

## Home Service for October 2, 2022

### Welcome and Announcements

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

### Call to Worship:

The promises of the world turn to ashes and dust, but the promises of God last forever. The Holy One calls to us: “Come!” We come to rekindle the gift of God ablaze within us. Amen

### Opening Prayer:

Lord, throughout the world today, Christians are sharing in the sacrament of Holy Communion. We come together with a bountiful table set in the midst of struggle and strife. Help us to receive the elements of bread and wine for the nourishment of our souls and for the strengthening of our witness to your love for us. In Jesus’ Name, we pray. AMEN.

### Prayer of Confession:

With the weepers we weep. With the warriors we yearn for peace.  
With the exiles we wander far from home, for our hearts wander far from you.  
We live in an uncertain world— time and again we turn to people who promise us security. But God, you are our only source of safety. Help us turn to you, our heart’s true home. Call us again and lead us home. Author of peace, teach us to seek our peace in you. Source of every blessing, forgive us for the multitude of our transgressions. Rekindle a spirit of love and self-discipline within us, through Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. Amen

### Words of Assurance

*Our Savior Jesus Christ abolished sin and death and brought life and immortality to light. By the grace of the Eternal One, we are forgiven in the power of the Holy Spirit living within us.*

### Read Psalm 137

By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept  
when we remembered Zion.

<sup>2</sup> There on the poplars  
we hung our harps,  
<sup>3</sup> for there our captors asked us for songs,  
our tormentors demanded songs of joy;  
they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"  
<sup>4</sup> How can we sing the songs of the LORD  
while in a foreign land?  
<sup>5</sup> If I forget you, Jerusalem,  
may my right hand forget its skill.  
<sup>6</sup> May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth  
if I do not remember you,  
if I do not consider Jerusalem  
my highest joy.  
<sup>7</sup> Remember, LORD, what the Edomites did  
on the day Jerusalem fell.  
"Tear it down," they cried,  
"tear it down to its foundations!"  
<sup>8</sup> Daughter Babylon, doomed to destruction,  
happy is the one who repays you  
according to what you have done to us.  
<sup>9</sup> Happy is the one who seizes your infants  
and dashes them against the rocks.

#### Prayers of the People:

*Generous God, it is easy for us to comfortably imagine so many other Christians praying today and receiving the elements of Holy Communion. We like to think of this as a nice event; yet you remind us that when we have received these gifts we are also called to use the strength that they provide to witness to others through acts of reconciling love. This Communion is not a "nice" service, meant for our comfort. It is a challenge for us to truly accept the love of Jesus Christ, who gave to us his body and his blood, that we might be redeemed to do God's loving will. As we have gathered here this day, bringing our prayer concerns to you, O Lord, help us to remember that you hold each one of us gently and lovingly, offering your healing mercies. Give us courage to be your witnesses, seeking peace in this war-torn world. For we ask this in the name of Jesus the 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: Lamentations 1:1-6

How deserted lies the city,  
once so full of people!  
How like a widow is she,  
who once was great among the nations!  
She who was queen among the provinces  
has now become a slave.  
<sup>2</sup>Bitterly she weeps at night,  
tears are on her cheeks.  
Among all her lovers  
there is no one to comfort her.  
All her friends have betrayed her;  
they have become her enemies.  
<sup>3</sup>After affliction and harsh labor,  
Judah has gone into exile.  
She dwells among the nations;  
she finds no resting place.  
All who pursue her have overtaken her  
in the midst of her distress.  
<sup>4</sup>The roads to Zion mourn,  
for no one comes to her appointed festivals.  
All her gateways are desolate,  
her priests groan,  
her young women grieve,  
and she is in bitter anguish.  
<sup>5</sup>Her foes have become her masters;  
her enemies are at ease.  
The LORD has brought her grief  
because of her many sins.  
Her children have gone into exile,  
captive before the foe.

<sup>6</sup>All the splendor has departed  
from Daughter Zion.  
Her princes are like deer  
that find no pasture;  
in weakness they have fled  
before the pursuer.

Read the Epistle Lesson: 2 Timothy 1:1-14

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, in keeping with the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus,

<sup>2</sup>To Timothy, my dear son:

Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

<sup>3</sup>I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. <sup>4</sup>Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. <sup>5</sup>I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

<sup>6</sup>For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. <sup>7</sup>For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. <sup>8</sup>So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. <sup>9</sup>He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, <sup>10</sup>but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. <sup>11</sup>And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. <sup>12</sup>That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.

<sup>13</sup>What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. <sup>14</sup>Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Luke 17:5-10

The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!”

<sup>6</sup>He replied, “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you.

<sup>7</sup>“Suppose one of you has a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Will he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, ‘Come along now and sit down to eat’? <sup>8</sup> Won’t he rather say, ‘Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink’? <sup>9</sup> Will he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? <sup>10</sup> So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’”

## Message

Let us pray: Dear Heavenly Father, through the power of your Holy Spirit, unite us together as a community of faith, that we might genuinely care for one another, and embrace each other as members of your heavenly kingdom. Empower us to provide a growing environment for our children and grandchildren, that they might be strengthened in faith, and embrace the life to which you have called them in baptism. Inspire us to live by the principles of our faith that we might witness to those around us that your redeeming grace makes a difference in our lives. This we ask in Christ’s holy name. Amen.

Each of our lessons for this morning addresses the issue of faith. In our first lesson, Habakkuk laments the fact that Israel is not living according to the precepts of God’s law, and receives from God the assurance that the righteous shall live by faith. In our second lesson, Paul says to Timothy “I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you.” And in our Gospel lesson, the twelve apostles said to Jesus, “Increase our faith!” And take note, that there is an exclamation point at the end of that sentence.

There is a simple fact we need to always remember and not lose sight of: Faith is a gift from God, and it is not great faith we need, it is faith in a great God!

“Increase our faith! If only I had more faith, Lord! Increase my faith!” How often have we cried these words? How often have we longed for a greater faith? How often have we wondered if God was really out there, and wondered why it was so hard to believe in him? Indeed, there are many times in our lives; seasons of challenge and suffering, when we may be tempted to roll our eyes heavenward and sigh aloud, “If only I had more faith!” But here is the thing about faith; it is not great faith we need, it’s faith in a great God!

I love the vivid imagery of faith that the Biblical scholar N.T. Wright offers. He says, "Faith is like a window through which you can see something. What matters is not whether the window is six inches or six feet high; what matters is the God that your faith is looking out on. If it is the creator God, the God active in Jesus and the Spirit, then the tiniest little peep hole of a window will give you access to a power like you have never dreamed of." Power enough even to "say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you."

It seems impossible, doesn't it? But in God, all things are possible, and our faith originates with God and comes to us as a gift. We just need to take the faith we have already been given and deploy it more effectively. Do you remember that classic science project; the one involving electromagnets. You take an old iron nail and it had to be iron, wrap a piece of copper wire around it, and attach both ends of the wire to the terminals of a dry cell battery. Suddenly that electrified nail is attracting all manner of paper clips, thumbtacks, and iron filings. In the presence of that electrical field, the nail is changed into a magnet. As long as it remains in contact with that field of electromagnetic power, it will attract other pieces of iron to itself.

Has the nail itself changed? No. It is the electrical power flowing around it that makes the difference. And that is the way it is with faith. We all have it; but every so often, we doubt that we have it. We all get lost in thought, and ask ourselves, "Where is the faith? Do I still have it? Did I lose it? If so, can I find it again?"

But the thing about faith is that it is not a possession of ours in the first place; so that makes it kind of hard to lose faith. Because faith is a spiritual power that originates with God and comes to and through us as a gift. What we must do during our seasons of doubt is to hook ourselves up to God's battery terminals, so the surge of spiritual energy will flow into us, and then on through us to others.

Most of us have experienced great sorrow at the loss of a loved one in our lifetime. It is not unusual at times like those we experience doubt and question our faith and God. But it is at those times when we need to remember that at all times in our lives we have something good and something bad in our lives. No matter how good things are in your life, there is always something bad that needs to be worked on. And no matter how bad things are in your life, there is always something good you can thank God for. At times like this you must learn that you can focus on your God given purposes, or you can focus on your problems. If you focus on your problems, you are going into self-centeredness, 'which is my problem, my issues, my pain.' But one of the easiest ways to get rid of pain is to get your focus off

yourself and onto God and others. You have to learn to deal with both the good and the bad of life. When we let God and God's purposes be the driving force in our lives, then we are connecting our faith, however small, to God's power. Christian faith centers on Christ, believing that God's word in Christ can and will be fulfilled. So how is our faith increased? The quality is more important than the quantity: a tiny seed of faith is enough if the faith is real faith; faith in God revealed in Christ. With that, amazing things can happen!

On this World Communion Sunday, we are reminded of a very important way by which we can connect with God's power and increase our faith, and it comes in the power of the Lord's Table. When coming to the Lord's Table, we take into our hands a tiny morsel of bread, and drink from the tiny cup of grape juice, it may seem like what we are holding in our hands is insignificant and inconsequential. It is ordinary stuff that bread and juice; no different in substance from what might sit on our dinner table at home. Yet, like the atom of hydrogen that is transformed by nuclear fusion into a blaze of power, that bread and cup have the ability to transform our lives in astonishing ways. There is nothing magical about the material stuff of the communion elements. It's all about the power we Christians call the Holy Spirit, that activates them in our lives.

Jesus said to his disciples that a mustard sized morsel of faith is more than enough to uproot a mighty tree and cast it into the sea. There is no telling what a piece of communion bread or a sip of communion juice can do for people of faith who come to the Lord's table hungry and searching for what our host, Christ has prepared for us. As you come to this table today, come as a humble servant. Come praising God for all the good and blessed things in your life, even if you are struggling in the midst of overwhelming trials. Come to this Table today with confidence that God's gift of faith is available to you, and real faith, however miniscule can overcome all things in God! Amen!

Benediction:

*As God has poured God's love on you, go now in peace to bring God's love to all people. Rest in the confidence of God's abiding presence with you and be joyful in your service to God. Go in peace and love. AMEN.*