

Home Service for June 19, 2022

Welcome and Announcements

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

We hunger for the holy, longing for the living God. We gather as children of God, rejoicing in the promise.

Call to Worship:

As the deep calls to the deep in thundering waves of faith and steadfast love, so we stand on the mountain with Elijah, feeling billowing waves of God's power flowing over and through us. Set aside your enemies—the people, thoughts, time, and challenges—that separate you from knowing God's love. Clothe yourselves in Christ. Shout praise in his name, and declare how much God has done for you.

Opening Prayer:

Open our hearts today, O Lord, to feel the powerful strength and love you have for us. Help us to listen, not only with our ears, but with our spirits for your words of compassion and healing. Enable us to become more faithful disciples for you; for we ask this in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN.

Prayer of Confession:

Lord of the ages, in our busy lives, we do not always make time to love, to pray, or to sing your praises. We want to be strong, yet we often feel out of control: buffeted by the winds of change, rocked by the earthquakes in our relationships, burned by the fires of doubt. Forgetting what we cannot see, we ask, "Why have you forgotten me?" Help us trust your presence, even when we feel utterly alone, trapped in our dark night of the soul. With the promise of Christ as our hope, lead us from our own wilderness wanderings into the well-tended garden of your love. Amen

Words of Assurance

The steadfast love of God is with you—yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Whether you turn away or doubt, whether you follow timidly or joyfully, you are loved and forgiven in Christ.

Read Psalm 42

As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, my God.
²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?
³My tears have been my food
day and night,
while people say to me all day long,
“Where is your God?”
⁴These things I remember
as I pour out my soul:
how I used to go to the house of God
under the protection of the Mighty One^[d]
with shouts of joy and praise
among the festive throng.
⁵Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.
⁶My soul is downcast within me;
therefore I will remember you
from the land of the Jordan,
the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar.
⁷Deep calls to deep
in the roar of your waterfalls;
all your waves and breakers
have swept over me.
⁸By day the LORD directs his love,
at night his song is with me—
a prayer to the God of my life.
⁹I say to God my Rock,
“Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I go about mourning,
oppressed by the enemy?”
¹⁰My bones suffer mortal agony
as my foes taunt me,
saying to me all day long,
“Where is your God?”

¹¹ Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.

Prayers of the People:

Lord, we hear the stories in the Bible of Christ's forgiving love. We look at them from a distance, believing that we could never be forgiven by God. We want to measure our sins on a grand scale, but in truth it is the little ways in which we disown you and run from your presence that form the foundation of our sins. Forgive us, we pray. Help us to be open to the needs of others. We have so much that we can do, and sometimes, O Lord, we are overwhelmed by the needs. We become paralyzed and fearful. Ease our hearts and give us strength and courage to be active witnesses for you. Give us such faith that we may place our whole trust in you. This day we have brought before you the names of people near and dear to us to be lifted in prayer. Some of these needs are for healing, for comfort, for solace; others are prayers of celebration and joy. All of these things we offer to you. Help us to truly believe in your abiding love in answer to all prayers that we willingly place our lives in your care. Heal and restore us; for we ask this in Jesus' name. 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 Kings 19:1-15a

Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. ² So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them."

³ Elijah was afraid^[a] and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, ⁴ while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have

had enough, LORD,” he said. “Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.”⁵ Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep.

All at once an angel touched him and said, “Get up and eat.”⁶ He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

⁷ The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, “Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.”⁸ So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.⁹ There he went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the LORD came to him: “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

¹⁰ He replied, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”

¹¹ The LORD said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.”

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake.¹² After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.¹³ When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

Then a voice said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

¹⁴ He replied, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”

¹⁵ The LORD said to him, “Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram.

Read the Epistle Lesson: Galatians 3:23-29

Before the coming of this faith,^[a] we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed.²⁴ So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith.²⁵ Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

²⁶ So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith,²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.²⁹ If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Luke 8:26-39

They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes,^[a] which is across the lake from Galilee. ²⁷ When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. ²⁸ When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don’t torture me!” ²⁹ For Jesus had commanded the impure spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.

³⁰ Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”

“Legion,” he replied, because many demons had gone into him. ³¹ And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.

³² A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he gave them permission. ³³ When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

³⁴ When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, ³⁵ and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus’ feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. ³⁶ Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. ³⁷ Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left.

³⁸ The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹ “Return home and tell how much God has done for you.” So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

Message

Jesus did many miracles while He lived on earth, we hear that one of those miracles involved the deliverance of a demon-possessed man who had been living among the tombs. He was so out of control that he could no longer be around people, he couldn’t live in a house or wear clothes. The people had tried to subdue him with chains, but he broke the chains. He was so controlled by demon power that he was a danger to anyone who came near him.

This story is found in three of the four gospels with slight variations. Just before this the disciples were almost scared to death by a storm on the lake. Now, they witness the sight of this demon possessed man immediately confronting Jesus when they arrived in the region across the lake from Galilee.

The people were Gentiles who had no knowledge of the miracles and power of Jesus. We know this because no self-respecting Jew would have anything to do with pigs, for pigs were considered unclean animals. But in a largely Gentile area it would be normal. What his disciples saw that day was that not only can Jesus calm the wild waves of the sea but also he can even calm a wild, out-of-control demon possessed person. They also saw the healing of a possessed man whose healing caused so much fear that Jesus was asked to leave the region. I would have thought that the people would have been happy to see this uncontrollable person restored to his right mind, dressed and no threat to anyone, but they weren't.

Let's look at the reaction of the different people: Starting with the demon possessed man: he was the first to stand in the presence of Jesus. He shrieked and fell to the ground before Jesus, but not to worship Him. The demons addressed Jesus as "Son of the Most High God." They recognized His power and they dreaded it. Each of the three Gospels gives a reason for the demons fears. They didn't want Jesus to torment them before the time, for Matthew 8:29 states: "Have you come to torture us before the appointed time?" Mark 5:10 states they didn't want to be sent out of the area. Demons usually were thought to have certain territorial areas and this region was one of them. And Luke 8:31, they didn't want to be sent to the Abyss where they could no longer do their destructive work, for the abyss was the abode of demons, a place of confinement or punishment.

The demon possessed man was so controlled that when Jesus asked him his name they answered for him and said, "LEGION," which in scripture means 6000 demons. They begged Jesus to let them go into the swine. The reason for this was that at least they would have a body to operate in and to continue their destructive work. Jesus said, "GO."

Let's look at the owners of the pigs, for large herds would have several owners. When they saw 2000 pigs rushing over the cliff to their destruction once the demons entered into them, they were scared and ran to town to tell everyone what had happened and not a positive report. At this time many thought the water or sea was a form of the Abyss. The pigs were no longer alive so the demons didn't have a body to operate out of. They were confined to a lake which represented the abyss. The demons realized all their fears.

The townspeople came out to check things out and they were alarmed and frightened over the presence of Jesus that they begged him to leave. Maybe they were afraid he would cast out their demons. There is no indication that anyone spoke to the man, asked how he was, had tears of joy or lifted their hands in thanksgiving. Why didn't the people rejoice? They were terrified to be in the presence of one with power to be able to perform such a miracle. If the mighty force could destroy a whole herd of pigs might not this power strike again with even more serious consequences? They viewed the cure as what caused the catastrophe and requested Jesus to leave. They would rather have had the man as he was, dangerous, destructive and uncontrollable rather than healed and clothed and a constructive member of society. They knew how to manage the problem before. It was an undesirable situation but a known one. They feared the unknown. People could cope with the known even though it was not to their liking. They were worried about what would Jesus do next?

For the man who had been possessed: It was a holy moment. When he was in his right mind once again, he was clothed and sitting at the feet of Jesus. He begged to go with Jesus. But Jesus said, "No, you go back to your family and tell them "how much God has done for you" (Luke 8:39). And the man did. He went back and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him. What is interesting here is that his testimony was effective. In Mark 7:37 it states that "People in this same region were overwhelmed with amazement. Jesus has done everything well, they said.

How do we react to the presence of Jesus? Many of us respond the same way to Jesus as the towns people, when He does an out of the ordinary act among us. We become fearful because we have never personally experienced this before. We fear the unknown even if it is a display of His goodness to us. The people could not benefit from Jesus' presence because of their fears. The people feared that Jesus' coming meant a change they did not want and did not feel they needed. Change is upsetting and we all fear the unknown. They wanted things just as they were and Jesus was threatening the status quo. The thought of the kind of changes which Jesus would bring was tormenting to the people of this region. They wanted Jesus to go because he was getting close to where they lived.

Does the presence of Jesus come too close to where you live that it identifies your need for change? Is he showing your need to live a different life from what you are living and you just don't want that? Many times it does. That's why we resist. The spotlight shines on our apathy, our wrong priorities and wrong values. Our careless way of serving him and our take it or leave it way of life. Sometimes we say, "Jesus leave me alone!"

What can we do? I think the answer lies in getting to know Jesus so well that you are not afraid of Him. The disciples in the storm said, “Who is this who even the wind and the waves obey Him?” We share a fearfulness of His power. Just like the disciples, we don’t understand. The Gentiles didn’t understand until the man had spread the good news of what had happened to him. When he shared the goodness of God to him, others began to understand. We must see Christ’s goodness in our lives and get to know Him in such a way that we have no fear of Him. The demons recognized who Jesus was, but they were bent on continuing their evil and destructiveness. The owners of the pigs were concerned mainly about their financial loss, but they couldn’t see beyond that to the value of a human soul.

What can we do about fears that keep us from His presence? We get to know Jesus a little bit better day by day. We allow Him entrance into our life little by little. We realize that “God is not out to get us” but that He is there to give us “life and that more abundantly.” What could be bad about that? Amen!

Benediction:

In the spirit of God’s unchanging love, live the stories of faith we have heard this day. In the melody of God’s song within us, sing the faith we have received this day. In the hope of God’s unfailing help, share the grace we have touched this day. Go and tell the world how much God has done for us! Amen.