

FPC Magnolia Worship
Sunday, April 9th, 2017

PRELUDE

"Lord, I Lift Your Name on High"

The Children's Choir

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 118 and printed in our bulletins?"

CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Psalm 118)

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice & be glad in it.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord.

The Lord is God, and he has given us light.

Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar.

You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;

You are my God, I will extol you.

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,

For his steadfast love endures forever.

Let us worship God beginning with our sixth Lenten reading. Today we will hear the voice of Mike McNeill as he allows us to hear the contemplations of Caiaphas as Jesus breathes his last. The Gospel of John reads: "Jesus said, 'It is finished.' With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."

The Liturgist will sit down until after the reading.

Mike will step to the microphone near the Lenten wreath and begin reading.

CAIAPHAS, THE HIGH PRIEST: It is finished. He hangs near death. I am sorry to see one of our people die in such agony & disgrace, but it had to be. Some time ago, reports came from Bethany that Jesus had raised a man, Lazarus, from the dead. The word spread to Jerusalem & was all over town. The crowds were ready to follow him & make him their king. Their hopes were high. They spoke of Messiah.

But the crowds, ignorant and uneducated as they are, didn't realize the danger this man was bringing upon his people. We have an arrangement with the Romans which allows us to practice our faith. Word of so large a following might lead to the loss of our position, our temple, our right to lead the people as their priests. Did he not see that he put the very faith of Israel at risk? He had to die before he brought trouble upon us all.

I know that he did many things which people called good. But, after all, he was guilty of terrible crimes. He stirred the waters of rebellion. He taught without proper training, without authority, without our approval. And I heard him with my own ears when he claimed to be the Messiah, the God-sent deliverer of our people! This is blasphemy! For such arrogance a man must die!

Our problem is solved. The threat has been eliminated. He said it himself, "It is finished." And yet I wonder. He is near death, and yet his presence in this place is stronger than ever. He haunts me. I know that a man on a cross can hold no threat to me, the high priest of the people of Israel. And yet I feel somehow that this is not over.

As I stand here beneath his cross, a strange & troubling thought passes through my mind -- what if he was right? Certainly the Sanhedrin, the spiritual leaders of Israel, couldn't be wrong in so important a decision. We had to protect the temple, the priesthood, the faith of Israel! But my heart is still troubled by this man, Jesus of Nazareth. What if his claim was true? Could it be that God sent his Messiah to us and we have put him to death?

A moment ago I heard him say, "It is finished. But in my heart, I fear that I will never be finished with this man. I will always wonder who he really is."

(Extinguish one candle and return to your seat with our thanks.)

The liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... Our Father, we pray that you would pour out your Spirit and speak through your Word

this day. Teach us to know the mind of Christ and to live by his example of humble obedience. Meet us in the midst of our brokenness and unfaithfulness, to heal and restore. Let your face shine on us, even in the shadow of the cross, whenever or wherever we feel alone and forsaken. Remind us that you are an ever ready resource to help us oppose evil and support that which is good. We entrust our times and our lives into your hands. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, "Hosanna, Loud Hosanna", #89 in our Hymnal.

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

*HYMN OF PRAISE "Hosanna, Loud Hosanna" *The Hymnal #89*

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

*CALL TO CONFESSION

We may be waving palm branches today, but when God's glory shines upon us, we see the shadows we create. Aware of our need for a faith more deeply grounded and a love more deeply committed, let us pray together the prayer of confession as it is printed in our bulletins, pausing at its conclusion for a time of silent prayer. Let us pray...

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

(In Unison)

Lord Jesus, though our intention and desire is to be faithful and true followers of your way, we confess how we overvalue our contributions to your work while we minimize our failures and shortcomings. When personal and public pressures confront us, we count the cost of owning our discipleship and turn away, lest following you lead us to sacrifice more than that for which we are prepared. How slow we are to put our life, our liberty, or the things we love on the line for you. Remind us constantly of the price you paid for our redemption so that we may be always ready to give joyfully whatever is required to advance your kingdom even as we lay up treasures for ourselves in heaven. Amen.

*SILENT CONFESSION

Pause for about 30 seconds of silence.

*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

As far as the east is from the west, so far will the Lord our God remove the sins of those who repent and believe in His Son. 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

God has reconciled us to himself through Christ, & has entrusted to us the ministry of reconciliation. Let us be reconciled one with another & 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...

"Would all who are able, please stand and join in one voice to sing our next hymn, "Seek Ye First" hymn #333 in our *Hymnals*.

*HYMN OF PREPARATION

"Seek Ye First"

The Hymnal #333

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

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

If Jesus is to reign among us, much more will be needed than our praise and rejoicing when we are together. What will we bring to see to it that our witness and service in Jesus' name will continue even when we are apart. Let us give as we have been blessed 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

"Meditation: All Glory, Laud, and Honor" - Gilbert M. Martin

***DOXOLOGY (In Unison)**

The Hymnal #592

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him all creatures here below;
Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

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

***OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Let us pray... Lord Jesus, you gave your life that we might know the fullness of your love for us & the whole world. In the spirit of compassion and humility we make this offering of our worldly possessions, and of ourselves. Accept these gifts and follow them with your blessing so that this expression of our faith may give tangible evidence of your care for those in need. Receive and bless our giving, we pray, to the glory of Christ. 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.

THE ANTHEM

"Lo, He Comes" - John D. Horman

The Choir

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson this morning is taken from the second chapter of Paul's Letter to the Philippians, beginning at the third verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page 1023 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

"Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, [a] being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

The liturgist will return to his seat either on the chancel or with family in the congregation..

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

Our sermon text today is taken from selected verses of the tenth chapter of Matthew's Gospel, beginning at the twenty-eighth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #844 in your pew bibles. Listen once more for the word of God....

"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father's will. ³⁰But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows...."

"He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸and he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it.

⁴⁰"He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives him who sent me. ⁴¹He who receives a prophet because he is a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward, and he who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. ⁴²And whoever

gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.”

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

“Know What You’re Worth”

We are nearing the end of our Lenten bucket list from God. So far the list includes, “Become a student of the Bible.”... “Heal an old wound.” ... “Take out the trash” ... “Tell Your Story” ... and “Call home”. Today we add, “Know what you’re worth.” Figure out what kind of legacy you are leaving behind. Not money, or things-- those will, as the Bible warns us repeatedly, disappear, be stolen, rusted or rotted into oblivion. Answering the question, “What am I worth?” involves looking at those things that will live on after you. What have you that will guarantee a pleasant future for you after death? What are you leaving behind that your heirs can build on that will guarantee them a future, not just here on earth, but in the hereafter itself? Will they believe in Jesus? Will they lean on God’s promises, or on their own abilities?

What is a thing worth? When I was in Junior High and High School, my mother used to tell me that if she could buy me for what I was worth, and sell me for what I thought I was worth, she could go ahead and retire.

So how do you know what something is worth? If Scott boa were here, I would let him deliver a delightfully entertaining lecture that I am sure would answer this question for us, but since he isn’t, we’ll have to take a different tack.

Twenty-five years ago, right out of seminary, my buddy J.T. took his first call to a church in the frozen north. While he was in Wisconsin for those three years that felt like three decades, he used to heat his house with wood.

Every fall he would go out and cut wood with his neighbor and they would divide the fruit of their considerable labor between them. He confessed that he never liked cutting wood because it was a lot of back breaking work but-- he was quick to add-- he liked the price!

In addition to cutting wood he used to get wood scraps from a local business that made beautiful hand carved duck decoys. A typical new decoy cost about 200 bucks, So valuable and beautiful were they that most of them never even saw the water, wives would buy them for their duck hunting husbands to decorate their desks or mantles.

Anyway, every couple of weeks J.T. would stop in and pick up their wood scraps to burn in his wood fired heater. One year, right before Thanksgiving he stopped in to pick up a load of scraps. he walked in the front door and told them why he was there. The man wheeled out two bins like usual to the loading doors and helped him load them in the truck. Usually the wood was just chunks of pine but this time they looked like decoys. He asked him if he was sure that he was giving me the right wood because they looked just like unpainted decoys. Then he noticed that they had a few cracks in them so he figured they were throwing them away because of the cracks. The old shop hand insisted that J.T. had the right stuff and wished him a Happy Thanksgiving. He took his load of wood home and unloaded the scraps and decoys in a big pile in the basement. The wood burner was low so he grabbed a handful of decoys and threw them in the furnace. Then he went back to work.

When he got home from visiting at the hospital that afternoon, he had about two dozen messages on his answering machine from the decoy shop-- from the shop foreman and several different secretaries, all demanding that he bring back the decoys immediately. He asked why and was told by the anxious shop foreman that he had mistakenly been given their entire inventory of Christmas decoys worth tens of thousands of dollars by mistake. The foreman went on and on about calling the police and suing him for the loss. J.T told them the name of the guy who had given them to him and added that he had even asked if he were sure that these were the right scraps.

Then the foreman apologized and asked sheepishly, “Do you still have them because they are incredibly valuable. Each decoy had taken them over a week to make and they needed to get them back.

Rather stunned J.T. told them that he had burned a few of them but would bring the rest back. So he carefully loaded a few hundred decoys into the back of his truck and drove them back to the shop.

Value is often in the eye of the beholder. The decoys had no value to me other than a little heat. But to the shop that made them and the men and women whose livelihoods depended upon them, they were priceless.

That's lesson one in Divine Economics-- we say that we believe that everlasting life lived in perfect peace and love in the presence of God's eternal realm is priceless. It was so important to God that we have that gift, that he was willing to die so that we could live there if we chose to. But instead of behaving as grateful recipients of a priceless gift, we think nothing of placing that gift behind sports, entertaining, going to parties, living the good life.

So, maybe you can tell me. Perhaps you can explain it so I can understand it. If the kingdom of heaven is so valuable, why doesn't everybody do everything they can to be a part of it?

I think it's because value is often in the eye of the beholder. What has value and what doesn't is really up to personal interpretation. What some people think are valuable have no value at all to others.

So why the confusion? Something is worth what it is worth, right? A penny is worth a penny... a dollar is worth a dollar... isn't it?

In terms of buying power, the dollar is worth less than one-sixth of what it was in 1960. If you spent \$1000 in 1960, you would have to spend over \$6000 today to purchase the same goods and services. So prices, costs, and values vary of time.

Let's look at the term value or its equivalent term worth. Value is the expected amount of pleasure or service one expects to get from an item or service. Value can be increased through marketing, branding and product differentiation. While *Consumer Reports* may rate an insulated knockoff mug as more efficient and a better buy, through clever branding and product differentiation can induce people to expect twice as much from the one with the YETI brand on it. Almost identical mugs, but one is valued twice as highly by a consumer. It doesn't keep their drinks twice as cold or for twice as long or hold twice as much. But they expect to be cooler themselves. The estimation of their personal worth increases with the price of the cooler that they choose to buy and use. If everybody thinks it's cool to use this brand, then the value of the mug and the user go up accordingly.

What does this have to do with Jesus? The Christian faith has those who would give everything they have, including their lives for the privilege of serving Jesus and walking with him daily. While others can't get themselves out of bed, dressed, and to church on a Sunday morning without grumbling every step of the way. To one, the love of God and his promises are priceless, to another, worth less than a couple of hours of extra sleep or television viewing. Marketing and branding have left the Christian faith a little short on street cred. How much better for us to embrace a religion of today, such as when Madonna embraced Kabala, or how about the warm fuzzy spirituality of Oprah, where everyone and everything is accepted, loved, and embraced equally;.... where there are no rules, no expectations, no absolutes, like truth, to get in our way of feeling good about ourselves. How much harder it is for us Christians to disapprove of another's actions based upon the revealed and absolute truth of Scripture, speaking that truth to power even in the face of society's scorn; and then still love, really love the person whose actions we have disapproved. "Father forgive them, they know not what they do," really doesn't do much, in the moment, to increase our value to those for whom we are asking God's forgiveness.

So let's talk about price. Price is what you can actually sell something for. Those who place a small value on an object expect to pay a small price. At one time, mink was a highly prized and sought after fur used to make women's coats, because of its natural water resistance, beauty, and luxurious feel. But over the last few years, animal rights activists have made the wearing of such furs so politically incorrect, that furriers have closed their doors and the price of mink has plummeted. It may cost \$1000 to raise, skin and prepare mink furs, but the price has fallen way below that. If price is what one will pay, and cost is the amount paid to produce an item, then the difference between those two is the profit, or in the case of minks, the loss.

Following Jesus costs a lot-- he must be first on every list of your priorities. There will be inconvenience and it will cost you out of our pocket, just like it did with the Good Samaritan. You will have to discipline yourself and get rid of anything that hinders you from following Jesus as did Paul. It may make you the target of political persecution as it did James and Peter. It will almost certainly cost you some friends and some family, for when you put your hand to the plow you are never to look back.

So why should we do it? If the cost is high & the price is low, surely there is no future in it. Why? For the same reason God did it. For love.

For God so loved **YOU**, that he gave his only Son, that whosoever should believe in him, should not perish but have eternal life.

If you believe that, the rest is easy. If you don't then it will be easy for you to continue showing up at church at Christmas Eve, and Easter, or when the kids or grandkids are singing.

And here is the tough part. If you're here when the kids sing, and all the other things you do that give you so much delight in them, they will know you love them. And when you are gone, how will it serve to know that they **WERE** loved. That **once upon a time**, someone bigger than themselves loved them, and cared for them, and looked after them, and thought that everything they did was cute and wonderful.

Well, all of you 60 and 70 and 80 and 90 year old orphans out there-- does it help? Or does it help to know that you **ARE** loved. That right here and right now, someone bigger than you loves you, and cares for you, and looks after you, and thinks that everything you do is cute and wonderful.

So what is the value of your life? What are you worth? Someone has already demonstrated the exact value of your life by trading his life for yours. That's right, you are worth Jesus.

If I could buy you for what you **THINK** you are worth, and sell you for what Jesus thinks you're worth, then, I -- WE -- all could retire.

Know it. Believe it.

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Majestic God, on this Sunday we celebrate the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, and the beginning of His Passion on the cross, may we remember always his amazing love for those sinners, including ourselves, who made his death necessary; his courage as he faced rejection and scorn then and still faces it now, with resolve and determination, with love and faith, and with no hint of bitterness or rancor that would tarnish your gift.

Inspire us by his example and help us to be more like him, strong in our commitment and faithful in our service. Give us a faith that sees your hand at work beneath surface appearances and waits confidently for the revelation of your will for all things. Help us to trust in you in times of success or failure, strength or weakness, victory or seeming defeat, that in the good times we may reflect your glory, and that in the bad the world may see, not our shortcomings, but your grace, 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, "Take Thou Our Minds, Dear Lord", #392 in our *Hymnals*.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION "Take Thou Our Minds, Dear Lord" The Hymnal #392

*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, And nothing I desire compares with you.

*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis