

Sunday, March 6th, 2016

The pastor will have a word of prayer with the choir at 10:40am after which he will meet the liturgist will meet in the hall outside the choir room a couple of minutes prior to the start of the service at 10:45am. The liturgist and pastor will enter together. 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

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" - Robert Hobby

CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP

The Choir

"What Wondrous Love Is This" - Walker's Southern Harmony 1835

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 126 and printed in our bulletins?”

CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Psalm 126)

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.

Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy;

Then it was said among the nations, “The Lord has done great things for them.”

The Lord has done great things for us, and we rejoiced.

Restore our fortunes, O Lord, so they may flow like rivers in the desert.

May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.

Let us worship God beginning with prayer...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... Dear Jesus, As you opened your hand to hide our sins, may we open our hearts to forgive and welcome others in your name. Save us from all self-righteousness that we may depend always upon your grace and draw upon the power of your love to transform ourselves and our world to your glory. Grant us the grace to hear and understand your Word for us this day so that our hearts may surely be fixed on Jesus, and so that we may render unto him the work and worship that are rightly his by the power of the cross. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me & join in singing our opening hymn, “In the Cross of Christ I Glory”, number 84 in our Hymnals.

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

***HYMN OF PRAISE**

“In the Cross of Christ I Glory”

The Hymnal #84

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

***CALL TO CONFESSION**

Our human tendency is to cling to our things for comfort, our power for security, and our pride of place for a sense of righteousness, rather than to heed God’s call to a new life that cannot be had apart from His grace. Let us admit our miserly ways and let go of the things which keep us from God and pray together the prayer of confession as it's printed in our bulletins. Let us pray...

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Loving God, our love of pleasure and leisure hinders our ability to receive your gift of sacrificial love. Forgive us for allowing our giving to become measured rather than extravagant, and our loving guarded rather than spontaneous and free. Forgive our inclination to measure gifts by their price rather than their value to you, to others, and even to ourselves. Restore in us a sense of the value of your gift to us so that we may respond to your call with our full devotion. Amen.

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

***THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

For God so Loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever should believe in him should not perish but have eternal life. 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

Having been made right with God, let us share our new found peace 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, the liturgist will step into the lectern and say...

“Please be seated. 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 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.

As the children begin to leave the front, the liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

The most lavish gifts we can bring are never enough to thank God for all we have received. Yet the tiniest offerings we present do not escape God's notice when presented with full commitment and devotion. Let us give as we are able and continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings. . .

The liturgist will take a seat until the Doxology.

THE OFFERTORY

"Beneath the Cross of Jesus" - David Cherwien

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... Lord, you have ever been the Giver of every good and perfect gift, and we are glad for all the good things you have done for us. Lord Jesus, we would give as Mary did: lavishly, lovingly, courageously. We count everything as loss before the surpassing value of knowing Jesus Christ. Receive this offering, we pray, and bless its use so that all may receive the gift of abundant life through the power of your Spirit. Amen.

*THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Let us remain standing and reaffirm our Christian faith as it is expressed in the traditional version 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...

This morning we have the fourth of our Lenten videos from the Skit Guys, this time relating the

witness of Mary of Bethany, whose family was friends with Jesus and whose brother, Lazarus, had just been raised from the dead. Let us listen to her tell of her anointing of Jesus.

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE CROSS

“Mary of Bethany”

Video

THE ANTHEM

"Celtic Laud" - Craig Courtney

The Choir

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson for this morning is drawn from the Twelfth Chapter of John’s Gospel, beginning at the first verse. You can find the passage on page 936 in your pew bibles. Listen once more for the Word of God. . . .

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus’ feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, “Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?” (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.)

Jesus said, “Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.”

The liturgist will return to his seat.

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

Our second lesson this morning is taken from Paul’s letter to the church at Philippi, the third chapter, beginning with the second half of the fourth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #1023 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God...

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

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

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

“The Main Thing”

Chuck Swindoll once told of a trip he had taken to New York City. He and his wife were given a pair of prime tickets to a sold out hit Broadway show. At the end of their very long day dealing with his publisher and a dozen other matters, they dressed up, went out to dinner, and then took a cab to the theater. They took their seats about 15 minutes before the curtain went up and he noticed a very well dressed woman seated near him on the aisle with an empty seat between her and himself. He struck up a conversation with the lady by asking, “Is this your husband’s seat?”

“It was supposed to be, but my husband recently passed away. We had planned this trip months

ago, bought the plane tickets from Iowa, booked the hotel, scheduled time at a spa, and purchased the tickets to this show.”

“I’ve heard it’s a great show,” he answered, “It’s too bad the seat has to go to waste. Do you have any children?”

“Why yes. I have four beautiful daughters.”

“And one of them couldn’t have arranged to come with you?”

“No,” she sighed, “They all insisted on going to their father’s funeral.”

Strange set of priorities she had. That’s really what our two primary Scripture readings are about-- Priorities.

Judas professed to love Jesus, but John tells us that his first love was money. But as Judas looked for the opportunity to betray Jesus, Mary made an opportunity to worship Him and demonstrate her love for Him.

It was no small thing she did. The jar of fragrant ointment was worth a year’s wages to an average man. It was probably her dowry, and without it, she had little chance of ever having a husband. She may have received the jar and a small amount of ointment from her mother as an inheritance, but no doubt, some of her wages from the many jobs she did for the wealthier residents of Bethany were used to buy fractions of ounces more as she could afford it. The ointment would never go bad, and it wasn’t likely that a male thief would ever steal such a fragile prize, so it was a very good place to save her money.

Mary gave it **all** and Judas was quick to criticize. "Why wasn't this sold and the money given to the poor?" Just like a man, isn't it, to criticize the way a woman spends money? Just like an unbeliever, isn't it, to question the extravagance of our love for Christ?

What possessed her to do what she did-- after all, she didn’t use just a little, she poured out the entire jar.

If you remember an earlier incident where Martha was cooking and cleaning and was upset with Mary because she spent that time sitting at the Master’s feet, listening intently to every word he said. She was probably the one person in the room who did more than hear Jesus’ words, **but listened to them**. Jesus had been telling the all for some time that his death was drawing near. The next day he was going to enter Jerusalem. Everyone knew hat to do so at Passover was to invite a violent confrontation with the Pharisees, Priests, and the Roman government. She knew that this moment was probably her last opportunity to show demonstrate her devotion and prepare him for what lay ahead.

That’s the thing about devotion, it’s not just doing the right thing, it’s doing it at the right time.

Mary gave what she had, all she had, the best she had-- and when it was needed, the only time she could. People who do that always inspire us to do better. Albert Schweitzer left his native Germany with three doctors' degrees -- in medicine, philosophy and theology. He went to the interior of Africa. Why would such a talented man pour out such great amounts of life's most precious things in the darkness of Africa? Paul said it for all, "The love of Christ compels me."

Jesus responded to Judas’ criticism and Mary's deed with the words, "She has done a good thing." It is indeed a good thing, the best thing, to "give of your best to the Master."

So..... What is your best? What valuable talent, or gift, or possession sits even today on the shelf of your life? Will you pour it out for the Master? Do you remember your favorite Sunday School teacher? What made her special? I would be willing to bet it wasn’t her eloquence or her innate talent for teaching.

My favorite was Mrs. Oglesby. Mrs. Oglesby taught me along with a bunch of other rowdy 6 to 8 year old boys in Sunday School. But you know I don’t remember a single lesson. I remember her and how she baked cookies for us every Sunday. I remember her smile and her patience with our unceasing rambunctiousness. I remember how she always smelled like vanilla. Later I was to learn that a lot of old Presbyterian women did that because in their generation it was considered vain and wasteful to spend hard earned money on themselves for perfume. So instead, they dabbed a little

vanilla extract on their neck and wrists and behind their ears. To this day, I can't smell vanilla without thinking of her and remembering her love of God. I think when I get to heaven, the scent of vanilla will fill the air.

What can you give the Master? A year's wages? A brilliant life? Or, like the little drummer boy of whom we sing at Christmas, a simple roll of the drum? Or much more practical, **much more needed**, a couple of hours a week teaching our upcoming crop of rowdy boys and perfect princesses. If it is your best, if it is your all, if it is an act of love, present it to the Lord. Do not say, "It is nothing." Take your alabaster flask of gifts and pour it at the feet of Jesus.

C.S. Lewis once wrote an essay on church music. He discussed the relative worth of the gifts we present Jesus. He concluded with these words: "For all of our gifts, whether of music or martyrdom, are like the intrinsically worthless gifts of a child which the father values, but values only for the intent."

Do you think for one minute that our children are going to believe that we love Christ above all things, that we truly believe he gave his life for us, if we can't commit to getting out of bed and getting to Sunday School and church each Sunday that we are not sick or out of town? Do you think that they are going to believe that you love them and Christ if you fail to share that love and commitment with them. Wives how about if your husbands are faithful one or two weeks a month? Or husbands, how about if your wives take care of you needs only on those weeks that you attend church? Christianity must mean everything to us before it can mean anything to others.

In February 1989, *The New York Times* reported a discovery near the Dead Sea in Israel -- a flask of ointment, dating to the times of Jesus. It was found wrapped in palm leaves and buried in a pit three feet deep inside a cave. The flask was full of a very rare and valuable ointment. Who owned the flask? When and why was it buried?

I know one person who owned a flask of ointment. But she did not wrap it in palm leaves and hide it in a cave. Aren't you glad that Mary broke the flask, poured the perfume, and filled the room with the fragrance of her love?

Does not the memory of it even yet draw you to Christ? Does not her example move you to devote yourself to the Lord? Is there something precious, something personal, something important that you can lay at the feet of Jesus?

What does the song say?

*"Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small
Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all."*

Mary doesn't ask for fame, or even that we remember her name-- just for you and me to do the same.

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Lord God, we thank you for the unrelenting, unfathomable love of Christ, and for the love of those people in our lives who set for us an example of loving generously, those who, like Mary, have not counted the cost of what they have given us; of those who given all of themselves to us and to your church as Christ gave himself for the world. Bless them and make us like them.

Lord Jesus, as we walk with you toward the cross, we discover how strange your path of sacrificial love is for us-- how against our natural inclination! We live in a land that values success, in a culture that prizes pleasure, within a value system that believes nothing is worth dying for. The way of the cross does not come naturally to us.

So all the more do we praise you for your faithfulness to us in the midst of our betrayals, your unfailing protection when we were assaulted by evil, your wisdom freely shared when we were almost seduced by foolishness, your patience with us when we were about to give up on ourselves. May we ever find in you all that we need and all that we hope for.

We pray for those among us for whom each Sunday's sermon seems to raise more questions than it answers; those whose faith seems to flicker without ever going out, but also without ever flaring

up into glorious flame; those whose smiles disguise heavy hearts or numbing discouragement. Calm our fears, call us forth to follow, no matter where your path leads.

Pour out your Spirit upon us and upon these gifts of bread and wine, that they may be for us the communion of the body and blood of Christ. Through this sacrificial meal, make us not only willing, but eager, to take up our crosses & follow after Jesus. Enable us to love you as you have loved us, with steadfast purpose and without placing a limit or price upon our affection. Have your way with us and make us ever as willing to live for you, as you were to die for us. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Malotte

(The congregation will sing in unison)
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, & the power & the glory, forever. Amen.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Invitation

The Words of Institution

The Distribution of the Elements

The Prayer After Receiving

We thank you gracious God for this meal which you have given us. As we gather around our own tables in the days ahead, might we be reminded of this table, where all are welcome, and your grace is sufficient to supply all our needs. May your love represented by this meal nourish us when we feel depleted, sustain us when times are difficult, comfort us when we are sorrowful, and enhance our joys when our cups overflow. As we have filled ourselves with your love, may go forth from this place committed to emptying our lives of things less needful. May we never again smell the fragrance of bread without remembering the depth of your love for us, and recommit ourselves to yielding our lives in service to your divine love. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Would all who are able please stand and join in singing our closing hymn, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross", #101 in our hymnals.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION

"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"

The Hymnal #101

*THE BENEDICTION

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 going out and in your coming in; 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

"Freely, Freely"

Freely, freely, you have received. Freely, freely give.

Go in my name & because you believe, others will know that I live.

*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis