

Home Service for October 4, 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.

Today we observe World Communion Sunday as we worship may we be reminded that we are members of God's worldwide church and today and every day we join our brothers and sisters around the world to send our thanksgivings and praises to our Heavenly Father.

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the seas roar the wonders of the Lord.

Opening Prayer:

Cornerstone of our faith, do not abandon us when we fall away from you. You are the true master of the vineyard; we are here to work in your fields and make disciples throughout the world. Bring us into your kingdom, that we might taste the sweetness of your mercy and share the joy of your grace. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

God, we confess that although we knew better, we have sinned. We have not loved you or our neighbors the way we should. We have not always honored you with our time. We've coveted other people's stuff. And sometimes we have called you out of your name. Lord, forgive us. We apologize for the pain we've caused you. Forgive us of our sins and help us to live in ways that give you joy – in Jesus' name, amen.

Words of Assurance

Brothers and sisters, there is good news today! God is faithful and just and has forgiven each of us for all of our mess. The things you were embarrassed about – God has forgiven you. The thing no one else knows about – God has forgiven it!

You have been given the graceful gift of another chance. Hallelujah! In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. Thank you God!

Read Psalm 19

The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

²Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.

³They have no speech, they use no words;
no sound is heard from them.

⁴Yet their voice^[b] goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.

In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.

⁵It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
like a champion rejoicing to run his course.

⁶It rises at one end of the heavens
and makes its circuit to the other;
nothing is deprived of its warmth.

⁷The law of the LORD is perfect,
refreshing the soul.

The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.

⁸The precepts of the LORD are right,
giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the LORD are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.

⁹The fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring forever.

The decrees of the LORD are firm,
and all of them are righteous.

¹⁰They are more precious than gold,
than much pure gold;

they are sweeter than honey,
than honey from the honeycomb.

¹¹By them your servant is warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.

¹²But who can discern their own errors?
Forgive my hidden faults.

¹³Keep your servant also from willful sins;

may they not rule over me.
Then I will be blameless,
innocent of great transgression.
¹⁴ May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart
be pleasing in your sight,
LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Prayers of the People:

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: Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20

And God spoke all these words:

- ² "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.
- ³ "You shall have no other gods before ^[a] me.
- ⁴ "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.
- ⁷ "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.
- ⁸ "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work,
- ¹² "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.
- ¹³ "You shall not murder.
- ¹⁴ "You shall not commit adultery.
- ¹⁵ "You shall not steal.
- ¹⁶ "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
- ¹⁷ "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."
- ¹⁸ When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance ¹⁹ and

said to Moses, “Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.”

²⁰ Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.”

Read the Epistle Lesson: Philippians 3:4b-14

though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

⁷ But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in ^[a] Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Matthew 21:33-46

“Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. ³⁴ When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.

³⁵ “The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. ³⁶ Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. ³⁷ Last of all, he sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said.

³⁸ “But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him and take his inheritance.’ ³⁹ So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

⁴⁰ “Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?”

⁴¹ “He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,” they replied, “and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.”

⁴² Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

“The stone the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone;

the Lord has done this,

and it is marvelous in our eyes’^[a]?

⁴³ “Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. ⁴⁴ Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.”^[b]

⁴⁵ When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus’ parables, they knew he was talking about them. ⁴⁶ They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.

Message

Philippians is a letter of joy. Paul writes to believers of their joy because of the Lord’s love for them. Paul has put his past behind him. He had not yet obtained heavenly perfection, for he was still a sinner, but God had called Him and God had forgiven his sins. He was trying to put earthly thinking behind him, so it wouldn’t interfere with his relationship with Christ or his service for Christ.

The future holds a certain mystery because it is unknown. Today many people become concerned about the things that might or might not happen in the future. In the near future there is no real certainty or guarantee of anything. Not a single one of us really know what will happen next year, next week, tomorrow or even today. As believers we do know that the Lord God Almighty is in total and complete control of the future. Therefore we also know that our eternal future is safe in the hands of our loving Lord. COLOSSIANS 3:1&2 tells us that: "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things."

All too often our minds are on earthly things. After all, we are earth-bound people. Each of us has lives filled with dealings and associations with other people of this world. The influence of the world around us can distract us from everything heavenly. We get caught up in the attitude of our society that is constantly concerned about what comes next. The world today paints the future with coming disasters or perceived tragedies. The prices, the economy, the government, and the

weather often occupy the bulk of our conversations. When we remember that our eternal future is in heaven. We can put behind us everything earthly easier.

At times the world around us can seem to be a very strange and difficult place in which to live. Earthly thinking mankind has little in common with heavenly-minded believers. The people of the world seldom agree with the children of God. In our lives of faith in an unbelieving world we wage war against everything that opposes God. Things in this earth are not eternal. We put behind us everything earthly in our efforts to concentrate on the joyful knowledge that our future is in heaven.

In Philippians 3, Paul describes our Christian life twice by using a race analogy which is very effective. For like a race, we have a reason to run, we keep our eyes on the prize and we are encouraged by others along the way. Jesus is Paul's reason to run. Jesus has made the apostle His own. Jesus had grasped and taken hold of Paul that day as he headed to Damascus. The Lord had other plans for him. He pulled him from his previous life and ways. He pulled Paul out of his sin and into the Lord's grace. The apostle was made Christ's own through His death and resurrection. He belongs to Jesus. He is the Lord's.

Like the apostle, we too have a reason to run, to live a Christian life. Like Paul, we are made Christ's own. We belong to Him. We are precious, prized, and His people. We were made His own, He put His loving arms around us, and gifted us with His grace and the Spirit. We live for Jesus, and we run for Him. We have a reason to run. We have started the race and are heading to the goal that He has already won for us, eternal life, heaven.

As Paul pursues his goal, he doesn't look back. He didn't look back at his past sins and struggles. He didn't need to because in Christ, he was righteous and right with God. He was forgiven. Looking back on these things only distracted him from the goal, eternal life. He kept his gaze fixed forward. He could only pursue the goal because Christ had won him salvation.

It is the same for us. For when running, when living our Christian lives, don't look back! We don't look back at our sin and shame, for the blood of Jesus covers and pays for all of these things. Through faith in Him, we are declared righteous, or innocent in God's sight of these sins and shame. These sins are not held against us and they don't define us. We move forward in Christ, and in His grace, heading to the destination that He has won and opened up for us. We don't need to worry about our relationship with God. For in Jesus, it has been made all good. We don't have to look back and wonder if it is fine, nor do we have to fear if we are right with God. We continue on in Christ and in His grace, looking forward, not looking back. Looking back doesn't help. Keep your eye on the goal, eternal life.

As the race goes on, the runners are encouraged and strengthened by others as they run. Our God does the same for us. As we live our Christian lives and head toward the goal, the Lord doesn't sit or stand on the sidelines. He doesn't yell encouragements from afar. Rather, He is with us, on the course, walking besides us. He puts His loving and strong hand on our back, and encourages us forward. He strengthens and cheers us with His Word when we are tired, faint, and feel like we can't continue. He gives us the Lord's Supper to do the same. The Lord strengthens us through the body and blood that forgives us of our sins. He will get us home and help us make it to the finish line. He encourages and strengthens us on the way.

Our Christian life is a lot like a race. We have a reason to run. We need to keep our eyes on the prize. We are encouraged as we go. So, what are we waiting for, we have a race to run! IN JESUS' NAME, AMEN.

Benediction:

Go with the blessings of the one who understands our trials and tribulations. God with the blessings of the cornerstone of our faith. Amen.