

Home Service for June 13, 2021

Welcome and Announcements

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

See as God sees. Only then can we see rightly. Love as God loves. Only then can we love with the eyes of our heart enlightened.

Call to Worship:

The Holy One, defender of the poor and needy, calls us to gather now. We come, thankful to be a part of this family of faith. God knows us well and calls us by name. We hear our name and respond to God's call. The love of Christ urges us on.

Opening Prayer:

Help us to walk by faith, O God, not by sight. Be our vision, Holy One, for without vision your people perish. Remind us that you do not see as mortals see, for you do not judge by outward appearances, but look on the heart. With our eyes of faith enlightened, help us see your kingdom in a tiny mustard seed, and marvel at the growth you offered to all through the power of your Spirit. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Patient Lord, you know how we are. We let the frustrations and worries of our lives overcome us. Our hearts seem to buckle under the weight of anger and confusion. And we turn away from you, sure that you can do nothing to alleviate our strife. How foolish we are! How faithless we are! Please forgive us. Help us to learn that you are actively involved in our lives, not as a "puppet master" but as a creative co-worker, seeking healing and hope not only for each of us, but for the whole world. Make us into disciples of peace and compassion; for we ask this in Jesus' Name. AMEN.

Words of Assurance

Let go of your fears and doubts. God pours God's love on you, in you and through you to others. Be at peace. AMEN.

Read Psalm 72:

Endow the king with your justice, O God,
the royal son with your righteousness.
² May he judge your people in righteousness,
your afflicted ones with justice.
³ May the mountains bring prosperity to the people,
the hills the fruit of righteousness.
⁴ May he defend the afflicted among the people
and save the children of the needy;
may he crush the oppressor.
⁵ May he endure^[a] as long as the sun,
as long as the moon, through all generations.
⁶ May he be like rain falling on a mown field,
like showers watering the earth.
⁷ In his days may the righteous flourish
and prosperity abound till the moon is no more.
⁸ May he rule from sea to sea
and from the River^[b] to the ends of the earth.
⁹ May the desert tribes bow before him
and his enemies lick the dust.
¹⁰ May the kings of Tarshish and of distant shores
bring tribute to him.
May the kings of Sheba and Seba
present him gifts.
¹¹ May all kings bow down to him
and all nations serve him.
¹² For he will deliver the needy who cry out,
the afflicted who have no one to help.
¹³ He will take pity on the weak and the needy
and save the needy from death.
¹⁴ He will rescue them from oppression and violence,
for precious is their blood in his sight.
¹⁵ Long may he live!
May gold from Sheba be given him.
May people ever pray for him
and bless him all day long.
¹⁶ May grain abound throughout the land;
on the tops of the hills may it sway.
May the crops flourish like Lebanon

and thrive^[c] like the grass of the field.
17 May his name endure forever;
may it continue as long as the sun.
Then all nations will be blessed through him,^[d]
and they will call him blessed.
18 Praise be to the LORD God, the God of Israel,
who alone does marvelous deeds.
19 Praise be to his glorious name forever;
may the whole earth be filled with his glory.
Amen and Amen.
20 This concludes the prayers of David son of Jesse.

Prayers of the People:

Lord, in this season of growth, open our hearts to grow in your love. Help us to truly trust in your creative process in our lives. We look around and we see the beauty of your world, the blossoming flowers and plants, the growth of children, the joy of celebrations of graduation and marriage, of receiving new life. And we also see the sadness and sorrow that has invaded the world when systems of injustice and hatred lay claim to people's lives. Prepare us, O Lord, to become ambassadors of peace and hope. Help us to place our trust in you, so that when we are serving others, they may come to know your abiding love and power. Give us courage and great joy as we serve you. 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: 1 Samuel 15:34-16:13

34 Then Samuel left for Ramah, but Saul went up to his home in Gibeah of Saul. 35 Until the day Samuel died, he did not go to see Saul again, though Samuel mourned for him. And the LORD regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel. **16** The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king."

² But Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me.” The LORD said, “Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’” ³ Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate.”

⁴ Samuel did what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, “Do you come in peace?”

⁵ Samuel replied, “Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me.” Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

⁶ When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’s anointed stands here before the LORD.”

⁷ But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, “The LORD has not chosen this one either.” ⁹ Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, “Nor has the LORD chosen this one.” ¹⁰ Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, “The LORD has not chosen these.” ¹¹ So he asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?”

“There is still the youngest,” Jesse answered. “He is tending the sheep.” Samuel said, “Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.”

¹² So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features.

Then the LORD said, “Rise and anoint him; this is the one.”

¹³ So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah.

Read the Epistle Lesson: 2 Corinthians 5:6-17

Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ⁷ For we live by faith, not by sight. ⁸ We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

¹¹ Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. ¹² We are not

trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. ¹³ If we are “out of our mind,” as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. ¹⁴ For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

¹⁶ So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:^[a] The old has gone, the new is here!

Read the Gospel Lesson: Mark 4:26-34

He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷ Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. ²⁸ All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. ²⁹ As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

³⁰ Again he said, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. ³² Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.”

³³ With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. ³⁴ He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

Message

If I had to summarize today’s Gospel it would be: God’s Kingdom is a matter of faith: faith that God’s word is working and that God’s church is growing.

Jesus used parables as points of comparison so that people could understand deep, spiritual mysteries. Today’s parables teach about the kingdom of God. Jesus is comparing the kingdom of God to this idea of a natural order in the growing of crops and the harvest.

He is saying that just as we need to surrender to the natural order in growing crops, in the kingdom of God we need to surrender to the reign or rule of God in his

kingdom. The kingdom of God for Jesus was not a place on this earth, it was not a kingdom. The kingdom of God is God's rule, it is God's reign on this earth. Jesus is saying that God's rules his kingdom, God's reigns not us. The kingdom of God comes of itself. We don't bring God's kingdom, He does. We don't rule, He does.

We must acknowledge as we pray: "Thine is, the kingdom" and build upon that solid fact. The kingdom of God is not the product of human effort. God brings his plan to fruition in His own way and needs no help from us.

Our activity becomes constructive only when we allow him to take full charge. Just as nature's growth is inevitable so is the growth of the Christian who is living under the reign of God! This growth can and will make a great difference, not only in our lives, but also in the lives of those around us, because there is nothing so powerful as growth especially in faith in God. Good things will happen for and through those who allow God's Reign to rule their lives.

What you and I are called to have is faith, faith that God is the ruler of his kingdom, faith that God is working even when we cannot see him, even when we have lost sight of him, even when we see no answer from him, we must believe that he is still ruling, he is still in charge. We need faith that believes God is in control.

Verse 27 describes the grace and power of God's word; the seed that was sown. The power of the word of God is just like the mysterious, powerful working of the seed sown into the ground. None can really explain how a small seed is able to break through the hard earth and grow and flourish. Plants are hard to control once they take root. The battle against the weeds in a garden is proof of the power of the seed. God's divine word is the point of comparison that Jesus wants us to remember concerning his kingdom. At times may underestimate the power of the word of God. We might even tend to not give God's word the credit that it deserves. "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart"(HEBREWS 4:12).

Consider what God's powerful word has done in your life. God's word has been planted in our sin-darkened hearts of stone. That word of God has burst forth breaking the hardness and coldness of sin so that we now have hearts of flesh. No longer do we live in the dark but walk in the light of the love of God. All of this happens because of God's grace. The word of God was sown in our hearts freely.

And now, our lives are changed. We have been reborn through the living and enduring word of God".

God's kingdom work is a matter of faith, faith that God's word is working. All around us the world is constantly promoting another expert who has the answer to life's mysteries. Wait a few months and another expert arrives with his answer. In the midst of all of this uncertainty and false hope you and I and every believer have the hope that is never disappointing. The word of God is alive and well in our lives and we celebrate God's grace.

We also need the faith that God's church is growing. Not everyone would agree with the statement. Remember God is concerned with his church growing in the hearts of believers. External numbers are of a minor concern in God's grand plans for his kingdom. So it is that we sometimes mutter things that take away from the glorious gospel message. We mutter if only our church was bigger and/or offered more, and then people would come. Jesus' church; it had none. The beginning of the Christian church started with twelve apostles and today includes countless millions. Jesus sent his disciples to catch a fish in order to take the coins from inside to pay the tax. If only I could speak better, I would invite more to church. Remember God answered all the excuses of Moses. Look not to yourself to make earthly excuses. "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well"(MATTHEW 6:33).

We do not always seek first God's kingdom. In our selfish, self-help, arrogant society we have picked up some bad habits. All too often we think that the success or failure of God's church depends on us. Or worse, if anything goes wrong it is the pastor's fault. The early church faced many difficult problems. The church was fractured because different groups followed different leaders at different times. God through the words of Paul reminded them as he reminds us: "So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow"(1 CORINTHIANS 3:7). To God be the glory. It is God and God alone who gives the increase.

We may not always see outward growth in the Christian church. We may even feel that our church or Christianity (in general) seems to be losing ground. This is not the case. The Lord has promised that the gates of hell cannot overcome his church. We need to remember that God's church is growing. God's church grows whenever we hear God's word. God's church grows whenever we read God's word. God's church grows whenever we study God's word. This kind of growth has nothing at all to do with numbers because it is the growth of a Christian's faith

in his or her heart. This is growth that happens because of and solely by the powerful word of God. Christian humility, which is despised by the world, will bring down the pride and arrogance of the world.

God's kingdom work is a matter of faith. God's word is the working just as certain as that seed that is planted pushes it way through the ground. God's church is growing just as certain as the small mustard seed turns into a great plant. We cannot always see the numbers but God knows his members. Amen.

Benediction:

Feel the love of God growing within your heart. Go into God's world, planting seeds of love, mercy, joy, and peace in all that you say and do. Be at peace and serve God. AMEN.