Sunday, October 18, 2026 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church
Bible Study
1 Thessalonians 1:1-10
"Chosen"

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes) In pairs or groups of three, have participants answer, "Who has been an example of a Christian for you? What do you see in their faith or action that compels you?"

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 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. This week's reading also lifts up how the Thessalonians have "turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God" – a counterpoint to those who worshipped the (dead) Emperor and other pagan deities (as well as the Israelites who had turned from God to the idol of the golden calf – last week's reading from Exodus).

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10
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 1:1-10 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 1:1-10 aloud, inviting participants to have the scripture in front of them, either in a Bible, on a phone app, or printed on paper. Ask group members the following questions:
    - What positive affirmation does Paul, the author of this letter (or "epistle"), give the church of the Thessalonians based on this passage?
    - Verse 4 refers to the people as "chosen." Consider what it means in scripture when someone is "chosen."
        - When have you been "chosen" for something? What about not being chosen? How does being chosen—or being excluded—shape one's identity?
    - What do you think Paul means by the gospel not just being "word," but also in "power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction"?
        - How do you understand the gospel having power and conviction?
    - Paul references them becoming imitators and being "an example to all the believers." How does the idea of imitating Paul/Christian leaders sit with you? How does the idea of being an example to all believers sit with you? Which do you struggle with more? Why might that be?

- The Preaching Notes for October 18 say:

"There are folks in your town who wonder what it means to follow Christ. They wonder what it means to belong to a church. Sure, they could go to church themselves to find out, but they don't need to. They just see you. Are you an example of the joys of discipleship? Are you one who loves God and neighbor with equal passion and commitment? What do your neighbors see when they look at you? At your church? Do they wonder if they might be welcomed if they wander in one day? Or is your church like a social club that they don't have the credentials to join?"

    - What resonates with you about these questions? What challenges you?
- Read back through the scripture passage. Is there a word or a phrase that stands out? Write it down for consideration in the week ahead.
- Just One Thing: What is one thing you want to do because of the discussion today?
- 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 [Exodus 33:12-23, Psalm 99, Isaiah 45:1-7, Psalm 96:1-9, (10-13), Matthew 22:15-22] 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?

Closing Reflection Question

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be, or what might it be calling you to do?

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:

Loving God, the power of your resurrection raised Jesus from the dead, and it raises us, too. We can sometimes feel less than "qualified" to be an example for others. But you choose us anyway, before we do anything to be worthy of being chosen. May we be encouraged by the witness of the church of the Thessalonians, who served you, the Loving and True God. And may we also be found faithful. In Christ's name, we pray, **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.