

Sunday, February 22, 2015

The liturgist and pastor will meet in the hall outside the choir room a couple of minutes prior to the start of the service at 10:45am.

After a short prayer with the choir, the liturgist, choir, and organist will enter and take their seats. Following them, the pastor will step into the pulpit, welcome everyone, 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.”

The preacher will take a seat.

PRELUDE "O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High" Dr. Elizabeth Davis

CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP "What Wondrous Love Is This" 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 25 and printed in our bulletins?”

CALL TO WORSHIP (adapted from Psalm 25)

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust.

Do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me.

Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.

Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation.

Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.

Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;

According to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O Lord!

Good & upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.

All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness.

Who are they that fear the Lord? He will teach them the way that they should choose.

They will abide in prosperity, and their children shall possess the land.

The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he makes his covenant known to them.

May integrity & uprightness preserve us, for we wait for you.

Let us worship God beginning with prayer...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray. . . Lead us in your truth this day, gracious God. We long to know your ways and to be guided by your Spirit. Direct us into that realm where your purposes govern the hearts and minds of all your children. We want to grow in the likeness of Jesus, to learn to live in ways that are pleasing to you. We wait for you now, eager to respond to your instruction. Let nothing cut us off from you or separate us from one another, not only in this time of worship but as we face the challenges of everyday living. May our faithfulness draw others into mutual trust and joyous service to the glory of Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, “O Worship the King, All Glorious Above”, number 446 in our *Hymnals*.

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

*HYMN OF PRAISE “O Worship the King, All Glorious Above” *The Hymnal #476*

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

*CALL TO CONFESSION

As Jesus was tempted, so are we. But we have yielded to temptation, and Jesus did not. We cannot escape temptation, for it comes in so many forms and from so many sources. Our only hope is to recall and acknowledge our failures to God and one another as we pray together the prayer of confession printed in our bulletins. Let us pray...

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

(In Unison)

Holy God, we confess that we fail to listen attentively to the one who alone can lead us safely through our temptations. We are besieged by the voices of the world, by the barking powers that tempt us to buy what we do not need, to prove our power by exerting it over others, and to indulge the sensual self by eating, drinking, and making merry with abandon. We learn to our sorrow that pride in our own ability to resist cannot save us from evil, and that believing ourselves to be more powerful than we are increases our vulnerability when we are faced with difficult choices. Free us from the amnesia that forgets the power you place at our disposal and the love that will never let us go. Forgive us, we pray. Amen.

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

*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

God is faithful to the covenant, even when we forget. In mercy and steadfast love, God lifts us above the sins of our youth and the transgressions of today. Christ brings us to God that we might receive a new spirit and a new beginning... 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

We have been united by the unshakeable, unending grace of Almighty God. We are called to remember His love for us, that shown so clearly in the person of Jesus, and then remember that we have been made one in Him through our Baptism. Let us 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

“Shall We Gather at the River”

Shall we gather at the river, where bright angel feet have trod,
With its crystal tide forever flowing by the throne of God? *Refrain*

*Yes, we’ll gather at the river, the beautiful, the beautiful river;
Gather with the saints at the river that flows by the throne of God.*

Ere we reach the shining river, lay we every burden down;
Grace our spirits will deliver, and provide a robe and crown. *Refrain*

Soon we’ll reach the silver river, soon our pilgrimage will cease;
Soon our happy hearts will quiver with the melody of peace. *Refrain*

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

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

We dare to believe that the Creator of the Universe has entered into a covenant relationship with us. Moreover, God has given us responsibilities as part of the covenant community he has established to share our blessings with others. Let us give with glad and generous hearts 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 "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" Robert Lau 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... Thank you, God, for the signs and wonders that reveal your presence. Thank you for the covenant fulfilled in Jesus Christ. We want to do our part to share your love with the world. Use our offerings and our lives to make your reign real and visible among us. May we be humble, teachable, and faithful as we seek to lead others into the new covenant in Jesus Christ. 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 then say....

Each Sunday of Lent we will be using a short video produced by "The Skit Guys" to help introduce the morning message. This morning we will hear from a modern looking John the Baptist, sitting in a jail cell in Herod's palace as he looks back on his own life and ministry and the day that the Lord came for baptism.

LENTEN VIDEO

"John the Baptist Looks Back from Prison"

ANTHEM

"A Lenten Meditation" - Douglas E. Wagner

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 third chapter of Peter's first letter, beginning at the eighteenth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page 1060 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit; in which he went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water.

Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him.

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

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

Our Gospel lesson this morning is taken from Mark, the first chapter, beginning at the fourth 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...

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased."

The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to him.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel."

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

“If...”

In this morning's gospel text we hear for the 2nd time in the last month or so, the story of Jesus' Baptism. But this time, the focus is not on Jesus, but on John as he starts us on our path walking with Jesus through Lent and to the cross before arriving at Resurrection morning.

Our video shows John in jail, imprisoned by Herod for nothing more than proclaiming the truth. The problem is, as with most politicians, the truth was a mortifying embarrassment for King Herod and his wife, Herodias. One day John is being sought by crowds flocking to the desert to hear his message of repentance and the call to return to God. They respond by the tens of thousands, and are baptized and renewed. But as the video opens, John is in jail. His own ministry is over. The one for whom he has prepared the way, Jesus, is now on center stage, drawing even larger crowds, while John is little more than yesterday's news. Alone, forgotten, and deprived of his freedom. He has little left but his memories-- first and foremost, the baptism of Jesus and hearing the voice of the Father proclaim, "Thou art my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Although Jesus had no sin that needed to be confessed and repented of, as those who are baptized do, Jesus was declaring his identity with human nature that is prone to weakness and sin. His walk to the cross first passed through the waters of baptism not only as an example to those he came to save from their sins, but also because of a foreshadowing of what Jesus would become on the cross. The Apostle Paul writes of this in 2 Corinthians 5 when he reminds us:

“For our sake God made Jesus to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” 2 Corinthians 5:21.

So Jesus became stuck in our sin. John is stuck in jail. And we sometimes get stuck as well. We get bogged down in our doubts, in our own sins that we just can't seem to leave behind either because their pull is too strong for our weak wills, or because we believe their effects are so terrible that they can never be forgiven.

It would be nice if there were something we could do ourselves. Maybe watch our sugar intake a little closer, exercise a little more, take a course, read a book, or even “Just do it” as Nike suggests.

Rudyard Kipling published a widely acclaimed poem in 1910 entitled, “If...” Do you remember how some of it goes....

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,

Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:...
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son.

How often I turned to that poem in my younger years for a little extra lift when I needed it, a little boost to help me reach the crest of the hill I'm climbing. But as I get older, I am forced to realize that there are somethings I had always dreamed of doing, but will most likely not accomplish in this life. I hear all of those "ifs"-- "If you can do this..." "If you can do that" and I know the answer is, "No, I can't do this or that."

I am sure that many of you have perhaps had that thought affect you at some point in time. If you're a builder, you may one day realize that you will never build a Taj Mahal or the next modern wonder of the world. As a parent, you recognize the mistakes you made in raising your kids, and even though you would like to go back and do it over the right way for your kids' sake, you can't. Maybe you will finally figure out that you'll never write the greatest American novel, or paint a work of timeless and universal inspiration. You'll never make a million dollars, or end world hunger, or usher in everlasting peace.

And we are haunted by the thought "If.... If.... If...."

I'm sure those thoughts haunt John as his talents and the precious little time he has left to him waste away in a jail cell. John needs to know:

Did he do the right thing? Did he prepare the way for the King or just another pretender to the throne? Was his work in vain? or Was it all for nothing?

For John and for us, it all comes back to that morning at the Jordan River, when Jesus, the Messiah and the Lamb of God, was baptized and the voice of God announced, "This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased."

When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness after forty days of hunger and thirst, Satan challenged him with his own version of "If". "If you are the son of God, turn these stones into bread" and "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down off the temple and let Him save you."

But Jesus didn't have to question his identity. God the Father had already announced it to him and John, and all at the Jordan River--- "This **IS** my son, with whom I **AM** well pleased."

It was enough for Jesus, and in Mark's gospel it was enough for John. He didn't have to think twice about whether he had prepared the way for the Messiah, he had heard it from God's own lips, **"THIS IS MY BELOVED SON!"**

And when we near the end of our life and work, however unfulfilled as it may seem to us at the moment, we may take comfort in knowing that Jesus was baptized, and in so doing identified with us. And that as Paul reminds us, "If we are united with him in a Baptism like his, we will **SURELY** be united with him in a resurrection like His." It doesn't matter if we got it all right. It doesn't matter if we didn't do great things. Because in Christ, even the smallest acts of grace can have far reaching effects that we will never see, but our Father will. Touching one life may touch thousands or even millions of others and change them for the better and forever. And one act of love can cover a multitude of sins.

When Martin Luther grew discouraged in his trials before the Catholic Church, hounded and in hiding to avoid being burned for heresy, he would pound his palm into his forehead and remind himself aloud, "I am baptized. I am baptized. I am baptized."

And so are you. So are you. And by Christ's baptism, you, and I, and John, do not have to worry about what we failed to do. There may be much work for us ahead or there may not. We may be long

remembered by those we leave behind, or we may not. The only if that matters is the if of baptism, because if we are united with him in a baptism like his, we shall surely be united with him in a resurrection like his. In Christ, You are also his beloved child, and with YOU, He is well pleased.

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Almighty God, you sent your servant John the Baptist to prepare the way of the Lord. And you sent your Son Jesus to prepare the way for us. We give you thanks for their message, and for the invitation to repent and believe the gospel. As your Son endured and subdued temptation, called sinners to follow him, and went to the cross for the sin of the world, so give us grace to be faithful to him and steadfast through whatever trials we must go. As he prepared the way for us, may we prepare the way for him to enter the hearts and minds of all who need his love.

Help us that we may not resist your Spirit as You lead us into and through deprivations. May we see them always as opportunities to strengthen our reliance on and contact with you. In difficult times, as we remember your great love for us revealed on the cross, may we find the courage to persevere, the strength to resist the lures of the devil, and the confidence that you are with us always, 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, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus", #403 in our hymnals.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION

"Change My Heart O God"

Sing the Faith #2152

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

"Sanctuary"

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

*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis