

Sunday, February 25th, 2017

PRELUDE "O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus" - Jason W. Krug Dr. Elizabeth Davis
CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP "Send Us Forth in Thy Love" - 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 118 and printed in our bulletins?"

CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Psalm 118)

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever!

Let Israel say, "His steadfast love endures forever."

Let the house of Aaron say, "His steadfast love endures forever."

Let those who fear the Lord say, "His steadfast love endures forever."

The Lord is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation.

There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous.

I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the Lord.

The Lord has punished me severely, but he did not give me over to death.

Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord.

This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it.

I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.

The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

We bless you from the house of the Lord.

The Lord is God, and he has given us light.

You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;

You are my God, I will extol you.

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever."

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

The video will begin immediately after this introduction.

A VOICE FROM THE CROSS

A Video

"A Disciple"

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

Faithful God, we seek your favor upon all this day who have considered the cost and yet have gathered here to reaffirm their commitment to follow Christ, to seek your will, and to serve you all the days of their lives. Through your Word and Spirit guide them well, so that they may grow in wisdom and understanding, knowledge and counsel, faith and love. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, to whom we give honor and glory forever. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, "Shout to the Lord", which is printed in our bulletins.

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

***HYMN OF PRAISE**

"Shout to the Lord"

My Jesus, my Savior, Lord there is none like You!

All of my days I want to praise the wonders of Your mighty love.

My comfort, my shelter, Tower of refuge and strength,

Let every breath, all that I am never cease to worship You.

Shout to the Lord all the Earth, let us sing "Power and majesty, praise to the King!

Mountains bow down & the seas will roar at the sound of Your name!"

I sing for joy at the work of Your hand. Forever I'll love You, forever I'll stand.
Nothing compares to the promise I have in You.

(Repeat one time)

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

***CALL TO CONFESSION**

God does not hide his face from us in response to our transgressions. He always hears and answers our cry for help. Confident of God's presence, let us confess our sins individually and together. 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, our Father, forgive us for letting little things distract us from great things. Forgive the laziness that prevents our beginning our assigned tasks, and the fear which keeps us from standing up or speaking out when our support is needed. Deliver us from the selfishness that rearranges our priorities to the detriment of your kingdom. Grant that ingratitude may not stop us from sharing our blessings with others; self-will may not hinder our obedience; lack of perseverance may prevent our finishing what was once begun in earnest; lack of discipline may not make us choose the things which bring nothing but regret. May we never desire anything except to do the things that please you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

***SILENT CONFESSION**

Pause for about 30 seconds of silence.

***THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. God's mercy is from everlasting to everlasting. Our sins are forgiven and we are made new creations...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.

Hold up a \$20 bill, and ask the children how much it costs to be a disciple of Jesus. \$5? \$10? \$20? \$100? \$1,000? One million dollars? Find out if putting a particular amount of money in the offering plate will make you a true disciple. Explain that there is no set amount of money that will make you a disciple, because Jesus wants more than money from us - he wants our lives. Point out that in the gospel of Matthew, Jesus promises that "those who lose their life for my sake will find it" (16:25). Ask them what it means to "lose their life" for Jesus. Explain that it means giving Jesus more than their money, but also their time and talents and energy and imagination and love. Find out if the children think that all this giving up will make them feel empty and exhausted. No! Quiz them on whether they feel better or worse after giving someone a gift, or doing a good deed. Explain that "losing their life" for Jesus actually gives them a fuller and happier life, and that Jesus promises to "repay everyone for what has been done" (v. 27). Close by saying that noth-

ing is ever lost when it is given to the work of Jesus, but it ends up being the very best use of whatever money or time or talent we have. Close with a prayer.

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Let us give with generous hearts, not out of a sense of duty but desire. Let us give, not because we feel we have to, but because we want to. Let us continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes & offerings.

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

THE OFFERTORY

"Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross"

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.*

***OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Let us pray... Accept these gifts we humbly offer, gracious God. Use them, and use us, to reach into places where your goodness is not yet known. As we dedicate our gifts to you, O God, bring us also to an awareness of the tasks set before us. Give us strength to make peace, love to reach the lost, and gratitude to offer everything we are to your glory, through 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 & 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.

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 Revelation of John, Chapter 21, selected verses beginning at verse 10. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #1086 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

"And in the Spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God... And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it, and its gates shall never be shut by day -- and there shall be no night there; they shall bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations."

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

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

Our sermon text for today is taken from the Book of Haggai, the first chapter, beginning at the second verse. If you would like to follow along in your pew bibles, you can find it on page 818. Listen once more for the Word of God:

"Thus says the Lord of hosts: This people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord."

Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, "Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins? Now therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider how you have fared. You have sown much, and harvested little; you eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages earns wages to put them into a bag with holes.

"Thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider how you have fared. Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may appear in my glory, says the LORD. You have

looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? says the LORD of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while you busy yourselves each with his own house. Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce.”

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

“Who’s Number One?”

Rev. Mike Morgan

Judah has been in exile for 70 years as a result of God’s loving discipline. Their time has been served and the time has come for them to go home to Jerusalem. Maybe you or someone you know, has been in chains of one sort or another, slaves of a force more powerful than themselves, and suddenly, just when you thought you might die in captivity, the chains fall from your wrists and ankles and you are free, and all you want to do is to go home.

In the case of the people of Judah though, their temple had been destroyed, their homes and fields left fallow and abandoned to the elements for 70 years. Two hundred years before the Babylonians conquered Judah, Assyria vanquished Israel and led them off in chains. But Israel didn’t come back. They were lost. Vanished as a nation and people. Little wonder that Judah thought that they would ever be able to recover their identity as a nation, a race, and as a people of God.

But that is lesson one from their story.

God will make a way when there seems to be no way.

Look at the opening words in chapter 19 of The Story or the first verses of the Old Testament book of Ezra –

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing:

This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: “The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Any of his people among you may go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the Lord, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem, and may their God be with them. And in any locality where survivors may now be living, the people are to provide them with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem.” Ezra 1:1-4

God changed the heart of a pagan king, the most powerful man in the world at the time, towards Judah. He can do the same for you. He will open one door and close another.... Shine a light into the dark corner that has become your life. Some of you who have lived the life of a prodigal and have come back home, almost always recount an incident outside of your control that paved the way for your return. For those of you still living the life of a prodigal and you are thinking there is no way back, there is.

But, there is a second lesson we need to know before we venture back.

Things need to be different.

When you repent, when you come back to God, or your family, or sobriety, things can’t be the same.

Judah made two major changes when they returned. First, they didn’t crown a king. If you recall, God didn’t want Israel to appoint a human king. He wanted to lead them directly. But they wanted to be like the other nations and God allowed it. And, as suspected, these kings led them away from God. Now that they are back, they will not make the same mistake again. The next king to sit on the throne of David will be Jesus – who is God wrapped in flesh.

Second, notice the first thing they did when they arrived in Jerusalem, in spite of their justifiable fear of the other tribes and nations gathered around them, *they built the altar on its foundation and sacrificed burnt offerings on it to the Lord, both the morning and evening sacrifices.* Ezra 3:3

They are committing themselves to putting God first in their life. When you return back home to God, you can’t put him in second place-- **& he won’t let you.** when you come back to God, you can rightfully be expected to get yourself to church each week, no excuses. You open up his Word-- every day. You bring your decisions and requests to God in prayer for direction and grace. You say grace at the table whether you’re

sitting by yourself or with family and friends. You say “yes” to God’s will without hesitation or compromise.

You cannot do the things you used to do. You cannot hang with the people you used to hang with. Things have to be different.

Third, we have to remain open to correction. We’re human, and we are going to make mistakes. We will wander from our chosen path. And when we do, we have to be ready to repent all over again-- and again,... and again,... until we get it right.

How does God get our attention? Before, he had Judah conquered by a foreign army and led them off to a foreign land. They lost everything but God himself. When they came back, they had learned, and they put God first. The Judahites couldn’t spend all their time working on the temple. They had fields to plant so they wouldn’t starve, and houses to build so they wouldn’t die of exposure. But in a very short period of time, the work on the temple had been postponed indefinitely. They worked instead on their houses, most of them building some fine structures with paneled walls and carpeted floors. Their fields looked pretty good too, even if they weren’t producing quite like they used to. This postponement on the work of the Temple lasted 16 years- long enough to make the surrounding tribes and nations say to themselves, “Maybe their God isn’t such a big deal after all?”... ”If they don’t fear him, why should we?”

They made the single most common mistake of believers everywhere-- they switched priorities. “Me first and God second.” And guess what happens when they stopped working for God... Their lives stopped working. They lost that sense of momentum. One day they have the most powerful king in the world opening up his pocketbook to fund the entire project and to protect them from enemies and now...nothing. Someone turned off the spigot of blessing. Their lives are in a recession.

They didn’t know what was wrong, just that the joy was gone. God had had enough of being relegated to second or third place behind the comfort of their homes and their bellies filled with produce from their fields. God didn’t send another conquering army with spears and chariots,... he sent his prophet Haggai with a word:

“Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?”

Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.”

This is what the Lord Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways. Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build my house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored,” says the Lord. “You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Haggai 1:4-...

Haven’t you ever had that feeling? You plant much but harvest little... You eat but never have enough... you drink and you’re still thirsty... you dress but you never feel warm.... life just doesn’t seem to be working for you. When it seems that the harder you work, the more you feel like you have to work, and the less satisfaction you get out of it? Maybe somewhere along the way you switched priorities. Maybe somewhere along the way, you woke up on a Sunday, worn out from the week behind you, and you decided to skip church and sleep in. Maybe you find it difficult to make time at home for reading Scripture together as a family, or saying prayers at meals and at bedtimes--- and I don’t just mean with your children. And then one day one Sunday became two, and prayer time with God just vanished, and without knowing why, you realize that your life just wasn’t the same anymore.

Those feelings of emptiness are meant to turn us back to God’s house.

Ask yourself: “IS GOD’S BIG THING, MY BIG THING?” ... “ARE MY PURPOSES ALIGNED WITH HIS?”

For most of us the answer is “YES!” You want God to rule in every heart. You want to see every knee bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord!”

But for some of us, the answer is, “I don’t think so” Maybe like Judah, you started off the right way, but then life happened, stuff got thrown at you, and you had to adjust and adapt. Maybe you didn’t forget God, but you didn’t exactly remember him either-- and ... well... here you are. Isaiah would have asked you,

