

## Home Service for February 7, 2021

### Welcome and Announcements

You might notice a few changes. You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship.

*The Holy One renews our bodies with strength, and fills our longing hearts with peace. Our mighty God opens our hands to share love with the world. May our ears be full of Christ's story, and may our lips proclaim God's praises and amazing deeds.*

### Call to Worship:

Praise the Lord! How good it is for us to gather and sing praises to our God. Great is our Lord, who understands us, lifts us up, and strengthens us. Sing with joy and thanksgiving to the Lord, who fills our lives with steadfast love. Praise the Lord!

### Opening Prayer:

O God, you have created us as your people and called us to partner with you in spreading the good news of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth so that all your people can be in relationship with you and with each other. May the Holy Spirit fill us with passion and enthusiasm for the gospel so that we can serve and love with all that we are and with all that we have. We pray in the name of Jesus, our example and savior. Amen.

### Prayer of Confession:

O God, you have created us in your image and called us to partner with you to spread the good news to all your people. Too often, we have defined "all your people" to be those who are like us in the way we look, speak, and live. We have shied away from going across boundaries to those who are different and we have withheld your love. We have judged those who are different according to our standards, not knowing their circumstances. Forgive us, O God. Fill our hearts with your love and compassion for others. Give us courage to step out of our comfort zones and reach out with the love of Jesus Christ so that we can partner with you in enlarging your Kingdom here on earth. We pray in Jesus' name, our example and savior. Amen.

## Words of Assurance

*Brothers and sisters, hear these words: The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear God, and place their hope in God's steadfast love. When we turn to God and place our hope in the Lord, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God!*

Read Psalm 147:1-11, 20c:

Praise the LORD.<sup>[a]</sup>

How good it is to sing praises to our God,  
how pleasant and fitting to praise him!

<sup>2</sup>The LORD builds up Jerusalem;  
he gathers the exiles of Israel.

<sup>3</sup>He heals the brokenhearted  
and binds up their wounds.

<sup>4</sup>He determines the number of the stars  
and calls them each by name.

<sup>5</sup>Great is our Lord and mighty in power;  
his understanding has no limit.

<sup>6</sup>The LORD sustains the humble  
but casts the wicked to the ground.

<sup>7</sup>Sing to the LORD with grateful praise;  
make music to our God on the harp.

<sup>8</sup>He covers the sky with clouds;  
he supplies the earth with rain  
and makes grass grow on the hills.

<sup>9</sup>He provides food for the cattle  
and for the young ravens when they call.

<sup>10</sup>His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse,  
nor his delight in the legs of the warrior;

<sup>11</sup>the LORD delights in those who fear him,  
who put their hope in his unfailing love.

He has done this for no other nation;  
they do not know his laws.<sup>[a]</sup>

Praise the LORD.

## Prayers of the People:

Lord Jesus Christ, when you walked on dusty roads or sat by glistening waters, you met people where they were. When you bent down low to touch the leper, or raised your eyes to touch Zacchaeus' heart, heaven and earth were met. And so our prayer today is that our world will know your healing touch and your forgiving heart. That those who have been hurt by insincere actions and damning words will hear your healing voice. That those whose lives are filled with dark thoughts, or unimaginable fears, will know your peace. Walk beside those who are close to giving up hope and where life seems to have no point; where people struggle to make ends meet and fear the bailiffs' knock on the door. May children living in sewers feel the touch of a caring hand and an end to injustice and fear. And may all who weep and mourn, or feel abandoned and unloved turn towards your voice, move towards your arms and hear the whisper of your presence in the long hours of night. Inspire us and encourage us to bend down low; to embrace those for whom society has no time or patience. Raise our eyes upwards to see the struggling patient and the exhausted care giver. And where young and old stumble and fall, may we be there to offer support, that all will know your love that transcends all others. Through Jesus Christ our Lord and 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: Isaiah 40:21-31

Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

Has it not been told you from the beginning?

Have you not understood since the earth was founded?

<sup>22</sup> He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth,  
and its people are like grasshoppers.

He stretches out the heavens like a canopy,  
and spreads them out like a tent to live in.

<sup>23</sup> He brings princes to naught  
and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.

<sup>24</sup> No sooner are they planted,  
no sooner are they sown,  
no sooner do they take root in the ground,  
than he blows on them and they wither,  
and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.

<sup>25</sup> “To whom will you compare me?  
Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One.

<sup>26</sup> Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens:  
Who created all these?

He who brings out the starry host one by one  
and calls forth each of them by name.  
Because of his great power and mighty strength,  
not one of them is missing.

<sup>27</sup> Why do you complain, Jacob?

Why do you say, Israel,  
“My way is hidden from the LORD;  
my cause is disregarded by my God”?

<sup>28</sup> Do you not know?

Have you not heard?  
The LORD is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
He will not grow tired or weary,  
and his understanding no one can fathom.

<sup>29</sup> He gives strength to the weary  
and increases the power of the weak.

<sup>30</sup> Even youths grow tired and weary,  
and young men stumble and fall;

<sup>31</sup> but those who hope in the LORD  
will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles;  
they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint.

Read the Epistle Lesson: 1 Corinthians 9:16-23

<sup>16</sup> For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! <sup>17</sup> If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. <sup>18</sup> What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make full use of my rights as a preacher of the gospel.

<sup>19</sup> Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. <sup>20</sup> To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. <sup>21</sup> To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. <sup>22</sup> To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. <sup>23</sup> I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Mark 1:29-39

<sup>29</sup> As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. <sup>30</sup> Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. <sup>31</sup> So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

<sup>32</sup> That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. <sup>33</sup> The whole town gathered at the door, <sup>34</sup> and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

<sup>35</sup> Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. <sup>36</sup> Simon and his companions went to look for him, <sup>37</sup> and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"

<sup>38</sup> Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." <sup>39</sup> So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

## Message

For the last few weeks, we have been reading the story of Jesus' first day of public ministry. All that we have talked about in the last few weeks happened in one day, and the first day, no less! Jesus began very early as he walked along the shore of the Sea of Galilee proclaiming the nearness of the kingdom of God and calling disciples to follow him and "fish for people." With his newfound companions in tow, Jesus then headed inland a little ways to the synagogue in Capernaum for Sabbath worship. There he taught with an authority all his own and then cast out a demon. That brings us to today's Gospel.

There are two events in today's Gospel lesson which I feel we should take a look at. The first is Jesus being taken to Simon and Andrew's home to find Simon's mother-in-law as she lay sick with a fever. The second is Jesus going to a "lonely place" to pray. Let us look at the first.

The disciples must have been impressed by what they had already seen and heard from Jesus, but also curious for they did not know how to take Jesus, yet. They had not been with Jesus long, so they must have been surprised and astonished at his teaching and at the healing He performed. They went to Simon's house to get something to eat. Notice there was nothing about Simon's mother-in-law being sick that led them to Simon's house.

Notice the text said: "Now Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever, and immediately they told him of her. And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her; and she served them." They did not demand anything of Jesus, but only made Him aware of the problem. What faith!! They wanted Jesus to be in a relationship with this woman and somehow they knew, they felt, He would take it from there. The disciples were able to let Jesus decide what He was going to do. This was remarkable faith on their part. They allowed Jesus to take the action himself.

Jesus took the initiative and brought His grace into her life. Jesus acted on his own accord. Jesus acted and the woman responded. After the fever left her, she got up and served Jesus. The important lesson for us in this story is to see that being in a relationship with Jesus is important, and in that relationship we need to let Jesus bring His act of grace into our lives as He sees fit. Because He is a God of love, He will do for us out of His loving heart. We must trust as the disciples did, trust Jesus with a faith and a conviction which will allow Him to act for us.

In our relationship with Jesus, we need to allow Him to handle our problems in His own way. Like the disciples, we must be in a relationship with Christ, then have the faith, the conviction, the assurance, that He can handle the troubled waters of our life.

The second significant event in this passage says: "And in the morning, a great while before day, He, Jesus, arose and went out to a lonely place, and there He prayed."

Most of the time when we read this passage and other passages such as Mark 7:24, Mark 6:31, where it says Jesus went to a lonely place to pray, we think of a quiet, peaceful time. A time to collect thoughts and recharge batteries.

In the midst of our busy lives and our ministry in service to Christ, it is not only necessary, but imperative that we too remain connected with God through prayer. Busy-ness is a problem in today's world when it comes to our relationship with God in Christ Jesus, and no one is immune from it, not even people working in the church, myself included. It's become the default response when you ask anyone how they're doing: 'Busy!' 'So busy.' 'Crazy busy.' It is, pretty obviously, a boast disguised as a complaint. Busyness may serve as a kind of hedge against emptiness; obviously your life cannot possibly be silly or trivial or meaningless if you are so busy, completely booked, in demand every hour of the day. We're busy because of our own ambition or drive or anxiety, because we're addicted to busyness and dread what we might have to face in its absence." Being busy may make us feel important, or it might hide feelings of emptiness or low self-worth, but it does nothing to enhance our relationship with God, even when we are busy in the Lord's work.

Look at what Jesus did the very first thing on his second day of ministry. Mark tells us that very early, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, went to a deserted place, and prayed. Busyness is a simple fact of life today that we must learn to cope with. And one of the best ways to deal with the chaos of our lives and stay focused on God in the midst of all the busyness? Prayer.

Even though Christ is one with God, he still had to be intentional about staying connected with God in order to maintain that power of God flowing through him. Jesus knew that the best way to do that was to talk to God, to get away from all the distractions and all the demands, to kneel in solitude, and to draw from God's strength in prayer. What was true for Jesus is true for us too. In Jesus Christ, we are promised God's presence and even God's power. But this is contingent upon

our staying connected with God. Even in the midst of our extremely busy lives, if we do not take intentional time to step away from the distractions and enter God's presence in prayer, then our relationship with God will suffer, as will our ability to faithfully serve God in the world. Just like God made each of us different and as individual there are many ways to pray. You must remember how extremely important a practice of prayer is, even though we know how very difficult it can be. Prayer is considered a spiritual "discipline" for a very good reason, and we must be disciplined in order to sustain this practice and remain connected with God. So find a way to pray that works for you!

When we stay connected with God in prayer, God's power flows out into this world in amazing ways. It pulls us into a deeper relationship with God in Christ Jesus, exposing us more and more God's abundant life, grace, mercy, and love. Then, it energizes us to do the work of God in the world, and to impact lives in much the same way Jesus did. We lose so much if we are not constantly connecting with God in prayer, and others suffer greatly too.

Jesus was a busy man, but he was able to sustain his work because he took time to soak in God's presence through prayer.

I urge you to do the same. It's not going to change the busy-ness of our lives, but it will change us, and it will change others too. And isn't that what God's kingdom is all about? Amen!

**Benediction:**

*We are being sent into a world in need of healing. We have been given all that we need to be God's messengers of peace. Go now into the world, rejoicing in God's presence with you. Bring the news of peace and hope to all you meet. AMEN.*