

Sunday, February 18th, 2017

A couple of minutes prior to the start of the service at 10:45am, the liturgist will enter and take his/her seat on the Chancel.....

The pastor will meet with the choir a couple of minutes prior to the start of the service at 10:45am., and offer this or a similar prayer.

Eternal God, who sent Jesus to seek and save the lost, we want to be found by you today. Open our ears that we may hear once more your assurance of salvation, and the promise of your abiding love that you offer. Free our voices to sing your praise. Grant us courage to accept your call and fulfill it with joy. Amen.

After offering this short prayer with the choir, the pastor will enter, offer a welcome, and make announcements....

The preacher will then ask...

“Are there any other announcements or concerns of the church that need to be made known at this time?..... Thank you.

PRELUDE **"Lord, My Soul Doth Thirst for Thee" - J.S. Bach/Rider** **Dr. Elizabeth Davis**

CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP **"Send Us Forth in Thy Love" - Arr. Dan Dykema** **The Choir**

After the Choir finishes, the liturgist should step to the lectern & say,

“Would you join me in reading the responsive call to worship adapted from Psalm 23 and printed in our bulletins?”

CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Psalm 23)

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures,

He leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul.

He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me;

Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely goodness & mercy will follow me all the days of my life,

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Let us worship God beginning with a video bringing us the voice of Bartimaeus, answering the question, “Who do you say Jesus is?”

The video will begin immediately after this introduction.

A VOICE FROM THE CROSS

A Video

“Bartimaeus”

Immediately at the conclusion of the video, the Acolyte will extinguish one votive candle.

The Liturgist will then return to the lectern microphone and say...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Gracious God, draw us near to experience your goodness. Abide among us to still our fears, even though the foundations of the earth are shaken. Grant us a faith that can move mountains, and the courage to stand fast even when earthly powers seek to bring us to our knees. Speak to us once more your words that do not change and that remain as an anchor in every storm. Then unite us all in worship and praise to the glory of your son, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, “Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley”, number 80 in our Hymnal.

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

***HYMN OF PRAISE**

“Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley”

The Hymnal #80

After the hymn, the liturgist will step into the lectern and say...

***CALL TO CONFESSION**

All flesh is summoned before God to account for our sins. Even though our busy schedules or pre-

occupation with our own goals and activities may cloud our awareness of God's presence and seek to prevent us from seeking his forgiveness, we are invited to come now, and examine ourselves before God, not out of fear, but with a vision of God's promises. Let us pray together the prayer of confession printed in our bulletins, pausing at its conclusion for a moment of silent prayer. Let us pray....

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

(In Unison)

O God, despite our best intentions our sins prevail over us and our transgressions are many. Our failure to trust your power to deliver us from evil, causes us to close our hearts to the lonely, our eyes to the misery around us, our minds to the insights of those we don't like, our mouths to speak your truth and our ears to hear it. The wrongs we could address do not move us to action. We shut you out and do not know you, not because you are unavailable, but because we do not seek you. Come to us now in our need, for all is not well with us. Walk with us and bring us to dwell with you, in Jesus Christ. Amen.

***SILENT CONFESSION**

Pause for about 30 seconds of silence.

***THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

When our transgressions prevail over us God forgives. When we are afflicted God grants rest. God delivers those who ask, and offers salvation, not because of our deserving, but out of his grace in response to our sincere request....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**

Now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made us all one. 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, the liturgist will step into pulpit 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 Pastor Mike."

The liturgist 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.

Show the children a picture of a bank guard, a Marine sentry at his post, a policeman, Ask your children what they think the job is of the person is. Agree that he/she is acting as a guard so that the evil can't take something precious away from someone else-- treasure, freedom, safety. What are some precious things that we might guard? Our homes and cars (with security systems) might be immediate answers. Other possible answers: toys, bikes, computers... Some things not so tangible for them to think about might be ideas or something in which they strongly believe. Sometimes people might not agree with what we think is right or what we believe in; it is important to have a strong grip on what we believe. Suggest that at the next family meal, everyone fill in this sentence: "An idea or belief I will safely guard is"

As the children leave, the Liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

All silver and gold belong to God. It is God who grants prosperity. How do we answer God's generosity? Surely with joy and imitation, giving as we have been blessed, with a song of thanksgiving in our hearts. Let us continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings...

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

THE OFFERTORY

"I Call to Thee, Lord Jesus Christ" - J.S. Bach

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... Through what we give, bless those who are poor. Grant to the fearful, courage; to the oppressed, deliverance; to the confused, new clarity and direction. May the programs and outreach supported by these gifts make you known in ways that are uplifting and transforming. 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 & 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." The liturgist will then return to her seat on the Chancel or with his family. Thanks so much for your help!

THE ANTHEM

"Create in Me a Clean Heart" - Arnold B. Sherman

The Choir

After the choir finishes, the Liturgist will step into the pulpit & say....

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson this morning is taken from the first chapter of Paul's second letter to Timothy, beginning with the eighth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #1038 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

Do not be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel in the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago, and now has manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. For this gospel I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, and therefore I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.

The liturgist will return to her seat either on the chancel or with family or friends in the congregation.

Thank you for your service.

When the liturgist finishes, the preacher will step into the pulpit & say...

Our sermon text for today is taken from the Book of Daniel, the sixth chapter, beginning at the sixteenth verse. If you would like to follow along in your pew bibles, you can find it on page 768. Listen once more for the Word of God:

"Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!" And a stone was brought and laid upon the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. Then the king went to his palace, and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him.

Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions. When he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish and said to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?"

Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live for ever! My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no wrong."

Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of hurt was found upon him, because he had trusted in his God."

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

"Alone, Yet Not Alone"

Rev. Mike Morgan

There once was an out of work actor, coincidentally enough, named Daniel.

He was so down and out that he's ready to accept any acting part that came along. One day he saw an advertisement in the local paper, ACTOR NEEDED TO PLAY A GORILLA.

I could do that," Daniel arranged an interview.

The employer turned out to be the local zoo

As it turned out, the zoo had spent so much money renovating the grounds and improving the habitat that they could't afford to buy the gorilla to live there. So, until they can get more funding, they'd decided to use an actor in a gorilla suit. Needing the money, Daniel took the job.

At first, he felt a little dishonest about cheating all these paying customers, especially the children who were seeing what they thought was a gorilla for the first time.

But after a few days on the job, he began to be amused by all the attention, and sought to earn his money by getting into the part and putting on a real show for the spectators-- hanging upside-down from the branches, swinging on vines, climbing up cage walls, and roaring while beating his chest.

Soon, Daniel was drawing a real sizable crowd.

One day, when Daniel was swinging on a vine to show off to some children, his hand slipped and he went flying over the wall into the lion's den next door. As soon as he came to his senses and got his bearings, he looked up and panicked-- a huge lion stood not twenty feet away, and it looked very hungry. So Daniel, still in his gorilla suit, started jumping up and down, screaming and yelling, "Help, help! Get me out of here! I'm not really a gorilla! I'm a man in a gorilla suit! Heeellp!"

The lion quickly pounced on poor Daniel, and held him down. As Daniel began to make his peace with God, miracle of miracles, the lion spoke and said,--- "Will you SHUT UP! You're going to get both of us fired!!!"

Like Daniel, we Christians spend lots of time wearing a costume and pretending that we are something we're not. In public, we act like Christians most of the time-- we go to church, drop our tithe into the plate, but when it really costs us something-- like.... the respect of our more secular friends.... the friendship of those who are made uncomfortable by men and women of faith because their faithfulness tends to remind those who know the real deal of how far they themselves fall short..... maybe what it costs is the freedom of being your own person, knowing that you were bought with a great price and called to serve, not to be served.

Two hundred years before there was a Daniel, the northern kingdom of Israel had been conquered by the Assyrians and carried off slavery. Not long after that, their freedom was restored, but they had focused so long on going along, fitting in, doing things the Assyrian way, that they had lost their own way, and became known as the 10 lost tribes of Israel. They weren't really lost, they had just sold out.

Daniel and his three friends, Hanania, Mishael, and Azaria, charted a different course. They had sold out before leaving their home in Judah, but they had sold out to God. They gave him their love, their respect, their obedience, and their unwavering trust and loyalty. And God, being God gave all of that right back to them multiplied many times over. He made these too young to shave adolescent boys, wisdom such as had not been seen in Babylon.

When they arrived in Babylon, they were renamed Belteshezar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. they discovered what most of us discover at one time or another, what it means to be in the world

but not of it. The king had them brought to his court where they were bathed, dressed in the best robes that Babylon had to offer, offered the finest wines, and richest foods. But they knew the food and drink at the palace was not kosher, so they asked for fresh vegetables and water only. And God blessed them with spectacular health and wellness.

When their talent for service to King Nebuchadnezzar began to receive attention, the other not so wise court advisors conspired to have Daniel's three friends thrown into the fiery furnace for refusing to bow down and pray to a golden statue of the king. The fire was turned up 7 times hotter than normal. But when the king looked he saw four figures walking unharmed in the flames, the fourth "like the Son of God." Seeing this, Nebuchadnezzar brought the youths out of the flames and promoted them to high office, decreeing that anyone who spoke against their God should be torn limb from limb.

Later under the new king Darius, it would be Daniel's turn. When he refused to stop praying to his own God, his less gifted Babylonian competitors tricked the king into throwing him into the lions' den. The next morning, concern of the fate of his most trusted advisor, Daniel, led Darius to the lions den to call out to Daniel, "are you all right?"

Daniel replies that God had sent an angel to close the jaws of the lions, "because I was found blameless before him." The king then had those who had conspired against Daniel, and their wives and children, thrown to the lions in his place, and commanded to all the people of the whole world:

Then King Darius wrote to all the nations and peoples of every language in all the earth:

"May you prosper greatly!

²⁶"I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel.

"For he is the living God and he endures forever;
his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end.
He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders
in the heavens and on the earth.

He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions."

So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

There are lots of people in the world with ability, bright boys and clever girls with advanced degrees and natural abilities, that make most of us look like idiots. God gives us those abilities. As James reminds us, "Every good and perfect gift comes from God." But God desperately wants what we can give him. Our humility. Our willingness to surrender ourselves to his good and perfect will. God wants our humility more than our ability, because if he has that, he can use us. Because Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow down before the statue of the emperor, God was able to bring all of Babylon to their knees in worship of God. Because Daniel remained steadfast and continued to pray to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God was able to bring all of the known world to their knees praying to the God of Daniel.

That is why God loves humility. It means we can be used to accomplish great things to his glory.

You may think those days are past, when one person can move a nation or a world, just by surrendering themselves to God's will. But I assure you they are not.

Consider Bernie. Bernie was born on the tail of the Great Depression in Queens, New York, the son of a Jewish plumber. His grandparents were emigrants from Poland, Romania, and Austria. He attended the University of Alabama for one year, where he became a brother of the then all Jewish fraternity, Sigma Alpha Mu fraternity. After he transferred to Hofstra University, he worked summers as a life-guard and weekends as a sprinkler installer. He discovered he had a knack for trading penny stocks, and it created in him an insatiable hunger to be accepted, liked, and welcomed, not just into Jewish homes, but also to those of his Gentile friends. He saved his money, borrowed from his father in law, and set up his own stock trading firm. And for 60 years he made money-- lots of it. He owned several luxury homes,

cars, club memberships. He owned politicians, contributing \$280,000 to their campaigns each year. He threw lavish parties and was welcomed into the best homes..... at least until 2008, when it all suddenly unraveled, he was exposed as the biggest financial fraud of all time, costing his clients an estimate 118 billion dollars. One son changed his name. His other son killed himself. And Bernie spends his days in a small cell at the Federal Correctional Institution in Butner, North Carolina where one day he will die and be remembered only for those he hurt.

Frank was different. He grew up on a farm in North Carolina and attended a little college in Illinois before moving on to a Masters degree in Bible from the FBI-- the Florida Bible Institute. All he ever wanted to do was serve God and preach the Word. He married a Presbyterian missionary's daughter and off he went. For the last 60 years, 10 of which were after he had retired and withdrawn from the public eye because of Parkinson's, he has appeared on Gallup's list of the most admired men and women over 60 times since 1955, more than any other person in the world. When he sent instructions to Michael W. Smith for his funeral, his one request was that his own name not be mentioned so that mourners could focus better on the love of Jesus. Can you imagine the funeral of William Franklin Graham without mentioning the name of Billy Graham somewhere in the service? Yes sir. I think God can use a man like that.

So, how about you. Are you ready to stop pretending? Ready to take off the Jesus suit we tend to put on in public, and just be yourself, your own humbled self, so that God can raise you up and use you to his glory? If you are, I am sure God could use a real believer like you.

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Would you pray with me...

Grant us this day, O God, clear sight to see the way we ought to take, and courage and perseverance to follow it to the end. Give us humility to ask what is your will for us, and give us trust and obedience to say, *Your will be done.*

Help us, O God, to be brave in danger; strong in temptation; uncomplaining in pain; and cheerful in disappointment.

Help us to remain humble in prosperity and hopeful in adversity.

Help us at all times so to live, that our life and conduct may make it plain that we belong to you.

Give to each of us:

the understanding to bear lightly our joys and sorrows;

the faith to make our love fruitful in service;

the love never to know all people as family;

the courage never to bend our knees before insolent might;

the wisdom to raise our minds above daily trifles;

and the humility to surrender our strengths to the will of Him who gave his life for us and 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 & join in one voice to sing our hymn of dedication, "It Is Well with My Soul", which is printed in our bulletins.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION

"It Is Well with My Soul"

When peace like a river attendeth my way,
when sorrows like sea billows roll;
whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say,
"It is well, it is well with my soul." *Refrain*

It is well with my soul; it is well, it is well with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
let this blest assurance control:
that Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
and has shed his own blood for my soul. *Refrain*

My sin oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!
my sin, not in part, but the whole,
is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more;
praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul! *Refrain*

O Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight,
the clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
the trump shall resound and the Lord shall descend;
even so, it is well with my soul. *Refrain*

*THE BENEDICTION

*CHORAL RESPONSE

Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary, Pure and holy, tried & true;
With thanksgiving, I'll be a living sanctuary for You.

"Sanctuary"

*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis