

Home Service for June 29, 2025

Welcome and Announcements

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

Call to Worship:

Our freedom comes as life in the Spirit.

We reject the works based only on our fleshly desires.

We live a new life of spirit and truth.

Let us worship the Lord in full spirit. Amen.

Opening Prayer:

God of all life and love: we are your children, and you made us free to live in joyful relationship with you and one another. Your grace empowers us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Give us the courage to love ourselves as much as you love us and to love others with the same compassion. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Loving God, you give us freedom. In fact, in you, we live in perfect freedom. Fear tries to bind us. Idolatry comes chasing after us. Divisive arguments try to trap us in corners and keep us locked away from one another. These are not the freedoms you have in mind for your children, loving God. We confess, we have submitted to them in the past, but no more. Inspire us to live in the freedom you have given us for love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. You set us free. Give us the courage to enjoy it. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Words of Assurance:

Beloved children of God: hear and believe the good news, for freedom Christ has set us free to live anew.

Read Psalm 77:1-2, 11-20

I cried out to God for help;

I cried out to God to hear me.

² When I was in distress, I sought the Lord;
at night I stretched out untiring hands,
and I would not be comforted.

- ¹¹ I will remember the deeds of the Lord;
yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.
- ¹² I will consider all your works
and meditate on all your mighty deeds.”
- ¹³ Your ways, God, are holy.
What god is as great as our God?
- ¹⁴ You are the God who performs miracles;
you display your power among the peoples.
- ¹⁵ With your mighty arm you redeemed your people,
the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.
- ¹⁶ The waters saw you, God,
the waters saw you and writhed;
the very depths were convulsed.
- ¹⁷ The clouds poured down water,
the heavens resounded with thunder;
your arrows flashed back and forth.
- ¹⁸ Your thunder was heard in the whirlwind,
your lightning lit up the world;
the earth trembled and quaked.
- ¹⁹ Your path led through the sea,
your way through the mighty waters,
though your footprints were not seen.
- ²⁰ You led your people like a flock
by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

Prayers of the People:

Gracious and loving Creator, Sometimes the words just are not there. God, you are so amazing that our words and thoughts of how best to praise you pale in comparison to the splendors of your name. You are the Almighty, you are the Redeemer, you are grace never ending and the embodiment of love itself. And when we come to you in prayer, sometimes words fail us in what to say. Yes, we lift up our concerns, and yet sometimes they seem so small in comparison to the tribulations encountered across your creation. How can our problems compare to disasters people face, or the fighting that surrounds people trying to escape, or the horrors that no child should ever experience? Lord God, sometimes when we come to you to pray, we are clueless as to what we should ask for. You know the thoughts in our minds and the desires of our hearts, and there are times when they conflict. Sometimes we want what is not always the best for us, and there are times that we long to hold on to the things we should let go of. There are times when really the

best thing we can do is just pray thy will be done. In these moments, dear God, we are so very thankful for the lessons of your Son Jesus Christ for teaching us the words to pray when our own are insufficient, for our tradition teaches that Jesus said to pray to Our Father ...

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: 2 Kings 2:1-2, 6-14

When the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. ² Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; the Lord has sent me to Bethel."

But Elisha said, "As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel.

⁶ Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; the Lord has sent me to the Jordan."

And he replied, "As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So the two of them walked on.

⁷ Fifty men from the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped at the Jordan. ⁸ Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

⁹ When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?"

"Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit," Elisha replied.

¹⁰ "You have asked a difficult thing," Elijah said, "yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours—otherwise, it will not."

¹¹ As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. ¹² Elisha saw this and cried out, "My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!" And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his garment and tore it in two.

¹³ Elisha then picked up Elijah's cloak that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. ¹⁴ He took the cloak that had fallen from Elijah

and struck the water with it. “Where now is the Lord, the God of Elijah?” he asked. When he struck the water, it divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over.

Read the Epistle Lesson: Galatians 5:1, 13-25

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh^[a]; rather, serve one another humbly in love. ¹⁴ For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”^[b] ¹⁵ If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever^[c] you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

¹⁹ The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Luke 9:51-62

As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. ⁵² And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; ⁵³ but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them^[a]?” ⁵⁵ But Jesus turned and rebuked them. ⁵⁶ Then he and his disciples went to another village.

⁵⁷ As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.”

⁵⁸ Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”

⁵⁹ He said to another man, “Follow me.”

But he replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

⁶⁰ Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

⁶¹ Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family."

⁶² Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

Message

An empty glass and a pitcher of water can be used as an illustration.

One question often asked when there is a discussion on the Holy Spirit is: "When does a person receive the Holy Spirit?" Followed by the questions of: Is it at baptism or does it come later, after a person has been a Christian for many years? Is there a second baptism; a baptism of the Holy Spirit?

As Christians, we need to understand that we receive the Holy Spirit the moment we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior. As a child of God, we already have the gift of the Holy Spirit. When you think about it, the real issue for many of us is that we are not "FILLED" with the Spirit. But what does this mean? To be filled with the Holy Spirit means we have yielded our entire life not just part, but our whole life to the working of the Holy Spirit. The more we yield, the more the Holy Spirit controls our life.

(Time to have the empty glass and pitcher of water.) Perhaps this will help us understand a little bit better. We have an empty glass. This glass represents a person, one of us. Here comes the Holy Spirit represented by water. The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin. We recognize our need for a savior and we accept Jesus into our heart. *(Pour some water into glass)* As Christians we now have the Holy Spirit in our life but notice there is more of our life that can be filled. The Holy Spirit has many blessings he wants us to receive. The question becomes, how do we receive more of what the Holy Spirit wants us to have? Well, this is done through prayer, through Bible Study, through fellowship with believers, by dwelling on the things of God.

Before we can be filled with some thing new, such as the Holy Spirit, we must be emptied of the old. As Christians, we cannot be full of God; we cannot be full of the Holy Spirit if we fill ourselves with something else. We must be emptied of sin, we must put "self" aside. Yes, the Holy Spirit that leads us to Christ is there but we must put him in control first. As Christians, God continually calls us to give

ourselves over to him. I love how Paul expressed it by saying, “we must walk in the Spirit.”

How can we know whether or not we are walking in the Spirit? Well, Jesus once said in Matthew 7:20: that Christians will be known by their fruit.

In Luke 6:43-45 Jesus said: A good tree doesn’t produce bad fruit; on the other hand, a bad tree doesn’t produce good fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit. Figs aren’t gathered from thorn bushes, or grapes picked from a bramble bush. A good man produces good out of the good storeroom of his heart. An evil man produces evil out of the evil storeroom, for each is known by what his mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart.

Paul teaches us in Galatians 5, that the more we give ourselves over to God, certain fruit will be more evident in our life.

Paul gives a list of nine fruit of the Spirit they are: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. As a Christian continues to give him or herself over to God the more of these fruits will be evident in his or her life. We cannot deal with all nine fruit today. However, these fruits can be divided into three clusters of three. The first cluster deals primarily with the inward aspects of a life lived in the Spirit. Of course, each of these fruits also have outward expressions. These first three fruit according to Paul are: LOVE, JOY, and PEACE.

An interesting fact is that an extensive survey was conducted in the United States. Questionnaires were distributed to people of various ages and occupations. The key question was this: What are you looking for most in life? When the results were compiled, the analysts were surprised. Most of them had expected answers that would suggest materialistic goals, but the top three things that people wanted in life were love, joy, and peace; the first three fruits of the Spirit! This demonstrates that God knows what it is we really need.

It should not surprise us that the first fruit on Paul’s list is LOVE. After all, it was Paul who wrote the great love chapter, I Corinthians 13, which he concluded with the words: Now abideth faith, hope, love but the greatest of these is love.

As we continue to yield our life over to God’s Spirit, our love will grow. We will become more Christ like in the way we love. We have all heard of AGAPE in relationship to love. AGAPE is a Greek word that describes that special love of God. God’s love is an unconditional love. He loves everyone even though we may not return that love. AGAPE is the highest form of love.

Here is some interesting facts about the early Bible: When Jesus said, “Love your enemies,” Matthew’s gospel uses the word AGAPE.

When Jesus said, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor,” Mark used the word AGAPE.

When the scriptures say, “God is love,” every time it uses the word AGAPE.

As we grow in the Lord, as we give ourselves over to the Spirit, our love will become more and more like the love of Christ. It will move toward “unconditional love.” That means we will love people who may not love us in return. That means we will love those who misuse us. We will love people regardless of color; nationality; or economic status. The Spirit controlled believer will manifest the same character and conduct of love as Jesus. We will love as Christ loved us on the cross.

An unknown someone wrote a little poem titled: “What is unconditional love?”

It is silence, when your words would hurt.

It is patience, when your neighbor is curt.

It is deafness, when a scandal flows.

It is thoughtfulness, for other’s woes.

It is promptness, when stern duty calls.

It is courage, when misfortune falls.

It is trust, when not knowing the why or how.

It is acceptance, in whatever God allows.

When we think about it, it is our love, that lets the world see us as true disciples of Jesus. For there is truth in the statement: if we do not love, WE DO NOT KNOW JESUS!

Dr. Bill Bright in his book, THE HOLY SPIRIT, presents a unique idea. He states that in reality there is really a single fruit of the Spirit and that is LOVE. This love is manifested in our attitudes and our actions. In other words:

JOY IS LOVE’S STRENGTH.

PEACE IS LOVE’S SECURITY.

PATIENCE IS LOVE’S ENDURANCE.

KINDNESS IS LOVE’S CONDUCT.

GOODNESS IS LOVE’S CHARACTER.

FAITHFULNESS IS LOVE’S CONFIDENCE.

GENTLENESS IS LOVE’S HUMILITY.

SELF-CONTROL IS LOVE’S VICTORY.

I have learned that there are many categories of churches, example: big churches and small churches, but the reality really is that there are only two kinds of churches: Loving churches and Unloving churches. May this church be known as a loving church today and every day. May we all be filled with the fruit of the Spirit which is love. And remember that the reason we love is because God first loved us! Amen!

Benediction:

Children of God: you are loved into freedom, set loose on the world to share the gifts of the Holy Spirit, so go and love your neighbor, all of your neighbors, as you love yourself, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.