minear once worried that Acts might actually *diminish* modern Christians' confidence in God, since Acts spins a tale full of miracles, conversions, and unmistakable discernment of the Holy Spirit's leading.¹ For many of us, life of faith involves much more trial and error, unanswered prayer, as well as dark nights of the soul. What do preachers need to know as they work with this colorful book, so it doesn't turn audiences into observers paralyzed by incredulity, frustration, and insecurity?

Most important, it is vital for lectionary preachers to put individual passages from Acts into a wider context — actually *two* wider contexts.

First, congregations need to get a sense of the overarching *narrative context*. Preachers should explain the larger stories. During Easter, the lectionary chooses passages from Acts that showcase apostolic preaching and instances of unusually heroic witness. The lectionary's underlying logic seems to be that Acts provides examples of what it looks and sounds like when believers give testimony about the resurrected Jesus. This is especially the case in Year A, when the lectionary lingers over Peter's intricate Pentecost sermon and the community that springs into being as a result (Easter 2, 3, 4), and when congregations observe the slaughter of Stephen (Easter 5) and Paul's homiletical dexterity before a curious yet suspicious crowd of Athenian intellectual elites (Easter 6).

If we aren't careful, congregations will hear those texts as syrupy nostalgia or as simplistic templates for what to believe, how to convert others, and how to die. The lectionary's choices risk leaving a congregation unable to experience the wider narrative of Acts and to appreciate the narrative's capacity to display ambiguity and the realities of ordinary faithfulness. Good sermons can paint the bigger picture.

A sermon's audience also benefits from hearing about, second, the *thematic context*. Don't refer to Acts as the history of the early church. That definition is too narrow and distorted — to say nothing of boring — especially since most of us operate with very limited understandings of the word *history*.

At one level, Acts tells a story of Christian communities trying to discover and articulate

who they are. This happens through the story's actions and the story's sermons, through advances and setbacks, debate and discovery. The book depicts believers living into new realities — realities that they don't fully understand but that they believe spring forth from the resurrection and ascension of God's Messiah.

The people in Acts operate out of a core conviction that nothing can be the same anymore, because of what has happened to Jesus. Their world has experienced upheaval in every way (Acts 17:6). As Acts tells its story, often it's as if Jesus' followers cannot express that fundamental truth of an upended world *without* relying on wonder, hyperbole, and rhetoric about a divine intrusion. Acts pulls no punches in attempting to impress upon its readers that the whole world should look different to them, because now anything has become possible.

What are the new possibilities? There are many, and Acts suggests that the word of God never finishes creating additional ones. Each passage can lead a congregation deeper into manifestations of the basic theological conviction that God has altered the world's systems and assumptions. God is keeping promises. God is creating communities that manifest salvation. God is welcoming those who suffer. God is reshaping our religious imaginations and calling them out for being too small. God is quite active in Acts. The church is mostly trying to keep pace. Perhaps things are not so different today, after all.

Sermons about Acts allow congregations to consider how they might be responsive to an "intrusive God" and a "disruptive gospel," as I've described those ideas elsewhere.² Acts insists that God breaks in and interferes. The lives, allegiance and priorities of Jesus' followers are disrupted time and again.

Our own insights and confessions don't need to be as breathtaking as those in Acts. We might find other, more measured ways of characterizing the church, its opportunities, and its struggles. But if we nevertheless read Acts as though it offers an invitation to think big, then we'll have to contend with the questions *What kind of God promises to raise the dead and bring the reign of God to fruition? What kind of priorities and commitments best express world-altering good news?*

If we read Acts as a story about fellow believers trying to give voice — even a grandiose voice — to their new, transformed realities, Acts will encourage us to ask questions about how we ourselves best bear witness to the good news in our own lived contexts. It will encourage us to be daring as we do so, lest we make the mistake of presuming that the status quo is the only reality available to us.

And so, we return to a preacher's basic dilemma: "If I tell people that Acts encourages them to see that anything is now possible, they're just going to be disappointed before they