

Home Service for 5/16/21

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:

To worship and pray, we are here this day. To mediate on God's teachings, we are here this day. We come in love to gather as one family in Christ. Amen.

Opening Prayer:

Holy Spirit, be with us in our worship this day. Draw us ever closer to you, that we may become one. Draw us ever closer to your word, that we may be wise. Draw us ever closer to your world, that we may serve and love as you guide us to do. In your holy name, we pray. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

We delight in your law, O God, but we don't always follow the rules. Shower us with your mercy, that we may know your forgiveness and your grace. Guide our steps, that we may follow you more closely. Draw us ever closer to you and to one another, that we might support one another as we follow where you lead us in our efforts to create a world of unity and boundless love. In your mercy and grace, we pray. Amen.

Words of Assurance

God watches over us with mercy and grace. Christ's forgiveness flows freely, redeeming us and making us whole.

Read Psalm 1

¹Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,
²but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,
and who meditates on his law day and night.

³ That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
whatever they do prospers.

⁴ Not so the wicked!
They are like chaff
that the wind blows away.

⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

⁶ For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

Prayers of the People:

Gracious God, you have enriched and enlightened us by the revelation of your eternal Christ. Comfort us in our mortality and strengthen us to walk the path of your desire, so that by word and deed we may manifest the gracious news of your faithfulness and love.

Holy Father, Father of Christ who asked the disciples, “What are you looking for,” and who offered the invitation to “Come and See,” open our hearts to what you reveal and give us the courage to follow. By your Spirit aid us in our journey, so that like John, our words and deeds point to the Lamb of God. For those who are suffering, let us point to Christ through comfort. For those who are hungry, let us point to Christ through bread. For those in the grip of despair, let us point to Christ through hope.

Almighty God, whose Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, is the Light of the World: Grant that your people, illumined by your Word, may shine with the radiance of Christ’s glory, that he may be known, worshiped and obeyed to the ends of the earth.

We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever, as we continue to pray the prayer your Son taught us, the Lord’s Prayer.

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: Acts 1:15-17, 21-26

¹⁵ In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) ¹⁶ and said, “Brothers and sisters,^[a] the Scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus. ¹⁷ He was one of our number and shared in our ministry.”

²¹ Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, ²² beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.”

²³ So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. ²⁴ Then they prayed, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen ²⁵ to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.” ²⁶ Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.

Read the Epistle Lesson: 1John 5:9-13

We accept human testimony, but God’s testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. ¹⁰ Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. ¹¹ And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. ¹³ I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Read the Gospel Lesson: John 17:6-19

⁶ “I have revealed you^[a] to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. ⁸ For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. ⁹ I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰ All I have is yours,

and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. ¹¹ I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of ^[b] your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. ¹² While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by ^[c] that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

¹³ “I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. ¹⁴ I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. ¹⁵ My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. ¹⁷ Sanctify them by ^[d] the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

Message

Let us pray: Dear Heavenly Father, through the death and resurrection of your Son, Jesus the Christ, you revealed your glory, the forgiveness of our sins, and the hope of life eternal in your heavenly kingdom. Through the power of your Holy Spirit, assure us of your presence, strengthen our faith, and continue to forgive our repentant sins. Form us into your church, that we might live our lives reflecting your steadfast love and faithfulness. This we ask in Christ’s holy name. Amen.

Today in the church year is a day of waiting, a time for reflection, a time to stop, to ponder, to listen quietly, to pray, to feel, to experience, to wait and to wonder. This past Thursday marked the Ascension of our risen Lord, his return to God the Father in heaven. What an awesome sight that must have been, for the disciples to have witnessed our risen Lord’s ascension. Not only had they seen Jesus die by crucifixion, and then, on Easter Sunday, appear to them risen from throws of death; they also saw him ascend back to heaven! If there was any doubt remaining in the minds of the disciples about who Jesus was, or by what authority he healed and taught and preached, Christ’s ascension made it clear. In Jesus they had beheld the very presence of God in their midst.

Listen for a moment to Luke’s description of our Lord’s ascension, which is found in Luke 24:44-53: He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

⁵⁰ When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. ⁵¹ While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. ⁵² Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. ⁵³ And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

There was no doubt in the disciple’s minds about the source of what they had experienced in their relationship with Jesus. In Jesus, they had experienced the saving grace of God. In Jesus, they came to recognize that God himself was in their midst, helping them to understand the meaning of life in a new and different way. In Jesus, they came to understand that through their faith in his death and resurrection, God forgave their sins, and offered them new and eternal life in God’s heavenly kingdom.

As the disciples left the mount of our Lord’s ascension, returned to Jerusalem, and spent each day at the temple blessing God and giving him thanks for what he had done for them, through his Son, Jesus the Christ! What they had witnessed and experienced filled their hearts with such great joy, that they couldn’t help but praise God for his redeeming grace, as they reflected upon all that they had experienced. But the season of Easter does not end with the ascension of our Lord. Today, we are asked to join our Lord’s first disciples, to reflect upon the significance of what they had witnessed, and what it means to us. And I can’t think of a better lesson for us to ponder, than Jesus’ prayer for his disciples – his prayer for you and me. Think about this. Jesus, the Son of God, is praying for you and for me. Is it not an awesome thought, that even as Jesus leaves this world, and returns to be with his Heavenly Father, that he continues to pray for his disciples? Jesus, our crucified, risen and ascended Lord, continues, even to this day, to lift his disciples in prayer to the Father, to intercede on our behalf, to pray for our protection.

In today’s gospel Jesus knows he is about to leave his disciples and they are being sent out into the world to be his disciples. Jesus prays for them, asking for protection; asking that God would “sanctify” them, make them holy, protect their souls. This could be called his last will and testament. With that prayer comes all

the wonder of Jesus praying for us. This is the Son of God, this is the one who came to save the world, including us. This is the one who died for us, and he is praying for you and me. Praying for our safety, praying for our souls. This is the one who has power over evil and death itself, this is the one praying for us. Jesus is the one who sends us out to carry on that which was important to him, the release of captives, to bind up the sick, to pray for those in need.

This was Jesus' high priestly prayer. The prayer that Jesus prayed with his disciples before the events of Holy Week. He prayed this to comfort the disciples who could not understand this prayer then, but now following the death and resurrection of Jesus, following his ascension, now they could really appreciate the words of this prayer, now they could understand what Jesus was saying, what he meant.

This is my prayer, I pray that each of us will take seriously our identity as children of God and seek to live it. I pray that we will all pray for each other so that we might have the courage to live differently as true Christians in our culture. May we each remember that Jesus is praying for us. Jesus wants us to live as children of God and promises to give us the strength to face whatever comes. Let us remember to pray for those around us, and those far away. Pray that we will be protected in our faith and that we will be "sanctified" even if that means that we will need the courage to appear weird or different from rest of the society. Remember that Jesus is praying for us and that all the power of God is with us. Remember that there is nothing that has power beyond the power of God. Remember that God is truth.

On this final Sunday of Easter, following our Lord's Ascension, may we reflect upon our Lord's continuing prayer for us, his present day disciples, and join his disciples of every age in praising God through our continuing witness to the grace of God. Amen.

Benediction:

As we leave this place, we are called to take the light into the world. As we leave this place, we are called to love God and one another. As we leave this place, may we live in unity with God and with one another. As we leave this place, may we live up to the calling to be community in the world. Amen.