

Home Service for September 19, 2021

Welcome and Announcements

You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship.

The wisdom from above calls us; calling us to peace and gentleness, kindness and mercy, goodness and service.

Call to Worship:

Are you longing for more wisdom in your life?
Do you face conflicts that need answers,
tough situations that require special insight?
Do you need more peace in your life?
Do you long to bear good fruit in your life?
Draw near to God, the giver of wisdom,
and God will draw near to you.

Opening Prayer:

We draw near to you, O God, Source of all understanding, and ask you to draw near to us. Teach us your wisdom from above, that we may bear good fruit in our lives. Root us beside the streams of your wisdom, that the green leaves of our goodness, fed by your insight, may not wither. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

O God, we live our lives as best we can; dealing with difficult relationships and situations, putting failures and disappointments behind us, and moving into each new day with as much energy, goodwill, and optimism as we can muster. But here, right now, we seldom have the right answers, we seldom seek your higher wisdom in our lives, we just move ahead. Forgive us for not asking for your insight. Fill us with your wisdom, that we may live lives of goodness and peace. Amen.

Words of Assurance

When we come before God in humility and honesty, God draws near to us with forgiveness and renewed blessing. Thanks be to God!

Read Psalm 1:

Blessed 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.

³That 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.

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

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

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

Prayers of the People:

God, how amazed we are at the solutions Jesus offers to his disciples when they question their importance to him and his kingdom. They want to know if they will receive the great rewards, if they will be recognized and praised for their accomplishments or at least their efforts. We are still so much like those early disciples. We want you to know how hard we work. We want to be praised and recognized for our efforts and successes. And we want you to pass over our failures as though they were inconsequential. When Jesus was confronted with their fears and concerns, he responded that they should be ready for service rather than adulation, And then he placed a small child in their midst; a child with no guile, no pretense. “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me, welcomes not me but the One who sent me.” Help us to reach out to others, not with thought of importance or gain, but in love and compassion; truly caring for each one we meet. When we have done this, we will have truly give our hearts and our service to our Lord. 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: Proverbs 31:10-31

A wife of noble character who can find?

She is worth far more than rubies.

¹¹ Her husband has full confidence in her
and lacks nothing of value.

¹² She brings him good, not harm,
all the days of her life.

¹³ She selects wool and flax
and works with eager hands.

¹⁴ She is like the merchant ships,
bringing her food from afar.

¹⁵ She gets up while it is still night;
she provides food for her family
and portions for her female servants.

¹⁶ She considers a field and buys it;
out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.

¹⁷ She sets about her work vigorously;
her arms are strong for her tasks.

¹⁸ She sees that her trading is profitable,
and her lamp does not go out at night.

¹⁹ In her hand she holds the distaff
and grasps the spindle with her fingers.

²⁰ She opens her arms to the poor
and extends her hands to the needy.

²¹ When it snows, she has no fear for her household;
for all of them are clothed in scarlet.

²² She makes coverings for her bed;
she is clothed in fine linen and purple.

²³ Her husband is respected at the city gate,
where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.

²⁴ She makes linen garments and sells them,

and supplies the merchants with sashes.
²⁵ She is clothed with strength and dignity;
she can laugh at the days to come.
²⁶ She speaks with wisdom,
and faithful instruction is on her tongue.
²⁷ She watches over the affairs of her household
and does not eat the bread of idleness.
²⁸ Her children arise and call her blessed;
her husband also, and he praises her:
²⁹ “Many women do noble things,
but you surpass them all.”
³⁰ Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting;
but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.
³¹ Honor her for all that her hands have done,
and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

Read the Epistle Lesson: James 3:13-4:3, 7-8a

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵ Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

¹⁷ But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

4 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

⁷ Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Mark 9:30-37

They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, ³¹ because he was teaching his disciples. He said to

them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.”³² But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

³³ They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?”³⁴ But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

³⁵ Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

³⁶ He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them,³⁷ “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.”

Message

In this life there is a lot of emphasis place on being important. The Olympics have just finished. The gold medal winners are the important ones. The fall football season has started, and the winning teams are the great teams. The losers are not so important or great. As believers you and I are to look at greatness with our eyes of faith. We know that the world measures greatness in wealth, power, honor, and winning at all costs. Hopefully we also know that is not how we as Christians are to think.

Our Gospel opens with Jesus traveling with his disciples, they are still far north of Jerusalem and not many Jews lived in the area. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, because he was teaching his disciples. We see that Jesus made some quiet time for teaching the disciples. He got them alone, away from the rush; away from the crowds to teach them. Perhaps we need to take a hint from this! Sometimes we too need time to be alone with Christ! Sometimes we need to have a heart to heart conversation with God and it can only happen when we are by ourselves with Him. Sometimes we need to be alone with God to hear Him, to understand Him.

Jesus told his disciples a second time what was going to happen to him went he arrived at Jerusalem. He told them he would be delivered into the hands of men, and they would kill him and then after three days he would rise again. But unlike the first time he said this, the disciples didn't understand what he was saying. Instead they were working on their own agenda. They were discussing who would be first in this new kingdom that Jesus was going to begin. They were wondering

who would be the ones who would sit on Jesus' right and left hands, the places of power and authority.

So Jesus uses this as a teaching moment when: "Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, 'If anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.'" I can just picture the disciples' blank faces when Jesus says this radical, out of the world thing. For Jesus sensed they didn't understand at all about this new kingdom calls the disciples together and explains that the places of honor in this kingdom were not the places of power, fame and wealth as in other kingdoms, no, the place of honor in this kingdom who would be place of servant hood, the last place in line. Jesus was explaining to the disciples that one would sacrifice himself for the sake of the other in this new kingdom.

Jesus asks a child to come forward, then He said to them: "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me." He telling his disciples that one must be as innocent, as trusting, as naive, as this child as he serves in God's kingdom. Jesus was saying that one must be willing to serve out of the same kind of love that a child has for its parents, a love that is trusting, a love that is simple, a love that is accepting.

Do you remember what Jesus said the marks of true discipleship are in Matthew Chapter 25:31-46? "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; thirsty and you gave me something to drink; a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you looked after me. I was in prison and you visited me."

It is all about doing things for people who can't pay us back, who will not be able to give us worldly success or fortune, but just doing them for the sake of Christ, in the name of Christ, in the name of love, for the sake of love, without expecting a reward that is a mark of true greatness.

Whereas the world follows a pyramid structure that gets more narrow at the top, Jesus turns the whole thing upside down by saying that the greatest will be the least, because greatness is found in those who can forget about themselves and reach out in service to others for the sake of Christ and Christ alone. It makes no sense at all by worldly standards and values, but it is the Truth.

And so, Jesus' lesson here in Mark Chapter 9 is about humility. When it comes down to it, humility is one of the most important qualities for a follower of Christ to have. Actually, it could be argued that without humility how can we be truly

following Jesus Christ at all? Jesus, the only One Who never sinned, the only Innocent Person to ever live; humbled Himself more than anyone at any time and in any place ever has and ever can and ever will. He did this because He loves us.

He humbled Himself to death, even death on a Cross and showed Himself to be the ULTIMATE SERVANT; the Servant of you and me. Jesus' call to discipleship is a call to a life of radical humility and service; it follows the pattern of Jesus' own life. There is nothing more beautiful. In order to more fully follow Jesus, we must intentionally get out of the way; and allow Jesus to be first. We must become less; He must become more. This is not easy. Perhaps it is the hardest thing we will ever do. To humble ourselves does not come naturally.

All of Jesus' teachings are challenging to us: "Love your enemies. Do good to those who persecute you. Forgive one another." They are all challenging and they all require humility to be carried out. To accept Jesus as Savior and Lord, we are saying to ourselves and to the world that we are no longer defined by the world's list of rules for successful living. In Jesus, we are part of a new social order centered around Jesus. We are like that child, embraced by Christ. Jesus' embrace frees us to love and serve all people, no matter who they are or what they look like. Jesus embrace frees us to serve all people with no eye on any worldly reward.

God calls you and I to such a role in life also. We are called to be servants to others, and servant to God. We are called to sacrifice our wants, our desires, our positions in order to serve God and our neighbor God is calling us to make our lives a sign of his power in this world. God is calling us to serve him with our entire lives, to be the Christ in this world, to be the light of hope, to be the instruments of justice, love and mercy in this world. God is calling us to servant hood, to give of our selves. Amen.

Benediction:

As we leave this place, Let us go now to serve. Welcoming every child we meet, loving every person we encounter, serving by all the means we can, in all the places we can, for however long we can. Amen