

Home Service for October 23, 2022

Welcome and Announcements

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

Rejoice in the beauty of God's creation. God has blessed God's people with many gifts and promises, and we humbly thank our God.

Call to Worship:

Here is your invitation. Unplug in this moment from daily life: from display screens and overload, from earphones and isolation. Reconnect to visions and dreams: meadows and pastures, hills and valleys, mountains and seas. Reconnect to the bounty of God. Be glad and rejoice in God. Amen.

Opening Prayer:

God of all generations, on this Reformation Sunday, we remember mothers and fathers in the faith who took bold steps in new directions to re-form your church. Pour out your spirit upon us, that we too may dream dreams, see visions, and view the whole created order as your bountiful temple. With responsibility and joy, we pledge ourselves to renew this temple, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Creator God, we confess this day to engaging in habits that diminish the bounty of your creation. Not satisfied with the goodness of your holy temple, your seas and mountains, your rain and soil, we have fashioned a system of sustenance that seems good to us, but cannot be sustained. Be merciful to us, for we have sinned. Answer us with awesome deeds of deliverance, O Hope of the Earth. Give us vision and a prophetic spirit. Renew our vocation, as stewards of your creation. Amen.

Words of Assurance

*Do not lose heart. Those who humbly admit their sins find favor with God. For God answers prayer, and forgives transgression.
Believe this good news: We are forgiven and freed to newness of life.*

Read Psalm 65

Praise awaits^[b] you, our God, in Zion;
to you our vows will be fulfilled.

² You who answer prayer,
to you all people will come.

³ When we were overwhelmed by sins,
you forgave^[c] our transgressions.

⁴ Blessed are those you choose
and bring near to live in your courts!

We are filled with the good things of your house,
of your holy temple.

⁵ You answer us with awesome and righteous deeds,
God our Savior,

the hope of all the ends of the earth
and of the farthest seas,

⁶ who formed the mountains by your power,
having armed yourself with strength,

⁷ who stilled the roaring of the seas,
the roaring of their waves,
and the turmoil of the nations.

⁸ The whole earth is filled with awe at your wonders;
where morning dawns, where evening fades,
you call forth songs of joy.

⁹ You care for the land and water it;
you enrich it abundantly.

The streams of God are filled with water
to provide the people with grain,
for so you have ordained it.^[d]

¹⁰ You drench its furrows and level its ridges;
you soften it with showers and bless its crops.

¹¹ You crown the year with your bounty,
and your carts overflow with abundance.

¹² The grasslands of the wilderness overflow;
the hills are clothed with gladness.

¹³ The meadows are covered with flocks
and the valleys are mantled with grain;
they shout for joy and sing.

Prayers of the People:

Lord, thank you so much for your faithfulness to us in the difficult times. Help each of us to run with perseverance the race that you set before us and to finish that race well with your help. Help us to keep the faith and the teaching that you have entrusted to us and pass it on faithfully to those in the next generation who can teach others also. We know you will be with us to the end. We know that your grace is sufficient. 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: Joel 2:23-32

Be glad, people of Zion,
rejoice in the LORD your God,
for he has given you the autumn rains
because he is faithful.

He sends you abundant showers,
both autumn and spring rains, as before.

²⁴ The threshing floors will be filled with grain;
the vats will overflow with new wine and oil.

²⁵ "I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten—
the great locust and the young locust,
the other locusts and the locust swarm^[a]—
my great army that I sent among you.

²⁶ You will have plenty to eat, until you are full,
and you will praise the name of the LORD your God,
who has worked wonders for you;
never again will my people be shamed.

²⁷ Then you will know that I am in Israel,
that I am the LORD your God,
and that there is no other;
never again will my people be shamed.

²⁸ “And afterward,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your old men will dream dreams,
your young men will see visions.
²⁹ Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days.
³⁰ I will show wonders in the heavens
and on the earth,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.
³¹ The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.
³² And everyone who calls
on the name of the LORD will be saved;
for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem
there will be deliverance,
as the LORD has said,
even among the survivors
whom the LORD calls.^[b]

Read the Epistle Lesson: 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

¹⁶ At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. ¹⁷ But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion’s mouth. ¹⁸ The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Luke 18:9-14

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰ “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood by

himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

¹³ “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

¹⁴ “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Message

As I read both the Epistle lesson and our Gospel lesson one idea or thought came almost yelling out at me. The idea of how our attitude affects our lives, be it in a moment or our life time and our relationship with God. So many times our attitude actually affects how we see a situation and how we react to it. I think we all have heard the reference of looking at a partial glass of water and being asked do you see it as a cup is half empty or do you see it as a cup half full. Our attitude at the moment has a great affect to our answer. What you see certainly determines how you feel about any situation. That is true even for our faith life. Focusing on evil and discouraging events causes us to lose sight of God’s faithfulness, but focusing on God’s faithfulness causes us to see the blessings of our past and your future.

Think about the apostle Paul as he was writing from a Roman prison, he knew his days were numbered. Even in closing his final epistle to Timothy, Paul was looking forward to his future in God’s faithfulness and backward into his past in God’s faithfulness. Paul had a positive attitude which enabled him to provide encouragement for all who would follow in believing in Christ.

In verses 6-8 we are told that Paul actually looked forward to his departure from this world. For he knew that his earthly life would end soon and he did not think that was negative situation. For Paul was eager to lay his life down as an offering before the Lord. The apostle’s blood was about to be poured out because of his commitment to Christ. This was a free willed offering signifying his confidence in God’s faithfulness to save him. Paul looked forward to completing his faithfulness. As a spiritual warrior, he had battled for the gospel to the end. As a spiritual athlete, he had finished God's prescribed course. And, as a spiritual steward he had faithfully administrated the blessings that God had entrusted to him.

Paul looked forward to the faithfulness of God. His eagerness to depart was grounded in his confidence that God had already set aside an eternal reward for

him. What Paul had accomplished would be acknowledged and rewarded. This eager, forward focus on God's faithfulness was not merely the apostle's private hope. All who laid their lives on the line for the gospel's sake, faithfully longing for Christ's return, could anticipate the same reward. Paul had a very positive attitude looking forward to the end of his days.

In verses 16 – 18 Paul looks in the opposite direction into his past. Paul took a look backward. Again he focused on the faithfulness of God. All through his life, and especially in the last days, God had met his needs. Looking back Paul saw himself standing alone before Nero's hostile court. No other believers had appeared to support him. While some may have been involved in ministry far from Rome, others had simply feared the persecution that made any identification with Christ risky. At any rate, Paul had experienced abandonment. Still, his focus was on God's faithfulness. If Jesus could say, "Father, forgive them," while dying on the cross, Paul could say, "May their desertion not be held against them."

Looking back at that time of loneliness, Paul realized he had not been forsaken. God had been faithful. The Lord had stood beside him as he faced Nero. In that moment God gave him strength, sustaining him in every way. Paul not only had stood, he had also spoken. Once again he proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ before the Gentiles. And after that, God had delivered him once again from a death sentence. Yes, God had been faithful. Looking back, it was easy to see.

Looking back at all of God's past deliverances caused Paul to trust God's ultimate deliverance. One day soon the Lord would rescue him from the evil attacks of earth and deliver him safely to his heavenly kingdom. As Paul looked forward, his focus was on God's faithfulness. As he looked backward, his focus was on God's faithfulness. As he sat in prison, waiting for the day of his departure, all Paul could think to do was praise God.

Our Gospel lesson also spoke about attitudes as the parable compares the attitude of a Pharisee and that of the Tax Collector when they both went to worship. The main difference between the two is how each man stands before God and that difference is whether or not he stands with humility or arrogance. The Scripture reminds us that "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble." Both in James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5. The Pharisee stood tall and without fear, while the Tax Collector hardly dared to lift his eyes heavenward.

They both prayed, but oh so differently. The Tax Collector asked for mercy admitting he was a sinner, while the Pharisee was there to inform all who could

hear including God just how good he really was. Jesus tells us that the tax collector left having received the forgiveness of God. The Pharisee on the other hand simply told God that he was good and didn't need mercy. Jesus also told us: for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.

We are to come humbly before God in pray. A person with genuine humility does not compare themselves to the best or the worst of humanity. A person of genuine humility does not compare themselves to others at all. Genuine humility rests in the care of God; it understands that we are inadequate to save ourselves, or to make ourselves fit company for being in the presence of God. Persons with genuine humility come into worship with that understanding, and they find genuine acceptance at the hand of God. When they leave worship, they feel and know forgiveness.

May you stand in humility before God. May you pray in humility, asking for mercy for your sins. May you receive His love and welcoming embrace and know God's presence surrounding you each day. Amen.

Benediction:

Go forth without shame to proclaim the goodness of God.

Go forth to spread God's love with all giving thanks for how much you are loved.

Go forth, knowing that the wind of the Spirit blows you to where you need to be.

Amen.