

Home Service for June 21, 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.

Great are the works of God's hands. Wondrous are the blessings of Christ's love. Holy are the works of God's Spirit. Let us clear our minds and center our thoughts on worshipping, thanking and praising our Heavenly Father, today.

Today is Father's Day. Let us start our worship with a prayer for all fathers.

Lord, thank you for all fathers.

For the new ones, who endure sleepless nights with infants in arms.

For the busy ones, who juggle the pressures of home and family life.

For the steadfast ones, who nurture and care for our special vulnerable children.

For the patient ones, who always seek to forgive and engage with their pre-teens.

For the persistent ones, who cleverly find new ways to connect with their mini-adults.

For the father uncles, who step in to cradle and care for nieces and nephews.

For all granddads, who love and support their precious grandchildren.

For the foster dads that are called to gather and cover the fragile ones.

For the Sunday dads who care for our children and lead them in faith.

For the dads who give far beyond their own resources, who overcome disability to cherish and love.

Thank you Lord for all our beautiful fathers. Help us to support them and keep them in our prayers. May you bless them now on this their special day. Amen.

Opening Prayer:

Eternal God, turn and be gracious to us, for the road is long and we are wary. We feel beaten down by the trials of life and need your strength to sustain us. Show us your favor, and offer us your blessing, that we may abide in faithfulness and not be put to shame. Comfort us, O God, and revive our souls. Grant us the endurance to take up our cross, and follow the difficult roads in life. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Holy One, your words cause us to tremble: “nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not be known.” There is much in our lives that we wish to hide from others, even ourselves. We fear those who kill the body, while ignoring those who kill the soul. Teach us once more, O God, that your Son came to bring us life; even if turned son against father, and daughter against mother. Remind us of our higher calling, and the promises you offer of life in your realm which has no end. Amen.

Words of Assurance

Those who seek to preserve their life will lose it, but those who lose their life for Christ's sake will find it. Those who have died with Christ through baptism are united with him in his resurrection. Amen.

Read Psalm 86:1-10, 16-17

LORD, listen closely to me and answer me,
because I am poor and in need.

²Guard my life because I am faithful.

Save your servant who trusts in you—you! My God!

³Have mercy on me, Lord,
because I cry out to you all day long.

⁴Make your servant's life^[a] happy again

because, my Lord, I offer my life to you,

⁵because, my Lord, you are good and forgiving,
full of faithful love for all those who cry out to you.

⁶Listen closely to my prayer, LORD;
pay close attention to the sound of my requests for mercy.

⁷Whenever I am in trouble, I cry out to you,
because you will answer me.

⁸My Lord! There is no one like you among the gods!
There is nothing that can compare to your works!

⁹All the nations that you've made will come
and bow down before you, Lord;

they will glorify your name,

¹⁰because you are awesome
and a wonder-worker.

You are God. Just you.

- ¹⁶ Come back to me! Have mercy on me!
Give your servant your strength;
save this child of your servant!
- ¹⁷ Show me a sign of your goodness
so that those who hate me will see it and be put to shame—
show a sign that you, LORD,
have helped me and comforted me.

Prayers of the People:

Gracious and loving Creator, Sometimes the words just are not there. God, you are so amazing that our words and thoughts of how best to praise you pale in comparison to the splendors of your name. You are the Almighty, you are the Redeemer, you are grace never ending and the embodiment of love itself. And when we come to you in prayer, sometimes words fail us in what to say. Yes, we lift up our concerns, and yet sometimes they seem so small in comparison to the tribulations encountered across your creation. How can our problems compare to disasters people face, or the fighting that surrounds people trying to escape, or the horrors that no child should ever experience? Lord God, sometimes when we come to you to pray, we are clueless as to what we should ask for. You know the thoughts in our minds and the desires of our hearts, and there are times when they conflict. Sometimes we want what is not always the best for us, and there are times that we long to hold on to the things we should let go of. There are times when really the best thing we can do is just pray thy will be done. In these moments, dear God, we are so very thankful for the lessons of your Son Jesus Christ for teaching us the words to pray when our own are insufficient, for our tradition teaches that Jesus said to pray the Lord's Prayer.

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 21:8-21

The boy grew and stopped nursing. On the day he stopped nursing, Abraham prepared a huge banquet. ⁹ Sarah saw Hagar's son laughing, the one Hagar the

Egyptian had borne to Abraham. ¹⁰ So she said to Abraham, “Send this servant away with her son! This servant’s son won’t share the inheritance with my son Isaac.”

¹¹ This upset Abraham terribly because the boy was his son. ¹² God said to Abraham, “Don’t be upset about the boy and your servant. Do everything Sarah tells you to do because your descendants will be traced through Isaac. ¹³ But I will make of your servant’s son a great nation too, because he is also your descendant.” ¹⁴ Abraham got up early in the morning, took some bread and a flask of water, and gave it to Hagar. He put the boy in her shoulder sling and sent her away.

She left and wandered through the desert near Beer-sheba. ¹⁵ Finally the water in the flask ran out, and she put the boy down under one of the desert shrubs. ¹⁶ She walked away from him about as far as a bow shot and sat down, telling herself, I can’t bear to see the boy die. She sat at a distance, cried out in grief, and wept.

¹⁷ God heard the boy’s cries, and God’s messenger called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “Hagar! What’s wrong? Don’t be afraid. God has heard the boy’s cries over there. ¹⁸ Get up, pick up the boy, and take him by the hand because I will make of him a great nation.” ¹⁹ Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well. She went over, filled the water flask, and gave the boy a drink. ²⁰ God remained with the boy; he grew up, lived in the desert, and became an expert archer. ²¹ He lived in the Paran desert, and his mother found him an Egyptian wife.

Read the Epistle Lesson: Romans 6:1b-11

So what are we going to say? Should we continue sinning so grace will multiply? ² Absolutely not! All of us died to sin. How can we still live in it? ³ Or don’t you know that all who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ Therefore, we were buried together with him through baptism into his death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too can walk in newness of life. ⁵ If we were united together in a death like his, we will also be united together in a resurrection like his. ⁶ This is what we know: the person that we used to be was crucified with him in order to get rid of the corpse that had been controlled by sin. That way we wouldn’t be slaves to sin anymore, ⁷ because a person who has died has been freed from sin’s power. ⁸ But if we died with Christ, we have faith that we will also live with him. ⁹ We know that Christ has been raised from the dead and he will never die again. Death no longer has power over him. ¹⁰ He died to sin once and for all with his death, but he lives for God with his life. ¹¹ In the same way, you also should consider yourselves dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Matthew 10:24-39

“Disciples aren’t greater than their teacher, and slaves aren’t greater than their master. ²⁵ It’s enough for disciples to be like their teacher and slaves like their master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, it’s certain that they will call the members of his household by even worse names.

²⁶ “Therefore, don’t be afraid of those people because nothing is hidden that won’t be revealed, and nothing secret that won’t be brought out into the open. ²⁷ What I say to you in the darkness, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, announce from the rooftops. ²⁸ Don’t be afraid of those who kill the body but can’t kill the soul. Instead, be afraid of the one who can destroy both body and soul in hell. ²⁹ Aren’t two sparrows sold for a small coin? But not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father knowing about it already. ³⁰ Even the hairs of your head are all counted. ³¹ Don’t be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows.

³² “Therefore, everyone who acknowledges me before people, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven. ³³ But everyone who denies me before people, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

³⁴ “Don’t think that I’ve come to bring peace to the earth. I haven’t come to bring peace but a sword. ³⁵ I’ve come to turn a man *against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.* ³⁶ *People’s enemies are members of their own households.* ^[a]

³⁷ “Those who love father or mother more than me aren’t worthy of me. Those who love son or daughter more than me aren’t worthy of me. ³⁸ Those who don’t pick up their crosses and follow me aren’t worthy of me. ³⁹ Those who find their lives will lose them, and those who lose their lives because of me will find them.

Message

I would not call today’s readings “happy readings” at all. In Genesis, jealous that Hagar’s son will one day inherit with her son Isaac, Sarah asks Abraham to cast mother and son out into the desert. Despite his distress, Abraham does so, because God says to listen to Sarah! As Ishmael lies dying of thirst, God seems unmoved by Hagar’s tears, and steps in only to save mother and child upon hearing the boy’s cries. In Matthew, Jesus warns that He did not come to bring peace, but as a sword, and to set a son against his father, and a daughter against her mother. Either God is ethically challenged, or God’s purposes are beyond our simple thinking of right and wrong. In seeming answer, the psalmist cries out in distress, pleading her case before God, who is unlike the other gods, because God hears our prayers and listens to the cries of our supplications. God’s ways are not our ways, but there is

help in the Lord and in no other. There is hope and courage to be found and shared in our faith.

God has given each of us a great and glorious cause: to reach men, women, and children for Christ. Some people don't want to be reached; therefore they rebel and become our persecutors. But some people do want to be saved! And the fact that they are saved to live forever is so glorious that it is worth whatever suffering we may have to bear. We are called to confess Christ even to those who might sneer at us, mock us, curse us, slander us, abuse us or avoid us. We are called to share the Good News with everyone, no matter who they are.

If we are to reach others for Christ our lives must reflect our faith and knowledge that Christ has died for our sins and He arose again from the dead. Our lives must confirm this through our confession or by what we say, our countenance or how others see our lives and our conduct or by what actions we take in life. We must be willing to share our confession of faith with others for the only gospel some people will ever hear is the gospel according to you and me. That confession needs to be confirmed by how people see us live our lives, so even that our lives speak the gospel to others. Finally, our actual conduct, how we treat others actually speaks the loudest about our faith and the gospel. If Christ is alive to us, then we must be alive in Christ through confession, countenance and conduct.

Sometimes, I am afraid the one thing that holds us back from reaching out to others for Christ is fear. Since we can be assured that God knows us better than we know ourselves and He truly loves us, we need to discuss the topic fear in respect today's Gospel. We find Jesus continues to give His instructions to His disciples and to us. Three times in verses twenty-six, twenty-eight and thirty, the disciples are told not to fear. Jesus is not forbidding the emotion of fear, but teaching his disciples including us that all of us are not to be paralyzed by fear, cowered by it, or prevented from accomplishing our mission because of it. Fear of God is different from fear of humans. Fear of God is appropriate, given his awesome power. But, also given his awesome love, fear of God does not paralyze, but liberates. Fear of humans has no foundation in fact, from the eternal perspective. If anything is going to prevent the spread of the message, it will be fear of humans and of human opinion. Jesus dismisses such fears as baseless and to be overcome by concentrating on the bigger picture, eternal life.

The human emotion of fear, or any other emotion, for that matter, depends on how one views a situation. If the external circumstances are perceived properly, then fear can be an appropriate reaction. It is not a response or a rational conclusion

drawn after consideration of the arguments pro and con. Fear, like all other emotions, is almost instantaneous and really beyond rational control. It is common not only to fear a situation, but to fear fear itself. Humans do not like being out of control. Ironically, the experience of fear puts us totally out of control by putting us under fear's control and paralyzing us or shrinking us to the point where we cannot act or where we run away, either freezing or fleeing. Most people would say that there are two basic responses to fear: fight or flight. I feel Jesus recommends the first option.

We can change the way we look at the situation or, at least, challenge our first impression. As our perception broadens beyond the immediate, we have a greater chance of seeing the circumstances in a different light, thus producing a different emotional reaction. We may not lose the fear altogether, but we will most likely reduce its intensity. Having done that, we are less paralyzed, less shocked, less frozen in place, and we can act in spite of the fear. We can react as our faith in Christ has shown us to act.

That is what Jesus was trying to show everyone that when they look at things in the broader perspective of eternity, they will see things differently. When one applies the general truths that a servant, an imitator, of a master will be treated like the master, the shock and surprise of maltreatment significantly diminishes. The general principle that the truth eventually comes to light reduces the fear produced by false accusations and empowers one to act in spite of them or the mere risk of them. The general principle of God's providential care and love, when applied to how specifically God knows us and watches over us, to the point of being able to count the number of hairs on our head, the threat of physical death loses its force. The awareness that not everybody will actually like us, have positive emotions towards us, no matter what we do, empowers us to do and say things that others might not like or like us for doing. We lose the paralyzing fear to incur hostility in others at all costs, peace at any price.

Courage is not the absence of fear, but courage is what we do in the presence of fear. Jesus gives us a powerful method to reduce fear enough that we can function courageously, no matter what the human consequences. He says that it is better to be rejected by humans, a temporary inconvenience, than to be rejected by Christ, a permanent condition. We do always have a choice. No matter how great our fear of God is, it never paralyzes us. Paradoxically, the only really appropriate fear liberates us. Yet, when that emotion is inappropriately linked to a human or humans it has the opposite effect. It makes "slaves," in both cases, but, oh, what a difference. The eternal perspective, when activated, lets us pass through the fear-

provoking details of life because we are so set on, so focused on, the goal, the end point that the details pale in significance. They are still there, only they do not matter as much. Thus, we can proceed undaunted, undelayed, undeterred by fear. That is the way Jesus wants it and that the way it will be if we consciously carry Him with us.

Fearing human beings is a form of self-imposed slavery. Fearing God, while reverencing him, liberates us from the enslavement all other fears cause. Reverencing God enables us to both speak and live the truth despite the consequences. When humans experience harm it does not mean that God considers them worthless. Remember, whoever recognizes and respects God's rule while on earth will be acknowledged as a friend of Christ upon entrance into eternity.

There are many things in our natural environment that we fear, but there are tons more in our social environment we also fear. We fear failure, given the esteem our society has for success. We fear being judged by others. We fear all emotional pain including being rejected by others. We fear being alone or abandoned. We fear the unknown, which constitutes the vast majority of reality. At the heart of just about all our misery is fear.

Some fears paralyze us. Others cripple us. Others deafen us. Others blind us. All diminish us. All seek to rob us of our freedom to be and become fully human. All humans know that these fears exist in everyone. After all, we all live in the same polluted environment. So, humans can evoke these fears in others in order to control them or get what they want from them. The origin of fear is control, just as it is the origin of sin.

Whenever God appears in Scripture his message begins with "Fear not." Jesus both preached and lived that message. Our Savior knows that we cannot help but have emotional reactions of fear, but He says to us we need not be overcome by them. All we need to do is trust him. Remember this saying: "Fear knocked at the door, faith answered, and no one was there."

Let us pray: Merciful Savior, when the waters of adversity mount up to our necks, threatening to sweep over our heads, hear our cry for deliverance. You are the Rock to which we cling, forbid that we ever lose our grip on Your grace and love. In the powerful name of Jesus, we are bold to make known to You our every thought or need. Give us the grace to proclaim your Gospel without fear. Amen.

Benediction:

Friends, go into this week with God's word to Jacob and to us, ringing in your ears: "I am the LORD. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised to you." By the power of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, let us live into God's word of presence and power to us this week. Amen.