

Sunday, January 25, 2015

PRELUDE "Hark! I Hear the Harps Eternal" by Gilbert M. Martin Dr. Elizabeth Davis
CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP "Open Your Hearts" by Kim Shirey The Choir

After the Choral Call, the liturgist should step to the lectern and say,

"Would you join me in reading the responsive call to worship adapted from Jonah 2 and printed in our bulletins?"

THE CALL TO WORSHIP (adapted from Jonah 2)

I called to the Lord out of my distress, and he answered me;

Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice.

You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas; the flood surrounded me; all your waves & your billows passed over me.

Then I said, 'I am driven away from your sight; how shall I look again upon your holy temple?'

I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever;

Yet you brought up my life from the Pit, O Lord my God.

As my life was ebbing away, I remembered the Lord;

My prayer came to you, into your holy temple.

Those who worship vain idols forsake their true loyalty.

But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you;

What I have vowed I will pay.

Deliverance belongs to the Lord!

Let us worship God beginning with prayer...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... Lord of love and life, open for us your love so that we may find courage for our fear and light for our darkness, peace in the midst of turmoil, and strength to overcome our weakness. Grant us wisdom where we are confused and forgiveness where we have ignored your call. Replace with your unconditional love our distrust of those who are different and our hatred of those who are hostile toward us. Lord, show us your glory and your grace, that we may joyfully follow wherever you lead us. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing", number 466 in our *Hymnals*.

The liturgist should step back from the microphone for the hymn.

*HYMN OF PRAISE "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing" *The Hymnal #466*

After the hymn, the preacher will step into the pulpit and say...

*CALL TO CONFESSION

We who have often turned away from God's direction and purpose have come together to confront our disobedience and our disregard of God's intent. We have broken trust with God and with one another. Let us acknowledge our sin, so that may we may be open to God's healing and restoration. Let us pray together the prayer of confession as it is printed in our bulletins pausing at its conclusion for silent prayer. Let us pray...

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of grace, we confess the pride we take in being good people; the sense of accomplishment we claim in doing the right thing; the pleasure we derive from thinking we are more like Christ than others, who shall go nameless, even though we all know who they are. We long ago lost sight of the fact that apart from your grace, we can do no good thing. We easily forget that the good we do is the result of your grace, and the evil we do results from misusing our free will and following down paths not of your own design. Restore to us a true sense of our worth and the worth of other sinners, no worse than ourselves, because we all desperately need your grace. Forgive us, and transform us into true disciples through the power of your unconditional love. Amen.

*SILENT CONFESSION

(Pause for about 30 seconds of silence.)

*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

The proof of God's amazing love is this: While we were still sinners Christ died for us. I declare to you, in the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. Friends believe the Good News!

In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!

*GLORIA PATRI

The Hymnal #579

***Glory be to the Father, & to the Son, & to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,
World without end. Amen, Amen.***

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

By grace we have been saved and by grace we have been changed from enemies into God's friends. Reconciled to God, let us also be reconciled to one another and share His peace. The peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

Share the peace of Christ with others as you will.

After a few moments, preacher will step into the lectern and say...

“At this time I want to invite all of our younger friends to come forward for a Word from the Lord brought to them by Ms. Karen.”

The preacher will take a seat.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

(All Singing)

**Jesus friend so kind and gentle, little ones we bring to thee;
Grant to them thy dearest blessing. Let thine arms around them be;
Now enfold them in thy goodness, from all danger keep them free.**

As the children leave, preacher will step to the pulpit and say,

“I would invite you to stand as you are able and join in singing our second hymn this morning, “Jesus Calls Us”, which is printed in our bulletins.”

The preacher should step back from the microphone for the hymn.

*HYMN OF PREPARATION

“Jesus Calls Us”

Jesus calls us over the tumult of our life's wild, restless, sea;
Day by day his sweet voice soundeth, saying, "Christian, follow me!"

Jesus calls us from the worship of the vain world's golden store,
From each idol that would keep us, saying, "Christian, love me more!"

In our joys and in our sorrows, days of toil and hours of ease,
Still he calls, in cares & pleasures, "Christian, love me more than these!"

Jesus calls us! By Thy mercies, Savior may we hear Thy call,
Give our hearts to Thy obedience, serve and love Thee best of all.

After the hymn, the preacher will return to the pulpit and say...

Our Youth Group, “the Halo Club” receives an offering on Super Bowl Sunday to fight hunger in our community. To tell us more about this effort and next Sunday’s Offering are Cameron Suchomelly & Bijan Dadgar.

The preacher will take a seat.

MINUTE FOR MISSION The Souper Bowl of Caring Cameron Suchomelly & Bijan Dadgar

The liturgist will return to the lectern and say....

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

God has shown us grace so that we may show grace to others. He has blessed us with abundance so that we may share our blessings with those who are in need. Let us give generously and joyfully, as we continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings....

The liturgist will sit down until the Doxology begins to play.

THE OFFERTORY "The Lord's My Shepherd" by Gilbert M. Martin

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

*DOXOLOGY (In Unison)

The Hymnal #592

***Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him all creatures here below;
Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.***

After the Doxology, the liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

***OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Let us pray... Gracious God, let our offering be a sign of our transformation from reluctant into willing and cheerful givers. Use it in your work of building bridges between your children so that our differences may be overcome and we may be made one people by your love. through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

"The Apostle's Creed"

Let us remain standing and reaffirm our Christian faith using the traditional words of the Apostles' Creed printed in our bulletins. Let us say what we believe...

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.

Invite the congregation to... "Be seated," and take a seat.

THE ANTHEM

"Shall We Gather at the River?" by Lowery/Carter/Courtney

The Choir

After the choir finishes, the Liturgist will return to the lectern & say....

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson this morning is taken from the First Letter of John, the fourth chapter, beginning with the twentieth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #1067 in your pew bibles.

Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments.

The liturgist will take his/her seat.

The preacher will then return to the pulpit and say...

Our second lesson for this morning is taken from the first chapter of Jonah, beginning with the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #800 in your pew bibles.

Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amit'tai, saying, "Arise, go to Nin'evah, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness has come up before me."

But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD.

Leader: ...This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

"Between Love and Hate"

Jonah was a man whose heart was torn between his love for God & his hatred of the Ninevites. There were two faiths. We read the beginning of his story, where Jonah, son of Amittai, received the word of God to go and preach in Nineveh, a great and wicked city about 175 miles northwest of the present

city of Baghdad on the River Tigris, the enemy of Israel. And God said, "The wickedness of that city just smells and it has reached me. I want you to go and preach against it." Jonah went from living a life close to God, and from the moment he decided to disobey God, he moved ever farther from Him.

There's a little noticed literary device used by the author of Jonah to draw attention to this situation. If one pays attention to the verbs in the first and second chapter, Jonah is on a downhill slide that can only end in misery. He goes **down** to Joppa, to catching a ship going **down** to Tarshish-- away from the presence of the Lord. He gets on board and goes down into the hold of the ship. Later, when the storm threatens the lives of all on board and Jonah refuses to pray to His God, the sailors throw him overboard, **down** into the sea where he is swallowed by a great fish & he goes **down** into his belly.

At this point, Jonah hits bottom. He can't go down any further. Then and only then is he willing to call upon the God he has disobeyed. And then and only then do things start looking up. He lifts up his prayers to God, acknowledges his sin, and vows to make things right and obey the word from the Lord that he had received.

That is when God goes to work & things start looking **up** for Jonah. God causes the great fish to spit Jonah **up** onto dry land. He gets **up** and goes **up** to Nineveh. And begins to preach like he was the preacher of Westboro Baptist Church, fire and brimstone, hellfire and damnation-- "Forty days and God is gonna **get yew!** Venom drips from every word. For the first time since God first spoke to him, Jonah can enjoy his work! He hates the Ninevites & he gets to tell them how God is going to destroy them. Jonah hates them, and now he is sure that God hates them too.

But although Jonah preached and started the countdown for their destruction, the city was not destroyed. Here is a man of profound faith. His faith is very deep. It's Abraham-and-Sarah deep. His faith is Moses deep. His faith is Elijah deep. He has the faith of his parents and his grandparents and their parents, all the way back to the beginning. Here is a man who loves his country and is faithful to its institutions and to the God who called them to be His people. A faith that is deepened and confirmed with every slur he gets at the market. A faith that is deepened by every ugly insult he got on the playground as a child. A faith that is deepened more by the ugly things scrawled on the wall of his house. A man whose faith is deepened by every slurring of the word "Jew"; deeper and deeper it goes. His faith is full of "My Country 'Tis of Thee."

I don't think that Jonah was aware of all the components of his faith, just as I am not of mine, you are not of yours. They're in there deep-- elements that are added from TV and radio, from conversations with right thinking friends, and from pulpits; loves and hates and prejudices born of pain, and war all mixed in together. We don't really know.

There is a phenomenon in art: if an artist puts the base color on the easel and then changes her mind and puts on another color and goes on with the painting, and the original color bleeds through, it's called pentimento. Our faith-- all of us-- is colored by pentimento. Stuff bleeds through. Stuff we don't even like to think about, we don't even know about. It's a part of the way we worship God and think about God and read the Scripture. It bleeds through. So it was with Jonah, but it was a strong and popular faith.

When he spoke, he knew how to draw a line in the sand, he knew who they were, and he knew who he was, and he knew the difference.

What's the point of taking a stand if you don't take a stand over against somebody else? He knew who the enemy was and he was not soft on those Arabs, descendants of Cain or Ishmael.

Part of the pleasure of having a faith is knowing how different it is from everybody else's and how superior it is to everybody else's. When you get in a room full of people whose faith is like your own, it is rather bland. But get some opposition, and things get a lot more interesting.

Thomas Hardy once said that just as the color of the skin is not determined by the rays of the sun that the skin receives, but by the rays of the sun that the skin rejects, so we come better to be known by those things which we reject than those things which we accept. It's true, and there's pleasure in it.

But this is where we have to ask ourselves, "If Jonah hated the Ninevites so much, wouldn't this be his dream job? Why would he run away from it?"

Because the Jonah that hates the Ninevites is the same Jonah that loves God. He loves God, because God is so good. God has shown him grace after grace. He has forgiven him so much, and would still forgive him even more if needed. And he knows that the God who loves him-- the one who ran from God's own call, the one who refused to pray to God for help until he felt like he was beyond help-- could also love and forgive the Ninevites. That is exactly what he tells God when God spares Nineveh and Jonah gets angry and bitter. He says, "I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. And now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live."

Luke says, "God is kind to the ungrateful and to the wicked." Jesus said, "God sends the rain and the sun on the just and the unjust, the good and the bad alike."

Don't tell me that doesn't bother you. No line in the sand? The good and the bad alike? The sun and the rain on the evil and the good alike?

That's no way to run the world. If I were running the world, the rain would come on the righteous right up to the fence, but the unrighteous, not a drop. And I'll guarantee you this, that old boy over there who never darkens the door of a sanctuary, after about nine years without rain, he might suggest to the wife and kids, "Why don't we go to church this Sunday?"

The sun would come shining in all its glory upon the good, but on the evil, gloom and darkness. That's the way to run the world.

But God loves all people equally-- and Jonah knows it. He knows it in his heart and he's mad as a we hen about it.

In his heart and in his faith, "You alone of all the nations have I chosen." In his heart is the faith, "I worship the Lord God, Creator of everybody, everywhere, everything, the God who daily runs along after me and blows across the sand and erases all the lines that I have drawn." Who can live with both? I do, maybe you, maybe you.

In the summer of 1992, Vaclav Havel gave an address at Lehigh University. In the course of that address, Mr. Havel said, "No member of a single race, no member of a single nation, of a single sex, of a single religion, may be endowed with any basic rights different from anyone else's." Do I agree with that? Yes, yes, I agree with that. The Lord God who made heaven and earth, and all ... Totality. I agree with that. But there is something else in me that once in a while wants my faith to support me in the desire for, the appetite for, the feeling that I'm a little different from, maybe a little superior to, maybe a little better than ...

When Fred Craddock was paralyzed in the hospital with an attack of Guillaume Barre syndrome and totally dependent on the ministrations of strangers, he got down a time or two and tried to think of things that would lift him up and give him a sense of worth and value. He tried to imagine into what kind of room could he walk and be superior to someone there. And do you know what he pictured? He pictured himself walking into a room of people trapped in gnawing poverty-- but he didn't feel any better.

So he changed the scene. He pictured himself walking into a room of illiterates.

He had a good education, so he imagined walking into a room of people who could not read or write-- but, he didn't feel any better.

He imagined walking into a room of people in prison and he walked up and down the corridor and looked at the prisoners behind the bars, caged like animals. He felt totally free, able to leave at anytime and he thought, ah, this is it. But he still felt no better, because he had to face the fact, no human being, and I mean **NO** human being-- is better than any other.

And my friends, if there is still in your heart the residue of such phrases as "better than," "greater than," "superior to," take a moment to ask Christ to pluck that from your heart, cast it into hell, let it burn to a crisp. When your greatest love is confronted by your greatest hate, there is only one thing in all the universe that can bridge the gap between them-- the grace of God that loves you---

and every one else on this beautiful world of God's creation. Only then will you be able to look back and laugh at yourself and say, "Who was I? Who was I to think that I could resist God?"

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, with so much bitterness abroad and even those we believe to be good stumbling from blunder to blunder, our world has become hollow with graves and hard with hate. May we who own the name of Christ, build the bridges of grace between warring parties and shed abroad your love.

We pray for a broader vision of the needs of all mankind, and a deeper compassion to fill those needs; for a planting of the seeds of concern for all humanity in our hearts; for a tapping of the wells of generosity.

Help us to live together as people who have been forgiven a great debt.

Help us to be gentle, walking softly with one another.

Help us to be understanding, lest we add to the world's sorrow.

Help us to stand for what is right, not because it may yield dividends later, but because it is right now.

Help us to be as anxious that the rights of others shall be recognized as we are that our own shall be established.

Help us to be as eager to forgive others as we are to seek forgiveness.

May our love be like your own-- and see all people as your children and our brothers and sisters, help us all to be ministers of mercy and ambassadors of kindness, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who taught us to pray saying...

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Let all of us who are able stand and join in one voice to sing our hymn of invitation, "Blest Be the Tie That Binds", #438 in our hymnals.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION

"Blest Be the Tie That Binds"

The Hymnal #438

THE BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make His face to shine upon you and give you His peace-- in your coming in and your going out; in your lying down and in your rising up; in your labor and in your leisure; in your laughter and in your tears; until you come to stand before Jesus in that day in which there is no sunset & no dawning. Amen.

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

"They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love"

We will walk with each other; we will walk hand in hand.

We will walk with each other; we will walk hand in hand.

And together we'll spread the news that God is in our land.

And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love.

Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis