

Sunday, March 22nd, 2015

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

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

The preacher will then ask...

“Are there any other announcements or concerns of the church that need to be made known at this time?..... Thank you.”

The preacher will take a seat.

PRELUDE

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 29 and printed in our bulletins?”

CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Psalm

29)

Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name; worship the Lord in holy splendor.

The voice of the God of glory thunders over mighty waters.

The voice of the Lord is powerful and filled with majesty.

The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon.

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox.

The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire.

The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness;

The voice of the Lord causes the oaks to whirl, & strips the forest bare;

Let all in His temple say, “Glory!”

Let us worship God beginning with prayer...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... Our Father, for this short time of worship, direct and control our thoughts that we may think only of you. Grant us:

Reverence, as we remember your glory;

Penitence, as we remember your holiness;

Gratitude, as we remember your love.

So grant that we may rise from our worship:

With knowledge deepened;

With love kindled;

With strength to live more nearly as we ought;

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, "How Great Thou Art", number 467 in our *Hymnals*.

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

*HYMN OF PRAISE

"How Great Thou Art"

The Hymnal #467

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

***CALL TO CONFESSION**

With the full assurance of faith, let us come before the Holy One, Our God and Father, and humble ourselves before him so that he may forgive us, heal us, and lift us up once more. Let us pray together the prayer of confession printed in our bulletins and pausing for a moment of silent prayer at its conclusion. Let us pray...

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

(In Unison)

God of Grace, forgive the pride that prevents our bending to serve others in true humility. Forgive the arrogance which tries desperately to cloak our weaknesses in self sufficiency and renders us incapable of accepting the help we need. Forgive our love of knowledge that blinds us to the ocean of undiscovered truth around us. Lead us to focus, not on our own achievements, but on all that is left before us to do. Deliver us from pride in our performance by reminding us of how far short of perfection our best still falls. By your grace, help us to recognize our ignorance, admit our mistakes, recognize our need, and accept rebuke. Help us to discover that it is only in serving others that we may become great, and only in obedience to you that we may find true freedom. Amen.

*SILENT CONFESSION

(Pause for about 30 seconds of

silence.)

*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Here the Word of the Lord: "I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." ... 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 brought near to the throne of grace by the blood of Jesus, we have been reconciled to God. Let us also be reconciled one to 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, the liturgist 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 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 Preacher will return to the lectern and say...

The minister will take a seat and Kathy will come to the lectern and speak to the congregation.

When she leaves the microphone, the Liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Give unto the Lord the glory due His name: bring an offering and come before Him 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

*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... O God, who has given us every good thing, accept these our gifts and follow them with your blessing that they may be used to free the oppressed, heal the sick, proclaim the good news, and offer good hope to all who are in despair. Grant that we may honor you with the commitment of our whole selves and that you will use these gifts to spread your Kingdom here on earth and that your name may be known and glorified in all the world, through 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

Dalene Baer, Violonis

After the Anthem, 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 about the Voice in the Thunder.

LENTEN VIDEO

"The Voice in the

Thunder"

After the video, the Liturgist will return to the lectern & say....

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson this morning is taken from the Paul's second letter to the church at Corinth, the fourth chapter, beginning at the eighth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page 1006 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you. But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture—"I believed, and so I spoke"—we also believe, and so we speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence. Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal."

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 third chapter, beginning at the fourteenth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #936 in your pew bibles.

Listen once more for the word of God...

Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Beth-saida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew went with Philip and they told Jesus.

And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If any one serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also; if any one serves me, the Father will honor him.

"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? `Father, save me from this hour'? No, for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify thy name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

The crowd standing by heard it and said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him."

Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out; and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."

He said this to show by what death he was to die.

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON
Glory”

“The Seed of

In every good story there is that moment when it feels like something is about to happen. The characters have been developed. The plot has been established. And then the tension has built to a point where the audience knows that something is about to unfold.

That is how we feel when we come to today’s passage from John 12. It is Passover week and Jesus has been watching the throngs of people from all over the countryside and beyond make their way into Jerusalem and thus the Temple to celebrate. More importantly, people have been watching Jesus-- the whole city was buzzing about Jesus’ actions in recent days. Jesus had cleansed the Temple and had just raised his friend Lazarus from the dead in John 11 and such news had spread like wildfire among the people.

A group of God fearing Greeks had come to town and were intrigued by the notoriety he had received and by the power and courage he had displayed in his confrontations with the all those in power, both Jew and Roman. They wanted to sit down face to face with him and have a conversation. So they approached Philip, the disciple with the Greek name, who in turn approaches Andrew who in turn seeks out Jesus to bring forth their request for an audience.

But what would start as an invitation to Jesus from some Greeks would quickly turn into a response about death and what was about to happen in the coming days for Jesus. His glory would come first, not with a crown but with a cross. He would be exalted by first surrendering himself obediently to the will of God his Father. The time was at hand. His hour had come. The moment was upon him that he had left the majesty and worship of heaven for three decades earlier. All hell was about to break loose on his life so that all heaven might be experienced by those who would ever call him their Lord. The only way for such things to unfold is for his life to be as the single kernel of wheat that falls into the ground and dies. When it does, such a sacrificial death produces much fruit.

The Old Testament prophets had foretold exactly the kind of death he would suffer. The most painful, humiliating, and lonely death that any man would ever experience was but hours away. As

much as he would have liked to have had the Father remove this bitter cup of wrath from in front of him, Jesus knew it was for this very hour that he had come on this mission of redemption and rescue in the first place. No cross of suffering would mean no crown of glory. And it was for the glory of God that Jesus was most interested.

“Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.”²⁹ The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.”³⁰ Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not mine.” John 12:28-30

Jesus was locked in to the mission at hand. He already had his Father’s approval and had heard him speak both at his baptism and on the Mount of Transfiguration. Those moments when the voice of God thundered were to bolster the soul of Jesus; however, this thundering voice from heaven in John 12 was for the benefit of those who would watch the events on the horizon unfold.

This is the point of this story. We can not hope for the crown if we fail to pick up the cross. We will not taste of glory until we have given it first to God.

Jesus then speaks of a seed. A single grain of wheat has little value. It isn’t even a full meal for a mouse. But if it falls to the ground and dies, it bears much fruit. Only when it is broken and spent, does it yield the fruit that it was meant to produce. It is only when Jesus has yielded his life in complete obedience to the Father’s will that his life will begin to produce the fruit intended from the foundations of the earth. His life lived in obedience and surrender is the seed that will bring glory to the Father, who will exalt his name above every name. Our lives lived in obedience to Jesus will bring glory to Jesus, and he will lift us up. If we serve the Son, the Father will glorify us.

Obedience, surrender, submission to Christ-- that is the seed of glory. And if you do the math, you will find it to be a very costly seed indeed, demanding our all, deserving our all, and yielding all we could ever hope for or imagine.

In 1921, Lewis Lawes became the warden at Sing Sing Prison. No prison was tougher than Sing Sing during that time. Sing Sing was widely regarded as ungovernable. It had had 9 wardens in less than 8 years prior to Lewis Lawes, including one who had lasted only 16 days. Political cronyism was rampant; questionable business practices had decimated the prison budget; vice was rife; and inmates appeared to run the institution.

But when Warden Lawes retired some 20 years later, that prison had become a humanitarian institution. Those who studied the system said credit for the change belonged to Lawes. But when he was asked about the transformation, here’s what he said, “I owe it all to my wonderful wife, Catherine, who is buried outside the prison walls.”

Catherine Lawes was a young mother with three small children when her husband became the warden. Everybody warned her from the beginning that she should never set foot inside the prison walls, but that didn’t stop Catherine! Instead of living in the Warden’s house a half mile outside the prison, Catherine and her husband set up housekeeping inside the prison.

When the first prison basketball game was held, she walked into the gym with her three beautiful children and she sat in the stands with the inmates.

Her attitude was: “My husband and I are going to take care of these men and I believe they will take care of me! I don’t have to worry!” She insisted on getting acquainted with them and their records. She became a foster mother to every man inside those forbidding walls.

She discovered one convicted murderer was blind so she paid him a visit. Holding his hand in hers she said, “Do you read Braille?” “What’s Braille?” he asked. Then she taught him how to read. Years later he would weep in love for her.

Later, Catherine found a deaf-mute in prison. She went to school to learn how to use sign language. Many said that Catherine Lawes was the body of Jesus that came alive again in Sing Sing from 1921 to 1937.

Then, sixteen years after she was arrived, she was killed in an accident. Warden Lawes wasn't in his office, so the acting warden took his place. It seemed almost instantly that the prison knew something was wrong.

The following day, her body was resting in a casket at the funeral home, three-quarters of a mile from the prison. As the acting warden took his early morning walk, he was shocked to see a large crowd of the toughest, hardest-looking criminals gathered like a herd of animals at the main gate. He came closer and noted tears of grief and sadness. He knew how much they loved Catherine. 500 men requested permission to go and pay their respects. About half were selected by the assistant warden to go on behalf of all the inmates. Her boys in grey went to the prison greenhouse and put together a funeral wreath fit for a head of state.

At 10am the next faced the men, "All right, men you can go. Just be sure and check in tonight!" Then he opened the gate and a parade of more than two hundred of the hardest cons in America walked out the gate for the first time in 7 years and most for the last time in their lives, with no guard, and no shackles. They walked slowly and tearfully the three-quarters of a mile to stand in line with mayors and governors and aldermen to pay their final respects to Catherine Lawes.

They said their good byes to their foster mother, offered their prayers, and then, like well behaved children, they turned and walked straight home. Every one of them back to their complete their sentences. Every one!

Some said it thundered, and some said an angel had spoken. But all knew they they had seen a miracle and that the glory of God had been revealed through the life of one woman willing to give her life to the cause of redeeming lost souls with the grace of God.

Will you give God what he asks? Will you do all that you can for his glory? I think something is about to happen, because I swear..... I can hear it thunder.

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Eternal and Merciful Father, may your hand be always upon us to guide us. If we push it away and stubbornly insist on finding our own way apart from you, hold us ever more firmly. If we are angered by the pain we encounter in following your way, lift up our eyes to our crucified Lord who learned through suffering, then then teach us, through the travail of our souls, to find our way into the truth that is in him.

Open our eyes to every revelation of your glory in the plain and ordinary paths of life, and may we not be blind to your presence because we scorn the simple or difficult paths we must travel.

If the path before us is steep and we draw back in weakness, give us your strength.

If the path ahead is dark and foreboding, allay our fears with your unfailing companionship.

If the journey's end is so far distant that we lose hope and despair of ever reaching it, give us patience to trust your purpose.

If the path is so rocky and treacherous that we fall, lift us up, heal our wounds, and keep us ever seeking.

As we walk the paths you have marked out for us, keep us ever mindful of those who march with us that we may sustain them with encouragement and laughter. Walk with us through every dark valley, over every wind-swept mountain, and across every fragrant meadow till at last we reach our home in you and know the joy of a journey faithfully completed; 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, "Lift High the Cross", number 371 in our *Hymnals*.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION

"I Am Thine O Lord"

I am Thine, O Lord, I have heard Thy voice,
And it told Thy love to me;
But I long to rise in the arms of faith
And be closer drawn to Thee. *Refrain:*
Draw me nearer, nearer blessed Lord,
To the cross where Thou hast died;
Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer blessed Lord,
To Thy precious, bleeding side.
Consecrate me now to Thy service, Lord,
By the pow'r of grace divine;
Let my soul look up with a steadfast hope,
And my will be lost in Thine. *Refrain:*
Oh, the pure delight of a single hour
That before Thy throne I spend,
When I kneel in prayer, and with Thee, my God
I commune as friend with friend! *Refrain:*
There are depths of love that I cannot know
Till I cross the narrow sea;
There are heights of joy that I may not reach
Till I rest in peace with Thee. *Refrain:*

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
God”

“Change My Heart, O

Change my heart, O God, make it ever true.
Change my heart, O God, may I be like You.
You are the Potter, I am the clay;
Mold me and make me, this is what I pray.
Change my heart, O God, make it ever true.
Change my heart, O God, may I be like You.

*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis