

**Sunday, February 1, 2015**

PRELUDE

"Two Pieces in A Flat Major" by César Franck

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP

"Open Your Hearts"

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 Psalm 111 and printed in our bulletins?"

THE CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Psalm 111)

I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart in the assembly of the upright.

**Great are the deeds of the Lord! They are studied by all who delight in them.**

His work is full of majesty and splendor, and his righteousness endures for ever.

**He makes his marvelous works to be remembered;**

The Lord is gracious and full of compassion.

**He gives food to those who fear him and is ever mindful of his covenant.**

The works of his hands are faithfulness and justice; all his commandments are sure.

**They stand fast for ever and ever, because they are done in truth and equity.**

He sent redemption to his people and commanded his covenant for ever;

**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;**

Those who act accordingly have a good understanding;

**Holy & awesome is his Name; His praise endures for ever.**

Let us worship God beginning with prayer...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray.... God of the prophets, help us to recognize your voice among the competing claims of our day. Raise up in our midst authentic witnesses to your truth. Let us not presume to know your message without careful listening or to speak your word without discerning the Spirit. Light your fires within us so we may heed your summons and give our best in your service. May your love so strengthen our witness that we may never be a stumbling block to others. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, "Praise Ye the Lord, The Almighty", number 482 in our *Hymnal*.

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

\*HYMN OF ADORATION

"Praise Ye the Lord, The Almighty"

*The Hymnal #482*

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

\*CALL TO CONFESSION

At some time, all of us have committed or allowed a distortion of the truth. If our liberty has become license or if we have led others astray, we are invited to repent and admit the evil we have done. Let us confess our sins and pray together the prayer of confession as it is printed in our bulletins, pausing at its conclusion for a moment of silent prayer or reflection. Let us pray.... . .

\*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Merciful God, from You comes all truth, all healing, and all that makes our world good. Forgive us for listening to those who do not speak for You, or ignoring the messengers who seek only to deliver a word of grace from You. Forgive us for not testing the spirits around us, for trusting in human knowledge rather than Divine wisdom, for seeking that which can never satisfy, and for judging the message by the attractiveness of the messenger. Have mercy on us and speak Your word to us once more. Open us completely to Your truth & deafen us to false prophets ignorant of Your ways, so that we may teach that which is good and cast out the evil within and among us, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

\*SILENT CONFESSION (Pause for about 30 seconds of silence.)

**\*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. God judges, but He also forgives the contrite. The burden of your sin is taken away and your freedom in Christ is restored. 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**

Other voices may still accuse, but there is only one voice, one authority that matters, and he has offers us a peace that passes ALL understanding. Let us share the peace of Christ with one another. 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, liturgist will step into the lectern and say...*

**THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING**

We can never do enough to earn God's generous blessings, but we can show our appreciation to the Father by supplying the needs, physical and spiritual, of His other children, even those not of this fold. Let us show our thanks to Him who has so richly blessed us 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**

"So Great a Sacrament" by Gabriel Fauré

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... O God, from whom comes all the good things we enjoy, we offer our gifts in the spirit of Him who gave his life for us. May the offerings we present be used in ways that encourage healthful and holy behaviors among us in the church, within our community, and as far as our influence can reach. Receive us and our gifts, we pray in Jesus' name. 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.*

**ANTHEM**

"Living Bread" by Gilbert M. Martin

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 book of Deuteronomy, the eighteenth chapter, beginning with the fifteenth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #168 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. This is what you requested of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said: “If I hear the voice of the Lord my God any more, or ever again see this great fire, I will die.”

Then the Lord replied to me: “They are right in what they have said. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command. Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable. But any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, or who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak—that prophet shall die.” You may say to yourself, “How can we recognize a word that the Lord has not spoken?” If a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord but the thing does not take place or prove true, it is a word that the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; do not be frightened by it.

*The liturgist will take his/her seat.  
The preacher will then return to the pulpit and say...*

Our Gospel lesson for this morning is taken from the first chapter of Mark’s Gospel, beginning with the twenty-first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #867 in your pew bibles.

Listen once more for the word of God....

They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.”

But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him.

They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, “What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.”

At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

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

**People: Thanks be to God.**

## THE SERMON

“What the Devil Knows That We Don’t”

I don’t know how many times I heard this story from Mark’s gospel read in church before I finally, really, and truly HEARD it. For years it’s importance and message sailed right over my head.

But I do remember when I heard it read, and the words hit me like an artillery shell. I was a young father with two small children, and it had been a Sunday morning like few others. When I got up that morning and turned the TV on to watch the news while I dressed for church, there were clips of Oliver North defying the authority of Congress. Next, I was sent by “she who must be obeyed” to pick up a last minute, still intact, pair of panty hose so that she would be properly attired for church. While standing in line to check out, with my one little egg, I couldn’t help but notice that the lady standing under the “10 items or less” sign at the register had about 150 items more than that. And, God bless the sweet soul, the tiny little eighty year old saint behind me, who spoke up and questioned the customer and then the checker about the excess number of items in the cart, and when she received no satisfactory answer to her inquiries, began asking in a very loud voice, “Who’s in charge here?....

Who's in charge?" The offending woman with the overloaded cart did not change lanes, but I'd be willing to bet she won't commit that same sin again.

I finally paid for my purchase and returned home, but as soon as I walked in the door, I was confronted by my two little angels, Maggie and Josh, going at it hammer and tongs, with Maggie acting in loco parentis for my wife, trying to get her little brother to put his Sunday shoes on. Josh of course responded as most little boys do to the orders of big sisters, "You're not the boss of me."

We went blissfully and uneventfully to Sunday school, and then church, and half way through the service, Rev. Davies read this passage from Mark, the beginning of Jesus' public ministry in which he would change the understanding of the world's relationship with God.

What every one of these incidents had in common was that they sought or asserted an answer to one of the ultimate questions in life-- "Who's in charge.... By who's authority."

Doesn't it seem strange to you, how Jesus could walk into a synagogue, read and teach and startle his hearers with his authority. They had heard the scribes and the Pharisees. These were the men who had been given the responsibility for interpreting the scriptures and teaching the people of Israel how to live in keeping with God's will. For authority, they appealed not to the truth of the scriptures themselves, but instead quoted this rabbi or that rabbi. They would answer questions posed by seekers of truth, the way modern seminary professors do, by citing the scholars or theologians. "On the one hand there is this," they might say, but before the seeker could draw a peaceful breath at finally having an answer to a question that plagued him, the scribes would add, "But, on the other hand, there is that." Trying to get an answer was like trying to nail Jello to a wall.

But Jesus cited no authority other than his own and the Word of God. It was a new, fresh approach that had an inherent truth and power of its own.

The word for "authority" that is used twice in the Gospel text today is the Greek word "exousia" - which literally translated means "out of being".

An author, an authority, is someone who speaks out of his own being- out of who He was - He was God. He was the ultimate authority. Because he spoke, whole worlds were created. With a word, a lifetime of sins were wiped out, a sentence of eternal death was lifted, and the assurance of life everlasting was conferred. One word and lepers were cleansed and made whole. One word and the blind could read it for themselves and the deaf would hear it. One word and bent and broken legs were suddenly made straight and the lame walked. One word. His word. Spoken out of his own being.

One word and, as in today's story, demons heard and obeyed.

People could sense that, and they were drawn to him on account of it. In him they saw something different than they saw in the scribes.

The simple truth is that human beings-- then and now-- can't defeat the evils or the demons around us and within us by ourselves.

That is the message of all those proverbs we like to quote, you know the ones - the ones that tell us that there is no hope: ones like:

"a leopard can't change his spots"

" you can't teach an old dog new tricks"

And that is the message of all the 12 step programs - which say first off: "We are powerless over alcohol" ... or drugs, or sex, or food, and so on."

Strangely we have gotten too familiar with God. The problem is that thinking of God as a parent or friend only conveys a tiny part of who and what God is. That over-familiarity has bred a kind of ignorance.

We tend to forget the awesome power of God, we tend to forget the absoluteness of God, and truly, in the long run, all too many of us forget what the bible calls the beginning of wisdom: we forget the fear of God. And as today's story relates, the demons know what many of us have long since forgotten. God is in charge, his will will be done, regardless of our choices, regardless of our wants.

The Fear of God is not very fashionable today.

Indeed, almost all of us have become so familiar with God's mercy, that we have forgotten the significance of that mercy, we have forgotten that God is to be feared and respected, we have forgotten the demanding Holiness of our God, and as a result - we have become foolish while thinking ourselves to be wise. Over and over again the scriptures say: The fear of God is the beginning of Wisdom.

The very first time Jesus spoke in public, at the synagogue in Capernaum, the people recognized that Jesus had the authority of God. Even demons recognized that authority and responded to his command to depart from those that they afflicted - - calling Jesus as they did so: "The Holy One of God".

Evil listened to Jesus, Evil fled at the command of Jesus. Evil feared Jesus.

Why? Because He came to destroy evil, and evil knows it. Because of his arrival, it's doom is sure. Christ has the authority and power to tell evil where to go.

The message this has for our lives is two-fold.

First it means that we can be set free.

As we yield ourselves to Jesus as Lord, our Lord can banish from our lives those things that afflict us.

For some it is immediate - the bondage they experience is utterly and completely removed - for others it is one day at a time process - until lo and behold - when we look back we see that we are new creatures, that our lives are now filled with light rather than with darkness.

The second thing it means is that we can play a part in casting out the evil that exists in the world around us - that when we get with Jesus and acknowledge Him as Lord as well as Savior, then Jesus is able to help us help others, that his authority becomes our authority.

The Apostle Paul tells us in the sixth chapter of Ephesians that, "our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."

Do not allow anyone to deceive you.

We can be friends of Jesus. Jesus can and does dwell in all those who sincerely call upon his name, and his love, the love of God, is meant to set us free.

But beware of false prophets, those who tell you that love will forgive all, and that your soul is safe no matter what you believe or do.

The love Jesus proclaimed is godly love. It is a love that casts out demons, a love that is willing to punish so that it might heal, a love that teaches so that it might bestow life and warn of death.

If you do not accept His authority, and believe that it demands of you the very best you have to give, neither will you believe that he can deliver you from evil. If you can not accept Him as Lord, you will not accept Him as Savior.

## PASTORAL PRAYER

Amidst all the competing authorities of our lives, O God, we turn to you for guidance, direction, and the hope that sustains us. We thank you that you are God, and that you have the power not only to still the wind and the waves, but also to cast out evil, to dispel darkness and confusion, and to win the final victory over the wickedness of this and every age.

We thank you for Jesus, in whom we most clearly see your compassion, authority and healing power. Help us, we pray, to be like Him-- building up rather than tearing down, curing rather than killing, loving rather than hating.

As we face a world run by those whose claim to authority is based on lies, half truths, and equivocations, we turn to you, O God, knowing that in you alone we can place our trust. Deliver us and all your children from evil forces that oppress, manipulate, and control. Set us free from abusive powers and release us from all that would possess and enslave us. Sustain all who are willing to give their all in opposing falsehood with your grace and your truth. And hasten that day when all who are held captive will know the joy of your salvation and freedom, and live life in hope and joy.

Eternal God, let your Holy Spirit move in power over us and over these gifts of bread and wine, that they may be for us the communion of the body and blood of Christ. Render holy to us in full truth this sacrament of holy Communion that we may be filled with your spirit and may have in us that mind which was also in Christ Jesus our Lord. May his coming in glory find us ever watchful in prayer; ever grateful for all your blessings; ever humble before the infinite ocean of the unknown; ever trusting and ever hopeful, knowing that with every tomorrow you draw us closer to that eternal morning when we shall be yours forever and your glory shall wrap all things in peace, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

*(The congregation will sing in unison)*

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

### **The Invitation**

At his last meal with his disciples, our Lord Jesus gave us a new commandment-- we are to love one another as he loved us. Then he gave us a way to remember his love for us, and our duty to love one another, by sharing bread and wine, representing his body and blood, with those gathered around him.

This meal was not intended to be a reward for the worthy, but as a help to the undeserving. This is not our table, but that of our Lord, and He invites all who have need of his strength or his forgiveness to come and receive the meal of grace he has prepared for you.

### **The Words of Institution**

On the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord took bread, and after he had give thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples saying: "Take, eat. This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In like fashion after they had eaten, he took the cup. After he had given thanks he gave it to his disciples saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, drink ye all of it."

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes again in final victory.

### **The Distribution of the Elements**

#### **The Prayer After Receiving**

So ends the sacrament, our Father, and we thank you that once again you have sent your light to shine into our darkness to lead us thru the days still left to us on earth. We pray that you would so enter the bodies and souls of those who have received these elements, that you would have such control of our thoughts and actions that we may never fail or disappoint you or those you send us to. Yours by creation, may we be yours by redemption as well, and commit ourselves wholly to your service. Amen.

Would all who are able please stand and join in singing our closing hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God", #260 in *The Hymnal*.

\*HYMN OF DEDICATION  
THE BLESSING

"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"

*The Hymnal* #260

\*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

"He Is Lord!"

He is Lord! He is Lord! He is risen from the dead and He is Lord!  
Ev'ry knee shall bow, ev'ry tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

\*POSTLUDE

Dr Elizabeth Davis