

Home Service for May 24, 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.

Please keep Jamie Brown in your prayers as she continues on the road to recovery. Also remember Lynn Weatherstone as she recovers and awaits doctor's permission to fly home.

Be glad and rejoice, for in our joy, we reveal God's glory and Christ's loving presence.

Gathering Prayer:

Lord of justice and mercy, be with us today as we seek healing for our pain, hope for our spirits. Encourage us in our various ministries in life. Help us to be faithful witnesses to your good news. In Christ's Name we pray. AMEN.

Opening Prayer:

Holy God, we celebrate your presence this day. For the gifts of resurrection, we give you thanks and praise. For the gift of your ongoing presence in our lives, we rejoice and sing. Overwhelm us with your presence today, that we might be overwhelmed with joy. In joyous gratitude, we pray. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Heavenly Christ, come down from on high to be with us, even in our darkest hours. As you share in our suffering, share your love in the midst of our shortcomings and our failings. Raise us to new heights with your forgiveness and mercy, that we may glorify you in all that we say and in all that we do. Enter into our sorrows with grace and hope, that we might be overwhelmed with joy. In your holy name, we pray. Amen.

Words of Assurance:

The Risen Christ is with you, restoring, empowering, and strengthening you. We are established as God's beloved children, forgiven and made new in Christ's love.

Read Psalm 68:1-10

Let God rise up; let his enemies scatter; let those who hate him run scared before him! ² Like smoke is driven away drive them away! Like wax melting before fire, let the wicked perish before God! ³ But let the righteous be glad and celebrate before God. Let them rejoice with gladness! ⁴ Sing to God! Sing praises to his name! Exalt the one who rides the clouds! The LORD is his name. Celebrate before him! ⁵ Father of orphans and defender of widows is God in his holy habitation. ⁶ God settles the lonely in their homes; he sets prisoners free with happiness, ^[a] but the rebellious dwell in a parched land. ⁷ When you went forth before your people, God, when you marched through the wasteland, *Selah* ⁸ the earth shook! Yes, heaven poured down before God, the one from Sinai— before God, the God of Israel! ⁹ You showered down abundant rain, God; when your inheritance grew weary, you restored it yourself, ¹⁰ and your creatures settled in it. In your goodness, God, you provided for the poor.

Prayers of the People:

Go back to Jerusalem and wait, Jesus said to his disciples. Lord, we are not good at waiting for anything. We want to know what to do right now, right here. We want the plan all laid out for us so that we can project the end results. We have some real control issues to overcome, Lord. Take our spirits and release the need for control for them. Help us place our total trust in your abiding love and presence. Give us patience and persistence in our ministries and mission. As we bring to you the names of dear ones whose lives are in need of your healing mercy and comfort, remind us that we also stand in need of those same mercies. Give us courage to accept your love and strength to witness to your love in all that we do. In Jesus' Name, we pray. 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: Acts1:6-14

As a result, those who had gathered together asked Jesus, “Lord, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel now?” ⁷ Jesus replied, “It isn’t for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ Rather, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

⁹ After Jesus said these things, as they were watching, he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ While he was going away and as they were staring toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood next to them. ¹¹ They said, “Galileans, why are you standing here, looking toward heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you saw him go into heaven.”

¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which is near Jerusalem—a sabbath day’s journey away. ¹³ When they entered the city, they went to the upstairs room where they were staying. Peter, John, James, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James, Alphaeus’ son; Simon the zealot; and Judas, James’ son— ¹⁴ all were united in their devotion to prayer, along with some women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

Read the Epistle Lesson: 1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11

¹² Dear friends, don’t be surprised about the fiery trials that have come among you to test you. These are not strange happenings. ¹³ Instead, rejoice as you share Christ’s suffering. You share his suffering now so that you may also have overwhelming joy when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are mocked because of Christ’s name, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory—indeed, the Spirit of God—rests on you.

⁶ Therefore, humble yourselves under God’s power so that he may raise you up in the last day. ⁷ Throw all your anxiety onto him, because he cares about you. ⁸ Be clearheaded. Keep alert. Your accuser, the devil, is on the prowl like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith. Do so in the knowledge that your fellow believers are enduring the same suffering throughout the world. ¹⁰ After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, the one who called you into his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will himself restore,

empower, strengthen, and establish you. ¹¹ To him be power forever and always. Amen.

Read the Gospel Lesson: John 17:1-11

When Jesus finished saying these things, he looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, so that the Son can glorify you. ² You gave him authority over everyone so that he could give eternal life to everyone you gave him. ³ This is eternal life: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you sent. ⁴ I have glorified you on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. ⁵ Now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I shared with you before the world was created.

⁶ “I have revealed your name to the people you gave me from this world. They were yours and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. ⁸ This is because I gave them the words that you gave me, and they received them. They truly understood that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.

⁹ “I’m praying for them. I’m not praying for the world but for those you gave me, because they are yours. ¹⁰ Everything that is mine is yours and everything that is yours is mine; I have been glorified in them. ¹¹ I’m no longer in the world, but they are in the world, even as I’m coming to you. Holy Father, watch over them in your name, the name you gave me, that they will be one just as we are one.

Message

Joy flows through our readings as the Easter season comes to a close; a vivid reminder that this is a season of Joy and celebration. Christ is risen! Christ ascends to heaven. Even so, the Risen Christ is in our very midst, for we are the body of Christ, the resurrection community, called to rejoice together in loving community. We are a sign of God’s glory for all to see. Surely, this is cause for joy to flow through our lives, just as joy flows through today’s readings.

Our gospel text for this morning comes from Jesus’ priestly prayer which He prayed the night before His death on the cross. He addressed His Father in heaven asking that the disciples might remain faithful to the word which He had given them, asked that they might remain faithful to the Father, asked that they might remain together as a group, or fellowship of believers. This prayer is named His priestly prayer, because Jesus was praying on behalf of the disciples to His Father in heaven in the same way a priest in the Old Testament would offer intercession on behalf of the nation of Israel.

As Jesus prays for the disciples, a few verses ring out loud and clear for us this morning as these verses 7 through 10 focus on the fellowship which Jesus wanted to establish between His disciples, between His disciples and the Father, and the loving and caring which would bind that fellowship together. Jesus' words charges the disciples and us to live in that loving fellowship. When you read the Gospel did you sense the togetherness, the unity, the union, Jesus hopes and prays for in this prayer as He prays for His disciples and all those who would be His followers today?

Our Epistle lesson picks up that theme of togetherness and brings to it the reality that life as a follower of Jesus is not easy. Peter speaks about the suffering, the brokenness that is in this world, the brokenness that all followers of Jesus Christ will encounter at one time or another as he or she walks with Christ. Peter ties the glory, the richness, the unity of the Christian community with the reality that, that community lives in a broken and less than perfect world.

As we look at these two interwoven themes, we see that because of the love and fellowship, because of the brokenness we encounter in this world; there is a definite obligation for us as followers of Christ to uphold, to pull-together, to encourage, to comfort, to be there for other members of the community with comfort, cheer and love as we bind ourselves together in this community of Christ, known as the church. This speaks to the idea of unity, togetherness, caring, upholding each other as a church. If the work of the Lord is to be a success, then all parts must be played by every member of the fellowship, every member of the community. We have to work as a community in visiting, giving, preaching and countless other jobs to make the church and its work successful. We must all work together and each do what he or she can to help. It is a matter of teamwork.

Fellowship in the community of Christ means "rubbing elbows" with Jesus Christ on a daily basis and also "rubbing elbows" with other Christians so that one's faith may be strengthen, may be upheld, may be watered, may grow as God would will it to grow. Fellowship in the community of Christ is for us a strong foundation as we walk our Christian pilgrimage. It is that fellowship which encourages us to stay in the word of Christ, live as Christ would have us live.

Today in the church year is a day of waiting, a time for reflection, a time to stop, to ponder, to listen quietly, to pray, to feel, to experience, to wait and to wonder. In the sequence of things, Thursday was Ascension Day, the day Jesus rose into heaven, and next Sunday is Pentecost, the day the spirit of Jesus, His Holy Spirit visits the disciples with power, it is the birthday of the church. Today, is a waiting day, a day to reflect upon all that Jesus had said, all that he had taught, all that he had done.

I imagine the disciples at this moment felt confused, felt alone, felt lost, were wondering what was going to happen next, were wondering if this was the

end or just a beginning as Jesus had promised. They probably felt frightened, alone, insecure, amazed, and perplexed. They had just seen Jesus rise into heaven, they had just seen their friend, their teacher, their Lord go away from them. This was a glorious event, for now they were certain that Jesus was with the Father, now they knew for sure that Jesus was indeed the Son of God, now they knew for sure that Jesus and the Father were really one.

Now they were alone, without their friend, without their leader, without their companion. Yes, today in the lives of the disciples was a day that was really in between times, in between the time when they had Jesus with them, and before the time when they would be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. Yes, this was a awkward time for the disciples. It was a time for them to think about the words of Jesus, to dwell on his teaching, to recall his promises for them. And I think it is very appropriate that this text from John's gospel has been chosen for today. For if the disciples must have been thinking about this text, if they could recall this conversation with Jesus, if they could remember these words, this in between time wouldn't seem so frightening, nor would they seem so alone.

This was Jesus' high priestly prayer. The prayer that Jesus prayed with his disciples before the events of Holy Week. He prayed this to comfort the disciples who could not understand this prayer then, but now following the death and resurrection of Jesus', following his ascension, now they could really appreciate the words of this prayer, now they could understand what Jesus was saying, what he meant. As we look at this prayer of Jesus, we can see that the disciples could have drawn strength from it, they could draw assurance that indeed they would be with Jesus again somehow. Jesus prayed that the disciples would remain in faith, remain in the name of the Father, remain true to the teaching that he had taught them. This is important for this in between time.

It would have been so easy for the disciples to forget all that Jesus had taught them, it would have been easy to say: let's go back to the fishing boats, it is all over. It was good while it lasted, but Jesus is gone, we are alone, there is nothing more for us to do, let's go back to something we know, something we can do. It would have been very easy for the disciples to have thought this way. But if they could have, which I am sure they did, remember this prayer of Jesus, then they would of have the power, the strength and the encouragement to wait, to stay in Jerusalem for the coming of the Spirit.

Jesus wanted the disciples to have faith, to remain true to the Father, to believe in the promises and teaching He had given them. Jesus knew that in a little while after His ascension, the disciples would have the needed power of the spirit to carry forth His work, so He prayed that they would remain true, they would remain in the faith. The disciples had all the power from Jesus, they had the mission spelled out, they had the tools at hand, but they didn't know how to use

them, they didn't know how to start their mission. They needed the Pentecost experience, they needed the guidance of the Spirit, they needed the power of the spirit to get started. Jesus prayed that while they waited for all this, they would be drawn together while they waited to get started in their mission, they would not lose faith, but they would remain in the Father. There is something we can learn from this text and sequence of events, too. Jesus also prayed for us to remain in the faith as we face the in between times of our lives.

Right this moment we are in one of the in between times of our lives. It can become one of those times when you and I are not quite sure of our faith, not quite sure what is going to happen next, not quite sure what the future is going to hold for us. I think it is appropriate for us to recall these words of Jesus also. It is appropriate for us to know that even when we are confused, even if we don't know what is going to happen, even though we are unsure of the future, we still have a relationship with Jesus, we still have faith. We can still cling to his promises, we can still rely on his redemption in our lives. We might feel in between, but Jesus is still there for us.

It is in situations like we face today, when we have lost a loved one, when we are facing sickness, when we are confused about relationships with family members or spouse, it is in these situations, when we go from one situation to another, not knowing what is going to happen next, not knowing where we are going to get the strength to carry on, it is in these kind of situations that these words of Jesus cry out to us.

He says, remain in faith, believe in Me, I will give you the power to see you through, I will be with you. As those words were comforting to the disciples, they are also comforting to us. In our in between times, Jesus is telling us to remain in faith, for our in between times will not be much longer because He will come, He will be with us.

Not only does Jesus pray for the faith of the disciples, but He prays that they will be in His truth. He says: "Sanctify them in the truth, thy word is truth." Jesus is asking that his followers be made holy in the truth and then He goes on to define that truth, that truth is the word of God. In this in between time for the disciples, these words are directing them to the Father's words, to the Father's teaching, to Jesus teaching to make them holy. It gives them something to turn to, gives them something to rely on, gives them something to hold on to. He is doing that for us, too.

Jesus is directing them to a great resource in life, He is directing them and us to something that can help when they/we are uncertain about the future, that is the word of God. The disciples didn't at this point have the New Testament writings as we do, but they did have the Old Testament, and they did have the oral teachings of Jesus. Jesus is asking that they rely on these. They study the Old Testament,

they retell his stories, they retell over and over his teaching to keep them fresh in their minds.

As the disciples faced an in between time in their lives, in between the Ascension and the Pentecost, they could recall these words of Jesus where he prays for them to remain in faith and to remain in the truth of God's word. Jesus was not praying just for His disciples of that day, but He was praying for all believers to come, too. He was praying for us. As we face our present situation and other situations that life brings us, we need to remember that Jesus prayed for us to remain in faith, and remain in the truth of God's word. We thank Him for those prayers and we pray that He will give us the strength and the power to be faithful to Him and to His words.

This church, this fellowship, this community in Christ is very important for our faith and daily living. We need each other's faith as we journey now the road of life. I need your faith to strengthen my faith and you need my faith to strengthen yours. We need to rub elbows!! We need each other's faith, we need to share it to each other, we need to discuss it, to pray about it, to rejoice in each other's faith. We need to be a community of faith in this day and every day. No lone rangers, we need each other, period. Amen

Benediction:

The power and love of Jesus Christ is with you. You are sent forth to be his witnesses in the world, bringing the good news, healing, establishing ministries of justice and peace. Go in confidence and the power and love of God goes with you. AMEN.