



# 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.” Today’s whatabout question is “What about miracles (or a perceived lack thereof)?” We will read through part of the Lazarus story of John 11 and talk about how we understand miracles as signs of God’s presence and even favor, even as some of those closest to God through Jesus Christ wrestled with those same questions in a time of deep grief. The raising of Lazarus is one of my favorite stories in John’s Gospel and I am excited to share in it with you!

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=OTFUQWJvU21MMmR6bkY5SitpelR1UT09>

**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 “Links to Zoom” then the Sunday Worship link.)

I look forward to seeing you on Sunday.

Christ’s and yours, Pastor Eric

# Valley Christian Church

## Twenty-Third Sunday After Pentecost

November 8, 2020

### PRELUDE

*"Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing"*

*Margaret Cox  
Pianist*

### CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.

People: By this we will know that we are from the truth, and will reassure our hearts before Him whenever our hearts condemn us.

Leader: For God is greater than our hearts, and He knows everything.

People: We should believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.

(1 John 3:18-20, 23, NRSV)

### HYMN OF PRAISE

*"When Morning Gilds the Skies"*

*When morning gilds the skies, my heart awaking cries  
May Jesus Christ be praised! Alike at work and prayer  
To Jesus I repair, may Jesus Christ be praised*

*Discordant humankind, in this your concord find  
May Jesus Christ be praised! Let all the earth around  
Ring joyous with the sound, may Jesus Christ be praised*

*Sing, sun and stars of space, sing, all that see His face  
May Jesus Christ be praised! God's whole creation over  
Both now and evermore, may Jesus Christ be praised*

*Be this, while life is mine, my canticle divine  
May Jesus Christ be praised! Be this eternal song  
Through all the ages long, may Jesus Christ be praised*

### INVOCATION

### SHARING JOYS AND CONCERNS

*Linda Reeves  
Worship Leader*

*Linda Reeves  
Worship Leader*

### PASTORAL PRAYER

Infinite God, you make miracles for us and we do not always see them for what they are. Yet we still turn to you to ask for miracles because we know that you alone are the most capable of them. We place our faith and trust in you in this time of prayer, as we lift up to you the people whom we have named aloud, and we repeat their names at this time...

*Rev. Dr. Eric Atcheson*

### SCRIPTURE

John 11:17-27

*Linda Reeves  
Worship Leader*

### MEDITATION

"The Whatabouts: What About Miracles (or a Perceived Lack Thereof)?"  
See Insert for Meditation

*Rev. Dr. Eric Atcheson*

### HYMN

*"Amazing Grace"*

*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me  
I once was lost but now am 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*

*Through many dangers, toils, and snares  
I have already come  
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far  
And grace will lead me home*

*When we've been there ten thousand years  
Bright shining as the sun  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Then when we'd first begun*

### 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.

*Linda Reeves  
Worship Leader*

### OFFERTORY PRAYER

*Linda Reeves  
Worship Leader*

**CALL TO  
COMMUNION**

May we remember how Jesus gave us miracle after miracle, including the miracle of His sacrifice embodied in this meal.

*Rev. Dr. Eric Atcheson*

**COMMUNION  
HYMN**

*"Bread of the World, in Mercy Broken"*

*Bread of the world, in mercy broken  
Wine of the soul, in mercy shed  
By whom the words of life were spoken  
And in whose death our sins are dead*

*Look on the heart by sorrow broken  
Look on the tears by sinners shed  
And be thy feast to us the token  
That by thy grace our souls are fed*

**COMMUNION  
PRAYER**

Conclude by praying together the Lord's Prayer

*Sara Simon  
Elder*

**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."

*Rev. Dr. Eric Atcheson*

**BENEDICTION**

May the God who breathed into you the miracle of life now send you forth from worship into continuing to live that life for God's Son Jesus Christ, and may the blessing of that God be with you on this day and on all days. Amen.

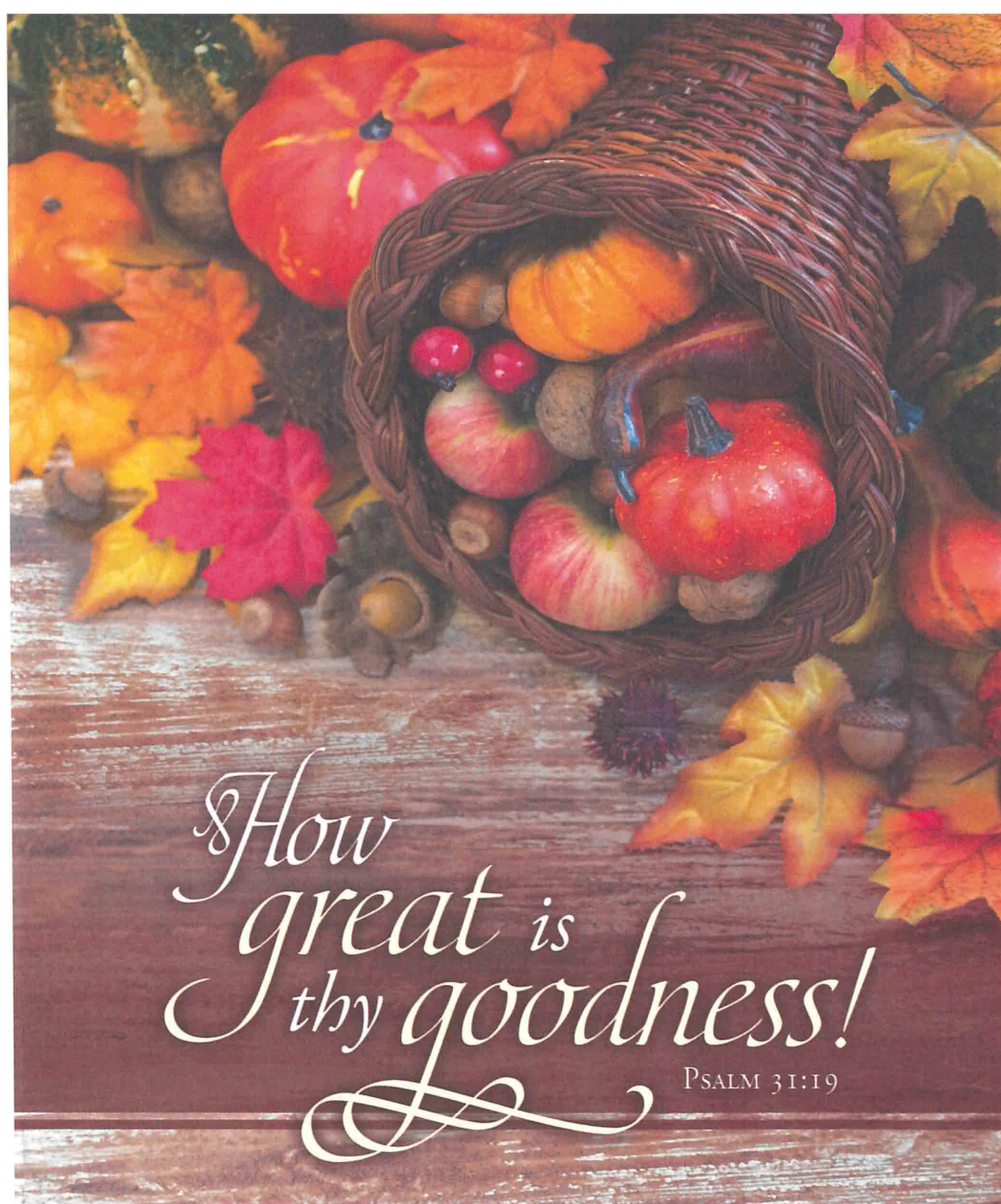
*Rev. Dr. Eric Atcheson*

**POSTLUDE**

*"To God Be the Glory"*

*Margaret Cox Pianist*

*You are warmly invited to remain in our Zoom worship space for some online fellowship time following the postlude.*



## MEDITATION

Sunday, November 8, 2020

**“What About Miracles (or a Perceived Lack Thereof)?” John 11:17-27**

**“The Whatabouts: Responding to Questions with Faithfulness,”  
Week Nine**

This sermon series is my first as your new minister here at Valley, and I arrived at it after multiple conversations with the search 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 a way for me to share with you what evangelism has looked to me and 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 miracles (or a perceived lack thereof)?” It is a question that pops up from that God School word “theodicy” that we talked about several weeks ago in this series. Miracles are purely good, but why do some people appear to get them while others appear not to? And can we really attribute everything as a miracle, and by extension to God?

In her book *The Practice of Pastoral Care*, psychologist, minister, and seminary professor Carrie Doehring shares the concept of the dream child, a

(over)

mental construct created by parents who lose a child in utero or during childbirth as a reaction to their loss. The dream child represents what the parents had hoped for their child—their wishes, dreams, and fantasies of who their child might become, their personality, their endearing quirks, all of it. There is a double mourning, then, that can take place for such parents—the mourning of the biological child they have lost, and the mourning of the dream child they have lost.

I learned about this concept in seminary, but I did not understand it—note the difference between learning and understanding—until our own miscarriage three years ago. I had no way of knowing then that God would be delivering Sadie Lou to us just over a year later. I did not know when, or if, we would become parents. I was in pain. I was upset. I needed a miracle.

I think the traditional understanding of a miracle here would have meant the restoration of our dead child. But a restoration of one’s relationship with God should also be called a miracle, and I was in need of that. To be moved as a human being from the deepest valleys back to the highest peaks should be called a miracle, and I was in need of that as well.

Put another way: what if our definition of what does and does not make a miracle has become much too narrow to do justice to the ways in which God can work \*and\* in which we need God?

Can we make a miracle out of reimagining our understanding of those miracles? Let’s hope so.