

Home Service for August 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:

Merciful God, your grace is bigger than we can imagine, wider than we can dream. In a world where racism, hatred, bigotry, and fear diminish your image in others, you remind us there are no exclusions from your family, no barriers to your open arms. Your expansive welcome reminds us never to keep others from your life-changing love or deny them your life-giving bread. Amen.

Opening Prayer:

Eternal God, part the veil that blinds us to our unity as your beloved children. When those we love hurt and betray us, help us let go of our pain and find the balm of forgiveness. When we feel abandoned by those we trust, help us seek your peace and reconciliation. When our hearts are pierced with anguish, help us find those who will bring us solace, through your loving Spirit. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Forgiving God, you know when we withhold forgiveness. Merciful One, you know when we are not merciful. Gracious Christ, you know when we are stingy with your grace. Acceptor and Lover of all, you know when we reject and exclude. Forgive us and reclaim us. Strengthen us with your Spirit of love, that we may offer forgiveness and compassion in the pursuit of your unity and love. In your mercy and grace, we pray. Amen.

Words of Assurance

God, who is merciful to all, forgives us all through the grace and compassion of Christ.

Read Psalm 133

How good and pleasant it is
when God's people live together in unity!

² It is like precious oil poured on the head,
 running down on the beard,
running down on Aaron's beard,
 down on the collar of his robe.

³ It is as if the dew of Hermon
 were falling on Mount Zion.
For there the LORD bestows his blessing,
 even life forevermore.

Prayers of the People:

As the summer days move rapidly toward the busyness of autumn, our attention is drawn forward. We begin to think about all that is coming; children preparing for the new school year; young people off to service, work or college; return to regular work schedules, preparations for retirement. There are so many things looming on our horizons that our focus is placed on them. Be with us, loving God. Remind us to place our focus on Jesus, who calls us to trust in his mercy and care. Keep the needs of others in our hearts and minds; needs for healing, for comfort, for friendship. Help us to reach out to them and offer our gifts and service in your name. We name these dear ones with our voices and in our hearts to you in these next moments of silence [silent prayer in which names may be offered for prayer]. As you have loved and healed us, so we ask your healing mercies on these whom we have named. We also ask your guidance and patience with us as we march through the last weeks of summer. Confident in Jesus' love for us, we pray.
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 45:1-15

Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence!" So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. ² And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it.

³ Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still living?” But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence. ⁴ Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come close to me.” When they had done so, he said, “I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! ⁵ And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. ⁶ For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. ⁷ But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.^[a] ⁸ “So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt. ⁹ Now hurry back to my father and say to him, ‘This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don’t delay. ¹⁰ You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me—you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. ¹¹ I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.’ ¹² “You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that it is really I who am speaking to you. ¹³ Tell my father about all the honor accorded me in Egypt and about everything you have seen. And bring my father down here quickly.” ¹⁴ Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. ¹⁵ And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.

Read the Epistle Lesson: Romans 11:1-2, 29-32

I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. ² God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don’t you know what Scripture says in the passage about Elijah—how he appealed to God against Israel: ²⁹ for God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable. ³⁰ Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, ³¹ so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now^[a] receive mercy as a result of God’s mercy to you. ³² For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Matthew 15:21-28

²¹ Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²² A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly.”

²³ Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, “Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.”

²⁴ He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.”

²⁵ The woman came and knelt before him. “Lord, help me!” she said.

²⁶ He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.”

²⁷ “Yes it is, Lord,” she said. “Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.”

²⁸ Then Jesus said to her, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed at that moment.

Message

What unites us is far greater than what divides us. Joseph forgives his brothers for selling him into slavery, for God used this terrible act to save Israelites and Egyptians alike from famine. The psalmist celebrates when kindred live together in unity. Paul asks rhetorically if God has rejected the Hebrew people by offering salvation to the Gentiles, and answers no. Jesus initially refuses to help a Canaanite woman’s daughter until she presses her case. Then Jesus joyfully heals the daughter, marveling at the mother’s faith. We are all bound together in the unconditional love of God.

Our gospel lesson for today is about two people with love in their hearts, Jesus and the Canaanite woman. At first glance this seems to be a harsh account in the life of Jesus, but when we look closely at this story, it is really a story about love, the love of a mother for her daughter and the love of Jesus for a worried mother and a sick daughter.

Jesus had left Jewish lands to go into Gentile lands to be alone, to regroup his thoughts, to prepare his disciples for the coming events of the cross. He needed to get away from the demanding crowds, for time alone, to rest, to teach, to pray, and to gain strength. So he went into Gentile lands north of Galilee, because the Jewish people would not follow him there.

But while in this land, a Gentile, a Canaanite woman comes to him begging him to heal her daughter. Jesus' fame must have even spread into lands that he had not even visited. This woman had so much faith in a man that she had never met that she was pleading him to say the words and her sick daughter would be made well. The Canaanite woman is the first woman that Jesus ministered to outside of the nation of Israel. She and the centurion, who asked Jesus to heal his servant, are the first Gentiles that Jesus ministered to. This humble woman's story is significant in that Jesus' ministry to the entire world begins with her!

It's so awesome that this woman is not only a Gentile, but that she is also a Canaanite. For the Canaanites were the arch enemies of Israel. They are the people who were to be driven out of the Promised Land by the Israelites. They fought against God's covenant people. And in the Old Testament the people of Israel often got into trouble worshipping the gods of the Canaanites. Yet, this woman seems to have a pretty good grasp on Who Jesus is. She calls Him "Lord, Son of David." She asks Him for mercy and to heal her daughter. And when Jesus gives her the "politically correct" answer of "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel," she knows that the God of the Universe loves all people. And from her experience, from her faith in the One True God the Gentiles begin turning to Christ in droves!!! It's often thought that faith Christianity didn't spread to the Gentiles until after Pentecost with Peter and Paul. And certainly God used Peter and Paul to do this, but it started with Christ Himself!

Jesus knew he was sent to the Jews first. He knew he would have to first convince them he was the savior of the world before he could work in the Gentile lands. But notice the responds of this woman. The text says: But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." The woman falls at Jesus' knees in an act of worship, calling him lord. This was her brief confession of faith; this was her acknowledging that she knew in her heart that Jesus was the Lord, the Messiah, the chosen one of God.

Then comes the most perplexing statement that Jesus makes when he says; "It is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." This seems to be an insult, for the Jewish people considered these Canaanite people to be like dogs, so Jesus was saying is it fair to take what was supposed to be given to the Jews first and give it to the Gentiles.

I imagine Jesus said this harsh statement with a smile on his face and in a quiet tone, really only to test this woman's faith. Our translation does not include it, but

some translations have the word "pet" before the dogs in our text. Let me read verses 26-8-28 from the Amplified Version:

And He replied, "It is not good (appropriate, fair) to take the ^[a]children's bread and throw it to the ^[b]pet dogs." ²⁷ She said, "Yes, Lord; but even the pet dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their [young] masters' table." ²⁸ Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, your faith [your personal trust and confidence in My power] is great; it will be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed from that moment.

Jesus was trying to say she wasn't like the dogs that roam the streets, but she was like the family dog. He was including her in the family of believers. Remember the woman's response, she was saying again, yes I understand who you are, but even though I am not Jewish, I still believe you are the Christ, the chosen one sent from God to save the world.

And the last verse of the text her daughter was healed instantly. Jesus praised this woman's faith and devotion. Her faith in Jesus, her blind faith, her unwavering faith, her persistent faith. And Jesus praised her devotion, her love for her daughter that gave her the courage to come to Jesus in the first place, to be persistent, to not take no for an answer.

This is a great story about love and faith. A mother's love for her daughter and a mother's faith in a Savior she has only met this one time, but a faith that allowed her to act.

Even though Jesus was subtle in his acknowledgement of her and her faith at the beginning of the conversation, she knew in herself that she was worthy, that she had faith. And that faith drove her on.

I have some questions: If you found an old, crumpled up, dirty twenty dollar bill what would you do with it? Would you drop it into the nearest garbage can? I doubt it very much, because it has the same value as a brand new twenty dollar bill, they both spend the same.

We are like that twenty dollar bill. "Many times in our lives, we are dropped, crumpled, and ground into the dirt by the decisions we make and the circumstances that come our way. We feel as though we are worthless.

"But no matter what has happened or what will happen, you will never lose your value. Dirty or clean, crumpled or finely creased, you are still priceless to those who DO love you. The worth of our lives comes not in what we do or who we know, but by WHO WE ARE. "You are special!"

Who are you? A person of faith? A person who believes in the saving grace of Christ through the cross of Calvary? Do you feel special because of Christ in your life?

Would you have had the faith of that mother to keep after Jesus?

Our Christian faith enables us to face life not because we can see, but with the certainty that we are seen; not that we know all the answers, but that we are known by Christ. Amen

Benediction:

The God of dreams has brought us together. The God of dreams sends us forth to love one another well. The God of love has knit us together in unity. The God of love sends us forth to heal our divisions. The God of hope sends us forth together. The God of peace sends us forth to bring the world home. Amen.