

Home Service for January 31, 2021

Welcome and Announcements

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

Call to Worship:

By this I have known the presence of the Lord: in the rising of the sun, in the smile of another's face, in the touch of a hand or the sound of a laugh, in the scent of a flower holding the promise of spring. By this I have known the power of the Lord: in the healing of hurts, in the forgiveness of sin, in the giving of gifts beyond all expectation, in the shower of love that comes from God's Son. Let us give thanks to the Lord with all of our heart! Let us worship our God, whose presence and power endures forever!

Opening Prayer:

Almighty and most merciful God, we give thanks that you know us and love us. Help us, through the power of your Holy Spirit, grow deeper, wider, and fuller in our knowledge and understanding of your ways. Help us, through the bestowal of your divine Wisdom, bring others closer to you and to your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

You, God, are known for your wonderful deeds— your mercy, forgiveness, and love. You have shown us the power of your works time and time again. And yet, we are slow to comprehend; we refuse to acknowledge your gifts; we act self-sufficient, as if we provide ourselves everything we need, when we know in our hearts that you are the author of life. Forgive us, we pray. As we confess our sins, in thought, word or deed, may your redemptive presence flood our lives that we may praise your name forever more. Amen.

Words of Assurance

*God offers redemption to people of every generation,
making new life possible for everyone.
Repent, believe in the gospel, and be healed!*

Read Psalm 111

Praise the LORD.^[b]

I will extol the LORD with all my heart
in the council of the upright and in the assembly.

²Great are the works of the LORD;
they are pondered by all who delight in them.

³Glorious and majestic are his deeds,
and his righteousness endures forever.

⁴He has caused his wonders to be remembered;
the LORD is gracious and compassionate.

⁵He provides food for those who fear him;
he remembers his covenant forever.

⁶He has shown his people the power of his works,
giving them the lands of other nations.

⁷The works of his hands are faithful and just;
all his precepts are trustworthy.

⁸They are established for ever and ever,
enacted in faithfulness and uprightness.

⁹He provided redemption for his people;
he ordained his covenant forever—
holy and awesome is his name.

¹⁰The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;
all who follow his precepts have good understanding.
To him belongs eternal praise.

Prayers of the People:

What have we done, Lord? We want to praise you, so we splash your words on screens on a wall, with brightly colored and powerful images. We shout your praises, with hands held on high. We teach and preach your word. But we don't listen carefully for you. We are so busy trying to shout above the noise of the day, that we don't take time to really listen and know you. The voices of the prophets spoke to people long ago who were too busy and anxious to hear. Their words streamed in the winds of time and have come to us. We need to pay attention to your message offered through them. You are our God, the God of all creation, the

God of power and love, whose mercy is offered to us. In Jesus' time, he proclaimed the good news through words and actions, reaching out to those who were troubled, alienated, cast aside. He offered healing and hope to those others turned away. Help us to learn that you alone can heal us and fix those areas in our lives that are wounded and twisted. Help us to understand that you alone can offer to us a new way of life through Jesus Christ. Remind us again that as we have spoken the names of people and situations that concern us, praying for your healing touch, that the same touch is offered to us in Jesus' name. Lord, we need to let go of our control issues and place our trust wholly in you. Now and forever. 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: Deuteronomy 18:15-20

¹⁵ The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him. ¹⁶ For this is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, "Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die."

¹⁷ The LORD said to me: "What they say is good. ¹⁸ I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him. ¹⁹ I myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name. ²⁰ But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, is to be put to death."

Read the Epistle Lesson: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that "We all possess knowledge." But knowledge puffs up while love builds up. ² Those who think they

know something do not yet know as they ought to know. ³ But whoever loves God is known by God. ^[a]

⁴ So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that “An idol is nothing at all in the world” and that “There is no God but one.” ⁵ For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”), ⁶ yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

⁷ But not everyone possesses this knowledge. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. ⁸ But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do.

⁹ Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak. ¹⁰ For if someone with a weak conscience sees you, with all your knowledge, eating in an idol’s temple, won’t that person be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols? ¹¹ So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. ¹² When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. ¹³ Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause them to fall.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Mark 1:21-28

They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. ²² The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. ²³ Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, ²⁴ “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”

²⁵ “Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” ²⁶ The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

²⁷ The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him.” ²⁸ News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

Message

Our interactions with one another and with God matter. This is the theme that flows through each of today's readings. The people are afraid to hear God directly, so God will send them a prophet to act as their go between. Paul warns the Corinthians that our actions and habits, even when innocent and without fault, can become faults if they cause confusion that leads others to harm. In Mark's Gospel, even an evil spirit can recognize Jesus and proclaim who Jesus is. But as He casts the demon out of the victim's life, Jesus brings the divine presence front and center to a crowd that is now both shaken and confused. Our interactions matter; sometimes bringing help and hope, other times not so much. Often, we will not know their effects until a long time after; but in the "now", we can simply interact to the best of our ability, with Christ's healing spirit and God's loving presence at the center of each interaction.

Someone unknown once said something very profound about Jesus, when they said: "I am far within the mark when I say that all armies that ever marched, and all the navies that were ever built, and all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of mankind on this earth as powerfully as that One Solitary Life". This statement tells us about the ageless authority of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Jesus Christ is Lord of all! Others may have authority and power. Only Jesus has the power to save people from their wages of their sin which is death (Romans 6:23). The authority of others is limited by time and boundaries as their authority will one day come to an end. But, the authority of Jesus never ends!

Jesus challenges the status quo that tries to hinder God's grace. Jesus did not speak and conclude His statements as did the true prophets of God by saying, "Thus saith the Lord". The prophets did so because their authority and message was given to them by God. Jesus spoke with authority because HE IS LORD! Mark 1:22 states: "The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law." Jesus obviously spoke with authority that the scribes or teachers of the law often seemed to lack in their teaching. They obviously had "positional authority" that seemed to lack in it's ability to satisfy spiritual hunger. Jesus seemed to be challenging the status quo of whatever hinders God's saving grace in both individuals and institutions like the synagogue in today's Gospel.

Jesus challenges his listeners to believe and receive God's grace. Luke tells us that Jesus came to heal brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, give

recovery of sight to the blind and to set at liberty those that are bruised, while Romans tell us that faith comes by hearing. That is why Jesus taught not only in the synagogue, but also everywhere He went. Jesus was effective in reaching those who believed because His message was empowered by God, His Father. He was anointed by God's Spirit to preach the gospel, and God's Spirit was calling to repentance those that Jesus was preaching to wherever He went. John 3:16 reminds us that Jesus left all the glory of heaven to come and live among us as one of us and as God's only begotten Son. Jesus was and is God in human flesh. It is through our belief in His message that we have been given the chance to become God's adopted sons and daughters. Jesus came to us in the way that He did so that we might have the chance to receive His righteousness as He exchanged it for our sinfulness that He took upon Himself as the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world that He took to cross. Only God's only begotten Son Jesus Christ has this kind of power and authority! This is how and why Jesus always challenges his listeners to believe and receive God's gift of grace!

Jesus challenged and called out the unclean spirit of the man who entered the synagogue. The man with an unclean spirit was a slave to the unclean spirit that possessed him. The fact that this evil spirit used this man's own mouth to speak his thoughts indicates that the man was under the control of the evil spirit that possessed him. Jesus had authority over this evil spirit, rebuked him to silence and ordered him to come out of the man. Nobody had ever seen such authority and power that even evil spirits had to obey. And for that reason Jesus got a lot of publicity and notoriety.

Unless we believe in Jesus and His saving grace and the gift of salvation, then all we have the knowledge of His name. Having only the knowledge of Jesus' name will not save us, for we need a personal relationship with Him. For when we have a relationship with Jesus, He empowers us to serve Him in His name. Jesus makes us strong in spite of whatever our weaknesses are because we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us, without Jesus we would be helpless and hopeless. The reason that Christians have hope and power is because Jesus Christ is the source of their hope and their power. Through Jesus' authority and power and our faith in that power and Jesus' authority we have the strength that He gives to us. When we as Christians pray we almost always end our prayers saying, "... in Jesus' name. Amen." We do that because we know that Jesus is the name of our Savior who saves us from the power of sin. We also do that because we know that His strength is made perfect in our weakness. God's grace through Jesus Christ is all that we need. For His strength is made perfect in our weaknesses because of His authority and the authority that He empowers us with to accomplish all that we

accomplish for His glory and the forwarding of God's kingdom here on earth. In Jesus's name, Amen.

Benediction:

Jesus comes to us, offering healing and hope, speaking and acting with authority. Listen to him. Go into this world, confident in God's love and healing power. Go in peace and may God's love and peace always be with you. AMEN.