

Home Service for September 4, 2022

Welcome and Announcements

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

God is the potter; we are the clay. Rest in gratitude on the potter's wheel, for we are being shaped according to God's purposes. We are being molded into vessels of great beauty and infinite worth.

Call to Worship:

God is like a potter who shapes and forms our lives. We have been called to be faithful to God's intention. God seeks for us to be vessels of compassion and service. We have been given multiple opportunities to witness to God's love. Come, let us worship the Creator who has given us life. Let us send our praises to God who knows us totally and loves us. AMEN.

Opening Prayer:

Lord, from the very beginning of your creation, you breathed your love in to all that you made. You gave us the breath of life and asked us to be good stewards of all creation. You placed your trust and love in us. Help us to turn again with joyful hearts to you, placing our trust in all that you have done for us. Let us be a blessing for you. AMEN.

Prayer of Confession:

Forgiving God, we have messed up in so many ways. You gave us a wonderful world, filled with beauty, power, and majesty, and we have ravaged it - tearing away at its gifts with our own greed and cowardice. We have not treated this world or one another with compassionate love. We have turned our backs on situations of need in which we could have been instruments of help, healing, and peace. We have neglected service to others and have focused our lives on accumulating things and status. We have chased after false gods - greed, power, fame. You are the potter, O Lord. You fashioned us, but we focused on developing our flaws rather than working with our strengths. Please forgive us, Lord. Refashion us to be your people, celebrating your love in service to others. For we ask this in the name of Jesus Christ. AMEN.

Words of Assurance

*God's loving choice for you is peace and hope. God has fashioned you to be God's people. Rejoice! For God is with you, reaching out to heal and care for you.
AMEN.*

Read Psalm 139: 1-6, 13-18

You have searched me, LORD,
and you know me.

²You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.

³You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.

⁴Before a word is on my tongue
you, LORD, know it completely.

⁵You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.

⁶Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.

¹³For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

¹⁴I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.

¹⁵My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

¹⁶Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.

¹⁷How precious to me are your thoughts,^[a] God!
How vast is the sum of them!

¹⁸Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand—
when I awake, I am still with you.

Prayers of the People:

We are broken vessels, O God. You have watched us. You have called to us. You have blessed us and yet we have chosen our own flawed ways. Throughout the ages you have sent your prophets to help us return to you. Some people heeded your call and turned again to lives of love and witness. But others chose not to listen. Please help us to tune our ears and our hearts to you, O God. Help us to seek peace and justice rather than greed and complacency. As we have gathered here this morning to listen to your word, to sing praise, to offer our prayers, help us to remember that you hold us dearly in your hands. You cherish our lives and listen to our cries. You respond to our needs. Enable us to place our trust in you totally, that we may faithfully serve you all of our days. In Jesus' Name, we pray. 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: Jeremiah 18:1-11

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: ²“Go down to the potter’s house, and there I will give you my message.” ³So I went down to the potter’s house, and I saw him working at the wheel. ⁴But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.

⁵Then the word of the LORD came to me. ⁶He said, “Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?” declares the LORD. “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel. ⁷If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, ⁸and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. ⁹And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, ¹⁰and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it.

¹¹“Now therefore say to the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem, ‘This is what the LORD says: Look! I am preparing a disaster for you and devising a

plan against you. So turn from your evil ways, each one of you, and reform your ways and your actions.’

Read the Epistle Lesson: Philemon 1-21

To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker—² also to Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier—and to the church that meets in your home:

³ Grace and peace to you^[a] from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴ I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, ⁵ because I hear about your love for all his holy people and your faith in the Lord Jesus. ⁶ I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. ⁷ Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord’s people.

⁸ Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, ⁹ yet I prefer to appeal to you on the basis of love. It is as none other than Paul—an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus—¹⁰ that I appeal to you for my son Onesimus,^[b] who became my son while I was in chains. ¹¹ Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me.

¹² I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you. ¹³ I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel. ¹⁴ But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do would not seem forced but would be voluntary. ¹⁵ Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever—¹⁶ no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord.

¹⁷ So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. ¹⁸ If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. ¹⁹ I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back—not to mention that you owe me your very self. ²⁰ I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ. ²¹ Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask.

²² And one thing more: Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers.

²³ Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. ²⁴ And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.

²⁵ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Luke 14:25-33

Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ²⁶“If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

²⁸“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? ²⁹ For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, ³⁰ saying, ‘This person began to build and wasn’t able to finish.’

³¹“Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won’t he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³² If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. ³³ In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.

Message

At the center of the life of a Christian is Christ. At the center of the life of Christ is the cross. Today the cross is still considered by some only an instrument of extreme torture and death. For the unbeliever and scoffers the cross holds no power or meaning. But you, every Christian, and I know, believe, and confesses that without the cross of Christ we are lost and condemned creatures. Paul states in Galatians 6:14: "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." He counted himself dead to the world and the world dead to him. In his new life for Christ Paul held firmly to the cross of Christ. Today’s verses speak to Christians in living faithful lives.

Jesus was at the height of his earthly ministry and popularity. His teachings and miracles were popular. Many were following Jesus for the wrong reasons. They sought only miracles and healings. Jesus wanted everyone to understand that there was a cost for true disciples. Jesus was also on his way to Jerusalem; for crucifixion. The same crowds following Jesus would soon be shouting, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” Jesus soon makes the ultimate sacrifice. Jesus would travel from the heights to the depths. Jesus wanted the crowds to truly understand the depth of his sacrifice. He wanted each to count the cost.

In our gospel lesson, Jesus is trying to tell us the price we must pay to be his disciple. He says, "If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple". That is a harsh statement. Does Jesus really mean we should hate our families, we should hate ourselves? Jesus is trying to drive home a point that to follow Him, to be a disciple of His one must put everything else second in life.

Jesus was saying we need to put in second place everything in our lives except him. He comes first. He comes first before family, he comes first before our relatives, he comes first before our own lives. As we let the impact of that statement filter into our hearts, we see that Jesus is calling us to a radical kind of life. A life that is lived which sets those who believe in Him apart from, the rest of society. Then in the last part of this text, Jesus, is asking: are you willing to pay that kind price to follow me? In a sense the two parables, or illustrations Jesus uses is asking us if we are willing to pay that, kind of cost to be his follower? Are we willing to turn the love we have for him into an action that will separate us, or set us apart from our families and even from those values and ideals we hold, dear in our own lives?

Jesus is saying, if you want to be my disciple, if you want to follow me, here is what you are called to do. Place, me first above everything else in your life and then before you say you are willing to do that, you better look before you leap, you had better count the cost, see if you are willing to make such a sacrifice for me, see if you are really willing to pay that kind of price? Taking up one's cross means death to self rather than denial of self. The cross is an instrument of execution ending in death. Today, in our modern Christianity, we have equated the cross more with service than with sacrifice. Those who heard these startling words of Jesus knew unmistakably that he was speaking of death. With no uncertain sound, Jesus is calling the people to follow him even unto their deaths.

In defining further what the cost of discipleship is, Jesus uses two parables as illustrations. The first is a builder who prepares to build a tower. The second is a warrior who prepares to go to battle. In each, the emphasis is on counting the cost.

The tower was probably to be constructed on the man's farm to protect his crops and his vineyards from animals that would destroy and from people who would steal. The intent was a positive one. What would be detrimental was to begin the building and not be able to finish it. Beginning without adequate finances would

cause derision and shame from his neighbors. Such a monument to bad planning would stand as a poor witness to the builder's ability to finish what he had begun. Jesus is focusing on the end of one's journey with him as well as the beginning.

The warrior king wisely counted how many troops he had before going into battle with his enemy. With ten thousand men, how victorious could he be against an army of twenty thousand commanded by his enemy? Having counted the cost, he came to the conclusion that the better part of wisdom was not to go to war. He seeks peace without the risk of battle. Jesus' point in the parable was the necessity of counting the cost before enlisting in his army.

Verse 33 sums up this section with a call to "forsake all." Are we willing to give up all that we are and all that we have to serve Christ? His call is for a willingness to surrender everything that would impede one's total commitment to him. We dare never, ever underestimate the power of the straightforward, powerful saving message of the cross of Christ. Jesus on the cross is not a pleasant picture. It took the holy, innocent, precious blood of Christ to cleanse the world and us from all unrighteousness. Christ made the sacrifice on the cross.

Without the cross there is no sacrifice. Without the sacrifice of the sinless Son of God there is no payment for sin. Without payment for sin there is no forgiveness. Without forgiveness there is no reason at all for us to carry on with our lives in this world. There is a sacrifice. It is a perfect sacrifice. The Son of God dies on the cross. Our sins are forgiven. Our souls are blessed and our lives are changed. Now we are saved by the perfect sacrifice of Christ. The punishment for our sins has been taken away. Now we are "eager to do what is good"!

Christ dramatically shows us his great love. Christ also reveals his love to all mankind. We are saved by grace to know, believe, and confess that Christ is our Savior. Our Savior has shown us his great love that we might show this love of God to others. We "sacrifice" because of Christ's sacrifice. Jesus is very serious that we count the cost of the cross of Christ. The cost of the cross for the Lord Jesus Christ was tremendous. Any sacrifice we endure pales in comparison. Our Savior wants us to remember it is God's grace that saves us. Jesus gives us the means to remain his disciples. We will want always to hold fast to the cross of Christ that cost Jesus' his life. **CHRISTIANS COUNT THE COST OF THE CROSS.** This price takes sacrifice. We live lives of self-denial rather than selfishness. We love God who first loved us. We love our neighbors. Thankfully Christ made the sacrifice for us. Amen.

Benediction:

Let the joy and love of the Lord flood into your hearts and lives today. Let this day of discipleship be a day of celebration as you go into the world to serve God. Go forth in peace and joy in all that you do. AMEN.