

Home Service for February 4, 2024

Welcome and Announcements

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

*Those who trust God will rise up with wings like eagles.*

Call to Worship:

God of love and healing, we gather today to hear the words of your love as you touch our hearts with holy balm. Open our hearts and spirits and let your merciful spirit dwell within us that, having heard the good news, we may bring that hope to others. AMEN.

Opening Prayer:

God of mercy and love, be with us this morning as we hear the stories of Jesus and his compassion. Remind us again that we also need to be people of hope and compassion in this world which seems so dark. You, O God, open the doors of blessings. You reveal to us the many ways in which Jesus reached out to others at their time of need. Inspire our hearts and lift our spirits this day, for we offer this prayer in Jesus' Name. AMEN.

Prayer of Confession:

How amazing it is to us, O God of love, that you look into our hearts and forgive our wayward spirits. So many times we have succumbed to the temptations of this world, seeking comfort in its fleeting enticements. We have turned deaf ears on the cries of those in distress and walked away from opportunities to give aid and comfort. Remind us again of how Jesus reached out to the multitudes who brought their problems and ailments to him. His compassionate touch not only healed their bodies but restored and renewed their spirits. Forgive our stubbornness and our selfishness. Give us hearts of compassion and spirits willing to serve you by serving others. We offer this prayer of contrition in Jesus' name. AMEN.

Words of Assurance:

*Hear the good news! In this very instant, God has touched our hearts and offered God's healing and forgiving love. In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Hallelujah!! AMEN.*

Read Psalm 147:1-11, 20

Praise the LORD.<sup>[a]</sup>

How good it is to sing praises to our God,  
how pleasant and fitting to praise him!

<sup>2</sup>The LORD builds up Jerusalem;  
he gathers the exiles of Israel.

<sup>3</sup>He heals the brokenhearted  
and binds up their wounds.

<sup>4</sup>He determines the number of the stars  
and calls them each by name.

<sup>5</sup>Great is our Lord and mighty in power;  
his understanding has no limit.

<sup>6</sup>The LORD sustains the humble  
but casts the wicked to the ground.

<sup>7</sup>Sing to the LORD with grateful praise;  
make music to our God on the harp.

<sup>8</sup>He covers the sky with clouds;  
he supplies the earth with rain  
and makes grass grow on the hills.

<sup>9</sup>He provides food for the cattle  
and for the young ravens when they call.

<sup>10</sup>His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse,  
nor his delight in the legs of the warrior;

<sup>11</sup>the LORD delights in those who fear him,  
who put their hope in his unfailing love.

<sup>20</sup>He has done this for no other nation;  
they do not know his laws.<sup>[a]</sup>

Praise the LORD.

Prayers of the People:

Tragedies abound, O Lord. Our newspapers, television newscasts, and media all report the troubled happenings in our world. War and strife seem to be the order of the day. And we are caught up in the midst of this chaos. Calm our spirits, Lord. Help us to focus on the love you have given to us in Jesus Christ. Remind us again that his healing mercies extend to us this day as surely as they did to the people of long ago. We have gathered on this day to hear your word, to be forgiven and healed, to find ways in which we may serve you in peace. We have lifted names of those near and dear to us who stand in need of your healing mercies and

compassionate love. Some names we have spoken aloud; and others we have uttered in our hearts. You have heard all our prayers. You know our needs and concerns before our voices can frame them. Let us accept the love you give to us. Empower us to take that love and use it for good in your world. Let the message of hope and compassion go forth from us again to this world which focuses on tragedy and turmoil. And once again, let us know fully that you are with us. 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 Old Testament Lesson: Isaiah 40:21-31

Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

Has it not been told you from the beginning?

Have you not understood since the earth was founded?

<sup>22</sup> He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth,  
and its people are like grasshoppers.

He stretches out the heavens like a canopy,  
and spreads them out like a tent to live in.

<sup>23</sup> He brings princes to naught  
and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.

<sup>24</sup> No sooner are they planted,  
no sooner are they sown,  
no sooner do they take root in the ground,  
than he blows on them and they wither,  
and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.

<sup>25</sup> "To whom will you compare me?  
Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One.

<sup>26</sup> Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens:  
Who created all these?

He who brings out the starry host one by one  
and calls forth each of them by name.

Because of his great power and mighty strength,  
not one of them is missing.

<sup>27</sup> Why do you complain, Jacob?

Why do you say, Israel,

“My way is hidden from the LORD;  
my cause is disregarded by my God”?

<sup>28</sup> Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

The LORD is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He will not grow tired or weary,  
and his understanding no one can fathom.

<sup>29</sup> He gives strength to the weary  
and increases the power of the weak.

<sup>30</sup> Even youths grow tired and weary,  
and young men stumble and fall;

<sup>31</sup> but those who hope in the LORD  
will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles;  
they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint.

Read the Epistle Lesson: 1 Corinthians 9:16-23

For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! <sup>17</sup> If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. <sup>18</sup> What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make full use of my rights as a preacher of the gospel.

<sup>19</sup> Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. <sup>20</sup> To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. <sup>21</sup> To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. <sup>22</sup> To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. <sup>23</sup> I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

## Read the Gospel Lesson: Mark 1:29-39

As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. <sup>30</sup> Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. <sup>31</sup> So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

<sup>32</sup> That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. <sup>33</sup> The whole town gathered at the door, <sup>34</sup> and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

<sup>35</sup> Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. <sup>36</sup> Simon and his companions went to look for him, <sup>37</sup> and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"

<sup>38</sup> Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." <sup>39</sup> So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

## Message

In the Gospel lesson today, we heard the story of Jesus leaving the synagogue after a day of preaching, teaching and healing. Jesus might have been ready to relax among his disciples and friends. But Jesus found Peter's mother-in-law, in bed, and sick with fever. Although he needed to rest, the needs of Peter's mother-in-law were more pressing.

Simon Peter, Peter's mother-in-law and the crowd that followed all had different needs. Each took a moment out of their day to seek out Jesus as the great solution to their problems. Each approached their needs with a slightly different frame of mind. First, the needs of Simon Peter. Jesus spent the better part of the Sabbath teaching those around him. The crowds were amazed at how He spoke, what He said, and what He did. In his ministry among the people: He chased a demon out of a man with only a word, He commanded an unclean spirit, and the spirit obeyed, He dumbfounded those around Him with His wisdom and words of authority. All these amazing things they heard Him say, and saw him perform; they didn't understand who this man was, but they wanted to know more. They wanted to find out more about this teacher and understand his message. Peter was also part of that group. He wanted to learn more from this rabbi who had called him to be a disciple.

Peter wanted to continue his journey with Jesus, but he was also a friend of the Lord who probably wanted to help Jesus unwind after such a busy day. Simon Peter followed Him, listened intently, and knew He had a lot more to learn from this man from Galilee. So, he invited Jesus to his house to help him relax, and take care of him, as well as learn more wisdom from the master.

It was common to eat a meal after being in the temple on the Sabbath and this is where Peter, Jesus and the others were headed. Simon Peter wasn't content leaving Jesus alone at the synagogue. He invited Him to supper, to spend time away from the temple.

Peter shared his house, his table, his life, with his Lord and Savior. He chose to spend more than just a few minutes a week with God. He spent hours and days dedicated to learning about, and following Jesus. Peter had a need to learn more about the Lord and learn more from Jesus. Perhaps we can learn a lot from how Peter chose to spend time with God. Peter's need was one of knowledge, and He used his time to expand His understanding of Jesus.

Peter's mother-in-law had needs. She was bed ridden with a fever and couldn't greet her guests at the door. Given the conditions of the day, and the likelihood of recovery, she probably had a life threatening condition that could have taken her from this world. But, Jesus was there to assist.

Our Lord could have healed her from a distance, with nothing more than a word from His lips for He did just that on occasion. But, that's not the path He chose to take that day. Instead, He came into the house, approached the ill woman, took her hand, and she was healed. Her condition was improved so quickly, and so completely, that not only was she able to get up and move about, she was able to serve her guests as was the practice of the day.

When He healed this woman, she could have chosen to relax, or maybe share her joy with others. But she responded with the gifts she was given. She had a guest in the house, and that guest was Jesus. He had just shared His power with her by blessing her with the removal of her fever. She chose to show her appreciation by serving her house guest. She chose to spend time with Jesus and help take care of His needs by taking care of His comfort, His appetite, and His rest.

Let us not forget the needs of the crowd that pursued Jesus as news of His healings spread. Think of the crowds that must have gathered around Him, pressing in, trying to get closer to this new teacher, perhaps pushing their way to the front. As Jesus spoke, people listened. As they heard His message, they talked to those next

to them. You can almost image some of the questions that must have been asked between people. Who is this guy? Did you hear what He said? As the murmuring increased, so did the size of the crowds listening. More and more people gathered to see this new teacher and hear what He had to say. Once they saw Him give orders to the demon in a man, it grabbed their attention even more. He spent the day at the Synagogue teaching, preaching, and cleaning the spirit of one man. All while fighting off the crowds, answering questions, and building the beginning of His new ministry. The crowds pressed in and around Jesus. Some were there to get healed, some to listen to this remarkable teacher, and others just to see what all the fuss was about.

The crowds recognized the wisdom and power of Jesus and sought Him out. They brought their sick to find a cure for their ailments. But, more importantly, they brought their questions, looking for answers no-one else could provide. They brought their hearts to find the truth in the God's message to them all. The crowd had needs, and they found them fulfilled by seeking out Jesus. Peter, his mother-in-law, and the crowd all had needs that were fulfilled in the coming of Jesus.

Our needs today are just as pressing, and just as important. Jesus' ministry was one of preaching repentance and granting forgiveness. He had a message to deliver, that required being exposed to His word and His teachings, in addition to His miracles. His word reveals that we are sinful human beings and need a savior. We need the forgiveness that His life offered us in his sacrifice on the cross. Jesus' ministry was about providing justice for our sins, by taking the punishment that we deserve, on His sinless, perfect shoulders.

Like Peter's mother-in-law, we too need to be healed from our sinful lives. Once healed, she used her gifts to aid those around her. Like her, we have gifts that can benefit those around us as well. May we seek out our neighbors, co-workers, friends and family, for they have needs to be met and served. Like the crowds seeking questions, we too need to ask who Jesus is and pursue those answers. No one has all the answers, except God Himself. Seek him out to help understand the questions, as well as the answers.

Today, we may need guidance. Tomorrow, it may be education. The day after it might be strength. Many days, it will be forgiveness that we'll need. Jesus provided for all of these needs, through the Word he pronounced, and the teachings he proclaimed. We have been given the scriptures to help us decipher our needs, and prepare for the future. But, we can't leave Jesus at the church steps. We have to take Him with us, everywhere we go. We have to be willing to ask the questions, that we have yet to understand. We have to bring Jesus into our lives, into our

houses, into our hearts, and address those needs by connecting with His Word and through prayer.

The ever present God is available for our help, and we have not done our best until we have invited him into the tangled messes of our lives. Like the disciples, we must be in a relationship with Christ, then have the faith, the conviction, the assurance, that He can handle the troubled waters of our life.

Don't leave Jesus at the door. Take him home with you today, and spend time learning what He can teach you. Most of all ask God into our lives for He will handle all the problems that life brings. Amen.

Benediction:

*Renewed by the power of God's unconditional love and forgiveness; strengthened by the witness of Jesus to be of service to others, we go from this place rejoicing in the opportunities to serve others in Christ's name. Go in peace, and may the peace of God always dwell within you. AMEN.*