

Home Service for 7/26/2020

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:

Lord of mustard seeds and yeast, we come to you this day, seeking your Word and will for us. Make us people who care deeply about the well-being of others. Give us courage to be yeast for the rising of hope and peace throughout the world. Open our hearts to your redeeming love, for we ask this in Christ's Name. AMEN.

No matter what happened yesterday, now is the time to call upon God, to lay our lives before our creator, and to proclaim God's wonderful deeds to one another. Now is the time to worship.

Opening Prayer:

Our gracious and ever loving God, we come in the midst of summer looking for refreshment. We rest in the knowledge of the wonderful works you have done for us, and of the deep and abiding love you have for us and for all God's people. Search our hearts. Fill our soul with your indwelling Spirit who whispers to our soul that all will be well if we but trust in you. Shine your light before us, that we may see our path to you and to your kingdom on earth. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Diligent Lord, who watches over us at all times, be with us all these days. We confess that we have allowed a host of worries and frustrations to crowd out your word for us. As you give us peace and your transforming love, also forgive all those times when we have been less than faithful disciples. Gently visit us again with your healing powers. Restore our hope and courage and joy for all the times ahead. We ask this in the name of the Master Healer, Jesus Christ. AMEN.

Words of Assurance

Here is some wonderful news! While we were worrying and fretting, God has been at work in our lives offering healing and peace. Receive these gifts in the name and love of the Lord our God. AMEN.

Read Psalm 105:1-11, 45:

Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name;
make known among the nations what he has done.
² Sing to him, sing praise to him;
tell of all his wonderful acts.
³ Glory in his holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.
⁴ Look to the LORD and his strength;
seek his face always.
⁵ Remember the wonders he has done,
his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced,
⁶ you his servants, the descendants of Abraham,
his chosen ones, the children of Jacob.
⁷ He is the LORD our God;
his judgments are in all the earth.
⁸ He remembers his covenant forever,
the promise he made, for a thousand generations,
⁹ the covenant he made with Abraham,
the oath he swore to Isaac.
¹⁰ He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree,
to Israel as an everlasting covenant:
¹¹ "To you I will give the land of Canaan
as the portion you will inherit."
that they might keep his precepts
and observe his laws.
Praise the LORD.

Prayers of the People:

God of amazing surprises, how easy it is for us to focus on the big picture and forget that change comes in the smallest of ways, in our hearts, our spirits, and then in our actions. We have gathered here this day, coming from different experiences, to hear your word of healing love. We offer our prayers for our friends and family members who are in need of your healing and forgiveness. Yet we withhold ourselves from you. We have a hard time imagining that you would find much of real worth in each of us. We think of ourselves as insignificant in your kingdom. But you have poured your love on us. You have given us the seeds of hope and compassion; you have called us the treasure that is meant to enrich the world. Help us be those people who are so confident in your presence, that we dare to step out

in faith, to work for you in places of need and strife; to witness to your love in all that we do, proclaiming your presence with our mouths and our actions. Give us your guidance, your forgiveness, and courage to be at work in your kingdom. 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 29:15-28

Laban said to him, “Just because you are a relative of mine, should you work for me for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be.”

¹⁶ Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. ¹⁷ Leah had weak^[a] eyes, but Rachel had a lovely figure and was beautiful. ¹⁸ Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, “I’ll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel.”

¹⁹ Laban said, “It’s better that I give her to you than to some other man. Stay here with me.” ²⁰ So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.

²¹ Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife. My time is completed, and I want to make love to her.”

²² So Laban brought together all the people of the place and gave a feast. ²³ But when evening came, he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and Jacob made love to her. ²⁴ And Laban gave his servant Zilpah to his daughter as her attendant.

²⁵ When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn’t I? Why have you deceived me?”

²⁶ Laban replied, “It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one. ²⁷ Finish this daughter’s bridal week; then we will give you the younger one also, in return for another seven years of work.”

²⁸ And Jacob did so. He finished the week with Leah, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife.

Read the Epistle Lesson: Romans 8:26-39

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who ^[a] have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”^[b]

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, ^[c] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. ³² Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.”

³³ He told them still another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds ^[a] of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

⁴⁴ “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

⁴⁵ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. ⁴⁶ When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

⁴⁷ “Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. ⁴⁸ When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. ⁴⁹ This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous ⁵⁰ and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁵¹ “Have you understood all these things?” Jesus asked.

“Yes,” they replied.

⁵² He said to them, “Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.”

Message

In the midst of summer, when our thoughts seem occupied with relaxation and fun, we find ourselves confronted with the difficult task of faithful living. Today’s texts abound with hard work and treachery and puzzling images of the kingdom of God. Yet these texts are tempered with deep love, love of another person and of God. These texts help us to see that no matter what happens in our lives nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Today’s scriptures speak about the family of God and God’s love for us. Genesis recounts the story of the beginnings of God’s family with Ladan and Jacob. Jacob would not be talked out of his love for Rachel. Love is part of any marriage, especially a Christian one, for it involves purity, devotion, and a strong sense of fidelity to the individual. Jacob and Rachel's love shows us what really is involved in a loving relationship.

Now, Jacob kept Leah; even after he was able to finally marry Rachel and Leah became the mother of Jacob’s first four sons; which includes Judah who is the ancestor of David and his royal line, and ultimately of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord! It’s amazing how things work out for those who love God and are called according to His purpose!

Jacob's dream of Rachel in his arms and life finally came to reality. Love finds a way to be fulfilled. Love is not something to fall in and out of; rather, it is a choice of uniting together in a lifetime bonding process. That type of love stems from a

God-given love fulfilled in each other. As Jesus said, "Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate" (Matt. 19:6).

In our Gospel, Matthew identifies how the family of God should live, seeking out the kingdom and helping to make it a reality here on earth. From the very beginning, God has always been with us as we grow to be the family of Christ.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul reminds the early church family that nothing can separate us from God because we have Christ Jesus, the one who died for us and intercedes for us. I believe that God's love is a very special love. It is a love that is sometimes difficult for us to understand, a love that sometimes is difficult for us to accept, a love that is difficult for us to imagine, a love that never leaves us, a love that surrounds us in a very unique and special way. So for us to get a handle, or some kind of understanding about what Paul is speaking about in our second lesson, where Paul wrote those famous words about God's love, listen as I reread again verses 35 through 39:

35* Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36* As it is written, "For thy sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

37* No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

38* For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,

39* nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God's love is the love that Jesus has for us in that He paid the price for our sins. Jesus went to the cross for our sins, those sins that we committed and those things we should have done, but didn't.

God's love shows us that God through Jesus accepts us as we are and gives us the ability to change, to turn away from our sins, and make a new live. God through Jesus allows us to repent, to change and then accept that changed person with no questions asked.

We cannot fully understand or fully appreciate the love that God has for us through Jesus. One day, we will fully understand and see that gracious love He has for us. We see signs of God's love through Jesus in the Word, in the sacraments, in the love others have for us. For in a sense we are blind, we trace our fingers all around

Jesus, but we do not quite fully see or understand. But we have seen enough, we have felt enough, we have understood enough to want to throw our arms around Jesus and hug Him and say as loudly as we can, I love you, Jesus. We sense, we understand through Jesus' love for us, that He is very love able. We love him because He loved us.

Think for a moment have you ever seen a saying or a picture which truly spoke to you personally. As I read the scriptures and was writing this sermon I remembered a picture with a saying that spoke ever so strongly to me. I have seen a plaque with a picture of Jesus on the cross which said, "I asked Jesus how much do you love me and Jesus said, this much and spread his arms and died on a cross." And from that cross, Jesus is asking each of us to run into his arms, where He will encircle us with His love. A love which is willing to sacrifice, willing to give, so that we might live. So next time you look at a crucifix remember those words and realize that it is not a reminder of death, but it is truly a reminder of God's love; of Christ's love for each and every one of us, today and every day.

God's love is indeed very special and never ending, so let us thank Him today and every day for it. Amen

Benediction:

Go forth with joy, celebrating all the many ways for us to serve our Lord. Give us courage, hope, peace and love that we might bear these gifts to others. Go in peace. AMEN.