

Home Service for August 31, 2025

Welcome and Announcements

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

God calls us into fullness of life. Will we listen? Will we hear? Will we honor the One who seeks our welfare?

Call to Worship:

Sing in exaltation, people of God. The Lord fills us with good things.
Shout for joy, children of the Holy One. God feeds us with finest wheat.
God satisfies us with the sweetest honey. The Lord sustains us with living water.

Opening Prayer:

Help us show hospitality to strangers, Merciful One, for many have entertained angels unaware while doing so. Move us to treat one another as we would have others treat us, lest we find ourselves tortured or imprisoned with no one to come to our aid. May we always seek to do good and share from our abundance, for these things are pleasing in your sight. In your holy name, we pray. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Long-suffering One, we long to return to you with love and gratitude in our hearts. We yearn for food that satisfies, the bread of life you offer without cost. Refresh us from your living waters, as we stare into the cracked cisterns and the dry riverbeds of our petty complaints. Stand by us, Holy One, lest we forsake your glory in vain pursuits that neither profit us nor bring us joy. Amen.

Words of Assurance:

God offers us these words and this hope: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide and I will fill it."

*God offers us these words of assurance: "I will never leave you or forsake you."
God is faithful, even when we are not.*

Read Psalm 81:1,10-16

Sing for joy to God our strength;
shout aloud to the God of Jacob!

¹⁰ I am the Lord your God,
who brought you up out of Egypt.

Open wide your mouth and I will fill it.

¹¹ “But my people would not listen to me;
Israel would not submit to me.

¹² So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts
to follow their own devices.

¹³ “If my people would only listen to me,
if Israel would only follow my ways,

¹⁴ how quickly I would subdue their enemies
and turn my hand against their foes!

¹⁵ Those who hate the Lord would cringe before him,
and their punishment would last forever.

¹⁶ But you would be fed with the finest of wheat;
with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.”

Prayers of the People:

For some of us here today, Lord, we wish the summer would never end. We have enjoyed opportunities to travel, to relax, to break away from schedules and hectic calendars. For others, there is the thrill of entering the new season; looking forward to the challenges ahead. On this Labor Sunday we gather to receive your blessings once again, that we may recognize your presence in our lives and use the gifts that you have given to us in service to others. As we have offered names and situations to you in prayer for your compassionate healing love, we add our names as well. Heal our wounds, we pray. Enable us to be strong in our commitment to you by serving others in need. Keep us open always to your abiding love. For we ask this in Jesus' Name. 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: Jeremiah 2:4-13

Hear the word of the Lord, you descendants of Jacob,
all you clans of Israel.

⁵ This is what the Lord says:

“What fault did your ancestors find in me,
that they strayed so far from me?

They followed worthless idols
and became worthless themselves.

⁶ They did not ask, ‘Where is the Lord,
who brought us up out of Egypt
and led us through the barren wilderness,
through a land of deserts and ravines,
a land of drought and utter darkness,
a land where no one travels and no one lives?’

⁷ I brought you into a fertile land
to eat its fruit and rich produce.
But you came and defiled my land
and made my inheritance detestable.

⁸ The priests did not ask,
‘Where is the Lord?’

Those who deal with the law did not know me;
the leaders rebelled against me.

The prophets prophesied by Baal,
following worthless idols.

⁹ “Therefore I bring charges against you again,”
declares the Lord.

“And I will bring charges against your children’s children.

¹⁰ Cross over to the coasts of Cyprus and look,
send to Kedar^[a] and observe closely;
see if there has ever been anything like this:

¹¹ Has a nation ever changed its gods?
(Yet they are not gods at all.)

But my people have exchanged their glorious God
for worthless idols.

¹² Be appalled at this, you heavens,
and shudder with great horror,”
declares the Lord.

¹³ “My people have committed two sins:
They have forsaken me,

the spring of living water,
and have dug their own cisterns,
broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

Read the Epistle Lesson: Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16

Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. ² Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. ³ Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

⁴ Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. ⁵ Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,

“Never will I leave you;
never will I forsake you.”^[a]

⁶ So we say with confidence,
“The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.

What can mere mortals do to me?”^[b]

⁷ Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. ⁸ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

¹⁵ Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. ¹⁶ And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Luke 14:1, 7-14

One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched.

⁷ When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: ⁸ “When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. ⁹ If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this person your seat.’ Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. ¹⁰ But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. ¹¹ For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

¹² Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Message

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus uses the occasion of meals to teach and reflect upon the meaning of the kingdom of God, and what should characterize our relationship to him, as his disciples. Today’s Gospel lesson provides us with such an occasion, as Jesus is invited to have dinner on the Sabbath at the house of a leader of the Pharisees. This was one of the few times Jesus ate with those they considered the “right” people. Remember how often he was criticized for eating with tax collectors and sinners by the Pharisees and here he is dining with the Pharisees.

And it doesn’t take long for Jesus to noticed how the various guests, presumably friends of the host and perhaps Pharisees themselves, came in and jockeyed for places of honor at the table, so he told them this parable. “When you are invited to a banquet, do not sit down in a place of honor, for someone more distinguished than you may have been invited, and arrive after you. Then, upon this guest’s arrival, the host might embarrass you by asking that you give up your seat in honor for the more distinguished guest.

Jesus was giving some good advice to the guests along with us today. His advice is that when we are invited to a banquet, we should humble ourselves, and take the lowest place of honor at the table to ensure we are not embarrassed, for the host may come to you and invite you to take a place of more respect, and you will be honored in front of all who are invited. When you think about it, it is good social advice to follow, but Jesus was not done yet for then Jesus turns to the host, and told him that when he gives a dinner, he shouldn’t invite his friends, or relatives, or his rich neighbors, who would be in a position to return the favor. Rather, he should invite the poor, and those who would not be able to return the favor, for then he would be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” Even our Epistle lesson states this in verse 2: “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by doing so some people have entertained angels without knowing it.” I personally would not like to miss a chance to entertain angels, would you?

I think the meaning of these teachings of Jesus are quite clear. In the first case, when we are invited to be a guest at the table of another, we should accept the

invitation with humility. If the host chooses to bestow on us a greater honor, that is his or her choice, not ours to assume. And in the second case, as disciples of Christ, we are called upon to humble ourselves, to care for the poor and those in need, rather than worrying about earthly status.

We are to live humble and faithful lives. That is how Jesus and his disciples lived. From the time of his incarnation, Jesus lived a life of humility, trusting that he could teach his disciples including us that if we place our faith in God, and truly care for one another, God would provide for our needs. He does not call upon us to become idle, lazy, or to shirk the responsibility of earning our living. For Jesus and his disciples did work, as they went about the countryside, proclaiming the kingdom of God. They were called to witness to the grace of God in Jesus the Christ. We are called to do the same for the Epistle lesson calls us to remember that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

We believe that we are saved by grace through faith and not by works, but I have just finished talking about doing good works and living our Christian faith? Let us not forget, our salvation comes through faith which brings forth good works.

I like this example I found about faith and good works, for we need to keep a balance between our faith and our works. Take for example my heart. My heart beats if I am alive. A heartbeat does two things. It pushes blood out into the body and receives it back into the heart. The heart keeps it moving. So, faith receives the lifeblood of the Christ and then pushes it out in action, good works. If my heartbeat only received, I would die. If it only pumped out, I would also die. Both functions are part of the same beat. So, faith and works are part of the same heartbeat of spiritual life. When I am alive in Christ, then my faith receives the life-giving blood of Christ and I then push that out into the lives, all around me. There is a constant getting from Christ and then a giving to my neighbor.

Remember in Matthew’s gospel Jesus was asked what is the greatest commandment and he said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

I love the fact that Jesus did not give a negative in his commandments, there are no thou shall not, but these are positive commandments, you shall love. You shall do something, love God and love your neighbor! Jesus gave these two commandments because he knew after he had secured our place in heaven for us through his death and resurrection, that we would need some guidelines about living on this earth.

So, these commandments were given to those who believed and are waiting out their lives here to join him for eternity.

Jesus wants all of us to do something positive with our lives, not negative. Remember life is measured not by what you don't do, but by what you do, do. And Jesus is saying our trust and faith in his salvation should be seen in a positive action in our lives. Jesus is saying that when we become more concerned about him and others, when we become humble, our lives will be able to touch those around us with the good news, with the hope of the gospel. Believe the fact that our lives touch or come in contact with many others lives each and every day. So we ask, how do I influence those lives? How do I touch others! My answer comes by way of a prayer by an unknown author called "Heart Prints."

We touch lives with Heart Prints
Whatever our hands touch
We leave fingerprints!
On walls, on furniture
On doorknobs, dishes, books.
There's no escape.
As we touch we leave our identity.
Oh God, wherever I go today
Help me leave heart prints!
Heart prints of compassion
Of understanding and love.
Heart prints of kindness
And genuine concern.
May my heart touch a lonely neighbor
Or a runaway daughter
Or an anxious mother
Or perhaps an aged grandfather.
Lord, send me out today
To leave heart prints.
And if someone should say,
"I felt your touch,"
May that one sense YOUR LOVE
Touching through ME. Amen.

The world, those around us will come to know God when they see us as people of God who humble ourselves, confess our sins of selfishness and pride. We are people who then honestly accept the forgiveness from God which is not man-made

but God-given. Then God will be seen, and you will then merely be the window through which others will see God. Is not that we want to happen?

Let us pray: Dear Heavenly Father, through the death and resurrection of your Son, Jesus the Christ, you have given us the gift of your love, your redemption, and the hope of life eternal in your heavenly kingdom. Through the power of your Holy Spirit, help us to realize our dependence upon your grace for our lives, and empower us to care for others as your forgiven disciples. May we be the windows through which others see the Triune God. This we ask in Christ's Holy name. Amen.

Benediction:

Children of God, go from this place in the blessing of the Triune God, our Helper and our Friend, offering your sacrifice of praise and sharing what you have as you spread the love of God in mutuality and care to the ends of the earth and back again. Amen.