

**Sunday, March 8th, 2015**

PRELUDE

"At the Name of Jesus" Michael Burkhardt

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP

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 119 and printed in our bulletins?"

CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Psalm 119)

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

**Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.**

There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard;

**Let their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.**

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul;

**The decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple;**

The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;

**The commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes;**

Moreover by them is your servant warned; In keeping them there is great reward.

**Let the words of our mouths & the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you, O**

**Lord, our rock & our redeemer.**

Let us worship God beginning with prayer...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... Everlasting God, whose law is perfect and whose judgments are just, we ask that you would come among us today and speak your eternal truth. Enter our hearts and minds and cast out all thoughts and feelings that are contrary to your will. Make this sanctuary, a temple of your presence, a house of everlasting prayer and praise unto your name. May we hear your Word with joy and respond in loving obedience. We ask it in the name of Christ Jesus, who gave himself for us and who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, "Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!", number 138 in our *Hymnals*.

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

\*HYMN OF PRAISE "Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!" *The Hymnal #138*

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

\*CALL TO CONFESSION

The psalmist declared that our souls are revived by God's perfect law. We are confronted by that law today. Let us confess those things in our lives that keep us from living in the grace and glory of God as we pray together the prayer of confession printed in our bulletins, pausing at its end for a moment of silent prayer. Let us pray...

\*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

*(In Unison)*

God of grace, we come confessing our failure to be a faithful people. We have come seeking forgiveness, but we confess that we too often forget whose house this is. Rather than being conformed to the image and likeness of our Lord, we more often conform ourselves to this world and its ways. We have justified or remained silent when your law is bent and broken to satisfy the whims of fads and fashions. Our zeal has grown cold; our attentiveness to your

commandments, law; and we have allowed your truth to be exchanged for lies. Cleanse us from our many faults and write your law once more upon our hearts that we may walk with you in righteousness and love through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

\*SILENT CONFESSION

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

\*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

God has provided an exodus from slavery to self and sin. As God sent Moses to lead the Israelites to freedom, so God sent Jesus to lead us to freedom by way of the cross. There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.... 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

Assured by the blood of Jesus, that in kindness and mercy God has fully and freely pardoned our sins, let us rejoice and 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, 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.***

Theme: Things which seem bad can be very good

Object: Cough Syrup, Aspirin, Syringe

Show medicine. Ask kids if they know what it is? How it tastes. (Let them smell it) Ask kids if they would like to drink it - or chew up the aspirin? No - tastes awful.

Now - ask if they have ever been sick? The medicines helped....

That is a bit like the law of God sometimes not doing things we want to do doesn't taste right to us we really like being angry - we really want to hit others - we really want to take other people's stuff - and the law of God says we can't. But if we follow the law of God - we will have healthy whole lives - we will not get the sickness of sin.

LET US PRAY - Dear Lord God - we thank you for medicine - and we thank you for doctors - we thank you they keep us well - we thank you too O God - for your law and for your love - they show us what is good, - Help us God to obey you - and to love you and our neighbors. Amen

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

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

The commandments invite us to observe a sabbath in which we give ourselves completely to the worship of God. The gifts we bring are important, but even more, we are invited to commit ourselves to God's way of love. May it be our passion to extend God's love to all of earth's people 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 "Jesu, Priceless Treasure" Michael Burkhardt 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... We bring our offerings, O God, not to buy your favor, but to express our gratitude, not to support an institution, but to further your mission. May we be zealous in your service, willing to sacrifice for love's sake, and eager to embrace your word in our everyday living. Amen.

*The liturgist will take a seat.*

ANTHEM "Christ Went up into the Hills Alone" - Roberta Bitgood The Choir

*After the Anthem the Minister will step to the microphone and say, "At this time I would invite the Nelson Family to come forward to the baptismal font."*

*As they come forward the minister will begin speaking.*

### **THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM**

Hear the words of our Lord Jesus Christ:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.

And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Hear also these words from Holy Scripture:

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

The promise is for you, for your children and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls.

### **The Presentation and Promises**

*The minister continues:*

Obedying the word of our Lord Jesus, and confident of his promises, we baptize those whom God has called.

In baptism God claims us, and seals us to show that we belong to God.

God frees us from sin and death, uniting us with Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection.

By water and the Holy Spirit, we are made members of the church, the body of Christ, and joined to Christ's ministry of love, peace, and justice.

Let us remember with joy our own baptism, as we celebrate this sacrament.

**Elder:** On behalf of the session, I present Ryan Jennifer Bailey, daughter of Jeff and Jenny Bailey, to receive the sacrament of Baptism.

*The minister then addresses parents presenting children for baptism:* Do you desire that Witt be baptized?

*The parents respond:* I do.

*The minister continues:* Relying on God's grace, do you promise to live the Christian faith, and to teach that faith to your child?

*The parents respond:* I do.

*The minister addresses the family and sponsors:*

Do you promise, through prayer and example, to support and encourage Witt to be a faithful Christian?

*The sponsors respond:* I do.

*The minister addresses the congregation:* Do you, as members of the church of Jesus Christ, promise to guide and nurture Witt, by word and deed, with love and prayer, encouraging him to know and follow Christ and to be faithful members of his church?

*The people respond:* We do.

*The minister continues:* Through baptism we enter the covenant God has established. Within this covenant God gives us new life, guards us from evil, and nurtures us in love. In embracing that covenant, we choose whom we will serve, by turning from evil and turning to Jesus Christ.

*The minister then asks the following questions of the parents of children being presented for baptism.*

As God embraces you within the covenant, I ask you to reject sin, to profess your faith in Christ Jesus, and to confess the faith of the church, the faith in which we baptize.

Trusting in the gracious mercy of God, do you turn from the ways of sin and renounce evil and its power in the world?

**I do.**

Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Lord and Savior, trusting in his grace and love?

**I do.**

Will you be Christ's faithful disciple, obeying his Word and showing his love?

**I will, with God's help.**

### **Profession of Faith**

*The minister continues:*

With the whole church, let us stand together and confess the faith of the church, the faith in which we baptize, using the traditional words of the Apostles' Creed as it is found on page 14 in our Hymnals. 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.

### **Thanksgiving over the Water**

Let us pray: We give you thanks, Eternal God, for you nourish and sustain all living things by the gift of water. In the beginning of time, your Spirit moved over the watery chaos, calling forth order and life. In the waters of Jordan Jesus was baptized by John and anointed with your Spirit. By the baptism of his own death and resurrection, Christ set us free from sin and death, and opened the way to eternal life.

We thank you, O God, for the water of baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death. From it we are raised to share in his resurrection. Through it we are reborn by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Send your Spirit to move over this water that it may be a fountain of deliverance and rebirth. Wash away the sin of all who are cleansed by it. Raise them to new life, and graft them to the body of Christ. Pour out your Holy Spirit upon them, that they may have power to do your will, and continue forever in the risen life of Christ. Amen.

### **The Prayer of Dedication and Laying on of Hands**

*Calling each candidate by his or her Christian (given) name or names only, the minister shall pour or sprinkle water visibly and generously on the candidate's head, or immerse the candidate in the water, while saying:*

Witt Murphy Nelson, child of the covenant, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*The minister lays hands on the head of each person baptized, while saying:*

O Lord, uphold Witt by your Holy Spirit. Give him the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence, that he may continue yours forever. Amen.

Witt, child of the covenant, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism, and marked as Christ's own forever. Amen.

### **The Welcome**

*The minister continues:*

Witt Murphy Nelson has been received into the one holy catholic and apostolic church through baptism.

God has made him a member of the household of God, to share with us in the priesthood of Christ.

Let us welcome the newest member of Christ's family by remaining seated and singing the hymn, "I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry", #2051 in the *Sing the Faith Hymnal Supplement*."

*The minister will take the baby through the congregation, starting with the choir. The rest of the family will return to their seats.*

*When the minister returns the child to the parents,  
the liturgist will step into the lectern and say....*

Each Sunday of Lent we are using a short video produced by "The Skit Guys" to help introduce the morning message. This morning we will hear from a witness to Jesus' cleansing of the Temple.

LENTEN VIDEO

"Cleansing the Temple"

*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 the Prophet Isaiah, the fifty-sixth chapter, beginning at the third verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page 636 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, "The LORD will surely separate me from his people"; and let not the eunuch say, "Behold, I am a dry tree."

For thus says the LORD: "To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which shall not be cut off.

"And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, every one who keeps the sabbath, and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant --these I will bring to my holy mountain, & make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples."

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

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

Our Gospel lesson this morning is taken from John, the second chapter, beginning at the thirteenth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #923 in your pew bibles.

Listen once more for the word of God...

The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers at their business.

And making a whip of cords, he drove them all, with the sheep and oxen, out of the temple; and he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; you shall not make my Father's house a house of trade."

His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for thy house will consume me."

The Jews then said to him, "What sign have you to show us for doing this?"

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?"

But he spoke of the temple of his body.

When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

## THE SERMON

## “Cleaning House”

It is time for the Passover, and it's spring cleaning time in every home in Judea. Every housewife and her children are moving furniture and sweeping carefully to remove every trace of leavening from their homes. The tiniest bit of leaven can defile their Passover observance so they are meticulous in cleansing their houses.

But no one is concerned about the filth at the Temple-- no one except Jesus that is.

Who could forget that day? ... Jesus walking through the colonnade with its marble forest of great Corinthian pillars a hundred feet high, into the Court of the Gentiles.

It is early morning, but already the Temple court is a bedlam of activity and noise. Among the tables of the moneychangers, visitors to the temple line up to get their Roman coins with the face of the God/Emperor Tiberius exchanged for the sacred half-shekel of the Jewish people. Daily business-- plying one's trade, buying food or cloth or pots at the market, or buying and selling animals for their farm or for sacrifice at the Temple requires the Roman coins, but to bring a Roman coin into the temple is a sacrilege, so the devout and pious Jews must exchange them for the Jewish temple coinage. Of course those in the business of making this exchange do it, not to facilitate the worship of God's people, but to make the maximum profit possible. And at Passover, when the Temple is flooded with worshipers from all over the world, demand is high and so is the rate of exchange and so are the profits.

Other vendors at other tables are selling their wares-- live animals. Bulls bellow and calves bleat, pigeons trill and sparrows chirp. The rich will buy a four footed beast for their sacrifice and the poor, a winged one. The voices of animals, vendors, and buyers unite in a cacophony that drives away any hope of a quiet moment with God. The sounds of greed and the smell of mendacity have polluted all worship at the Temple. There is no serenity-no peace.

The sacrificial animal racket is especially hard on the poor, since they, who are forced by their poverty to offer only a sparrow, are forced to give a whole new level of meaning to the term sacrifice.

But suddenly, a hauntingly familiar figure stands between two of the gigantic stone columns, His eyes flash and his face burns with intensity,

His countenance is magnificent in its wrath.

Poor peasants are being bled in the name of God.

He has watched His own mother patching clothes, skimping on food, doing without in a hundred ways just to save her required contribution for the Temple dues.

He steps forward with a resolution and firmness and picks up some binding cords which the merchants have discarded and deftly knots them into a whip.

And then the full fury of His wrath breaks.

In a few long strides He is across the court.

Picking up their boxes filled with money, He throws them onto the stone floor, with coins spilling and rolling in a hundred directions.

The tables too go crashing to the floor, and the moneychangers rush to gather up their coins from the filth they have created.

In their greed, they grovel in the dirt, pouncing upon their money and screaming in protest as the Man with the whip stands over them.

He drives out the terror-stricken cattle, the muscles of His arms standing out like cords.

Not a voice is heard in protest ... not a hand is raised against Him. Even the Temple guards only stand and watch helplessly. His magnificent figure dominates the scene.

Who is this Man?

He is a Man whose impact on people who listened to Him must have been more like dynamite than dew.

This day he is angry.

And the reason He's angry, is because these merchants and politicians and priests have taken that which was intended to be pure and holy and they've covered it with dung, chased away the quiet of the sanctuary with the clamor of unfettered commerce, taken that which was pure and holy, and made it as common as dirt. The sweet smell of incense has been overwhelmed with the stench of animal dung and urine.

It had all gone on so long. The worshipers had come to think that God didn't care. And because God "didn't care" they could do what they wanted to with the things of God.

Back in the Old Testament, God told His people how He wanted His things handled. For example: when the Tabernacle was first constructed, God gave explicit instructions about how everything was to be built, carried and dealt with. His instructions were so explicit that he even told them where to get the fire to use to burn incense.

But Nadab & Abihu – two of the sons of Aaron the High Priest and nephews of Moses - decided they had a better idea. And when they offered incense in the tabernacle they "... offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD."

This was such a serious matter, that God commanded Moses and Aaron not to mourn the death of these boys. There was to be no sack cloth and ashes at their funeral. These priests knew what they were doing! They knew what God wanted... but they disobeyed Him anyway.

Later, in the book of II Chronicles, we're told about Uzziah, a King of Israel, who had been a good and godly King for a number of years, became prideful. Ignoring the commands of God, and feeling no compunction to obey the laws of any man or even God, he arrogantly entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense-- a privilege reserved to the priests. He was immediately struck with leprosy which excluded him from ever entering any part of the Temple ever again. Uzziah knew that what he was doing was wrong. The priests of temple even followed him inside to stop him, but the King ignored their warnings and even shouted back at them.

Every generation has had its moneychangers and corrupt priests and arrogant kings. Men and women arrogantly disregarding the commands of God. There would be those who chose to serve their emperor rather than the King of the Universe. Later there would be priests who would sell the forgiveness of God for money, who would barter bishop's thrones for a profit.

Our generation also has those who have exchanged the truth of God for a lie and tell the people what they want to hear, rather than God's own truth. They preach that God wants them

to be rich. And they practice what they preach-- driving luxurious cars and living in even more luxurious houses. Flying in fast planes and living all of life in the fast lane. Don't worry about others-- unless they can be used to get what you want. There are even those who claim to heal the sick with the power of God-- for a price.

We live in a culture of celebrity, which has come, not unlike the worshipers of Baal, to view sex as a sacrament and the most intimate relationships as a right rather than a gift. Paul described us well at the end of the first chapter of Romans, "They did not see fit to acknowledge God, so God gave them up to a debased mind. They did things that should not be done. And they not only did them, but encouraged others to do them as well."

And that leads His people away from Him and deeper into trouble.

And God will not have that-- any more than you would. Imagine how you would react if someone was encouraging your child to do something that would harm or endanger them. Would your eyes flash with anger? Would you not grab the closest thing at hand to use as a weapon and drive them as far away from your child as possible?

A few years ago two men broke into the home of a young family. They had entered through the window of their 5 year old son's room-- apparently to kidnap her. But in the dark, one of them nudged a toy with a foot and, in the silence, that one small clink was enough to awaken her dad sleeping lightly in the room next door. The father entered the room, flipped on the light, grabbed his son's baseball bat, and went after the knife wielding intruders. The son, sat upright in bed as his father attacked the men with a ferocity he had never seen. In his eyes his father was the most loving and kind man in the world. He had always loved his father's gentleness, whether riding on his dad's shoulders or cradled in his arms.

The father swung and jabbed that bat with a unimagined ferocity, beating one intruder near death and completely incapacitating the other. Throughout the whole ordeal, the little boy huddled in the bed, fearing for his life. When the slaughter was done, the father tenderly walked toward his son, who initially pulled away. His father was covered in blood from the wounds on his hands and face. He had never seen his father like that. He didn't like it.

But neither did the father. So he gently talked to his son and said to him, "Come here, Son. I didn't want to do that. But those men wanted to hurt you, and I just couldn't allow that to happen." With those gentle words, the boy leapt into his father's arms-- in spite of his father's wounds. He found the same father that he had known and loved. And he knew that the blood which had frightened him so, had kept him safe.

Whenever we see God's wrath come crashing down, it is a scary sight, turning over tables, beating men with a homemade whip, kicking their backsides to remove the threat they pose to his children. It's even scarier to see the wrath of God come down on His only Son on the cross - to see the blood come pouring out of his hands, his feet, his head, and his side.

But after this terrifying ordeal, Jesus appears to us with his hands - still marked but freed of the stains - and holds out his hands to us and says, "I did this for you. Come here, my child." With these words, God encourages us to come back to Him, with a deeper respect for His ways that lead to life-- and deeper love for Him who has given us that life.

#### THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Almighty God, you have called us to take up our cross and follow your Son. Deliver us from seeking refuge in moderate virtue which costs us nothing; in conventional religion which

disturbs no one; in simple decency which even the godless observe. We tremble to think what it would demand of us if we gave ourselves to you without reserve, without compromise, without fear. Yet you wait and the world waits for people who are not afraid to follow your Son courageously.

Our Father, watch over those Christians in Syria, Iraq, and all over the world who are suffering persecution, imprisonment, torture, and death in your name. Make us quick and strong to come to their aid whenever and however the opportunity presents itself. Deliver us from our delusions and boasts that we would gladly die for you, when we stand ever ready to worship on the altar of convenience, expedience, and compromise. You have given each of us the grace to carry the sword of your kingdom of peace. Make strong our hand, make clear our voice, make firm our resolve to fight-- not to conquer, but to redeem. Grant us the courage needed to rid your church of robbers and thieves who still prey upon the weak, the uneducated, the poor and powerless.

Help us to be your people, O God, and forgive everything in us that shrinks in fear and refuses to share your compassion for a broken world. Hear our prayer and make us better than we are; through Jesus Christ our most merciful and patient 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.

\*HYMN OF DEDICATION                      "O For a Closer Walk with God"                      *The Hymnal #397*

#### 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