

Home Service for September 26, 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:

Walk humbly before the Lord, even in hardship and pain. Live with integrity before God all the days of our lives.

Walk faithfully before our God, even when put to the test.

Honor the Lord our God all the days of our lives.

Come! Let us worship.

Opening Prayer:

Jesus, Brother and Savior, we are grateful to find our way back to you. We have carried out another week's worth of responsibilities. We have watched another week's worth of news programs and have listened to another week's worth of predictions. Sometimes we have slept well; sometimes not. But here we are, before you once again, open to your presence. Revive us with your love and power. Fulfill your kingdom promises in our lives, in our church, and in our world. In the name of God who created us and the spirit who breathes new life in us, we pray. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Brother Jesus, Teacher of the Way, we come from a busy week of tasks and obligations. In this quiet time, we have a chance to reflect on how we have lived our lives this week. We have an opportunity to explore the hopes that you have; hopes for compassion for the weak, justice for the mistreated, and love for friends and strangers. We thank and praise you for your love and power. We rejoice that you have helped us to be like you; and we regret when we have not been like you. Pick us up where we have fallen. Touch us with your renewing grace, Healer on the Way. Amen.

Words of Assurance

*Jesus forgives us when we wander. He raises us up to live with courage and hope and love. Praise be to our Brother and Savior!*

Read Psalm 124

If the LORD had not been on our side—  
let Israel say—

<sup>2</sup> if the LORD had not been on our side  
when people attacked us,  
<sup>3</sup> they would have swallowed us alive  
when their anger flared against us;  
<sup>4</sup> the flood would have engulfed us,  
the torrent would have swept over us,  
<sup>5</sup> the raging waters  
would have swept us away.

<sup>6</sup> Praise be to the LORD,  
who has not let us be torn by their teeth.

<sup>7</sup> We have escaped like a bird  
from the fowler's snare;  
the snare has been broken,  
and we have escaped.

<sup>8</sup> Our help is in the name of the LORD,  
the Maker of heaven and earth.

Prayers of the People:

Lord, you want us to be “salt”, to add savor to your world. We cannot be bland witnesses to your love, only working when it's convenient for us or doing work that is incomplete. If we lose our “saltiness”, it cannot be regained. Give us courage and joy in our service to you. Help us to be people who clear the pathways to service rather than those who place roadblocks and “potholes” in which people can stumble. Many are called to serve You, O Lord. Help us to be people who work willingly with others, not demanding that our way is the only way, but rejoicing in a new approach to ministry. Give us confidence and joy in all that we do, for we offer our lives and our prayers to you in the name of Jesus Christ. 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: Esther 7:1-6, 9-10; 9:20-22

<sup>7</sup> So the king and Haman went to Queen Esther's banquet, <sup>2</sup> and as they were drinking wine on the second day, the king again asked, "Queen Esther, what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted."

<sup>3</sup> Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favor with you, Your Majesty, and if it pleases you, grant me my life—this is my petition. And spare my people—this is my request. <sup>4</sup> For I and my people have been sold to be destroyed, killed and annihilated. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king.<sup>[a]</sup>"

<sup>5</sup> King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, "Who is he? Where is he—the man who has dared to do such a thing?"

<sup>6</sup> Esther said, "An adversary and enemy! This vile Haman!"

Then Haman was terrified before the king and queen.

<sup>9</sup> Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs attending the king, said, "A pole reaching to a height of fifty cubits<sup>[a]</sup> stands by Haman's house. He had it set up for Mordecai, who spoke up to help the king."

The king said, "Impale him on it!" <sup>10</sup> So they impaled Haman on the pole he had set up for Mordecai. Then the king's fury subsided.

Esther 9:20-22

<sup>20</sup> Mordecai recorded these events, and he sent letters to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King Xerxes, near and far, <sup>21</sup> to have them celebrate annually the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar <sup>22</sup> as the time when the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month when their sorrow was turned into joy and their mourning into a day of celebration. He wrote them to observe the days as

days of feasting and joy and giving presents of food to one another and gifts to the poor.

Read the Epistle Lesson: James 5:13-20

Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. <sup>14</sup>Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup>And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup>Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

<sup>17</sup>Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. <sup>18</sup>Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

<sup>19</sup>My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, <sup>20</sup>remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Mark 9:38-50

“Teacher,” said John, “we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.”

<sup>39</sup>“Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, <sup>40</sup>for whoever is not against us is for us. <sup>41</sup>Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.

<sup>42</sup>“If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were thrown into the sea. <sup>43</sup>If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. <sup>[44] [a]</sup> <sup>45</sup>And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. <sup>[46] [b]</sup> <sup>47</sup>And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, <sup>48</sup>where

“the worms that eat them do not die,  
and the fire is not quenched.”<sup>[c]</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Everyone will be salted with fire.

<sup>50</sup> “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other.”

## Message

Remembering a church is not a building, but it is the people. What kind of people does the church produce? That may sound like a strange question but in all reality that is the question which our gospel lesson asks in many different ways this morning. Does the church produce salt, pure and willing to preserve the goals and ideals of Jesus? Does the church produce people who practice what they preach? Does the church produce people of faith who are willing to put their faith into action in their own lives as well as the lives of others?

This lesson is asking us to look seriously at our conduct as members of the body of Christ, not only how we treat others, but also how we conduct our own individual lives in relationship to the teachings of Jesus and the commands of God as found in the 10 commandments. So do we as a church produce salt?

Salt is not as valuable today as it was during the time of Jesus. Salt can be purchased very cheaply. During the time of Jesus salt was used as currency. Soldiers were paid with money in order to buy salt. At times salt was even used as payment for services. Our word salary comes from the root word salt. Our Christian lives are to be “salty”. Listen to Colossians 4:5,6 – “Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. <sup>6</sup> Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” Jesus’ words in verse 50 of today’s gospel serves as our theme: “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other.”

Last week we heard how the disciples had argued about who was the greatest. Jesus taught them humility. Jesus used a child as an example of humble service. They heard, but pride was still with them.

Jealousy and pride are a constant threat to the very core of our Christian faith. It was pride that really led Adam and Eve into sinning against God and ruining His perfection. Pride is always with us. We like to feel important and valuable, but that pride can detract us from God’s grace. God’s grace comes to us freely, without our merit. It is God alone who has called us out of darkness into light. We did not choose Him but God first chose us. Faith puts aside all jealousy and pride. Grace leaves no room for human pride. Faith is the gift of the Holy Spirit, which confesses Christ.

Human pride causes many to put trust in the wrong things. Some trust themselves. Others trust in the things of this world to bring happiness. God's truth reminds us that the things of this world pass away but God's word never passes away. The challenge remains. For you and I and every believer spend much more time living in this world than in the safe and secure walls of the church. We spend a great deal of our lives dealing with people of the world. Our human pride puts great value on the things of this world rather than on the things of God. The Lord reminds us to have salt in ourselves, put aside all human, selfish pride.

Jealousy and pride cause many not to do what is right. Let us always remember the sacrifice of Jesus. Jesus humbled himself and took on human flesh and blood. Jesus humbled himself and became obedient even to death on a cross. Our world does not give very much credit to those who live humble lives of service. But this is exactly what it means to have salt in us. We put aside our own selfish pride to better serve God by helping those around us. Do not let jealousy or pride deceive you. "HAVE SALT IN YOURSELVES". For having salt in us happens only when we put aside all jealousy and pride.

The salt of God's word that stings us is the law. None of us like to hear that we are sinners. We do not want to be reminded of our shortcomings that deserve eternal punishment. Yes, hell is a real place reserved for those who reject God. Many find it difficult to understand why and how our loving and merciful God would send anyone to hell. But does God really make that choice? It is the unbeliever who chooses for himself or herself eternal punishment. The unbeliever denies, rejects, or scoffs at God and his word. This is the bad choice of a life filled with sinful pride, so as I see it, Hell is their choice, not God's.

So the question is now, "How are we to have salt in ourselves?" We know that the world can become an attractive and yet distracting, destructive influence. Our own flesh urges us to live in selfishness. The devil daily tempts us to forsake God's truths. It is quite easy to focus on all that is the bad. The very structure of our society seems to accentuate the negative rather than put forth the positive. We are challenged to have salt in ourselves and live as God's salt and light in this world. I would like to remind you of Philippians 4:8 - "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things." This is an amazing positive list to fill up our lives.

Starting today and until the very end of the ages God's word must remain our ultimate source of truth, life, light and salt. Mankind may deny and reject that validity of Scripture. This does not make God's word any less true. Our loving Lord reminds to have salt in ourselves. Jesus does not only teach us this truth he

also reveals how we can accomplish his truth. Be filled with God's word. When God's word fills our hearts and lives there is little room for other distractions.

So let us always "HAVE SALT IN OURSELVES". For Jesus reminds us that salt is valuable and vital in the life of the Christian for the lives of others. Followers of Christ are just that. As Christians we follow Christ and his example rather than our own jealous and pride-filled, sinful nature. We are able to put aside the sin that dwells in us by filling up our lives and souls with the word of God. Our gracious God and loving Lord promises us a "harvest of righteousness". We have heaven as our home purely, freely by the love, grace, and will of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are the salt of the earth and light of the world, which continually grows darker. May we rejoice in the faith that dwells in our hearts and let it be seen in each day of our lives. Amen.

Benediction:

*Go in peace to serve the Lord. Remember the healing love that has taken place in your life. Be open to all the wonders and opportunities that God puts before you. Go in peace. AMEN.*