Sunday, November 1, 2026 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church
Bible Study
1 Thessalonians 2:9-13
"Witnesses"

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes) Say the following: "Think about the people in your life who have shaped you spiritually. Who has been an example in the faith for you? In pairs or groups of three, talk about that person, taking a few moments to give honor and gratitude to them today."

1 Thessalonians 2:9-13 Context. Paul's first letter to the Christian community at Thessalonica is the very first of his letters and the earliest document of the New Testament. It was probably written around 50 CE. Thessalonica was an important Roman city on the Macedonian coast. The growing cult of the Roman Emperor would have been an increasingly significant point of conflict between Christians and their neighbors, leading to discrimination, if not persecution. Paul recognizes that his hearers and readers are also caught up in the tension between the "already" of what God has done for them through Christ and the gifts and power of the Spirit that they have already claimed and experienced, and the "not yet" of the fulfillment and completion of God's love and power in their lives that they will only experience with the second coming of Christ. In these verses, Paul reflects on the bond that had been forged between himself and those who had heeded his message, encouraging them every step of the way.

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:9-13
What touches your heart? What do you hear in the Scripture? What questions do you have, or what doesn't make sense to you in the text?

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:9-13 again. Write down your thoughts, or share them with the person or group you are with.

Group Dialogue (Approximately 30 minutes). You likely won't get through all the questions in the time you have together. Consider inviting group members to work through any remaining questions on their own throughout the week.

- Read 1 Thessalonians 2:9-13. Invite participants to have the scripture in front of them, either in a Bible, on a phone app, or printed on paper. After reading it, ask the following questions:

- This passage is a part of Paul's letter to the church of the Thessalonians. He references the past hard work so that "we might not burden any of you while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God" (2:9).
    - What do you think he might be referencing? What questions does this bring up for you, either about the context in which Paul is writing, or about hospitality and financial support as a part of the church today?
- Verse 2:10 says: "You are witnesses, and God also, how pure, upright, and blameless our conduct was toward you believers."
    - How do you understand being a witness in this context?
    - Why is being a witness important?
    - What bearing does the character of the witness have on what they're bearing witness to?

- The Preaching Notes for November 1 say:

"We bear witness. That is a function of the church, of the community of faith: to bear witness. It is a part of our identity. So, it is both who we are and what we do. We are witnesses. As you know, there are two aspects of being a witness. First is the willingness to see. It is easy to avert our eyes and not see the world as it is, not see the suffering of our neighbors, not see the glory of God at work around us in surprising places and through surprising people...Second, we bear witness by telling what we have seen…you might tell your own story to bring hope to someone struggling with decisions. You are bearing witness to the work of the gospel by sharing your life with others."

- Is one aspect of "bearing witness" easier for you than the other? Which one? If so, why do you think that is?
- How do you understand bearing witness to the gospel in your own life?
- Read back through the scripture passage. Is there a word or phrase that stands out? Write it down for consideration in the week ahead.
- Just One Thing: How can you share your gratitude for the person who has been a witness in your faith? Find one way to honor them/their memory.
- Going Deeper on Your Own: This week, consider studying one of the other lectionary texts in the following pattern:
    - Prayerfully ask God to open your eyes to the scripture. (Psalm 119:18)
    - Read the text of your choice [Joshua 3:7-17; Psalm 107:1-7, 33-37; Micah 3:5-12; Psalm 43; Matthew 23:1-12] out loud.
    - What do you notice about the text?
    - What questions arise?
    - What do you think God might be saying to you in this text?

Prayer (10 minutes). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

Sending Forth (2 minutes). After all have shared, end by praying the following, or a similar prayer:

Gracious heavenly father, you are a wonderful parent to us, pure, upright, and blameless. May we receive the gift of your generous love that sometimes shows up as people in our lives. We thank you for the witness of those who have pointed to your love and pray that we might be those people for others as well. Give us grace to live a life worthy of you, who called us to be your people in the world around us. We pray this in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

And now we pray the 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.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.