

Home Service for 7/19/2020

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.

Gathering Prayer:

Gracious and loving God, we gathered to acknowledge you as our God and to praise your name in all the earth. In our worship, reveal and make yourself known among us that you are no longer the God that we heard of but the God who is real and as close to us as our breath. May we know you so that we can make you known in the world through what we say and do. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

While we are waiting, God is waiting with us. God's promises are both now and yet to come. Wait and see.

Opening Prayer:

God of Jacob, who rested his head on a stone pillow and saw visions of your angels, be with us this day. Give us a vision of your presence in the midst of our strife. Give us courage and confidence that you are with us, calling us to be your loving people in the world. For we ask these things in Jesus' Name. AMEN.

Prayer of Confession:

Patient Lord, it is so easy for us to focus on all the things that are wrong. We spend much time and energy in anger and sorrow, leaving behind the possibilities of hope and service to you. Ease our hearts, O Lord. Forgive our willingness to get caught up in the negative. Direct our steps toward positive actions that will produce growth and peace. We offer this prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. AMEN.

Words of Assurance:

God's seeds of love have already been sown in your midst. Come and see the love of God outpoured for you. You are God's beloved ones. Come, live in the light of God. AMEN.

Read Psalm 139:1-12, 23-24

You have searched me, LORD, and you know me. ² You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. ³ You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. ⁴ Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely. ⁵ You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. ⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. ⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? ⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. ⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, ¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. ¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," ¹² even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. ²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Prayers of the People:

Lord, we wonder about you. We look around us at the mighty power and majesty of nature, and it is easy for us to sing songs of praise for your creation. But then we look at the ways in which people treat one another. Too often, lying and cheating are touted as the ways in which we should live. We see deceit and anger, hostility and hatred, and we wonder where the visions of the angels descending and ascending are today. We long for times of peace and joy yet are drawn into the horrors of the world. Be with us, Lord. Help us see and feel your presence in our lives. Help us place our trust in you. For there is much work to be done in your world, and you have called us to this work. Guide our steps and guard our lives. For we ask this in Jesus' Name. 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 28: 10-19

Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. ¹¹ When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. ¹² He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³ There above it^[a] stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. ¹⁴ Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.^[b] ¹⁵ I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."¹⁶ When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it." ¹⁷ He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."¹⁸ Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. ¹⁹ He called that place Bethel,^[c] though the city used to be called Luz.

Read the Epistle Lesson: Romans 8:12-25

Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.^[a] And by him we cry, "*Abba*,^[b] Father."¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-

heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that^[c] the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

²⁷ “The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’

²⁸ “‘An enemy did this,’ he replied.

“The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

²⁹ “‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

³⁶ Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”

³⁷ He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

⁴⁰ “As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴² They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of

teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

Message

In the Old Testament Lesson, we find Jacob running away from his brother's anger. Jacob had little time for God, because he was been too busy scheming and planning how to get ahead. Too much of his time has been wasted thinking only of himself. There was no time for God, and there was no time for anyone else but himself. But God dramatically interrupted his self-centered life.

After running all day, he was exhausted. Using a rock for a pillow, he stretched out for a night of slumber, never expecting to experience such a dream. As he was asleep, God revealed Himself to Jacob. In his dream there appeared a staircase of light, the top of which reached to heaven and the very throne of God. On it the messengers of God were traveling up and down between heaven and earth. They were delivering people's petitions to God and bringing God's help to the people of the earth. Jacob was one of the privileged few who saw with his own eyes the workings of the kingdom of God, the spiritual activity of heaven itself. Here God revealed himself and gave His promise to Jacob that Jacob would be the heir to the promises which God had made to his father, and his father before him.

Jacob called the place Bethel, or the 'House of God.' This place seemed to him to be the very dwelling place of the Lord. Jacob had met God. He wasn't expecting to meet Him. He wasn't even thinking of God. It was purely grace. It was probably the last thing on his mind. He did not even want to meet God. He was only thinking of getting away from his brother. His mind was full of thoughts about where he was going and what was ahead of him. But God broke into Jacob's self-absorbed world in an amazing way. God came to Jacob even when Jacob was not seeking God. God opened his world to Jacob, even when Jacob had closed his world to God.

This whole incident tells us something very important about the Lord. God is full of surprises. Just when you do not expect to meet Him, He comes to you. God can interrupt our self-centered lives in the most amazing ways. This kind of thing that happened with Jacob is the kind of thing that happened often throughout Scripture. One day as Moses was walking through an ordinary day, he encountered an extraordinary bush that was aflame with God. He had been tramping over what he thought was ordinary ground when God told him to take off his shoes because he was on holy ground.

Paul, on the Damascus road, had only hate on his mind when the Lord stopped him in his tracks and changed his life. Gideon was busy with his job, threshing wheat, when the Lord came to him and announced that He was going to use his life in ways that Gideon had never dreamed of. The list of Bible characters could go on and on, but there is enough evidence to show us that God sometimes interrupts the ordinary in our lives to come to us in extraordinary ways. And he is still doing it today.

Most of us cannot say that we have seen the sky open, nor have we passed by any flaming bushes. We have not had blinding experiences like Paul on the road to Damascus. But there are still those times when God comes unexpectedly into our lives. It may be in our sleep. It may be when we are least thinking about it. It may be in church, or even some place where we should not be. It may come when we need him the most, or when we feel we do not need him at all. It may be in a time of crisis and depression, or it may be in a time of great blessing and joy. But God is the God of the unexpected. He can come knocking on your door when you least expect it. He may even come when you least want to hear from Him.

God does not work the same with every person; you never know when He is going to come to you. But don't ever say it will never happen, because it can and will. God is as interested in you as He was in Jacob. And He can meet you in a way that you cannot imagine. He can surprise you in some of the most unusual places. Sometimes it is in a small way, sometimes in a big way... you never know. He is trying to get your attention, and He may use anything to get it. It may not be until you give your life to Him that you will understand some of the ways which He was speaking to you and breaking into your world.

As my faith grows I begin to understand some of the ways that He has been trying to reach me. I began to understand the times He has watched over me, and the times He was trying to speak to me. I am confident that God loves and cares about me. Most of the time people do not realize that God is interested enough to bother with them. They feel either too guilty or too unimportant for God to be concerned with. But I want you to hear this if you hear nothing else today: God is interested in you, He is looking for you. He is looking for a way He can come into your life. He made you with His own hands. He longs for you and He is looking for a way for the two of you to meet. There is so much He wants to do for you if you will only let Him in.

It is not we who find God, but He who finds us. God came to Jacob that night and opened the door to heaven. Jesus said: "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he

with me” (Revelation 3:20). He is the God who looks for you and knocks at your heart’s door.

Jesus identified himself as the door to heaven; the house of God. He said: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). The only way that we can get to God is by going through Christ. He is looking for us. He brings the stairway of God to us. It does not matter that no one loves you, He does. It does not matter that you feel unimportant. He says that we are important enough to die for. It does not matter if you have sinned, He died to forgive you and take your guilt away.

When God is longing for you and looking for you there is no way to hide from Him. You may try to ignore Him, but there is a better way. Like Jacob, you need to wake up and realize that God has been talking to you, and build an altar in your heart where He will be worshiped, a place where He can live. Make your heart the house of God.

Christ is the door and He is beside you right now. He wants to come in. Will you let Him in? Amen.

Benediction:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who came to make God real for each of us,
And the unchanging love of God who finds us in time of our deepest needs, And
the abiding presence of the Holy spirit be with us in our continued journey. Amen.