



Worship Service Theme: Loyalty

Welcome: Welcome! It's so good to be together to celebrate faith and community. My name is ____ and I'll be leading our worship time today. Our theme for today is **loyalty**. What is loyalty to you? (*Commitment; care for another no matter what.*) We'll talk together about what this means for our lives of faith.

Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening Prayer: Great and loving God, we ask that your Holy Spirit bless our time together and to refresh us with your presence. In the midst of a world full of trouble and strife, we thank you for watching over us, guiding us, and as we confess our sins, for forgiving us. Enable us to enter your presence today joyfully and reverently, and let us depart with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace which passes understanding. Amen.

Opening Hymn: Doxology

Statement of Faith: Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23 together:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

²He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Suggested Hymns:

**For the Beauty of the Earth
Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us
Amazing Grace**

First Reading: Ruth 1:6ff

⁶Then Naomi [a woman whose husband and two sons had died] arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab ⁸and Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to your mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me." Then Naomi kissed her daughters-in-law, and they lifted up their voices and wept. ¹⁰And the daughters-in-law said to Naomi, "No, we will return with you to your people." ¹¹But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? ... ¹²Turn back, my daughters; go your way... ¹⁴Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And one daughter-in-law kissed Naomi goodbye, but the other daughter-in-law, named Ruth, clung to Naomi ... and said, "Do not urge me to leave you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God." ...¹⁸And when Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she said no more.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Suggested Hymns:

Holy, Holy, Holy

Jesus Loves Me

Second reading: Psalm 117

Praise the Lord, all nations!

Extol him, all peoples!

²For great is his steadfast love toward us,
and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.

Praise the Lord!

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Suggested Hymns:

Softly and Tenderly

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

Interactive Homily: I recently read a lovely book called “The Grace of Dogs.”¹ In this book, theologian Andrew Root “paints a vivid picture of how ... the dog-human connection can legitimately be described as ‘spiritual’ —as existing not for the sake of gain, but for the unselfish desire to be with and for the other.”

- What are dogs typically like? (In Chinese culture, the Dog represents loyalty, honesty, and integrity.) I wonder why dogs are often called “man’s best friend”?
 - Dogs *seek out* human company and interaction, unlike any other species on Earth.
 - Dogs love you no matter what!
- I wonder if anyone here had a dog while you were growing up? (Show of hands.) Do you have a dog story you could share with us?
- Loyalty is certainly a trait that dogs have. What do you think is involved with loyalty?
 - Being true to something – a person, principle, actions; allegiance, faithfulness, steadfast devotion; *faithfulness*
 - In the Bible, God is most often described as having “steadfast love”
- So we’ve heard about loyal dogs, but I wonder who has been the most loyal *person* in your life? Tell me more about that person – what made him or her loyal to you?
 - Family
 - Best friend (best man, maid of honor)
 - Spouses
 - Military partners
 - Work partners
- What about loyalty in the military service?
 - What is the Marine Corps motto? “Semper fidelis,” always faithful. What does that kind of loyalty involve?
 - Loyalty to your fellow service men and women no matter what – even to death.
 - 2016 movie, “*Hacksaw Ridge*,” about conscientious objector Desmond Doss, who saved 75 men (without firing a single shot) during the bloodiest battle of WWII, on Okinawa

¹ <http://andrewroot.org/grace-of-dogs/>

- What does it take for someone to be loyal? What do you need in your heart to be a loyal person?
 - Courage, especially in the face of opposition
 - Determination
 - Promise keeping
 - Endurance
- What does it mean that God is loyal to us? that we are loyal to God?
 - God *never* leaves us nor forsakes us, no matter what
 - We cling to God no matter what; return to God when we wander

Let's pray silently in thanks to God for loyalty in each other and especially God's faithfulness to us.

(Silent Prayer) ... Lord, hear our prayers. Now let us pray the Lord's prayer together:

Lord's Prayer: 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Suggested Hymns:

This is My Father's World
It is Well with My Soul
Standing on the Promises

Third Reading: Quotes on Loyalty

Loyalty and devotion lead to bravery. Bravery leads to the spirit of self-sacrifice. The spirit of self-sacrifice creates trust in the power of love. –Morihei Ueshiba, Japanese founder of Aikido (martial art)

You cannot buy loyalty; you cannot buy the devotion of hearts, minds, and souls. You have to earn these things. –business executive Clarence Francis

Faith deals with the invisible things of God. Remember that even when every demon in hell stands against us, the God of Abraham remains faithful to all his

promises. Christ can do anything but fail his own people who trust him. – Pastor and author Jim Cymbala

Though our feelings come and go, God’s love for us does not. –writer C.S. Lewis

Loyalty to the country always. Loyalty to the government when it deserves it. – Mark Twain

Suggested Hymns:

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

Shall We Gather at the River

Fourth Reading: True stories of loyal dogs

In the 1920s, Hachiko, a golden brown dog, waited for his owner, a professor at the University of Tokyo, at the train station at the end of each day. Sadly, one day the professor did not return from school, where he had died suddenly. But for nearly nine years, Hachiko the dog kept going to the train station every morning and afternoon precisely when the train was due, patiently waiting for his beloved owner. Hachiko passed away peacefully on the street near Shibuya train station in 1935. In 2015, the University of Tokyo unveiled a new statue that shows the famous loyal dog happily reunited with his owner.

While on a family road trip, Bobbie, a 2-year-old Scotch Collie, got lost in the state of Indiana—but his family lived in Oregon. After six months of walking alone and traveling 2,800 miles, over two-thirds of the United States, the dog reunited with his human family in Silverton, Oregon. Today in Silverton, you can find a replica of Bobbie’s house and a statue in his honor.

On Sept. 11, 2001, Omar Eduardo Rivera, a blind computer technician, was working on the 71st floor of the World Trade Center with his guide dog, Salty. When a hijacked plane hit the tower, Salty insisted that he and his owner leave, so they started down the escape staircase. It was slow going because the staircase was so crowded with people escaping. Omar wanted his dog to have a chance to live, so he unclipped Salty’s leash and told him to go. Salty continued his way down, but a few minutes later Omar felt the dog nuzzling his legs—Salty had come right back to his side. “Salty decided, ‘no, I cannot go without him,’ so he

came back,” Rivera said. “He was telling me, ‘I am with you. No matter what.’” Salty and a co-worker helped Omar climb down 70 flights of stairs, which took over hour. Soon after they escaped the tower, the building collapsed. Omar says he owes his life to his faithful dog.

Suggested Hymns:

Blest Be the Tie that Binds

I Need Thee Every Hour

Closing Blessing: (Strike bell as you say the word “Lord”)

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Doxology, Reprise

Extra Material:

You, by Jack Eldridge²

You lined the clouds with silver,
You pushed away the rain.
You lifted some of my burdens
and shared with me my pain.

You gave me your most precious treasures,
A value no man can adjust.
Freely given without measure,
your loyalty, patience, and trust.

You eased my fears with confidence
And held sacred all my flaws,
Diminishing their apparent affect
Through eyes of a higher cause.

² https://www.poetrysoup.com/poem/you_823528

You taught me how to appreciate
All that one can be,
Encouraged me through the eyes of love
To invest in a possibility.

Now I can line the clouds with silver
And push away the rain again,
For through you I have seen that the greatest gift
Is the gift of being a friend.