

Home Service for August 2, 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:

Saving God, we come to you this day from times that are hectic. We are pulled in many directions. Open our hearts to receive you. Deliver us from the temptation to just give up and flounder in the rough waters of life. Reach out to us with your strength and power and bring us closer to you. In Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen.

Opening Prayer:

Lord, we come to you this day in the midst of our summer months. For many this is a time of relaxation; but for others, the burdens, worries, and cares continue to weigh them down. Be with each of us as we open our ears to hear your words, our hearts to feel your presence, and our spirits to receive your healing touch. In Jesus' Name, we pray. AMEN.

Prayer of Confession:

Lord of mercy and hope, we come before you with fear. We know that we have fallen short of being the kind of disciples that you have called us to be. We have turned our backs on people in need; we have closed our ears to the cries of the voiceless. And so we hesitate to come before you because we believe that you are disappointed in us. Remind us again that you are merciful and your love transforms and changes our lives. When we falter and slide off the path of hope you place before us, you "pick us up and dust us off" and put us again on the trail, confident of your faithful presence with us. Forgive us our weakness. Strengthen us and give us courage; help us to be bearers of your good news of peace. We pray this in Christ's name. AMEN.

Words of Assurance

Feel God's healing love pouring over you and into your lives. Know that God delights in each one of you and will always be present to you. This is indeed the Good News of the Gospel. AMEN.

Read Psalm 17:1-7, 15:

Hear me, LORD, my plea is just;
listen to my cry.

Hear my prayer—

it does not rise from deceitful lips.

²Let my vindication come from you;
may your eyes see what is right.

³Though you probe my heart,
though you examine me at night and test me,
you will find that I have planned no evil;
my mouth has not transgressed.

⁴Though people tried to bribe me,
I have kept myself from the ways of the violent
through what your lips have commanded.

⁵My steps have held to your paths;
my feet have not stumbled.

⁶I call on you, my God, for you will answer me;
turn your ear to me and hear my prayer.

⁷Show me the wonders of your great love,
you who save by your right hand
those who take refuge in you from their foes.

¹⁵As for me, I will be vindicated and will see your face;
when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness.

Prayers of the People:

Lord, we have heard the story of Jacob as he wrestled with the angel, how he asked for the angel to bless him. We, too, come to you for blessing. There are so many times in our lives in which we have felt alienated, downtrodden, alone. It is easy for us to wallow in our misery, to whine about all the perceived injustices that have been heaped upon us. But you encourage us to stand strong; to seek the blessings that you have provided for us; to recognize the many ways that you are with us,

giving us strength and courage. Be with us again, precious Lord. Guide our lives. As we have brought our prayers before you for those near and dear to us, seeking healing and hope for them; let us also remember that those same mercies are lavished upon us, not because we deserve them, but because of your great and generous love for us. Help us receive these blessings and, in turn, be a blessing to someone else. For we ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior. 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 32:22-31

That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. ²³ After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. ²⁴ So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. ²⁵ When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. ²⁶ Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

²⁷ The man asked him, "What is your name?"

"Jacob," he answered.

²⁸ Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, ^[a] because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome."

²⁹ Jacob said, "Please tell me your name."

But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there.

³⁰ So Jacob called the place Peniel, ^[b] saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

³¹ The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, ^[c] and he was limping because of his hip.

Read the Epistle Lesson: Romans 9:1-5

I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit— ² I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ For I

could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, ⁴ the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. ⁵ Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised!^[a] Amen.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Matthew 14:13-21

When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴ When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

¹⁵ As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."

¹⁶ Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."

¹⁷ "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered.

¹⁸ "Bring them here to me," he said. ¹⁹ And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. ²⁰ They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ²¹ The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Message

Everyone likes to get gifts. Gifts come from people who care for us. Family and friends honor us with gifts that we often do not expect them. Gifts are given out of love for those whom are loved. Our heavenly Father is no different except for the fact that He is perfect. Our gracious God makes promises and keeps his promises. Our gracious God gives gifts: gifts we do not deserve, cannot earn, or buy. The good gifts of God are great gifts because they provide all that we need.

Our Gracious God gives good gifts with compassion. Let us think about this morning's Gospel as we relate it to our lives. We've all heard it numerous times in our lives, or perhaps said it ourselves on occasion, "Excuses, excuses!" especially when there is something either someone else or even ourselves do not want to do. Matthew's telling of the "Feeding of the 5,000" immediately follows news of John the Baptist's beheading. Upon learning of his violent death, Jesus and his disciples

were hoping to get away for a while, hoping for some peace and quiet to sort through their pain and sorrow. This was Jesus' cousin after all, not to mention a fellow prophet and friend. Understandably, Jesus needed time and space to mourn the loss, to pray to God, and to deal with his feelings of grief. No sooner had Jesus and the disciples shoved off in their boat, than the crowds began appearing on the shoreline. Jesus could have made excuses and continued on to have that much needed solitude, but Jesus had compassion for the crowd. He didn't make excuses so He could meet His needs, Jesus put the crowd's needs first. He willingly made sacrifices for others.

We get the impression that Jesus worked all day, through the afternoon, and into the evening healing the people. And before he knew it, it was meal time. The disciples came to him with an excuse of sorts, an opportunity for a break and some peace and quiet finally. "Jesus," they said. "It's evening. You have to stop now. The people need to get back home so they can eat." But hear again Jesus' response, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." At which they said, "But Jesus, we only have five loaves of bread and two fish!"

I can imagine Jesus shaking his head, thinking: "Excuses, excuses!" But instead, he just said, "Bring them here to me." And after he blessed the bread and broke, the disciples handed out the food. And everyone ate and had their fill, with food to spare.

All too often we are not very different from the disciples. Our thinking is very practical and just maybe not as spiritual as it ought to be. We live in a time when every option for every decision can be programmed and calculated. Rational reasoning rules rather than faith-filled confidence. With divine compassion our gracious God gives good gifts. One gift of God to believers is the fact that our Father reminds us constantly of his mercy, love, and forgiveness. Day in and day out, year after year, and generation upon generation the Lord God Almighty has not once forsaken his children. In his great love our gracious God reminds each one of us of his divine compassion. Each day God's great goodness passes in front of us in order for us to rediscover his great mercy.

One key in our Christian life is not being so arrogant as to think we can always know what Jesus would do. But the key in experiencing God's compassion is to know WHAT Jesus DID! Jesus lived on this earth. Jesus died on the cross for our sins and the sins of the world. Jesus rose again to give us forgiveness of sins and eternal life. What great comfort this is for us in this wicked world of sin and suffering. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of

compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God" (2 COR. 1:3,4). Jesus saves us that we may comfort others.

Our Gracious God gives freely with divine compassion, love and mercy. His gifts are more than enough. Notice the actions of Jesus in what seemed to be hopeless. At least this is what the disciples were thinking. "Send the crowd away"; "we have only five loaves..." How often do we throw our hands up in moments of frustration or feelings of hopelessness? Notice the calm confidence of Jesus. Jesus is our ultimate example of Christian living. Our gracious God invites us to come to Him at any time in any place for any reason.

Our gracious God gives more than enough gifts for every one of us to enjoy a comfortable life of relative ease. Such is the compassion of our loving Lord. More than that our gracious God gives us gifts that truly, really matter. The precious blood of Christ saves us. God freely gives forgiveness to us poor, miserable sinners. Why does our God forgive us? Is it because we are so good? Do we earn God's mercy? Hardly. God's forgiveness is a gift. It is undeserved, unearned, and freely given.

We want to live Christ-like lives. On this side of heaven we are still connected to our sinful nature. How can and do we learn to appreciate the gracious and good and great gifts of our loving Lord? We stay close to our heavenly Father by hearing, reading, and studying the very living and active word of God. Thankfulness helps us to focus on all things good from God.

That is the gospel story at its simplest. God in Christ Jesus loves us unconditionally, even to the point of sacrifice. The "Feeding of the Multitudes" is the only miracle story that appears in all four gospels precisely because it strikes at the very heart of the gospel message. It is a story of great power not simply because of what happens, but because it demonstrates that God is love, it teaches what it means to follow Christ, and it assures us of God's power for good in the world. The key reality in the story of the feeding of the 5,000 is that Jesus had compassion. Despite all the hurdles and difficulties, despite the powers stacked against him, and despite his own personal hopes and needs, compassion for people was Jesus' prime motivation. He cared about the wholeness and well-being of all people, and Jesus made sacrifices, even the ultimate sacrifice, for the healing of the nations and for the good of every person.

Our gracious God gives us good and great gifts out of compassion for us poor, miserable sinners. Our gracious God gives good and great gifts that are more than enough for this life and for eternity. Amen.

Benediction:

The Lord has forgiven and restored you. You are strengthened for ministry in the name of Jesus Christ. Go in peace and may God's peace flow through you to others. AMEN.