

Sunday, May 7, 2017

PRELUDE

"Festive Voluntary" - Robert Lau

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

After the Choral Call, the liturgist should step to the lectern and say,

“Would you join me in reading the responsive call to worship adapted from Psalm 116 and printed in our bulletins?”

THE CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Psalm 116)

What shall I render to the Lord for all his bounty to me?

I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.

I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people.

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.

O Lord, I am thy servant, the child of thy handmaid. You have removed my bonds.

I will offer You the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the Lord.

I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people,

In the courts of the house of the Lord, in your midst, O Jerusalem, let us praise the Lord!

Let us worship God beginning with prayer...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

O Lord our God, your Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Give us grace to receive your truth in faith and love, that we may be obedient to your will and live always for your glory; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, “Christ Is Risen! Shout Hosanna!”, number 104 in our Hymnals.

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

*HYMN OF ADORATION

“Christ Is Risen! Shout Hosanna!”

The Hymnal #104

The preacher will step into the pulpit and say...

*CALL TO CONFESSION

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

The proof of God's amazing love is this: While we were still sinners Christ died for us. Because we have faith in him, we dare to approach God with confidence. In faith and penitence, let us confess our sin before God and one another and pray together the prayer of confession printed in our bulletins. Let us pray...

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Loving God, you have dealt with us graciously, but too often we respond with ingratitude. We accept too readily the myth that we are self-made people, that our possessions and status in life are the sole result of our own efforts. Forgive us for our spiritual blindness. Open our eyes to your presence in every aspect of our lives. Renew us by your Spirit, that we might serve as a witness to others of your love and grace, for we ask it in the name of the Christ who incarnates that love & grace for us all. Amen.

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

*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, that we might be dead to sin, and alive to all that is good... 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

All of us who have been buried with him in baptism have been raised with him into a new and living hope. Let us share the peace of Christ with one another. The peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

Share the peace of Christ with others as you will.

After a few moments, 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 begin to leave the front, the liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it. Let us return to God the offerings of our life and the gifts of the earth as we continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings...

The liturgist will take a seat until the Doxology.

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... Blessed are you, God of all creation; through your goodness we have these gifts to share. Accept and use our offerings for your glory and for the service of your kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Let us remain standing and reaffirm our Christian faith as it is expressed in the traditional version 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

Arthur Mahop, baritone

"You Satisfy the Hungry Heart" - Robert E. Kreutz

After the Choir finishes the Anthem, the liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson this morning is taken from the first chapter of Peter’s first letter, beginning with the seventeenth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #1058 in your pew bibles. Listen once more for the word of God...

“And if you invoke as Father him who judges each one impartially according to his deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile. You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was destined before the foundation of the world but was made manifest at the end of the times for your sake. Through him you have confidence in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

“Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere love of the brethren, love one another earnestly from the heart. You have been born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.”

The liturgist will sit down on the Chancel or with the congregation.

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

Our primary sermon text for this morning is taken from the Acts of the Apostles, the second chapter, beginning with the forty-second verse and continuing to the forty-seventh verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #949 in the New Testament section of your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God...

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

Leader: ... This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

“Table Talk”

If I were to ask you to sketch a picture entitled, *'The Church'*, what would you draw? A beautiful little building with a spire, a sanctuary with pews of worshipers, a small group in a circle studying the Bible... an altar... a pulpit? Whatever else is included, when Luke paints a picture of the church, he always places in the center a dining table. More than any other Gospel writer, Luke describes Jesus at table. Read through this Gospel and you probably will be as surprised as I was to discover how many of the great lessons Jesus gave were given while he was at the table.

In the home of Martha and Mary, he spoke of pots and pans and the kingdom. Sitting at the table of Simon, the Pharisee, he taught of love and forgiveness. When he was a dinner guest at a certain home, he warned the other guests about seeking the places at the head table. While he was at a banquet, he taught them about how to make out a guest list for such an occasion.

He was at dinner when he said that the kingdom of God is like a man who gave a great banquet. Those invited made excuses and so the room was filled with people of the street. The most beautiful parable that Jesus ever told was a parable of a dinner party for a prodigal who had returned. It was at a meal with his friends that Jesus spoke of his death.

Luke alone tells us of the first Easter and how, after hours on the road discussing the Scriptures with the two disciples from Emmaus, it was only when Jesus took the bread and broke it and blessed it that the eyes of the Emmaans were opened and the Lord was made known in the breaking of bread.

Elsewhere in the Book of Acts, Luke pictures the risen Christ with his followers. And he says that while they were staying together-- the expression "staying together" is literally "sharing the salt." In other words, while eating together, he gave them the Great Commission to witness in all the world. But this witnessing in all the world was possible only if the great barrier between Jew and Gentile was broken. And how was it broken? Of the many stories he tells, he shares two.

Luke says Simon Peter was on a housetop in Joppa, hungry and waiting for his lunch. As he napped, he had a vision of a sheet come down from heaven and on the sheet were all kinds of creatures that it was not kosher to eat. "Rise, Peter, kill and eat." Three times he saw the vision and each time Peter refused. Then the voice from heaven proclaimed the unforgettable truth, "What I call clean, do not call unclean." When that beautiful story ends, Simon Peter has entered the house of a Gentile, an Italian army officer in Caesarea, and has eaten with the man, his family, and his servants.

The second story concerns Paul. It also occurred about noon near Damascus and he, too,

through a vision, was called to preach to Gentiles. Broken and penitent because of his efforts to destroy the church, for days Paul refused food or drink. Then the pastor of the Christian community in Damascus came to him, called him brother, embraced him with understanding, and baptized him. The congregation surrounded Paul and accepted him fully, and they demonstrated this change in status by their eating together.

Why is it so vital to Luke to picture the church sitting around a table? Because **for him sharing the food is basic to the definition of a church.** There is nothing more spiritual anyone can do for another than to share food. Rabbinical midrash tells a story, that in a certain village there was a rabbi whose absence on the eve of the Day of Atonement was explained by the congregation in this way. "Our rabbi has ascended to heaven to make intercession with his people."

A visitor that synagogue heard that explanation and made light of it saying, "No one ascends to heaven; that's foolish."

The next year the same explanation occurred and from this one came the same refusal to believe. "That's foolish; no one ascends to heaven."

The third year this unbeliever determined to find the truth so he hid under the bed in the rabbi's cottage, waited and watched. Early one morning the rabbi got up and gathered what food he had into a sack and started out through the woods. He traveled some distance through the forest, pausing at one time to chop down a tree, cut it into fuel, tie it in a bundle, and put it on his back. He continued his way through the forest until he came to a clearing where a very humble cottage housed a widow and her children. The rabbi gave the food and fuel to this poor family.

The next Sabbath the congregation explained the absence of the rabbi by saying, "The rabbi has ascended to heaven." But the former doubter arose and announced; "He has gone even higher. " **You cannot go higher than sharing the food. Wherever some eat and some do not eat, you do not have church.**

But it was not just in the bread that Christ was present, it was in the breaking of bread, in the sharing of the bread. The very nature of the church is contradicted when some have to eat alone. When the Apostle Paul learned that the church in Corinth had grown so permissive that one of the leaders was living with his father's wife and that the church had grown accepting of this behavior, Paul was incensed and knew that this man who had set such a poor example and brought such disrepute on the church be punished severely. Paul searched his imagination for the worst possible penalty and he finally concluded that that man was not to eat with the church. He must eat alone. It is hard to conceive of a harsher punishment than that.

The secular world followed and reserved for its hardened criminals that terrible sentence, solitary confinement, and it remains the awful fact that the church in many places even today, without imagination and thought, allows that practice to continue by its neglect of the increasing number of the aging and widowed. Of course there's no punishment intended but the pain is no less severe. If you don't think so, just ask those who sit alone somewhere amid stainless steel trays, forced to eat alone when their only crime is that they have gotten old. But in the church Luke describes, eating together was the test and the proof of their common life.

Maybe you recall that very tense moment in the church at Antioch, which Paul describes in his Letter to the Galatians. He and Simon Peter were attending the fellowship dinner there in that church made up of Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. The remarkable fact is that they were eating together, Simon Peter included. But there came in certain brethren from the church in Jerusalem. They whispered in the ear of Simon Peter and he along with several others formed a separate table. Paul stood, walked over to Simon Peter and said, "You are condemned before God for this hypocrisy." One can hardly imagine a more tense moment than this, these two great apostles standing eyeball to eyeball and the table fellowship interrupted. It is a crisis of major importance. What was at stake? Everything was at stake.

When you form a separate table you have destroyed the church. It is not a church where some

refuse to eat with others. How profound is this simple portrait of the church drawn by Luke. The church is a group eating together with glad and generous hearts. It is theologically central, not just quietly beautiful, that he began his story of the resurrection with that account of two men asking a tired stranger to stay for supper. They didn't know who he was; they only knew that the hour was late, the trip was long, and they were hungry. Wherever the church exists, now as then, God's people will break bread at home and partake of food with glad and generous hearts. And now, no less than then, the Lord will be made known in the breaking of bread.

PASTORAL PRAYER

Dear Lord, wake us up this morning. Give us eyes that see & souls that hunger to share your love and grace show with everyone. May we never forsake the means of grace that you have granted to us. Keep us true to the practice of gathering in your name and of welcoming both friends and strangers into our homes, to our table, and into our hearts.

Create within those to whom you send us an awareness of the deep hunger within themselves, an aching need that only fellowship with you and your people satisfy. In sharing this meal of grace, may we be awakened to your presence with us at all times and know that you stand ready to dissolve our doubts and remove every division that separates us from one another and from you. Grant that we may all encounter the Risen Christ and know that the future is safe in his hands.

Lord, we come to you, trusting in the comforting words by which you invite us to your table. Pour out your Spirit upon these common elements that they may become uncommon. Grant that by his body, our bodies may be made clean; that our souls may be washed in his most precious blood; that our wills become so surrendered to you that we may easily recognize you in whatever guise you may be found. We make this prayer in the strong name of 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.

Would all who are able please stand and join in singing our closing hymn, "As We Gather at Your Table", printed in your bulletin.

*HYMN OF PREPARATION

"As We Gather at Your Table"

As we gather at your table, as we listen to your Word,
Help us know, O God, your presence; let our hearts & minds be stirred.
Nourish us with sacred story till we claim it as our own;
Teach us through this holy banquet how to make Love's victory known.
Turn our worship into witness in the sacrament of life;
Send us forth to love & serve you, bringing peace where there is strife.
Give us, Christ, your great compassion to forgive as you forgave;
May we still behold your image in the world you died to save.
Gracious Spirit, help us summon other guests to share that feast
Where triumphant Love will welcome those who had been last & least.
There no more will envy blind us nor will pride our peace destroy,
As we join with saints and angels to repeat the sounding joy.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Invitation

The Words of Institution

The Distribution of the Elements

The Prayer After Receiving

Strengthen for service, Lord, the hands that have taken holy things. May the ears which have

heard your word be deaf to clamor and dispute. May the tongues which have sung your praise be free from deceit. May the eyes which have seen the tokens of your love shine with the light of hope; and may the bodies which have been fed with your body be refreshed with the fullness of your life that we may bring glory to you forever. Amen.

THE BLESSING

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, remain with you always. Amen

***THE CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE**

“Go My Children Fed and Nourished”

Go, my children, fed and nourished, closer to me;

Grow in love and love by serving, joyful and free.

Here my Spirit's power filled you, Here His tender comfort stilled you;

Go, my children, fed and nourished, joyful and free.

***POSTLUDE**

Dr Elizabeth Davis