



# Valley Christian Church

(Disciples of Christ)

Dear Friend in Christ,

I am happy to share with you the next week of our autumn sermon series “The Whatabouts: Responding to Questions with Faithfulness.” This week features the question “What about the rules?” and one of my favorite stories, Jesus teaching on the commandments in Matthew 22:34-40.

Please use following phone numbers and links between 10:15am and 10:30am. You can join in one of two ways:

**By computer, smart phone or tablet:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86757133623?pwd=OTFUQWJvU2lMMmR6bkY5SitpelR1UT09>

**By Phone:** 1 (312) 626 6799 ID 867 5713 3623,  
Passcode 205879

(If you need a live link to the Worship link, you can go to the homepage of our website at [www.vccbhm.org](http://www.vccbhm.org) with the passcode 205879 OR click on “Zoom Links” then the Sunday Worship link.)

I look forward to seeing you on Sunday.

Christ’s and yours,  
Pastor Eric

# Valley Christian Church

## Twentieth Sunday After Pentecost

October 18, 2020

### PRELUDE

*“Rejoice, the Lord Is King!”*

### CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: God reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

People: In Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.

Leader: So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us. We entreat you on behalf of Christ to be reconciled to God.

People: For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

(2 Corinthians 5:19-21, NRSV)

### HYMN OF PRAISE

*“Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing”*

*Come, thou fount of every blessing  
Tune my heart to sing thy grace  
Streams of mercy never ceasing  
Call for songs of loudest praise  
Teach me some melodious sonnet  
Sung by flaming tongues above  
Praise the mount, I'm fixed upon it  
Mount of thy redeeming love*

*O to grace how great a debtor  
Daily I'm constrained to be  
Let thy goodness, like a fetter  
Bind my wandering heart to thee  
Prone to wander, Lord I feel it  
Prone to leave the God I love  
Here's my heart, O take and seal it  
Seal it for thy courts above*

### INVOCATION

Dear God we welcome you into our homes and worship spaces this morning. We are excited and glad

that we can spend this time together even though we are not physically together. Turn our minds and thoughts to coming together in worship with one another. Be with us today as we begin our week with you and with each other in this worshipful space.  
Amen

### SHARING JOYS AND CONCERNS

#### PASTORAL PRAYER

Faithful God, we know your presence and that you do not desert us. Out of this knowledge we come to you as your children in need of your parental love and wisdom, to guide us where we are lost and bind us up where we are broken down. As we turn to you in these moments of prayer, we remember especially the people whom we have named, and lift up to you again by name now...

#### SCRIPTURE

Matthew 22:34-40

#### MEDITATION

The Whatabouts: What About the Rules?"  
See Insert for Meditation

#### HYMN

*“Love Divine, All Loves Excelling”*

*Love divine, all loves excelling  
Joy of heaven, to earth come down  
Fix in us thy humble dwelling  
All thy faithful mercies crown  
Jesus, thou art all compassion  
Pure unbounded love thou art  
Visit us with thy salvation  
Enter every trembling heart*

*Finish then, thy new creation  
Pure and spotless let us be  
Let us see thy great salvation  
Perfectly restored in thee  
Changed from glory into glory  
Till in heaven we take our place  
Till we cast our crowns before thee  
Lost in wonder, love, and praise*

#### SHARING OUR OFFERING WITH GOD

Share your financial offering with the church by mail or bring it by the church office. Thank you for your love gifts.



**OFFERTORY  
PRAYER**

Dear Lord, we bring together our offering to you. We give in your name to help your people. Help guide Valley to give to the greatest in need and work together to help all people. Lead us to do your work. Amen

**CALL TO  
COMMUNION**

May we remember how Jesus delivered on Maundy Thursday the commandment to love one another as we gather together at His table as His beloveds.

**COMMUNION  
HYMN**

*“Here at Thy Table, Lord”*

*Here at thy table, Lord, this sacred hour  
O let us feel thee near, in loving power  
Calling our thoughts away from self and sin  
As to thy banquet hall we enter in*

*Sit at the feast, dear Lord, break thou the bread  
Fill thou the cup that brings life to the dead  
That we may find in thee pardon and peace  
And from all bondage win a full release*

**COMMUNION  
PRAYER**

Conclude by praying together the Lord’s Prayer

**HOLY  
COMMUNION**

Partake of the holy communion (bread, juice, or whatever is available to you)

**WORDS OF  
INSTITUTION**

Hear the words of Jesus when He said, “Take and eat, this is my body, broken for you. Take and drink, this is the cup of the covenant poured out for you.”

**BENEDICTION**

May the God who has led you this far lead you still more, from worship into service, from prayer into deed, and from this day into the next. May the blessing of the Lord be with you now and always. Amen.

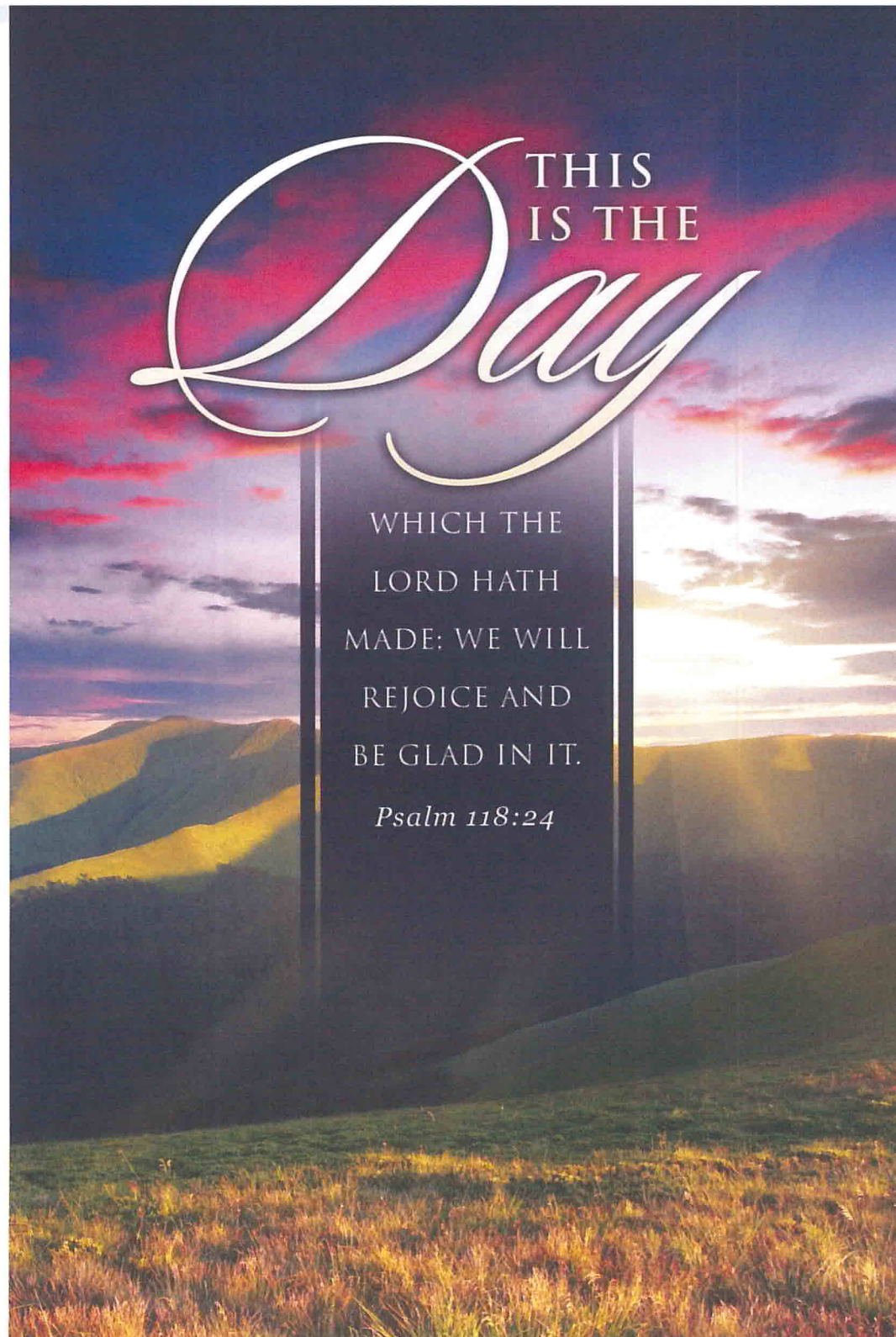
This Sunday’s worship leaders

Leader: Katelyn Clark

Elder: Eve Harman

Pianist: Margaret Cox

Minister: Rev. Dr. Eric Atcheson





## MEDITATION

Sunday, October 11, 2020

### “What About the Rules?” Matthew 22:34-40

#### “The Whatabouts: Responding to Questions with Faithfulness,” Week Six

My mom and sister are here visiting from Kansas City this weekend for Sadie Lou’s birthday this weekend, so this seems an opportune time to share with y’all the...wildly varying approaches my sister and I took to the rules when we were children.

So fastidious was my devotion to rule-following as a kid that among my more frequently-recounted antics were the following:

- -Creating my own consequences chart outlining the punishments I should face for breaking rules
- -Watching the speedometer in the car and writing my mom speeding tickets when she went over
- -And, after issuing my mom multiple speeding tickets, asking, “Why doesn’t daddy break the law?”

Meanwhile, my sister’s approach to the rules my parents laid down can be summed up in one legendary preschool-aged quip from her: “This is America, I make my own rules!” Can you spot which of us was maybe fated to grow up to be a pastor, and which of us wasn’t?

I share these stories not just out of nostalgia or as a sop to my visiting family, but because today’s whatabout question, “What about the rules?” is a particularly fraught one when you combine the ethical expectations Jesus Christ makes of His followers with the quintessentially American impulse to, as my sister exclaimed, make your own rules. We all have rules, even probably the most libertarian among us, and whether and how we adhere to them does indeed say much about us.

This sermon series is my first as your new minister here at Valley, and I arrived at it after multiple conversations with the search

(over)

committee about how and why evangelism came to be noted as so important a trait in the congregation’s search and call profile. And specifically what I heard was a need to be equipped to talk to people about faith in a way that could answer their questions—questions to which we may or may not have all the answers, or not feel comfortable answering.

The way I experienced doing evangelism on the West Coast would sometimes come in the form of fielding questions from folks skeptical of the nature of my faith in God as revealed in Jesus Christ, and I came to think of those questions as “the whatabouts,” as in, “Well, what about...?” Being honest in those moments was vital for my own integrity and for my friendship with the person asking me. I crafted this sermon series to tackle many of these questions as a way for me to share with you how evangelism has looked to me in my ministry, by trying to answer those whatabout questions, and as a way to let you into my own theology and faith.

Today’s whatabout question is, “What about the rules?” And this is a question that has a lot of unspoken expectations and experiences behind it. We in the church are very capable of talking a good game about the grace God offers, but we have a tendency to attach strings to that grace.

Consider, for instance, the miles-long statements of faith that congregations will expect new members to sign as a condition of church membership—and the expectation, whether spoken or unspoken, that membership in a church with that narrow of a worldview equates to salvation. That scenario represents on paper the opposite pole of a purposefully noncreedal denomination like ours, which expects no such gesture from its members, but that does not immunize us from having our own arbitrary expectations, whether spoken or unspoken, over our siblings in Christ. Whether it is an unspoken dress code on Sunday mornings, or an expectation that women limit themselves to food- and child-centric roles at the church, each congregation has its own culture of expectations-that-are-really-rules that are not always easy, or even healthy, to try to navigate. And these rules can, for some Christians, do more harm than good in their own relationships with God.