

Home Service for May 10, 2020

Welcome and Announcements

Although we cannot meet together in the church building we can share worship together in our individual homes. We will continue to work to stay connected and be there for each other during the difficult time. We are going through something never experience before. I hope this will help you worship God today with those who are in your home. Add hymns if possible, too.

Reminder that the Bishop has closed us through May 30 and will update us again closer to that date. Also Annual Conference in June in South Dakota is canceled.

Let us continue keep Jamie Brown in our prayers as she recovers.

Let us all remember the mothers, be they ours or the mothers of friends and neighbors. It is Mother's Day, a great day to be in contact with family even though it should be using technology or at a distance.

God is our rock, the foundation of our spiritual home. We are living stones, used to build God's house.

Gathering Prayer:

Lord of love, you have called us together this day. Help us to appreciate all that you have given to us, to cherish our families and our friends, to seek your hope and peace throughout all our lives. AMEN.

Opening Prayer:

Gracious God , on this day of the festival of the Christian Home, the celebration of Mother's Day, the witness to the eternal love of Christ, remind us that we are responsible for caring for each other. We are called to lift up rather than tear down; to support rather than abandon, to reach out when others have turned away. Give us

hearts of love that, in all places and times, we may be a witness to the hope that is found in Jesus Christ. AMEN.

Prayer of Confession:

Patient and forgiving God, we come to you this day. For many there is a celebration of Mother's Day and all that our mothers have given to us and taught us; but for some, these memories are too painful, of those who could not parent, who were afflicted. Remind us that your blessings are poured out in many ways, through many people. Give us the confident faith that reaches beyond our own lives to help others. Forgive us when we sink into our own selfishness and pettiness. For it is in those times that we turn our back on you. Bring us back to you, to the awareness of your eternal love. In Christ's Name, we pray. AMEN.

Words of Assurance:

Christ, our cornerstone and our salvation, offers to us hope and comfort. On this Mother's Day Sunday, this Festival of the Christian, help us to make our home in you. AMEN.

Read Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16

31 In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness.

² Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me.

³ For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.

⁴ Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength.

⁵ Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.

¹⁵ My times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.

¹⁶ Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies' sake.

Prayers of the People:

Gracious God, we thank you for the unconditional love we receive from you, demonstrated most vividly in Jesus' willingness to call us friends, and then lay down his life for us. For many, we experience a human manifestation of Christ like

love in our mothers, and we thank you for them. We thank you for their sacrifices of time and personal freedoms. We are grateful for the sleepless nights they endured on our behalf and for their caring compassion in times of illness or sorrow. We thank you for those who taught us the faith and shared with us the stories of Jesus. We thank you for their discipline, for the correction that helped mold our character, teach us respect and manners, and instill in us godly values. We ask you to bless our mothers, to pour out your spirit of grace upon them, and to grant them strength and peace. For those for whom Mother's Day renews feelings of sorrow and grief over what never was or might have been, we ask for comfort. For those who experience the pain of neglect or abuse, we pray for healing and the grace to forgive. We thank you that you are present to each of us, whether our mothers are near or far, present or gone, and that in you we can find the perfect love and acceptance that we so deeply desire. Amen.

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, and the power and the glory forever and ever. AMEN

Read the Lesson: Acts 7:55-60

⁵⁵ But Stephen, enabled by the Holy Spirit, stared into heaven and saw God's majesty and Jesus standing at God's right side. ⁵⁶ He exclaimed, "Look! I can see heaven on display and the Human One^[a] standing at God's right side!" ⁵⁷ At this, they shrieked and covered their ears. Together, they charged at him, ⁵⁸ threw him out of the city, and began to stone him. The witnesses placed their coats in the care of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹ As they battered him with stones, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, accept my life!" ⁶⁰ Falling to his knees, he shouted, "Lord, don't hold this sin against them!" Then he died.

Read the Epistle Lesson: 1 Peter 2:2-10

² Instead, like a newborn baby, desire the pure milk of the word. Nourished by it, you will grow into salvation, ³ since you have tasted that the Lord is good.

⁴ Now you are coming to him as to a living stone. Even though this stone was rejected by humans, from God's perspective it is chosen, valuable. ⁵ You

yourselves are being built like living stones into a spiritual temple. You are being made into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ Thus it is written in scripture, *Look! I am laying a cornerstone in Zion, chosen, valuable. The person who believes in him will never be shamed.*^[a] ⁷ So God honors you who believe. For those who refuse to believe, though, the stone the builders tossed aside has become the capstone. ⁸ This is a stone that makes people stumble and a rock that makes them fall. Because they refuse to believe in the word, they stumble. Indeed, this is the end to which they were appointed. ⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people who are God's own possession. You have become this people so that you may speak of the wonderful acts of the one who called you out of darkness into his amazing light. ¹⁰ Once you weren't a people, but now you are God's people. Once you hadn't received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Read the Gospel Lesson: John 14:1-14

¹⁴ “Don't be troubled. Trust in God. Trust also in me. ² My Father's house has room to spare. If that weren't the case, would I have told you that I'm going to prepare a place for you? ³ When I go to prepare a place for you, I will return and take you to be with me so that where I am you will be too. ⁴ You know the way to the place I'm going.”

⁵ Thomas asked, “Lord, we don't know where you are going. How can we know the way?”

⁶ Jesus answered, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you have really known me, you will also know the Father. From now on you know him and have seen him.”

⁸ Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father; that will be enough for us.”

⁹ Jesus replied, “Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been with you all this time? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰ Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I have spoken to you I don't speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ Trust me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or at least believe on account of the works themselves. ¹² I assure you that whoever believes in me will do the works that I do. They will do even greater works than these because I am going to the Father. ¹³ I will do whatever you ask for in my name, so that the Father can be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ When you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it.

Message

Have you ever thought about what you really want out of life? To some that may sound like a strange question, because of course everyone knows what they want from life: the good old American Dream, a house, a nice family, a car, and enough money to live a comfortable life. But is that what you really want out of life?

Our gospel lesson this morning gives an answer to that question about what do I really want out of life. Jesus says: "And you know the way where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me."

What we really need and want out of life is to follow Jesus, it is as simple as that. We need to let the guiding principle of grace guide us and then all the other stuff of life will fall into place.

If we follow Jesus, then a certain contentment will follow, we won't have to be searching for things, or digging to find treasure or be afraid of being robbed of our possessions, for we will know and understand that in the large scale of things, these are not as important as our relationship with Jesus Christ.

A poem by an unknown author reads: "Do not look forward to what might happen tomorrow. The same Everlasting Father, who cares for us today will take care of you tomorrow and every day. Either He will shield you from suffering, or He will give you unfailing strength to bear it. Be at Peace then, and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginations."

With Jesus as our way and truth and life, we can walk confidently into the future, knowing that He is with us to guide us.

God doesn't tell us all the answers about where we are going on the road of life, He doesn't tell us all the details about how we will be taken care of, or what might happen to us along the way, but he does give us himself in the form of his son,

Jesus Christ, to be our guide, the guide who leads the way, because Christ said, "I am the way, and the truth and the life."

Also, in this passage from John, Christ says, "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father." Whoever believe in Christ will do the works that he did, and even greater things!

How could we ever compare to Christ? Think of all he did and accomplished. He changed water into wine. He walked on water. He healed the blind and the hemorrhaging. He interacted with all sorts of people, without any prejudice. Jesus raised people from the dead. And after he died on a Roman cross, he defeated death itself, in his Resurrection on the third day. He is God's Son and the Son of Man, who came to reveal God and proclaim God's new kingdom in the world. How could Jesus ever think that his mere human disciples would do greater things than he?

The fact of the matter is that we won't ever be able to do many of those things we associate with Jesus. But these aren't really the kinds of things that Jesus had in mind when he was speaking to his disciples anyway. As God's Son, Jesus knew that he came to this earth to do the will of the Father. Jesus came to proclaim the love of God and the establishment of God's new kingdom, which would reign on earth as in heaven; a kingdom of justice and mercy for all people. Jesus came so that we might know God fully and completely. Jesus' greatest work was that he revealed God to the people around him.

With Jesus not physically around, how will God be revealed to the people of the world? As Jesus prepared for his ascension to the right hand of the throne of God, He also had to prepare his disciples. The passage we heard from John takes a moment in the Upper Room to emphasize the link between the believers' continuing work, and the work that Jesus has begun. Jesus makes clear that the success of the disciples' works and ours is directly dependent on Jesus' departure to the Father. "Whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father."

The final events of Jesus' days on earth show forth the fullness of his love for God and the fullness of God's love for the world. Believers continue the glorification of God through Jesus that was the very purpose of Jesus' own works. Think of how Jesus changed lives by introducing people to the loving God. And now, as Jesus disciples, we are to continue that work; to reveal God to others! We can do even greater things than Christ himself, because as Christ's own body at work in this

world, we can continue to share the love of God with more and more people everyday. Christ's transformational work can continue through us, Christ's disciples, the church!

God has created us with a purpose. Life has a goal to it. We are created to journey through life to an end. And the way to that end, Jesus says today, is through him. We don't have to wander, stumbling over every root and rock. There is a better way into God's presence. Jesus tells us today that it is through him that we find the way, for Jesus brings God to us. And when Jesus says, "I am the way and the truth and the life," those words are an invitation to know God as well as an example of how to live our lives so that we can continue the work that Christ began.

We can know the way and continue Christ's work because Jesus' life was a witness to the truth, that was why Jesus said, "I am the truth." When we look at Jesus, we see the truth about ourselves. Maybe that's why it's so hard to look at Jesus sometimes, because when we look at Jesus, we see the ugliness of our lives, the sinfulness of our thoughts and deed, the blemishes of selfishness and pride, and our failure to continue Christ's work. But when we look at Christ, we also see the truth about God, our God who wipes all that wickedness away. In Jesus, we see the very nature of God, whose love for us is unearned, undeserved, and most unexpected. And when we look at Jesus, we learn the truth about the life God wants us to live. We, too, are to love, to forgive, to show mercy, to welcome each other; we are to continue Christ's great work, to be part of the truth about God.

It is in knowing Jesus as "the way and the truth" that we are able to experience God as "the life." For without Jesus, there is no life in us. Jesus says, "I am the life. No one comes to the Father except by me." These words remind us that Jesus is our life. They are Jesus' invitation to all to come to him, to receive in him the gift of life that God created for all. How do we experience abundant life and help others to do the same? The key is faith. It is faith that brings God's blessings to life for us. It is faith that takes us to the feet of God. It is faith that brings God's gift of life to us. And it is faith that enables us to continue Christ's great work and share the blessings of God with others. Faith comes from trusting in Jesus' word, living with God, following Christ's example, and continuing Christ's work.

Through faith in Jesus Christ, all can come into God's presence. That is the gospel; it is God's promise to us. In Jesus, we have "the way and the truth and the life" that God creates us to be; not only us, but the whole world. That is why Jesus says, "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing,

and they will do even greater things than these." So let's believe, let's have faith, and let's show others The Way into God's presence!

So how can we continue Christ's work in this world with the great fruitfulness that Christ expects of us? We do it by pointing to Christ, who is "the way and the truth and the life." Like those disciples gathered together in the Upper Room listening to Jesus say farewell, we can get scared thinking about continuing his work in this world without him or we can put our trust and faith in Jesus Christ and continue His work. We need only to tell others about Christ, "the way and the truth and the life." We need only point to Christ who is God in our very midst; God who, in his infinite grace, has stepped down from heaven so that all might know Him.

A closing poem by an unknown author says it well: "May the strength of God pilot me, May the power of God preserve me, May the wisdom of God instruct me, May the hand of God protect me, May the way of God direct me, May the shield of God defend me, May the host of God guard me against the snare of the evil one and the temptations of this world. May Christ be with me Christ before me, Christ in me Christ over me, May your salvation, O Lord, be always mine this day and forever more." So let us remember: Christ said, "I am the way, and the truth and the life." Amen.

Benediction:

May the love of God take away your millstones and place you high up on the Rock, that you may see more clearly the calling of God in your life. Into the hands of God, commit your spirit, in the name of Jesus Christ, our risen Lord. Amen.