

Home Service for June 14, 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.

Laugh with Sarah, as life grows within the womb of an old woman. Stand in amazement with the crowds, as illiterate fishermen perform the miracles of God. Forget what you think you know. Expect miracles. For with God, anything is possible!

Opening Prayer:

God of wondrous love, your miracles always catch us by surprise. When our time of blessing comes, may we laugh with Sarah and dance with Abraham. When our bodies are touched by your healing grace, may we bow before your throne of glory. Come to us now, as we gather to worship. That we might be touched by your Spirit and made whole by your grace. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Steadfast source of mercy and grace, we long for our touch in our lives, as you touched the lives of Sarah and Abraham; we yearn to laugh at blessings that are so unlikely, we can scarcely believe them; we desire to feel in our very bones, that no problem we face is beyond your care. Grant us the wisdom to put our trust in you, and to offer you our songs of praise and our shouts of joy. Amen.

Words of Assurance

In God's faithfulness, we are made well. In Christ's love, we discover righteousness and peace. In the Spirit's sustaining power, we find strength for the journey. Thanks be to God. Amen!

Read Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19

I love the LORD, for he heard my voice;
he heard my cry for mercy.

² Because he turned his ear to me,
I will call on him as long as I live.

What shall I return to the LORD
for all his goodness to me?

¹³ I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the LORD.

¹⁴ I will fulfill my vows to the LORD
in the presence of all his people.

¹⁵ Precious in the sight of the LORD
is the death of his faithful servants.

¹⁶ Truly I am your servant, LORD;
I serve you just as my mother did;
you have freed me from my chains.

¹⁷ I will sacrifice a thank offering to you
and call on the name of the LORD.

¹⁸ I will fulfill my vows to the LORD
in the presence of all his people,

¹⁹ in the courts of the house of the LORD—
in your midst, Jerusalem.

Prayers of the People:

O God of grace abounding and love unlimited, we thank you for your infinite mercy. It has been the source of our life and faith through all our days, and before that, through the days of our ancestors. When the whip of Pharaoh held Israel in bondage, you broke the yoke of the tyrant, and the prisoners escaped. When the exiles in Babylon trembled before their captors, you raised up a deliverer, and the refugees returned. And when their descendants believed their sin had doomed them to life without hope, you sent your Son, and the hopeless rejoiced. Not only did you redeem them from their sin, but you reconciled them in the midst of their sin. We thank you, dear Lord, that where sin abounds, grace much more abounds. You call us to be a priestly people and a holy nation, but we, like lost sheep, go astray. We know that peace comes through openness to our neighbors, but we make little effort to crash the walls between us. We know that the soft answer turns away wrath, but we greet our enemies with hard words and even harder looks. We

know that self-giving breeds self-givers, but we refuse others the grace with which you treat us. We criticize fellow believers for not patterning their lives after Jesus, yet we do not mirror his life. Forgive us, O God, for our betrayal of your call. Let us take our place at the foot of the mountain of revelation. Open our ears that we might hear your commandments, and transform our hearts that we might keep your covenant. Let us now, as when we first believed, exclaim, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient."

As we think of your other sheep who have gone astray, we think of ourselves as your instruments for bringing them home. If they tarry for a sympathizing tear, let us shed it without shame. If they wait for a soothing word, let us speak it without hesitation. If they desire a cup of water, let us offer it without delay. If they hunger for a decent meal, let us provide it without suspicion. Remembering that you are not impressed by gracious words unaccompanied by generous deeds, make us the instruments of your grace in speech and in action.

We are your people, O God; grant us the wisdom to affirm your claim upon us. We await your revealing word; grant us the sensitivity to hear your demands in clear and compelling language. We long to do your will on earth as in heaven, our Heavenly Father; grant us the courage to fail neither you nor your children. 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: Genesis 18:1-15

The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. ² Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.

³ He said, "If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, ^[a] do not pass your servant by. ⁴ Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. ⁵ Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way—now that you have come to your servant."

"Very well," they answered, "do as you say."

⁶ So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. "Quick," he said, "get three seahs ^[b] of the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread."

⁷ Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. ⁸ He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.

⁹ “Where is your wife Sarah?” they asked him.

“There, in the tent,” he said.

¹⁰ Then one of them said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.”

Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. ¹¹ Abraham and Sarah were already very old, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. ¹² So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, “After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?”

¹³ Then the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really have a child, now that I am old?’ ¹⁴ Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”

¹⁵ Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, “I did not laugh.”

But he said, “Yes, you did laugh.”

Read the Epistle Lesson: Romans 5:1-8

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we^[a] have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we^[b] boast in the hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only so, but we^[c] also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵ And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Matthew 9:35-10:8

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his

disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.

² These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; ³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴ Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. ⁶ Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. ⁷ As you go, proclaim this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, ^[a] drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.

Message

There are two verses in our texts for today that I would like to call to your attention. The first is in our lesson from Romans which says: "But God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." and the other verse is found in our gospel lesson saying: "When he (Jesus) saw the crowds, He had compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."

I feel that it is these two verses that sum up for me the meaning of the gospel message, the Good News of Jesus Christ. God shows His love for us while we were still sinners, or enemies of God and Jesus had compassion for the people. Based on these two verses today's sermon was inspired.

Most people are prone to think of the church as the building, but that is not true, in Acts Chapter 17: 24 - “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands.”

Jesus taught us that God lives inside of people, God lives inside of you and I, and that our bodies are the temple of God! Which means that wherever you are, wherever I am, there is the Church! It makes me feel that in many ways I have a huge responsibility, but at the same time I realize, what a huge privilege! Take moment and think about it, where are you at?

For Jesus said, "On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not overcome it." Which tells us that we need not be afraid of those who might get angry when we share the message of Christ. We need not be afraid of standing up for the Gospel of Jesus Christ! But we should only be afraid of not sharing the Gospel, because Jesus is Lord and Jesus always wins! Jesus calls us to make followers of Jesus Christ to change the world! Jesus calls us to be people living in Him and to join hands with others to follow Jesus. Are we doing this, or is church just a building to us?

But that still doesn't get us to the meaning or to the heart of the matter, what does it mean that God loves us, what does it mean that Jesus had compassion? Maybe scripture might help, how about John 3:16, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that who so ever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

"Yes, that verse speaks about God's love for us, but does it describe it? Can we see love in that verse? We can see love because God's love is visible only through Christ. The only true way to see God's love, to describe God's love is to see Christ. Christ is God's love incarnate, or God's love made real in this world. So, as we look through the New Testament, as we look for descriptions of what does it mean that God loves us, we need to just look at the actions of Christ.

When Christ had compassion on the crowds, He was in a sense, and in all reality, showing the people, showing each of us what it means that God loves us. As He healed, as He forgave sins, as He brought people together, as He made especially women feel part of God's created order, He showed us and them God's love.

Jesus is the one who shows us very dramatically what God's love is like. It is a forgiving, accepting, caring, merciful, compassionate love. It is a love which allowed God's only son to be killed on a cross so that you and I might have eternal life. It is a love which was willing to sacrifice God's son so that reconciliation might happen on this earth. "While we were yet sinner, Christ died for us." While we were yet sinners, Christ reconciled God the Father with creation.

If one is to describe God's love it can be described in the action, words and deeds of Christ. It can be called a reconciling love, a love which brings people together. It is a love which forgives, it is a love which is willing to sacrifice, it is a love which is willing to give instead of take.

That love of God is seen through Christ and the cross, but at the same time, the love of Christ is seen today not only through the actions, words and deeds of Christ in the Bible, but through the actions of the Holy Spirit working in the lives of people today. Paul says very clearly, that you and I are little "little Christs" out in the world. People see Christ today through us, through you and me. Paul says in Romans 12:9, "Let love be genuine, hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good, love one another with brotherly affection, outdo one another in showing honor."

In Ephesians 5:1-2, Paul says: "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Paul continues by saying, "for once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord, walk as children of light."

This reminds us that you and I are to be little Christs in this world. We are to be Christ like, loving one another as Christ has loved us. We are to be free with our love, expressive with our love, we are to be generous with our love toward our neighbor.

Christianity is not a spectator sport. Christians are not to merely be 'fans' of Jesus. We aren't followers if we are just a fan of Christ. Instead, Christianity is a distinctive way of life! Following Jesus requires much more than having 'orthodox' beliefs and attending religious services. Christianity means much more than reading the Bible to look for the pages of Scripture which confirm what we already think or how we currently live. Christianity is supposed to subvert our thinking, confront our way of life, and produce a change of heart and action! You and I are invited to step up from the crowd of the curious to join the team of the committed! Jesus' ministry was a living out of the good news and as followers or apprentices of Jesus this is our calling as well!

In our Gospel Lesson for this morning we see that Jesus "went through all the towns and villages, teaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." The word which is used for compassion here is the strongest word for pity in the Greek language. It describes the compassion which moves people to the depths of their being! Jesus was moved to the depths of His being when He saw, the crowd of ordinary people living with troubled lives. Jesus was moved to the depths of His being when Jesus saw you and I. Jesus is moved to the depths of His being when Jesus sees all the other folks living around us being troubled and helpless. We as the Body of Christ on this earth, are called to be moved to the depths of our being

when we see our fellow human beings struggling. We are to join hands with them, and follow Jesus together!

According to our Gospel Lesson for this morning, “When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples” which includes every one of us, “he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.’” There are people who are “harassed and helpless” in every community and we meet them every day. They are “like sheep without a shepherd.” Jesus has compassion on them; Jesus is moved to the depths of His being. What about us? Do we, as the Body of Christ, have this Jesus Compassion as well? Amen.

Benediction:

As you enter a new week, may you experience God’s presence. May you feel God pouring out the Holy Spirit over your heads and your thoughts and the words of your lips, over your hearts and your feelings and emotions and your compassion for all others, and over your hands and your feet as you put into action all that God commands you. During this week, may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each of you. Amen.