

## Worship Service- April 2nd, 2017

*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 behind the Pastor and take their seats. The pastor will step into the pulpit, welcome everyone, and make these announcements....*

*The preacher will then ask...*

“Are there any other 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**

**"O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High" - Edward Broughton**

### CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP

**The Choir**

**"Lord, Draw Us Near" - Dan Dykema**

*After the Choir sits down, the liturgist will step to the pulpit & say...*

“Would you join me in reading responsively our call to worship, adapted from Psalm 105 and printed in our bulletins.”

### CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Psalm 105)

O give thanks to the Lord, call on his name!

**Make known his deeds among the peoples.**

Sing to him, sing praises to him;

**Tell of all his wonderful works.**

Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.

**Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually.**

Remember the wonderful works he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered,

**He is the Lord our God; his judgments are in all the earth.**

He is mindful of his covenant forever.

**He remembers the word that he commanded for a thousand generations.**

Let us worship God beginning this morning with the fifth Lenten reading by **Doug Green**. He will be speaking the words of Simon of Cyrene as he watched his Savior on the cross, deserted by his friends and feeling abandoned, even by God. Luke writes: “At the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?--- which means, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’”

### THE LENTEN CANDLE READING

**Doug Green**

*The reader will immediately step to the microphone near the wreath and begin reading:*

**SIMON OF CYRENE:** I came to Jerusalem for Passover. I was minding my own business when I heard the noise of a crowd in the street. I pushed through the crowd to see what was happening and saw a most horrible sight. The Romans were leading this poor man through the streets, mocking him as they went; making him a public example for anyone who lost the favor of Rome. They were leading him out of the city to crucify him, but they had almost killed him already. His back was bleeding and torn open-- the work of the cruel Roman whip, I was sure. He staggered and stumbled beneath the weight of the heavy cross he bore. He fell, but the guards struck him and yelled at him to get up and go on. But he couldn't go far. He fell again, and this time even they knew that he wouldn't bear the burden of the cross alone.

The guards looked around for someone to help him. I waited to see if a friend of his would step forward to help him, but no one did. A guard, in great frustration, picked me out of the crowd, and ordered me to pick up the man's cross and carry it for him to the place of execution. I had no choice but to obey. Still, I resented having to carry a cross for anyone. It was heavy and dirty and bloody. I thought to myself that I must have been in the wrong place at the wrong time.

As I followed along behind this man, Jesus, I realized that though I had taken a heavy load from his shoulders, he still bore a heavy load which no one could take away. I have never seen a man so all alone. I had heard that this man once had a large following. Thousands came to hear him speak and to see the great things he did for God. Large crowds wanted to make him their king. But where did they go? Not one of them was there to help him bear his cross. I know that he had a circle of disciples who had traveled with him and learned from him for a long time. They were closer to him than anyone. But they too were gone now. His mother and some other women followed us through the streets, but not one of his disciples was there to help him bear his load. As I, a total stranger, followed him outside the city and laid down the cross upon which he would be killed, I thought that this man was as alone as a man had ever been. Somehow I couldn't leave him. I had to stay. I had to stand by him, at least at a distance. No one should die so all alone.

As I stood near his cross, I asked one of our religious leaders, one of the members of the Sanhedrin, what this man's crime had been. What had he done to deserve such a death? The man answered that this Jesus had made a blasphemous claim that he and the Father are one. As I thought about what Jesus had claimed and whether I could believe it was true, I heard him cry out in an agony which ran deeper than the nails which held him to the cross. He said, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

How awful, I thought. At one time he felt that he was one with God. And now he feels so alone that even God has turned away from him. What could have come between them? I don't know. But I will never forget how he looked and how he sounded. He's carrying much more than a cross today. He looks like a man who is carrying the whole world.

*The reader will then extinguish one candle and return to his seat in the congregation.*

*The Liturgist will return to the lectern and say:*

#### PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom, you know our needs before we ask and our ignorance in asking. We have gathered at the feet of Jesus seeking a word of hope amid all the hurt and the evil around us. Have compassion on our weakness, and mercifully give us those things, which because of our unworthiness we dare not ask, and which, due to our blindness we cannot seek without your help. Speak to us through your Word and Spirit, Lord, so that we may truly appreciate the gift of your grace and live as those who are already citizens of your eternal kingdom. Amen.

"Would all of you who are able, please stand and join in singing "I Will Call Upon the Lord", #2002 in the Sing the Faith Hymnal supplement. Before we begin, Dan would like to give us a few instructions to help us enjoy our singing of this new hymn a little more.

\*HYMN OF PRAISE "I Will Call Upon the Lord" (repeat 1 time) *Sing the Faith #2002*

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

#### \*CALL TO CONFESSION

For far too long we have listened to the seductive voice of the serpent. Now that we are reaping the fruits of our disobedience, let us confess our sins and seek the help and forgiveness of Almighty God, by praying together the prayer of confession printed in our bulletins. Let us pray...

\*PRAYER OF CONFESSION (In Unison)

Heavenly Father, we do not always pray as we ought.

Help us to speak the truth and to listen for your forgiveness:

When we pray, "Our Father in heaven," but forget to embrace all people as our brothers and sisters ... *Silence*

When we say "Your kingdom come" without working for your kingdom on earth ... *Silence*

When we ask for our daily bread, but do not recognize it as your gift ... *Silence*

When we request forgiveness for ourselves, but fail to pardon others ... *Silence*

When we plead not to be led into times of trial, but walk willingly into temptation ... *Silence*

When we honor you with our lips, but fail miserably with our lives ... *Silence*

O Lord, forgive us. Help us to pray unceasingly, that we may be transformed by the renewing power of the Spirit. Create spaces in our prayer, that we might hear and live out your words back to us, words of love and justice, grace and forgiveness. Amen.

\*SILENT CONFESSION *(pause for about 30 seconds of silence)*

\*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Brothers and sisters in Christ, hear these words regarding prayer: "Ask and it will be given to you; search, and you find; knock and the door will be opened for you." Know that God longs to hear our prayers for forgiveness and to grant all such requests. 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

Christ has made peace through the blood of his cross, and reconciled all things unto himself. 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 return to the lectern and say...*

"At this time I want to invite all of our younger friends to come forward for a message from the Lord prepared just for them by Ms. Karen."

*The liturgist will take a seat until after the handbells.*

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 step to the pulpit and say,*

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Life does not consist in the abundance of our possessions. All to which we now hold so tightly will one day belong to others. We have the privilege of sharing our blessings with others in Christ's name and laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven. Let us give joyfully and generously as we continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings....

*Take your seat for the offertory.*

THE OFFERTORY

"What Wondrous Love Is This" - Anna Laura Page

**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 pulpit and say...*

\*OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray. . . May these gifts and our lives bear fruit in many good works, increasing among all people the knowledge of You, O Lord, and with it, patience, endurance, wisdom, love and joy. We would act with compassion toward one another and toward neighbors near and far. Thankful for the mercy you have shown us, we pledge ourselves & these offerings to extend your mercy to all. 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 then take a seat.*

**THE ANTHEM**

**"O Come and Mourn" - Hal Hopson**

**The Choir**

*As the choir sits down, the liturgist will step to the lectern & say...*

**SCRIPTURE READINGS**

Our first lesson this morning is from the fourth chapter of the Letter of James, beginning with the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #1056 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God...

"What causes wars, and what causes fightings among you? Is it not your passions that are at war in your members? <sup>2</sup> You desire and do not have; so you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain; so you fight and wage war. You do not have, because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. <sup>4</sup> Unfaithful creatures! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. <sup>5</sup> Or do you suppose it is in vain that the scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit which he has made to dwell in us"? <sup>6</sup> But he gives more grace; therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." <sup>7</sup> Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup> Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you men of double mind. <sup>9</sup> Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to dejection. <sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you."

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

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*The preacher will step into the pulpit & say...*

Our gospel lesson today is found in the eleventh chapter of Luke's gospel, beginning at the first verse. You can find this passage on page 903 in your pew bibles. Listen once more for the word of God.

"He was praying in a certain place, and when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."

<sup>2</sup> And he said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. <sup>3</sup> Give us each day our daily bread; <sup>4</sup> and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive every one who is indebted to us; and lead us not into temptation."

<sup>5</sup> And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; <sup>6</sup> for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; <sup>7</sup> and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything'? <sup>8</sup> I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him whatever he needs.

<sup>9</sup> And I tell you, Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>10</sup> For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

<sup>11</sup> What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; <sup>12</sup> or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? <sup>13</sup> If you then, who are evil, know how to give

good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

L: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: **Our thanks be to God!**

## THE SERMON

“Call Home”

Parents learn early on in a child's college years, that the once regular phone calls home begin coming with less and less frequency. Even return calls get returned seldomly if ever. A friend of mine solved the problem with his college age daughter by making a direct deposit to her college account every Monday morning, only when he received a call from her on the previous Sunday afternoon.

As we grown in our faith and sophistication, our own calls home to our Father in Heaven, usually become more infrequent as well. We who began life saying grace at every meal and saying our prayers at night, now do well to pray weekly and only while we are at church. We tell ourselves we are too busy to pray, not realizing that if we don't have time to pray, the rest of our week suffers terribly as a result. If there was one thing that God would add back to our bucket list this week, it would be to get back into the habit of calling home regularly.

Why? What is prayer?

Start by imagining a very real place, like a hospital. Something's happened. You find yourself in a hospital waiting room. Your spouse is being seen by the doctor, or maybe they've gone down to Xray, but for whatever reason, you find yourself alone in the waiting room-- except for a stranger who sits across from you. Like you they have been waiting a long time. The silence is deafening-- so quiet that you can hear your own heartbeat. The light is dim and the silence seems even to suspend time.

The silence, the emptiness, the preoccupation with your own thoughts and your own waiting, separate you from the person sitting across from you in the dim light as fully as light-years of space separate stars. The mystery of who you really are is as hidden from the proximate stranger; and if somebody asked you later if there was anyone else there with you, you might say, "No. At least I don't think so. I'm not sure. " Maybe it's because the stranger across from you hardly even seems human; he is a face dimly seen, a dark shape sitting on a bench or leaning against the wall.

Then maybe, on impulse, you speak, "Hi ... It's a long wait isn't it."

Some silly word. Something. A very small miracle. What made you speak? Maybe a sudden pang of loneliness. A sudden desire to know or to be known. Maybe you need the sound of your own voice to bring you back to reality again from the shadow world of your own thoughts.

For whatever reason, you do speak-- you have to break the silence. To a stranger you reveal some part of the mystery of who you are. And in some partial, tentative way, you open yourself to the stranger's knowing. *Does* he hear you? Does he answer you? If he does, a little bridge is built, and you can meet on the bridge.

This is what I think, in essence, prayer is. It is the breaking of silence. It is the need to be known and the need to know. Prayer is the sound made by our deepest aloneness. I am thinking not just of formal prayers that we might say in church or in bed at night, but of the broken fragments of prayer that people use without thinking of them as prayers

Something terrible happens, and you might say, "God help us" or "Sweet Jesus"-- the poor, crippled prayers that are hidden in the minor blasphemies of people who still have to speak to him if only through clenched teeth. Prayer is a person's impulse to open up his life at its deepest level.

And God, of course, is the stranger. Does he listen? Does he answer? Does he exist at all? The light is so dim, and we are so caught up in ourselves, that sometimes it is hard to be sure whether the stranger is really there or is just the shadow cast by our own starved longing for him.

In Luke, Jesus tells a strange story. At midnight an unexpected guest arrives. He is hungry, but you have nothing to feed him. So you go to the house of a friend to borrow some food. "Don't bother me," the friend says. "The door's locked. The children are all asleep. I can't give you anything now. Go home." But you keep on pestering him. You are so persistent that he finally gets up and gives you

what you want. Then Jesus adds, "For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened." And his point seems to be that the secret of prayer is persistence. Keep at it, keep speaking into the darkness, and even if nothing comes, speak again and then again. And finally the answer is given.

It may not be the kind of answer that we want-- some kind of stopgap peace. Christ never promises peace in the sense of no more struggle and suffering. Instead, the answer that he gives, I think, is himself. If we go to him for anything else, he may send us away empty or he may not. But if we go to him for himself, I believe that we go away always with this deepest of all our hungers filled.

The shadows become a face, a presence. The stranger turns out to be no stranger. It is not that God has to be pestered into compassion by our persistence, but that it is only through persistence, through hoping against hope, believing despite doubt, that one can open oneself to receive the compassion that is there in abundance. It is only when you ask a question out of your very bowels that the answer is really an answer. It is only when you stretch out your hands for it until your arms ache that a gift is really a gift.

You say, "The body of my friend, my child, myself, is sick. Make it well, Lord." You say, "The nations of the world snarl like wolves hungry for each other's blood. Grant them peace, Lord." The faith, such as it is, of a person when he prays, is faith in God as power. When you pray, it is to a God who with at least part of yourself you believe has the power to heal, *is* the power to heal, which is the power of love.

You do not have to persuade him to heal. You do not have to ask him to change his mind and he merciful instead of indifferent. But what you do in effect, I think, is something like this. You ask God to use your prayer as a channel through which the healing power of his love can flow into whatever body or soul you pray for, your own or that of another. The channel of your praying is apt to be clogged with all kinds of doubt, not only about God but about yourself, and clogged also with disuse. And yet I believe that little by little, as you persist in prayer, the power begins to trickle through anyway. The healing begins. Perhaps first it is the healing of yourself, and then gradually, through your prayer, it becomes the healing of others.

Nobody ever promised that prayer was going to be easy as far as I know, least of all anyone who ever tried it. Jesus said, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak," and that meant his own flesh, too, apparently. As death drew near while he waited in the garden among shadows, he managed to choke out the words, "Not what I will, but what thou wilt," but one of the accounts says that as he did so "his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground," and that is not hard to believe. He spoke to the stranger who is no stranger, and the answer he received was that in order to be made whole, he had first to be broken.

The disciples, in their wisdom, kept silent and addressed no word at all to the stranger for fear that he might answer them in the same way. So while Jesus prayed in the garden, they pretended to fall asleep. Or maybe they really slept. There are times when we all thirst for oblivion, and no one can blame us.

I am afraid that prayer is really not for the worldly. They avoid it for at least two reasons. In the first place, if the God they pray to really is a God who has this power to heal, to make whole, then it is wise to be very cautious indeed, because if you go to him for healing, healing may be exactly what you will receive, and are you entirely sure that you want to be healed? "Lord, take my sin from me-- but not yet," Saint Augustine is said to have prayed. In the second place, those wise in the ways of the world see prayer as a very childish procedure indeed.

In a way, "childish" is the very word to describe it. A child has not made up his mind yet about what is or isn't possible. If someone tells him that the mossy place under the wisteria bush is a magic place, he may wait until he thinks that no one is watching him, but then he will very probably crawl in under the lilac bush to see for himself. A child also knows how to accept a gift. He does not worry about losing his dignity or becoming indebted if he accepts it. His conscience does not bother him

because the gift is free and he has not earned it and therefore really has no right to it. He just takes it, with joy. In fact, if it is something that he wants very much, he may even ask for it.

And lastly, a child knows how to trust. It is late at night and very dark and there is the sound of sirens as his father wakes him. He does not explain anything but just takes him by the hand and gets him up, and the child is scared out of his wits and has no idea what is going on, but he takes his father's hand anyway and lets his father lead him wherever he chooses into the darkness.

In honesty you have to admit to a sophisticated man that prayer is not for them, not for the prudent, not for the worldly. Instead it is for those who recognize that in face of their deepest needs, all their wisdom is quite helpless. It is for those who are willing to persist in doing something-- like prayer-- that is both childish and crucial.

### **PASTORAL PRAYER**

Father, we come knowing that our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you, and we ask You to take from us now all that troubles the waters around us, all that has laid the crushing burdens of anxiety and worry upon our hearts. We thank You for the stillness of this time of prayer; this oasis in the midst of the dry, life sucking business with which we fill our lives when we can relax before You, lay our burdens down, and hand over to You everything that threatens us or fill us with vague fears.

Deep calls unto deep, Father, and underneath are the Everlasting arms. So we open our hearts to receive Your blessing, knowing that in Your presence  
the furrows are being smoothed from our brows,  
the lines from our faces,  
the load from our hearts,  
the doubts from our minds,  
the fears from our souls,  
and we find the peace that you alone can give.

And now, we thank You, not only for quietness around us, but for Your quietness within us; Quiet even at the heart of the universe.

Render holy to us in full truth this sacrament of holy Communion. Free us from all distractions of means and of method. Blind us to those who serve, and to those who wait to be served. Deafen us to sounds that rise from the pews or slip in from the doors and the windows. Fasten our minds to the bread and the cup, and in them let us find only your Son, laying down his life for our sakes and redeeming us still from our sins. May this bread and this wine be heralds of peace, tidings of hope, and bearers of love to all who believe. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

*(Sung by Congregation)*

Malotte

*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**

God knows that we are sinners. Yet it is for you that he gave his body and his blood that we might be fed upon the bread of life and drink from the cup of salvation. Allow him to wrap you in his righteousness, to hide your sins beneath his own perfection, and then come. Come to eat your fill and drink deeply of his pardon, for this is his feast and you are invited, not because you are worthy, but because he loves you. He has set a place at His table for you.

#### **The Words of Institution**

On the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord took the bread, and blessed it. After giving

