**Sunday, October 25, 2026 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church**
**Bible Study**
**1 Thessalonians 2:1-8**
**"Tested"**

Open with a word of prayer

**Gathering Time** (5-10 minutes) In pairs or groups of three, have participants answer, "Are you a person who likes tests or dreads them? Why?"

**1 Thessalonians 2:1-8 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 and persecution. In last week's reading, Paul had praised the Thessalonians for taking up their new way of life, and the great reputation for being faithful followers of Jesus that they had already achieved in Christian communities throughout the Greek world. They had become not just imitators of Jesus, but outstanding examples to others as well – just as Paul, Timothy and Silvanus had been examples to them. In this way Paul implicitly affirms their solidarity in their witness to the gospel and ends with his self-description of his relationship to them as a nurse caring for her children.

**Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8**
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 2:1-8 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 2:1-8. 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:

    - Paul is addressing a community of believers with whom he has a relationship. What evidence of that relationship do you see in this passage?
    - What questions do you have about this relationship?

- Chapter 1 emphasizes that the people are "chosen" by God (1:4), visible by the "message of the gospel [that] came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction." Chapter 2 builds on this foundation but notes that "just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel (chosen), even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts" (2:4).
    - What do you think about God "testing our hearts"? Does this have a positive, neutral, or negative association for you? What would help you decide which it is?
    - Have you ever felt that God was testing you? What was that experience like? What did you learn about God through that experience? About yourself?

- The image of the relationship between Paul (and Silvanus and Timothy, who are the "we" to whom Paul is referring in this passage—see 1:1) and the people in the church of the Thessalonians is a tender image, a nurse caring for her own children (v. 7). What foundation does this create when there is this kind of trusted relationship?
- The Preaching Notes for October 25 say,
  "Testing…[by God] is not an arbitrary or extraneous challenge or burden laid upon those who decide to be believers. Rather, it is living out of one's faith day by day. Our faith is tested because we use it. The testing is in acting as people of faith. It is not a hoop to jump through or even a job evaluation exercise. Our faith is tested whenever we step out in faith, whenever we stand up against injustice, whenever we act out of love for God or neighbor, whenever we swim against the cultural current and put ourselves at risk."
    - How does this passage resonate or conflict with your understanding of testing by God?
    - How does it expand upon what you thought about testing by God?
- 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 action you might take because of our conversation/study 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 selected text [Deuteronomy 34:1-12; Psalm 90:1-6, 13-17; Leviticus 19:1-2, 15-18; Psalm 1; Matthew 22:34-46] 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:

God of all goodness, we give you thanks for entrusting us with your gospel and giving us the witness of your faithful followers across time. May we be people who are tested—and approved—by you as disciples who are full of your love for one another and for the world. Give us awareness of your invitations to be tangible expressions of your love in the world around us. In the name of Jesus, 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.