

Home Service for 11/8/20

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:

It is time to wake up, for God is about to surprise us. It is time to prepare, for God's love is about to change the world. It is time to get ready, for God needs us to proclaim the good news. It is time to start planning, for God's invitation will fill our church. It is time to worship, for God is here now!

Opening Prayer:

Lord of Life, we come this day to follow the ways you set before us. Show us the signs of your coming kingdom, that we may be worthy of our invitation. May we have the wisdom to teach our children your ways and pass on a better world to the generations to come. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Lord, forgive us when we so easily turn our backs on you; when we choose not to help in times of need; when we utter words of anger and bitterness as ways to relate to one another. Heal our hearts and our wounded spirits. Lift us from the depths of our anguish into the light of your love that we may serve you faithfully. When the darkness becomes oppressive and we cling to our fears, O Lord, forgive us. Open our hearts and release us from all those things which block us from your love, for we ask these things in Jesus' name. AMEN.

Words of Assurance

God's brilliant love bursts through the oppressive darkness to heal our spirits and to prepare us to become effective disciples! Rejoice! God's love is poured out for you!

Read Psalm 78:1-7

My people, hear my teaching;

listen to the words of my mouth.

²I will open my mouth with a parable;

I will utter hidden things, things from of old—

³things we have heard and known,
things our ancestors have told us.

⁴We will not hide them from their descendants;

we will tell the next generation
the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD,
his power, and the wonders he has done.

⁵He decreed statutes for Jacob
and established the law in Israel,
which he commanded our ancestors
to teach their children,

⁶so the next generation would know them,
even the children yet to be born,
and they in turn would tell their children.

⁷Then they would put their trust in God
and would not forget his deeds
but would keep his commands.

Prayers of the People:

O Lord, we wait for you to come again into our midst.

Sometimes we wait patiently, sometimes not.

Always we are aware of how much the world needs you.

We pray today for those in our community
who need your healing and comfort.

We pray for persons in leadership across our country,
that together we might make wise decisions.

We pray for brothers and sisters around the world,
whose lives are torn apart by war.

We pray for the saints who have witnessed to your love.

We pray, knowing that you are with us now,
and that you will strengthen us to keep awake, to keep the faith,
to keep working for the time

when Christ will come again to surprise us anew
with love and justice on earth. 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: Joshua 24:1-3, 14-25

Then Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He summoned the elders, leaders, judges and officials of Israel, and they presented themselves before God.

² Joshua said to all the people, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Long ago your ancestors, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the Euphrates River and worshiped other gods. ³ But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the Euphrates and led him throughout Canaan and gave him many descendants. I gave him Isaac,

¹⁴ "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. ¹⁵ But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

¹⁶ Then the people answered, "Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods! ¹⁷ It was the LORD our God himself who brought us and our parents up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we traveled. ¹⁸ And the LORD drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the LORD, because he is our God."

¹⁹ Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the LORD. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. ²⁰ If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you."

²¹ But the people said to Joshua, "No! We will serve the LORD."

²² Then Joshua said, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the LORD."

"Yes, we are witnesses," they replied.

²³ “Now then,” said Joshua, “throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel.”

²⁴ And the people said to Joshua, “We will serve the LORD our God and obey him.”

²⁵ On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he reaffirmed for them decrees and laws.

Read the Epistle Lesson: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. ¹⁴ For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. ¹⁵ According to the Lord’s word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Matthew 25:1-13

“At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish and five were wise. ³ The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. ⁴ The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. ⁵ The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

⁶ “At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’

⁷ “Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’

⁹ “‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’

¹⁰ “But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

¹¹ “Later the others also came. ‘Lord, Lord,’ they said, ‘open the door for us!’

¹² “But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I don’t know you.’

¹³ “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

Message

This past week I saw the motto: Championships are won at practice. I found myself agreeing with it as I thought back to my days as a coach. When you think about it you know it is true. If it were not for hard work at many practices when no one is watching, a team would never get to the championship game. It is all that hard work, that make the difference between a champion and an also ran. It also takes hard work to be a Christian.

This is All Saint's Sunday, the day we remember those who have gone before us in faith. Because of their faith, sharing their faith, and all their hard work in faith, love and service to God we are able to worship here today, together. They are our examples of Champions of Faith. They have lived faithful lives, knew the hope that came with faith in God. Their relationship with Jesus held them throughout life and carried them through the last stages of life. These people trusted the promises that once death had done its worst, God would do his best. Eternal life, that they experienced throughout their life as faithful followers of Jesus has come into its fullest expression.

As we look and remember those saints, we can find hope for the future. At the same time we need to realize that sometimes other people are looking to us for hope, but we cannot give them our hope, all we can do is speak of the hope that we have, the hope that is shared by all the faithful. Hope that has not come easily or quickly. Hope that has ebbed and flowed, hope that has been dashed only to rise again. Our hope that is nourished in worship, at the Lord's Table, among God's faithful people who lift us up when our hope is wanting.

Worship is a rehearsal of our death. We hear the words we need to hear, we sing the words that give us hope in tough times. Someone once said we should go to the Lord's Supper as though we were going to our death so that one day we can go to our death as though we are going to the Lord's Supper. Those are foundations that will not let us down.

When we worship we are with other people who care for us. We practice confession and forgiveness most every week. If we can speak words of confession at worship and hear that we are forgiven, we can more easily speak those words in our lives and share the joy of knowing we are forgiven. In worship we come to understand that the world does not rest completely upon our shoulders, that God is greater anything that can confront us in life.

Immediately before this morning's Gospel, Jesus was talking about His Second Coming. "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, not the Son, but only the Father...Who then is the faithful and wise servant..." Jesus asks, and then continues that it will be good for that person whose master finds him or her doing the Lord's work when he returns. He was talking about when He returns.

The parable of the Ten Virgins was meant to help explain what Jesus is talking about. The virgins represent us who call ourselves Christians and await the bridegroom who is Jesus.

The bridegroom's delay alludes to the fact that Jesus has not returned as soon as many folks had hoped. We never know when that day will come, we just know some day it will. The marriage feast symbolizes the life in the age to come, and the closed door stands for the last judgment.

There is uncertainty that surrounds the meaning of the key element in the story: the extra oil that the wise virgins have and the foolish virgins do not have. Some scholars claim that the oil represents faith in the Triune God. Others say the oil that causes the lamps of the wise virgins to continue burning brightly is enduring love for God. While others say it is our Hope in Jesus Christ our Savior. Personally I feel the oil represents all three,

This parable refers to you and to me; ordinary followers of Jesus who must persevere in our doing and being...in our faith, hope and love...until Jesus comes, no matter how long the delay may be!!!

And when faith, hope and love are real, we know that they lead to action!!!

Life is full of choices. The result of choices made today may not be obvious for years down the road, and we are often unsure of which choices are truly significant and which are not. Jesus says we are "to keep awake, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour." All we can do is make choices that are in line with God's will. Amos 5:24 says, "let justice roll down like water, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." We make choices to be found with people whose values are life giving. We attend worship that may not always be exciting, sometimes seeming repetitive, because we need to hear and repeat the words that establish our foundation on God.

We remind ourselves of the words in the "Service of Word and Prayer" to "keep the words of the Lord in your hear; teach them to your children. Talk about them

when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.” We are not only building our own foundations, we are building the foundations of the children around us, be it our children or grand children or even great grandchildren. It can even be any child we have contact with. All children in our lives even if they are there for only a short period of time. Choices made that may not test our foundations for years to come.

We make daily choices that may not be glamorous, but are foundational to our faith. Only in difficult times are the foundations tested. And so we live our lives, knowing that there are so many choices to be made every day. We ask God for the strength to discern good choices. We seek to remain close to God because God is the only foundation that will stand the tests of life and death. God is the foundation that will not fail. And for that we are thankful. Praise God! Amen!

Benediction:

*God has called and chosen you to be witnesses to hope and peace in God's world.
Go in peace and this same healing, reconciling love and peace will be with you.
Go and serve the Lord your God in all that you do. AMEN.*