

## Home Service for March 21, 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:

Have mercy on your people, O God. Wash us. Cleanse us. Make us more perfect in your love. Open the skies and pour down your grace upon your people. Open our hearts to hear your voice. Let the thunder of your presence awaken us! Have mercy on your people, O God. Restore within us the joy of your salvation. Draw us nearer to Jesus, our Christ!

### Opening Prayer:

God of love and mercy, open our hearts to your presence as we worship you this day. Whether our prayers are filled with celebration or with loud cries and tears, remind us that you are the source of our eternal salvation. Give us the strength to respond faithfully to your transforming love, that the joy of your salvation might shine in and through us all. Wipe away our wrongdoing, clean our hearts, and make us more perfect. For it is in your perfect love that we are drawn more fully into your image. In the name of the glorified Christ, we pray. Amen.

### Prayer of Confession:

God of steadfast love and mercy, we have shielded our eyes from the evil and injustice in the world. We have turned away from your forgiveness and your compassion, and from your wisdom and your guidance. We have allowed our voices to be silent. Cleanse us. Purify us. Remind us that we still have much to learn, and that you continue to teach us. Fill us with your Holy Spirit, that our faith in you might be renewed. In humble confidence, we pray. Amen.

### Words of Assurance

*In the grace of God, through the love of Jesus Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are saved from brokenness and sin and are restored to the joy of God's salvation.*

Read Psalm 51:1-12

Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your unfailing love;  
according to your great compassion  
blot out my transgressions.  
<sup>2</sup>Wash away all my iniquity  
and cleanse me from my sin.  
<sup>3</sup>For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is always before me.  
<sup>4</sup>Against you, you only, have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight;  
so you are right in your verdict  
and justified when you judge.  
<sup>5</sup>Surely I was sinful at birth,  
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.  
<sup>6</sup>Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;  
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.  
<sup>7</sup>Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;  
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.  
<sup>8</sup>Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.  
<sup>9</sup>Hide your face from my sins  
and blot out all my iniquity.  
<sup>10</sup>Create in me a pure heart, O God,  
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.  
<sup>11</sup>Do not cast me from your presence  
or take your Holy Spirit from me.  
<sup>12</sup>Restore to me the joy of your salvation  
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Prayers of the People:

God of great love, take hold of our hearts and let us sit here in the stillness of your presence as we turn our souls to you. Help us to be still ... and discover the mystery of the living Christ within us. Inspire us to turn ourselves inside out in service to you. As we clean our homes, commute to our jobs, planning our gardens, sit at our desks and answer our e-mails, may we honor you. As we read to our children or

grandchildren, greet our neighbors, walk or jog in the out of doors and shopping for our needs, may we honor you. At work or at play, take hold of our hearts, O God, and awaken us to the presence of your love. May your love spill over into our lives in such a way that it lightens the path and eases the burdens of each person we meet. We pray in the name of the one who came as the light of the world, as love incarnate, Jesus the Christ who taught us to say when we pray ....

## 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: Jeremiah 31:31-34

“The days are coming,” declares the LORD,  
“when I will make a new covenant  
with the people of Israel  
and with the people of Judah.

<sup>32</sup> It will not be like the covenant  
I made with their ancestors  
when I took them by the hand  
to lead them out of Egypt,  
because they broke my covenant,  
though I was a husband to<sup>[a]</sup> them,<sup>[b]</sup>”  
declares the LORD.

<sup>33</sup> “This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel  
after that time,” declares the LORD.

“I will put my law in their minds  
and write it on their hearts.

I will be their God,  
and they will be my people.

<sup>34</sup> No longer will they teach their neighbor,  
or say to one another, ‘Know the LORD,’  
because they will all know me,  
from the least of them to the greatest,”  
declares the LORD.

“For I will forgive their wickedness  
and will remember their sins no more.”

Read the Epistle Lesson: Hebrews 5:5-10

In the same way, Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him,

“You are my Son;  
today I have become your Father.”<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>6</sup> And he says in another place,

“You are a priest forever,  
in the order of Melchizedek.”<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>7</sup> During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. <sup>8</sup> Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered <sup>9</sup> and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him <sup>10</sup> and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Read the Gospel Lesson: John 12:20-33

Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. <sup>21</sup> They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.” <sup>22</sup> Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

<sup>23</sup> Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup> Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. <sup>25</sup> Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup> Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

<sup>27</sup> “Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. <sup>28</sup> Father, glorify your name!”

Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” <sup>29</sup> The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.

<sup>30</sup> Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine. <sup>31</sup> Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. <sup>32</sup> And I, when I am lifted up<sup>[a]</sup> from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” <sup>33</sup> He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

## Message

We are nearing the end of the season of Lent. A week from now the traditional timing of Palm Sunday begins followed by Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter celebration of resurrection! This is a time of anticipation, and this is reflected in the scriptures for today. The prophet Jeremiah writes of the days that are coming, of a new covenant; the psalmist looks toward being cleansed and restored; the letter to the Hebrews alludes to our common aim of working toward perfection; and the gospel of John culminates our anticipation with the reminder that the hour has come.

If I had to give a title to today's sermon it would be, *The Day Has Come*. You might be thinking that we are going to talk about the end of time, but you would be wrong for the day has come for us to think about who we are. You heard correctly today is the day to ask ourselves, who are we. You might think you know who you are, but do you really know? Do you really know who you are in relationship to all the other people on the face of the earth? Do you know who you are in relationship to God? Who are you anyway?

What would your answer be if you had to take paper and pen and write it down? Think about it. I tried it, but I did not feel I was very successful at it. So I decided to google the question and look for a better answer than mine. Finding several I found only one that I really liked and I felt said it all so clearly which was written by an unknown scientist who wrote the following.

I am a (1) child of the Creator (2) temple of the Holy Spirit (3) image of God (4) redeemed disciple of Christ (5) working member of his kingdom (6) member of the fellowship of saints (7) candidate for Eternal life.

After reading his or her answer I thought: yes that is who I am, too. What about you?

When we think about it in this way, we are very special people. We are special not because of our doing but because of the work of God through Jesus in our lives.

We are special and our Old Testament lesson from Jeremiah speaks about that unique nature. The Lord said that He would make a covenant with his people. He said He would be their God and they would be His people. God established a covenant with us during the time of Jeremiah. He continued that covenant through the time of Jesus.

Jesus in our gospel lesson speaks of that relationship when he talks about His time being fulfilled. Jesus says "No, for this purpose I have come to this hour."

Jesus came to continue that covenant that God began with the people of Israel. Jesus came so that we might know who we are. We are God's children. Children bought and paid for by the blood of the lamb of Jesus.

Martin Luther said that not only are we God's children through the covenant God made with us. At the same time, the Holy Spirit calls each of us by the gospel. God helps us to live in that covenant through His Holy Spirit.

He was quoted as saying: "I believe that I cannot come to my Lord Jesus Christ by my own intelligence or power. But the Holy Spirit call me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith, just as He calls, gathers together, enlightens and makes holy the whole Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus in the one, true faith. In this Church, He generously forgives each day every sin committed by me and by every believer."

So remember who you are. You are a child of God called by the Holy Spirit into a covenant with God.

I read a short story in which a girl tells of how her pastor reminded her of who she was: Her pastor was her confidant and guide, who made sure that her walk with Christ was closer every day. He always said these words to her before she stepped out of the house, he said: "Girl, Remember Who You are - You are God's child, You are very precious in His sight and His precious blood was shed for you, never let HIM down." He even bought her a cap with these words stitched on it: "Remember Who You are."

These words got embedded in her heart so strongly that it always pulls her out of temptations that come by her way all the time. There were times when she had almost given in, but she could hear her pastor's voice saying "Remember Who You Are". At that moment the love of Christ flashed in her mind and made her remember who she was, she would just run back to Christ, who is her fort and shelter. Her pastor is no more; but his profound words will always be with her. His love and dedication for Christ drew her even closer to Christ.

After reading the story, I want to do the same; I want to make difference in everyone's life that come in touch with mine, by passing on the light that Christ has given me. I want to always remember who I am in Christ and make sure others

do so too. I believe we are here to live lives that should touch other people's lives positively and with Christ like love, so they too may know who they are.

So, the moral of the story is when you face difficulties and fears; you don't give in. Just "Remember Who You are" - You are God's child, You are very precious in His sight and His precious blood was shed for you, never let HIM down. "

Who are you? You are called into a covenant with God through the Holy Spirit.

Scripture says " If any one serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also; if any one serves me, the Father will honor him. "Not only are we God's children, but we are chosen for a purpose to serve others. We are to be the ones who serve God through serving our neighbors. As we serve we discover that we want to serve and we gain so much by serving.

By serving we can see how love, kindness and compassion can positively affect individual lives. We can let God's Spirit work in and through us. Jesus says in our gospel lesson, "He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life."

Jesus demonstrated that concept in a clear and marvelous way on the cross of Calvary. He gave, he lost his life, and he died. In his dying, everyone benefited. We received God's grace through the sacrifice of Jesus. Jesus gave and we received. He received from God too, new life, the eternal life of the resurrection. In God's economy goodness is non-exclusive, everyone gains, everyone receives, everyone benefits.

So remember who you are. For we each are a child of God bought and paid for by the Jesus' blood. We are called into a covenant by the Holy Spirit with God and we are chosen by God to serve others. Amen.

Benediction:

*God will write a new covenant on our hearts. God will be our God and we will be God's people. No longer shall we teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the Lord." For we shall all know God. In the name of God the Source of Life, the Word of Truth, and the Spirit of Love. Amen*