

Sunday, March 19th, 2017

PRELUDE **"Come to Calvary's Holy Mountain" - Michael Burkhardt** Dr. Elizabeth Davis

After the Prelude, the liturgist should step to the lectern and say,

“Would you join me in reading the responsive call to worship adapted from Psalm 8 and printed in our bulletins?”

CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Psalm 8)

O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens!

Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy & the avenger.

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established;

What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?

Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor.

You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet,

O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Let us worship God beginning with our third Lenten reading, the witness of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and John, Jesus' beloved disciple, as they heard Jesus speak to them as he hung dying on the cross. The Gospel of John says this: “When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.”

The Liturgist will take a seat.

Keith & Trish will step to the microphone near the Lenten Wreath & begin.

MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS: How can I give up my son? How can I bear to watch him die?

Long ago, my husband Joseph was taken from me in death. And now my son, Jesus, is dying like this. In one sense, he has always belonged to me. I gave birth to him. Joseph and I raised him in our home. He worked in the carpenter's shop.

But in a deeper sense, he has never really belonged to us. From the very start, he has belonged to God.

I remember when Jesus was eight days old. We took him to the temple to dedicate him to the Lord as the law commands. An old man named Simeon was there. He told us that Jesus would bring salvation to his people, and even to the Gentiles. We marveled at what he said. But Simeon also said something else. He said, "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

Those words have come true today. My son has been spoken against by the religious and political leaders. These last hours have shown how much fear and hatred live in the hearts of those who claim to lead the people of God -- their hearts have been revealed. And a sword has pierced my soul today-- the pain of seeing my son, Jesus, suffering and dying upon this cross.

JOHN, THE APOSTLE: Mary, did you hear what he just said? He called us to be family to each other. Don't you remember that day when you and your other sons came to take Jesus home, away from the crowds and the conflict and the people who claimed that he was crazy? Do you remember the question he asked? "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers? Then he pointed to his disciples and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

I wasn't so sure what he meant by those words when he spoke them. But I believe that I understand them now. There is a love which is stronger than the love of a human family-- a love which is even stronger than the love a mother has for a child or a son has for his mother. One day, when he was teaching us, he described the greatest kind of love. He said, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay

down his life for his friends."

Mary, we are seeing that love today. He is laying down his life for us. And because he loves us so much, he wants us to love each other. Mary, he has called us to be family to each other. He wants you to be like a mother to me. And he wants me to be like your son. We will do what he has told us to do. We will be his people. We will love each other. We will be faithful to everyone who does the will of God. Come, Mary, and share my home. His love has made us a family -- the family of God.

Extinguish one candle and then return to your seat.

When Keith and Trish leave the microphone, the Liturgist will return to the lectern and offer the invocation.

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 and join in singing our opening hymn, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness", number 276 in our Hymnal.

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

*HYMN OF PRAISE

"How Great Is Our God!"

The splendor of the King, and clothed in majesty
Let all the earth rejoice... all the earth rejoice.
He wraps himself in Light, and darkness tries to hide
And trembles at His voice... and trembles at His voice.
How great is our God! Sing with me: How great is our God!
And all will see how great... how great is our God.
And age to age He stands, and time is in His hands;
Beginning and the end... beginning and the end.
The Godhead Three in One-- Father, Spirit, Son;
The Lion and the Lamb, the Lion and the Lamb.
How great is our God! Sing with me: How great is our God!
And all will see how great... how great is our God.
How great is our God! Sing with me: How great is our God!
And all will see how great... how great is our God.
Name above all names, worthy of all praise.
My heart will sing: How great is our God!
Name above all names, worthy of all praise.
My heart will sing: How great is our God!
Name above all names, worthy of all praise.
My heart will sing: How great is our God!

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

*CALL TO CONFESSION

The burden of our sins is a heavy one and often makes us feel as if we would collapse under the weight of them. But Christ invites us to leave them all at His cross and be freed from them forever. Therefore, let us confess our sins as we 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)

Lord forgive us for being such an acquisitive people. We collect things to help us remember our past, to protect us in the present, and to provide for our future. We accumulate grudges, hurts, habits, and pet

sins that we would rather drag through life than discard to lighten our load. Father, grant us such faith that we might be not just willing, but eager to lay our burdens down, and run with joy the race that is set before us. Help us to cling to Christ rather than the things that keep us from the joys that yet await us in this life and the next. Amen.

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

***THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

Christ himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, freed from our sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds we have been healed. 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**

Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us now be reconciled one with another and share the peace of Christ. 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, 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 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 leave, the Liturgist will return to the lectern and say...***

“Would all who are able, please stand and join in one voice to sing our next hymn, “Fairest Lord Jesus” hymn #306 in our *Hymnals*.

***HYMN OF PREPARATION**

“Fairest Lord Jesus”

The Hymnal #306

After the hymn, the liturgist will return to the pulpit and say,

THE 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 generously with grateful 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

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

"O Sacred Head, Now Wounded" - Michael Burkhardt

***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 all you have given to bless us in abundance. Help us to remember that possessions can become a burden and keep us from following where Christ calls us to go in his name. Instead we pray that you would use these gifts to equip your saints to go where they are needed so that they might proclaim the Good News in every corner of the earth. We pray this in the name of him who lifted our burdens from us and buried them in His tomb, Jesus 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 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 take a seat.

SPECIAL MUSIC "Intrada" Jean Antoine Piani Desplanes Dalene Baer, violinist

After the soloist finishes, the Liturgist will return to the lectern & say....

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson this morning is taken from the eighth chapter of Matthew's Gospel, beginning at the eighteenth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page 986 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

"Now when Jesus saw great crowds around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. And a scribe came up and said to him, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go."

And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head."

Another of the disciples said to him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father."

But Jesus said to him, "Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead."

The liturgist will return to his 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 today is taken from the third chapter of Paul's Letter to the Philippians, beginning at the seventh verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #1024 in your pew bibles. Listen once more for the word of God....

"Whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

"Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith; that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

"Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but 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 upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

"Take Out the Trash"

This Lenten season, we are learning how to "die to ourselves" so that we can "live for Christ". We are preparing for that death, by making our bucket lists. And instead of writing our own, we are asking, "What would God want on my bucket list?" First we added the item, "Become a student of the Bible." Last week we listed, "Heal an old wound."

This week our bucket list goal from God is, "Take out the trash."

Let us begin with two parables. The first is historical, the second allegorical.

The Pelicano was the world's most unwanted ship. For more than twenty years she was the ship without a country. No one wanted her. No port in the world would allow her to dock. The problem was not the boat. Though rusty and barnacled, the 466-foot freighter was seaworthy.

The problem was not the ownership. The owners kept the licenses current and taxes paid.

The problem was not the crew. They may have felt unwanted, but they weren't inefficient.

So what was the problem! She was full of trash. Fifteen thousand tons of trash. Orange peels. Beer bottles. Newspapers. Half-eaten hot dogs. Dirty disposable diapers. Garbage.

During Philadelphia's long summer of 1986 when the city's garbage workers went on strike, The trash piled higher and higher. At least until the Pelicano's owners thought they could make a fast buck by transporting the rubbish. The trash was burned, and the ashes were dumped into the belly of the boat. But then no one would take it. At least until 20 years after she was loaded in late 2006. She is finally empty and serving a useful purpose, but those 20 years are lost to her and her owners forever.

The sad story of the Pelicano can serve us as a parable. Trash-filled lives don't fare any better.

Life has a way of unloading her rubbish on our decks. Your husband works too much. Your wife gripes too much. Your boss expects too much. Your kids whine too much. The result! Trash. Load after load of anger. Guilt. Bitterness. It all piles up.

Trash affects us. It contaminates our relationships.

Let trash on board, and people are going to smell it. The troubles for the Pelicano began with the first shovelful. The crew should have turned it away at the gate. Life would have been easier for everyone on board if they had never allowed the trash to pile up.

Another story.

The woman flops down on the bench and drops her trash bag between her feet. She stares at the sidewalk. Everything aches. Back, legs, neck. Her shoulder is stiff and her hands raw all because of the sack. Oh to be rid of the garbage. Her memories of life without trash are fuzzy. As a child maybe, or was it a dream . . . maybe the trash has always been there. She never looks at the trash though. Early on she did, but what she saw was too much, so she's kept the sack closed ever since. What else can she do? Give it to someone? Everybody already has their own garbage!

Here comes a young mother. With one hand she leads a child and with the other she drags her load. Here comes an old man. His trash sack is so long that it hits the back of his legs as he walks.

What in the world could they be carrying in those enormous hefty bags of garbage?

Shifting through people's trash can tell you a lot about them. Look inside your trash bag. What is it that you need to throw out but for some reason just can't, or don't, or won't.

Regrets. The saddest words of tongue or pen are, "It might have been." If you could do it over you would, but alas, that ship has sailed.

Shame. Past mistakes haunt you. You know it was wrong, but will you never be able to live it down.

Maybe it's loneliness? A kind word not said. An unkind word spoken in anger. A slap. A spanking. And you are alone. You thought you could avoid the pain by avoiding people, but now you are left with a deep, aching hunger for love, that nothing else can satisfy.

How about worry? Worry divides the mind, which is literally what the biblical greek word means. Anxiety splits our energies between today's priorities and tomorrow's problems.

I am sure there's some pain in there. Part of us is broken and part of us is bitter.

How about resentment and bitterness? Resentment is the cocaine of emotions, and like cocaine it demands larger and more frequent doses until rage is a driving force.

Back to the young woman and the old man with their sacks of garbage. Her eyes make contact with those of the old man and she stiffens as she steels herself against the scorn she has learned to expect. But it never comes. His voice is compassionate and warm as he asks, will you give me your trash? What could he mean? His sack is already so large that she cannot comprehend how he manages to carry it.

But he persists. "Give it to me, tomorrow at the landfill. Will you bring it." He gently rubs a smudge from her cheek. Friday, the landfill.

Long after he leaves, she replays the scene, touching her cheek.

That night's sleep brought summer dreams, but when she awakes it is dark and drizzling. At the foot of her bed awaits her sack of trash. Hoisting the bag over her shoulder she walks out of the apartment and down the stairs and out into the street. It's Friday. With hope just barely outweighing hopelessness, she heads toward the edge of town toward her appointment at the dump.

The landfill is tall with trash. By the time she reaches the hill, the line is long. Thousands upon thousands walk ahead of them. All wait in silence, stunned by what they hear --- a scream, a pain-pierced roar that hangs in the air for moments, interrupted only by a groan. Then the scream again. His scream.

As they draw nearer, they know why. He kneels before each, gesturing toward the sack, offering a request then a prayer. "May I have it? And may you never feel it again."

He bows his head and lifts the sack, emptying the contents on himself. The selfishness of all, the bitterness of the angry, the possessiveness of the insecure. He feels what they felt---as if he had lied or cheated or cursed or . . . Upon her turn, the woman pauses. Hesitates. He reaches for the trash and takes it from her. "You can't live with this, he explains, you weren't made to."

With head down he empties her shame upon his shoulders. Then looking toward the heavens with tear flooded eyes, he screams, "I'm sorry"

. . . "But you did nothing," she cries.

And now he sobs as she sobbed into her pillow a hundred times. That's when she realizes that his cry is hers and her shame, now His! With her thumb she touches his cheek and for the first time in a long, long, time, she has no trash to carry. With the others she stands at the base of the hill and watches as he is buried under the trash of their lives. For some time he moans. Then nothing. Just silence.

The trashman is dead. But the burdens carried by all of those who had given him their load of garbage, were free. Like the Pelicano, she is finally free of all that has weighed her down for so long. Now she has a future.

We can avoid the fate of the Pelicano and the young woman by giving our garbage to Jesus. Let him cleanse you of the filth. And after you do that... then what?

Refuse to let any more trash enter your life! Take the counsel of Solomon: "Be careful what you think, because your thoughts run your life".

Paul tells the Corinthians, "Love keeps no record of wrongs." Or thought of another way, don't hold onto the those things that hurt you or make you angry."

You need to make a choice. Ask yourself, "Am I going to keep a list of wrongs?" You can, but your life will smell worse than the stuff you occasionally pick up on your shoe.

Or you can do something else. You can defy the culprit. Quote a verse if you have to: "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse".

Remember, just because there is trash on the dock, doesn't mean there must be trash on your ship. You are not a victim of your thoughts. You have a vote. You have a voice. You can exercise thought prevention. You can also exercise thought permission.

How could you change the course of your life so that you avoid the fate of the Pelicano? Change your cargo. Load the decks with flowers instead of trash, presents instead of ash, and no one will ever turn your ship away. Change the cargo, and you change the ship. By the same token, change the thoughts, and you change the person. If today's thoughts are tomorrow's actions, what happens when we fill our minds with thoughts of God's love? Will standing beneath the downpour of his grace change the way we feel about others!

Paul says absolutely! It's not enough to keep the bad stuff out. We've got to let the good stuff in. It's not enough to keep no list of wrongs. We have to cultivate a list of blessings. Paul says it this way, "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things".

Rather than store up the sour, store up the sweet.

You want to make a list? Then list his mercies. List the times God has forgiven you. Stand before

the form of your crucified Savior and pray, "Jesus, if you can forgive me for hurting you, then I can forgive them for hurting me." You didn't deserve to be hurt by them-- but neither did you deserve to be forgiven by him.

And yet, here you are. Breathing. Still witnessing sunsets and hearing babies gurgle. Still watching the seasons change. Getting married to the one true love of your life. Apparently God hasn't kept a list of your wrongs.

Listen. You haven't been merely sprinkled with forgiveness, you have been immersed in it. You are submerged in mercy. Let it change you!

A little rain can straighten a flower stem. A little love can change a life.

Would you like to avoid the plight of the Pelicano? Then let Jesus on board. Let him love you. Let him change your cargo. He will get rid of your trash and leave you full of grace.

You don't have to.

You can keep your stinky cargo and drift from port to port.

But why would you? The Captain of your soul has better plans for you.

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Would you pray with me...

Father, in these quiet moments we have caught a glimpse of your glory. So inspire us, that the gospel we profess may shine in our faces and be seen in our lives. May we return to face the grind of the monotonous and the humdrum routine of duty with a new vision. Transform for us our common tasks and glorify them with a new light, that we may apply ourselves to them with fidelity and devotion.

Forbid it, Lord, that our roots become too firmly attached to this earth, that we should fall in love with things. Help us to understand that the pilgrimage of this life is but a training school for what is to come. Then shall we see all of life in its true perspective. Then shall we not fall in love with the things of time, but come to love those things that endure. Then shall we be saved from the tyranny of possessions which we have no leisure to enjoy, and of property whose care becomes a burden. Grant that we may be mature in our faith, childlike but never childish, humble but never cringing, understanding but never conceited.

So help us, O God, to live and not merely to exist, that we may have joy in our work. In Thy name, who alone can give us moderation and balance and zest for living, 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 dedication, "O What Shall I Render?", #557 in our *Hymnals*.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION

"O What Shall I Render?"

The Hymnal #557

*THE BLESSING

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

"More Precious than Silver"

Lord, You are more precious than silver.

Lord, You are more costly than gold.

Lord, You are more beautiful than diamonds.

Nothing I desire compares with You.

*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis