



Worship Service Theme: Discovery

Helpful elements:

Green table covering (Ordinary Time)

Welcome: Welcome! It's so good to be together to celebrate faith and community today. My name is ____ and I'll be leading our worship time today. This week we're looking at the theme of **discovery**.

Let's look at the word itself: *dis* + *cover*, or "to uncover, to find." That's where the intersection with faith happens: through God's Spirit, we continually discover new things about God, ourselves, and the world around us.

Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening Prayer: Great and loving God, we ask your Holy Spirit to 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 joyfully and reverently, and let us depart today 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, "The Lord is my shepherd," together:

¹The 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

Amazing Grace

First reading: A Brief History of Discovery¹

This week is the anniversary of Christopher Columbus' arrival on the American Continent on October 12, 1492. The landing is celebrated as *Columbus Day* in the United States; and because Columbus was Italian, many Italian-Americans observe Columbus Day as a celebration of their heritage.

But some things have changed as we "rediscover" the truth about our nation's beginnings ... because Columbus didn't actually discover America, did he? Who was here first? The Native Americans! There were already civilized people inhabiting this land for centuries.

To acknowledge this, several U.S. states and cities, including South Dakota, Vermont, Phoenix, and Denver, have replaced Columbus Day with *Indigenous Peoples Day*. In Latin America, it is recognized as *Día de las Culturas* (Day of Cultures), *Día de las Américas* (Day of the Americas), and *Día del Respeto a la Diversidad Cultural* (Day of Respect for Cultural Diversity).

In 1992, the National Council of Churches said this about the start of colonization in America: "What represented newness of freedom for some was the occasion for oppression for others." Something to think about!

Suggested Hymns:

Holy, Holy, Holy

Jesus Loves Me

Second reading: Matthew 13:44-46

⁴⁴Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy the man goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. ⁴⁵Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of

¹ collected and adapted from Wikipedia

fine pearls,⁴⁶ who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought that pearl.”

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

Suggested Hymns:

Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee
Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

Interactive Homily: Let’s talk more about discovery.

- What types of things have you ever looked for in your life?
 - Lost child, lost valuable item; looking for a job; looking for a home.
- What is it like when you’re looking for something? What do you feel?
 - Feelings can depend on what you’re looking for!
 - When you’re looking for something like a job or valuable item, there can be feelings of urgency, anxiety, even fear.
 - In less urgent circumstances, looking may feel like an adventure.
- What does it feel like when you find something *unexpectedly*? Like finding money on the ground or a book you’ve been wanting to read? How does that feel?
 - Excited, surprised, happy, grateful
- Now turning to our spiritual lives: How did you find God, or how did God find you? (*Take time to tell stories here.*) Examples:
 - Grew up in the church
 - Taught by parents or grandparents or teachers
 - Struck by the Spirit at a “tent meeting” or revival
 - Talking to people or reading
 - Being out in nature
 - Sometimes young, sometimes old
 - People find God, and God speaks to people, in different ways and at all stages of life!
- As we read in Matthew 13, Jesus describes the kingdom of God in two ways:
 - As a treasure hidden in a field – the person was not even looking for it!
 - As a pearl of great value – a merchant is looking and finally finds the perfect pearl.

- What's the same in both stories?
 - The VALUE of what is found. Both people in the stories *sell everything else they have* to get the treasure or pearl.
 - Jesus uses these pictures to teach that no matter how you discover God, whether you're looking or not looking, a relationship with God is worth more than anything else, worth more than anything you could give up to get it.
- And this treasure and pearl – this relationship of great value – doesn't end upon first discovery; it continues! God's Spirit calls us to discover God *throughout* our lives as we journey through the world. Consider these "discovery" questions for today:²
 - Why do you think you are here? (list as many ideas as possible)
 - "If you are alive, you are here for a purpose."
 - What have you enjoyed learning? What do you still enjoy learning? (list as many ideas as possible)
 - "Life is a learning journey. The more we learn, the more we grow... and the richer and deeper our life experience."
 - What brings you joy? (list as many ideas as possible)
 - "Often it is the simple things that bring us the most joy. Make a list of the things that bring you joy. Then begin incorporating those things into your life on a daily basis."
 - God can and will use the time we have here on Earth to show us more of who we are, what's important (and what's not!), and how we can love him and love our neighbor well.

... Let's take a moment to silently pray and reflect on God's gift of discovery – what God has already shown us and what God wants to show us going forward.

(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.

² from life coach Valorie Burton: http://www.cbn.com/finance/burton_fivequestions.aspx?mobile=false

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

Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus

Third Reading: Quotes on Discovery

Some people, in order to discover God, read books. But there is a great book: the very appearance of created things. Look above you! Look below you! Read it. God, whom you want to discover, never wrote that book with ink. Instead, God set before your eyes the things that He has made. Can you ask for a louder voice than that? –St. Augustine, 4th-century North African philosopher and bishop

The first step toward finding God, who is Truth, is to discover the truth about myself: and if I have been in error, this first step to truth is the discovery of my error. –Thomas Merton, American writer and Trappist monk

Sixty years ago, I knew everything; now I know nothing. Education is a progressive discovery of our own ignorance. –author and historian Will Durant

The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others. –Indian lawyer and anticolonial activist Mahatma Gandhi

The only real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes. – French novelist Marcel Proust

The way to find a needle in a haystack is to sit down. –Beryl Markham, English-born Kenyan aviator and author

Suggested Hymns:

Sweet Hour of Prayer

He's Got the Whole World in His Hands

Fourth Reading: Matthew 7:7-11

Jesus said: ⁷“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks

finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ⁹Which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, would give him a stone?¹⁰ Or if your child asks for a fish, would give him a serpent? ¹¹If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!”

In other words: God isn't hiding from you! God is close and looking for you as you look for him. Take time to be quiet and listen for his voice. God, as a good father, will give you what is good – especially himself.

Suggested Hymns:

Great is Thy Faithfulness

Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

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. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Doxology (Reprise)