



Promises at the Crossroads of History and Hope
Hagar – God Sees and Sets Free

A Worship Experience Centered in the *Vocare* spiritual practice

Vocare is the Latin word meaning “to call.” The *Vocare* spiritual practice invites regular reflection upon values, openness, call, attentiveness, regrets, and experiences of God’s presence. This liturgy follows the *Vocare* pattern, inviting worshipers into reflection and contemplation to deepen their understanding of God’s call as together we contemplate *God’s Promises at the Crossroads of History and Hope*.

Prelude

Welcome

Call to Worship

Psalm 121

L: I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?

**C: My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.**

L: He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.

**C: He who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.**

L: The Lord is your keeper;
the Lord is your shade at your right hand.

**C: The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.**

L: The Lord will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.

**C: The Lord will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time on and for evermore.**

Values

Opening Hymn

What Wondrous Love is This

ELW 666 (vs. 1, 2)

Responsive Reading

L: God, the Creator of the universe, sees you and cares about what happens to you.

C: With that seeing and care, God is always moving toward justice, liberation, and blessing, even when we cannot comprehend it.

L: This movement is not always a straight line or a swift path.

C: In Hagar’s story, we see ourselves, our world, and all of the challenges of being different together.

L: We are bidden to ask, “how do we treat those who come from different places, live different lives, have different stories?”

C: We are compelled to see and name injustice and our complicity and place in it, and we hear a voice of all who suffer at the hands of others.

L: Through all of this, we discover the God who both sees and sets free at the crossroads of history and hope.

Openness

L: God’s Spirit is continually moving across the face of this world to bring about renewal and new life. As children of God, we are called to be open to the Spirit’s work in our own lives, our community, and the whole creation. As we read **II Corinthians 4:16-5:7** responsively by whole verse, consider what God is opening up in your heart and life in this moment.

L: So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.

C: ¹⁷For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure,

L: ¹⁸because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

C: For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

L: ²For in this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling—

C: ³if indeed, when we have taken it off we will not be found naked.

L: ⁴For while we are still in this tent, we groan under our burden, because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

C: ⁵He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

L: So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord—

C: ⁷for we walk by faith, not by sight.

L: Holding God's invitation to openness, we sing together: *Take, Oh, Take Me as I Am, ELW 814 (3x).*

Call

Reading **Genesis 16; Luke 13:10-17**

As the reading concludes: Word of God. Word of Life.

C: Thanks be to God.

Homily *Hagar – God Sees and Sets Free*

Hymn *The God of Promise Praise* **verses 1,2,3**

The God of Promise praise,
the God who does not shame,
who teaches me your paths and ways
and knows my name.
Remember me, God,
O gracious One in Three,
and with forgiving, boundless love,
remember me.

**The God of Abr'ham praise,
the God of Abr'ham calls,
whose promises are made to one,
and blesses all.**

**When doubts and troubles rise
and God seems far away,
God says, "remember who I AM --
with you always."**

**The God of Hagar praise,
the God of hope who sees,
who blesses one outside the fold,
affliction heeds.**

**We lift our voice and weep,
when anxious, and alone.
God calls to us with words of grace,
"You are my own."**

*To the Tune of "The God of Abraham Praise," ELW 831, [6 6 8 4 D](#), traditional
[Yigdal melody](#), public domain.*

Attentiveness

The Prayers of Intercession

L: As people of faith, we are called to turn our attention toward God in prayer, praising and thanking God for God's steadfast love, lifting before God the cares of the world, and the needs of our lives, and seeking God's guidance, grace, and mercy sufficient for the day. As we bring our prayers to God, each petition will conclude, "God of mercy, hear our prayer," after which we will sing our response, ***Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying, ELW 752.***

Regrets

The Confession of Sin

L: Beloved in Christ: God created us to live in the joy of communion with the divine, to live in peace with all of creation, and to love all humanity. But we turn in on ourselves and turn away from God, our neighbors, and creation. Our lives are not what God hopes.

But God comes to us with a promise that changes everything. In the waters of baptism, we receive God's love and forgiveness, and are forever connected to Christ. Because of this, we can come to God with things we said or did wrong, things we forgot to do or are still in progress.

Hymn *Softly and Tenderly Jesus is Calling* **ELW 608 (v. 1 & refrain)**

L: God of Promise,
(repeat after me, line by line)

C: We are sorry.

Sometimes we do not see others or their needs.

Sometimes cause harm.

Sometimes we cause suffering.

Sometimes we look harshly upon those who are different from us.

Sometimes we are the oppressors.

Forgive us.

Forgive us for not seeing others and their needs,

for the harm we cause,

for the suffering we impart,

for looking harshly upon our siblings,

for afflicting pain.

See us, O God,

and set us free.

In the name of +Jesus,

Amen

L: The God of Promise who sees you, remembers you, looks upon you with lovingkindness, and sets you free. In steadfast faithfulness, God forgives your sins in +Jesus' name. Almighty God strengthen you in faith to live each day renewed in God's call for your life. Amen.

Experience God's Presence

L: "The order for healing is an expression in worship of the church's ministry of healing. Here all who sense the need for God's healing in any aspect of their lives join in prayer for others and for themselves. Here each person may come to receive a word of blessing and prayer. Here each person may also receive a physical gesture of healing: the laying on of hands, which may be accompanied by anointing with oil. These signs, first given in baptism, tell us again that we are sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked forever with the cross of Christ, who is health and salvation for the whole world. In its ministry of healing, the church does not replace the gifts of God that come through the scientific community nor does it promise a cure. Rather, the church offers and celebrates gifts such as these: God's presence with strength and comfort in time of suffering, God's promise of wholeness and peace, and God's love embodied in the community of faith."¹

Hymns

<i>We Come to you for Healing, Lord</i>	ELW 617
<i>Jesus Remember Me</i>	ELW 616

The minister lays hands on those who come forward and prays with these or similar words: Father in heaven, for Jesus' sake, send your Holy Spirit upon your servant here before you; drive away all sickness of body and spirit; make whole that which is broken; deliver from the power of evil; and preserve this your child in true faith to share in the power of Christ's resurrection and to serve you with all the saints, now and forevermore. AMEN.

¹ Evangelical Lutheran Worship. Augsburg Fortress, 2006, p. 276.

Sending Prayer

L: We praise you, O God, for meeting us with promises at the crossroads of history and hope.

(repeat after me)

C: You have promised to see us.

You have promised to set us free.

Go with us now.

Lead us.

Guide us.

Strengthen us

To trust that you look upon us with mercy

And set us free

So that we might show forth in our lives

Your love for us

And for the whole world.

Amen

Blessing

L: Receive this blessing:

May the blessing of Almighty God –

The one who sees and sets free -

Be upon you this day, and remain with you always.

C: Amen

Hymn

What Wondrous Love is This

ELW 666 (vs. 3, 4)

The Commission

P: Go in peace. You are God's beloved.

C: Thanks be to God.

Postlude

For your Devotional Reflection this week:

V - What are Hagar's values, and how does she live them?

O - To what is Hagar asked to be open, and how does she respond?

C - What voices, literal and metaphorical, call to Hagar? Which ones does she listen to? Which ones does she not listen to?

A - Where is Hagar's attention invested in this story? Does her attention align with her values?

R - What regrets does Hagar have in this story? How do her regrets call her to something new, different, better?

E - When, where, and how does Hagar experience God's presence?

What does this mean for your life?

Suggested petitions for the Prayers of Intercession:

Prayer: Look kindly upon me, O God, and set me free from all that oppresses me. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

Thanksgiving for God's help

*The present crossroads of history and hope faced by individual people,
congregations, communities, our country, and the world*

Those who are oppressed in any way

Victims of human trafficking and modern-day slavery

Those who are outsiders

Those who despair

Those who are hungry, have no shelter, are alone, or dying

Liturgy created by Rev. Dr. Charlene Rachuy Cox, the Nourishing Vocation Project, St. Olaf College

The God of Promise Praise, ©Charlene Rachuy Cox, 2023. Used by permission.