

Home Service for 10/18/20

Welcome and Announcements

Although we are worshipping in our church building again, some have health reasons that makes it impossible to do so. Others are worried about those who need them with health issues. We want everyone to be comfortable and to be able to worship so the home services will continue so all may be able to worship Our Heavenly God where ever they are. You might notice a few changes. You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship, just like we are doing in the church building.

Call to worship:

We are loved by God. The ruler of heaven and earth knows us by name. God hears and answers our cries for help. God shows compassion and kindness to us. May our lives praise and magnify our great and awesome God. We have come to worship the on whose image is imprinted within us.

Opening Prayer:

Majestic God, help us to feel and see your presence in our lives. Enable us to listen clearly to your words of hope and comfort. Encourage us to go into your world serving others and bringing your message of mercy and healing. In Jesus' name, we pray. AMEN.

Prayer of Confession:

Patient God, we are so easily distracted from what you would have us be and what you would have us do. We allow ourselves to be claimed by the angry and hurting world as though we bore a stamp reflecting the hostility. You remind us that, from the beginning, your love has been available to us. Forgive us when we so easily turn toward ignorance and greed as ways of living in the world. Heal our wounded souls. Challenge us to be your people, not owned by false promises of instant wealth and status, but strengthened and empowered to be those who bring hope through our words and actions. In Jesus' name, we pray. AMEN.

Words of Assurance

In our words, smiles, compassionate living we bear the image of our God. In our willingness to serve the voiceless and alienated, the lost and alone, God's presence abide with us. Rejoice! You are called "Beloved of God" and given God's own stamp in your lives. AMEN.

Read Psalm 99

The LORD reigns,

let the nations tremble;

he sits enthroned between the cherubim,

let the earth shake.

²Great is the LORD in Zion;

he is exalted over all the nations.

³Let them praise your great and awesome name—

he is holy.

⁴The King is mighty, he loves justice—

you have established equity;

in Jacob you have done

what is just and right.

⁵Exalt the LORD our God

and worship at his footstool;

he is holy.

⁶Moses and Aaron were among his priests,

Samuel was among those who called on his name;

they called on the LORD

and he answered them.

⁷He spoke to them from the pillar of cloud;

they kept his statutes and the decrees he gave them.

⁸LORD our God,

you answered them;

you were to Israel a forgiving God,

though you punished their misdeeds. ^[a]

⁹Exalt the LORD our God

and worship at his holy mountain,

for the LORD our God is holy.

Prayers of the People:

Lord, we enter these “gates” with thanksgiving and praise. Many of us have come with burdens, seeking your healing; others have come with joys, celebrating the goodness and blessings that abound. Each one is welcome here. We know that there is much work to be done in this world. Injustice, greed, isolation, alienation all exist when we have forgotten to be your people of peace. As in our minds we speak the names of people who are dear to us, seeking prayers for their needs, let us also remember to be faithfully working for you in all that we do. Help us give to you our complete faithfulness. Teach us to be good citizens of your kingdom here on earth. Be with us as we go from this place. 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: Exodus 33:12-23

Moses said to the LORD, “You have been telling me, ‘Lead these people,’ but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, ‘I know you by name and you have found favor with me.’¹³ If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people.”

¹⁴ The LORD replied, “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”

¹⁵ Then Moses said to him, “If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. ¹⁶ How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?”

¹⁷ And the LORD said to Moses, “I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name.”

¹⁸ Then Moses said, “Now show me your glory.”

¹⁹ And the LORD said, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have

compassion. ²⁰ But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.”

²¹ Then the LORD said, “There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. ²² When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. ²³ Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.”

Read the Epistle Lesson: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:
Grace and peace to you.

² We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. ³ We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴ For we know, brothers and sisters^[b] loved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵ because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. ⁶ You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. ⁷ And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. ⁸ The Lord’s message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, ⁹ for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, ¹⁰ and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Matthew 22:15-22

Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. ¹⁶ They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. “Teacher,” they said, “we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren’t swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. ¹⁷ Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax^[a] to Caesar or not?”

¹⁸ But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, “You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? ¹⁹ Show me the coin used for paying the tax.” They brought him a denarius, ²⁰ and he asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?” ²¹ “Caesar’s,” they replied.

Then he said to them, "So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."

²² When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.

Message

"Always" is one of God's strong words of encouragement. A couple of weeks ago God reminded us to "rejoice always". Only with the strength God provides is, can, or will this be possible. Thus today the words of our text encourage us to "always thank God". Growing in our Christian faith we begin to understand the depth of the meaning of God's word. By hearing God's word we grow in our Christian faith. For this reason no matter where we are physically we try to gather each week around the foot of our Savior's cross.

Paul is thankful that the Thessalonians have kept their faith in Jesus Christ. He says, "For we know, brethren beloved by God, that He has chosen you; for our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction."

He knows the message of Christ has come to them and Paul knows how difficult it is for them to remain in Christ, so he prays for them. He says, "We give thanks to God always for you all, constantly mentioning you in our prayers." As he prays for these people, he recalls, he remembers how they have worked to remain faithful to Christ. He says: "remembering before our God and Father your work of faith, and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."

Let us focus on those phrases as we think about our faith, as we remember each other in prayer, and as we uphold each other in faith. I want you to be clear though, we are not speaking of salvation, for we are speaking about remaining faithful to the salvation message God brought to us through the Spirit as He accomplished it through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Faith, is at the same time, our work and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Paul speaks about a work of faith among the Thessalonians. Their work of faith can be described as laboring to keep their relationship alive with Christ. As we stay in our relationship with Christ, we become new people, a new creation. We must keep our relationship with God alive and fresh. God will never leave us, but we can leave him. He has given us the choice.

Peter speaks about us staying in our status with God," But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." He says the genuineness of our faith is more precious than gold because without seeing we believe with joy.

Our works of faith are grounded and rooted in the word and the sacraments. It is in these and the faith of our fellow Christian that we remain those children of light, as Paul says in Ephesians who walk as the light of the world.

We have been greatly blessed and privileged to gather together in God's house of worship. But you and I know that there is more to faith than a nice place of worship. The holy Christian church is made up of much more than brick and mortar the church is the faithful believers who gather to worship God. We should always thank God for every faithful believer who has Jesus Christ as their cornerstone.

First and foremost in our worship we have ample opportunity to listen to God's powerful word. Our service is centered on that word of God. The hymns are scriptural. Each week the scripture lessons bring us God's truth. Faith comes by hearing. We gather together to hear and be encouraged in our Christian faith. We then also encourage one another.

Paul blessed these believers with God's grace and peace. We have heard these precious, divine words hundreds and possibly thousands of times. They should have great meaning for us in our lives in this unsettling world of ours. On this side of heaven there is no peace as the world understands that word. On this side of heaven only God gives us His peace. We have peace through our Savior, Jesus Christ. Grace is God's undeserved love for us. God's peace is forgiveness. Our souls are at peace with God!

"We always thank God" for every faithful believer. By faith believers are able to mutually encourage others. They are able to find hope together. Paul also speaks about their being a people of hope. He is thankful for the steadfastness of hope the Thessalonians have in Christ. A hope I think which sees the circumstances of life as not in a negative way, but positive in Christ. I think this means you and I can be triumphant in life through Christ. We can be triumphant because of the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit and the promise of the resurrection.

We are a people of hope. A people of faith, who can see the endless possibilities in life. We see, not dead ends, but ways through the dark tunnels of life. We see and

we experience a hope of overcoming our brokenness not by ourselves, but only through Christ. There are times in our lives that we face heartache, sorrow, temptations or other earthly difficulties. We may not always feel the urge to be thankful at such times. God's word is clear: "always thank God". By the power of the word of God we are able to always thank God.

Our loving Lord and gracious God has promised that wherever two or three gather together in His name there He is with them. Always thank God for his powerful word as seen even among the smallest gatherings.

On our own or by our own strength it is impossible to always thank God. Only by God's grace are we able to thank God. It is God's powerful word that brings us into God's kingdom. Be thankful for God's powerful word. God' word has made all the difference in our lives and in the world—forever. Amen.

Benediction:

Beloved of the Lord, go forth in peace to joyfully serve God. Share your lives and your blessings with others in need. Go in peace. AMEN.