

Sunday, May 10, 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. The liturgist will enter and take his/her seat. The pastor will follow, 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.”

HONORING OUR MOTHERS

Presentation of Carnations

A Mother's Day Video

A Mother's Day Prayer

Let us pray... Father, we would thank you this day for the mothers who gave us life; who surrounded us early and late with love and care; whose prayers on our behalf still cling around your Throne of Grace as a haunting fragrance of their love's petitions.

Help us as their children and yours, to be more worthy of their love. Keep us from living as though any sentimentality or material gifts given today, can excuse any neglect during the rest of the year. So in the days ahead, may our love speak to the hearts who know love best and bless those whose names we whisper before you, and keep them in your perfect peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRELUDE "Psalm 33: Rejoice in the Lord!" - Emma Lou Diemer 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 25 and printed in our bulletins?”

THE CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Psalm 25)

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

O my God, in you I trust.

Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.

Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation.

Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

He leads the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.

He will teach them the way that they should choose.

They will abide in prosperity, and their children shall possess the land.

The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him.

He makes his covenant known to them.

Let us worship God beginning with prayer...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray...We come to you. Loving God, needing the love you alone can give. Your love comes to us in Jesus, bringing abundant life for all who will receive it. Interpret your word to us, Gracious God, and feed us with food that satisfies so that we may be productive branches of the true vine, Jesus Christ. Abide in us and with us and help us to abide in you as we proclaim your glory and seek your strength - both now, and indeed forevermore. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling”, number 446 in our *Hymnals and sung* to the tune “Beecher’ #343 in our hymnals.

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

*HYMN OF PRAISE

“Love Divine, All Loves Excelling”

The Hymnal #376

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

*CALL TO CONFESSION

Come, all the proud of the earth, and bow down before Him who made the earth. Come, all who

think you can live for yourselves alone. Come, all who are alienated from sisters and brothers, that you might rejoin the family of God. Let us pray together the prayer of confession printed in our bulletins, pausing for a moment at its conclusion for a moment of silent prayer. Let us pray...

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

We confess, O God, that we are accustomed to having our own way. Our abundance has tricked us into believing that we are independent, self-sustaining creatures. Yet, when our ingenuity solves one problem, a dozen more seem to take its place. We need your love and forgiveness in order to live with ourselves, and with one another. Forgive us for failing to abide in you, seeking your presence only when we are in trouble over our heads. Forgive us for forgetting that without you we are nothing and can do nothing. Forgive us for holding back and refusing to love others as Jesus loved. Amen.

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

***THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

Our own goodness can never warrant God's pardon. But while we were still sinners, Christ died for us, proving God steadfast love once and for all. We who were poor are made rich in the freedom of God's forgiveness... 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 reconciled to the Father through the gift of his son, let us also be reconciled with one another and share His peace. 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 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.**

Object: Budding Branch, Dead Branch

Good morning - I have here today two branches. If you were one of them, which would you want to be?

This branch is healthy and looks alive - this branch is dead. The dead branch has been dead for quite a while - there is nothing we can do to save it - but this branches still lives. What does it need if to stay alive??? (Sun and rain)

What killed this branch is the fact that it was broken off the rest of the bush last summer. While the rest of the bush grew and grew, this branch just kind of withered - even though there was a lot of rain and a lot of sun. That will happen to this branch too unless it is reattached to the bush - by a process called grafting. Then it will produce beautiful leaves and give shade to us.

Jesus compares us to branches on a vine. He calls himself the vine - and us the branches.

When we are part of the vine - we are truly alive and we produce good fruit - we do good things - but when we become separated from Jesus - we begin to wither and can't really do anything good at all - and if we go on too long like this - we will die. But if we turn back to Jesus in time - and become reattached - and allow his love to flow through us as sap flows the vine and its branches - then we will live and produce the beautiful fruit of good works and praise unto God's name.

As the children leave, the Preacher will return to the pulpit and say....

Each year between Mother's Day and Father's Day, we distribute baby bottles to be taken home and filled with loose change, stray bills, or even an occasional check. Here with us this morning to tell us how this money is used is Ms. Jennifer Hawkins of the Hannah Pregnancy Center.

A MINUTE FOR MISSION

The Baby Bottle Campaign

The Preacher will take a seat.

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

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Please be seated. . . What do we have to give! Only what we have received from the hand of our loving Father, who has blessed us in more ways than we can count. Let us offer to God more than the support of a church. Let us offer ourselves for the healing of nations and the building up of God's kingdom on earth, 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

"Though I May Speak" - Emma Lou Diemer

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... Righteous God, we acknowledge that there is bread enough in the world to feed your people, and love enough that none should suffer from isolation and rejection. Receive this offering of our substance and ourselves for the aid of those who desperately need your message of salvation. 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.

ANTHEM

"I Am Thine, O Lord"

The Handbell Choir

After the handbells finish, the Liturgist will return to the lectern & say....

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson this morning is taken from the fifth chapter of John's First Letter, beginning at the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page 1067 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hid from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God"?

Have you not known? Have you not heard?

The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength.

Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

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

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

Our Gospel lesson this morning is taken from John, the fifteenth chapter, beginning at the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #939 in your pew bibles.

Listen once more for the word of God...

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples.

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

“Connected”

Mother's Day is all about being connected. As a matter of fact, more long distance phone calls are placed on Mother's Day than at any other day of the year. The single highest day for long distance calls came in 1981 when South Central Bell hired Bear Bryant to pitch its long distance service on Mother's Day weekend.

At the end of the commercial Coach Bryant was just supposed to say, 'Call yo' mama'. But instead of "Call yo' Mama" he ad libbed "Have you called yo' mama today?..... I wish I could call mine." Within seconds of the commercial's first airing, switchboards across the country lit up, registering the highest one day call volume ever recorded.

As babies, we crave the presence of our mothers and become agitated and anxious when our cries do not produce their smiling faces and reassuring hugs within seconds. But in the years that follow, we find ourselves not just growing up, but growing away from those important connections.

In adolescence and young adulthood, healthy people begin to define themselves more and more in connection with their peers. If we connect up with friends who are basically stable and healthy, the results are positive. If we "fall in with the wrong crowd," the results can be tragic.

Still later we begin to draw our sense of worth and our motivation and our values from the business or industry or profession to which we belong. That, too, can be both good and bad.

Even if these connections are more healthy than unhealthy, their limitations inevitably become apparent to us.

Consider our connections with our parents. Most of us come to a point at which we recognize that our mothers and fathers were easily the most powerful and positive force in our development. Even so, as we mature we come to understand that our parents are themselves flawed human beings from whom we got both good things and not so good things, by whom we were both helped and hurt. Some of us maintain an idealized picture of our parents throughout our lives and never see in ourselves the eccentricities which we inherited from them. But even if they WERE perfect parents and ideal Christians, we all discover somewhere along the line that we cannot draw sufficient power for life even from our connection with our parents-- because they have the same limitations as any other mortal-- their life span is finite and their influence does not extend much beyond those with whom they have contact.

Nor can we draw it from our friends. We can get a lot from them in the way of love and affirmation. But they have lives of their own, and if we become too dependent on them they will have to withdraw for self-protection. And if we try too hard to be what they want us to be, we find that we are losing ourselves.

Even if we are fortunate enough to find an occupation in life that gives us satisfaction and yields a useful service or product and provides an adequate living, it is not sufficient to provide the spiritual, emotional and physical energy we need to thrive. If we really become dependent upon our work for our life, we find in time that it is taking more out of us than it is giving back. The energy in us is not being replenished to the extent that it is being taken out.

All of our human connections, taken together, finally require more life from us than they are able to return. Only a vital connection with the God who made us can give more life than it requires.

Take a fish and place him on a beach. Watch his gills open and close as they plead for air. Watch him as his scales dry and his skin begins to crack. How do you make him happy? How do you give him what he wants?

You put him back in his element. That's what you do. You put him back in the water. He will never be happy on the beach because he was not made for the beach.

And the same is true for you and me. We will never be happy living apart from the One who made us and saved us. Just like a fish was made to live in water we were made to live in close fellowship with our Lord and nothing can take the place of that."

This is what Jesus knew. This was the reality in which Jesus lived, the reality of being connected with God like a vine rooted in good, rich soil. One day when his disciples thought he was hungry, they said, "Rabbi, eat." But he replied, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." (John 4:31)

If you're much younger than I am, you probably don't remember a Norman Rockwell painted Saturday Evening Post cover entitled "The Problem We Live With" that detailed the struggle of African Americans to integrate schools in the south for the first time on November 14, 1960. Ruby looked like a typical first-grader. With a big bow in her hair and lunch box in hand, she climbed the steps of William Frantz Elementary School for the first day of school. But little else was typical about that day in November 1960.

As Bridges describes that experience, "Driving up I could see the crowd, but living in New Orleans, I actually thought it was Mardi Gras. There was a large crowd of people outside of the school. They were throwing things and shouting, and that sort of goes on in New Orleans at Mardi Gras."

Former marshal Charles Burks later recalled, "She showed a lot of courage. She never cried. She didn't whimper. She just marched along like a little soldier, and we're all very proud of her."

As soon as Bridges got into the school, white parents went in and brought their own children out. All but one of the white teachers refused to teach while a black child was enrolled. That first day, Bridges and her adult companions spent the entire day in the principal's office; the chaos of the school prevented their moving to the classroom until the second day. Every morning, as Bridges walked to school, one woman would threaten to poison her, because of this, the marshals overseeing her only allowed Ruby to eat food that she brought from home. Another woman at the school put a black baby doll in a wooden coffin and protested with it outside the school, a sight that Ruby remembers as something that scared her more than the nasty things people screamed at us.

How does a five year old child learn such courage and perseverance in the face of such pervasive and universal hatred and evil? By abiding in the true vine.

At her mother's suggestion, Bridges began to pray on the way to school, which she found provided protection from the comments yelled at her on the daily walks. Little Ruby prayed every day, before and after school, for those who were verbally abusing her. Ruby explained it this way: "One thing my mother always said to me was that when she couldn't be with me, if I was ever afraid, I should say my prayers . . . Even at night, if I would wake up from a nightmare and want to get up and

go to her room, she would immediately ask, 'Did you say your prayers?' That's where that came from and it sort of stuck with me."

Ruby's mother wanted her to know that no matter the situation she was never alone. She was connected. To be connected is to have power. It is to have an eternal presence in your life. It is to know always that Someone cares about you.

And yes, I know that there are times when we don't feel very lovable... when we have done wrong and the shame and guilt makes us question our worth, and even our very existence, and we tell ourselves that God could never love us, God wishes to have nothing to do with us.

This is where our new moms can help us out. Let me ask, moms, why do you love your babies?

For months that baby brought you pain. He made you break out in pimples and waddle like a duck. Because of him you craved sardines and crackers and threw up every morning. He punched at your insides like Frazier punched Ali. He occupied space that wasn't his and ate food he didn't fix.

You kept him warm. You kept him safe. But did he say thank you? Are you kidding? He's no more out of the womb than he starts to cry! The room is too cold, the blanket is too rough... and who does he want? Mom.

He didn't even tell you he was coming. He just came. And what a coming! He rendered you a barbarian. You screamed. You swore. You bit bullets and tore the sheets. And what a sight you were! Your back ached. Your head pounded. Your body was drenched in sweat. Every muscle strained and stretched.

You should be angry, but are you?

Far from it. When you look at your baby, on your face is a longer-than-forever love. He has done nothing for you, yet all you can talk about are his good looks and bright future. He's going to wake you up every night for months, but that doesn't matter. I can see it on your face. You're crazy about him.

OK, time to change the question...

God, why do you love your children? Heaven only knows how much pain we've brought you. Why do you tolerate us? You give us every breath we breathe, but do we thank you? You give us bodies beyond duplication, but do we praise you?

We complain about the weather. Not a second passes when someone, somewhere doesn't use your name to curse a hammered thumb or a bad call by the umpire.

You fill the world with food, but we blame you for hunger. You give blue skies, and we demand rain. You give rain, and we demand sun. As if we knew what was best, anyway. And if you don't give us what we want, we say you don't exist.

We have ignored the Word you sent us. And we killed the Son you became. We are spoiled babies who take and kick and pout and blaspheme.

You have every reason to abandon us. But do you?

No, you give us your answer in a thousand ways. We see the answer in the rising of the sun. I hear the answer in the crashing of the waves. I feel the answer in the skin of a child.

Your love never ceases. Even though we ignore you and disobey you, you will not change. Our evil cannot diminish your love. Our goodness cannot increase it. Your love never ceases and never changes.

Why?

The answer is found in the eyes of the mother. Why does she love her newborn? Because the baby is hers? Even more. Because the baby is her. Her blood. Her flesh. Her sinew and spine. Her hope. Her legacy. It bothers her not that the baby gives nothing. She knows a newborn is helpless, weak. She knows babies don't ask to come into this world.

And God knows we didn't either.

We are his idea. We are his. His face. His eyes. His hands. His touch. We are him. Look deeply into the face of every human being on earth and you will see his likeness. Though some appear to be distant relatives, they are not. God has no cousins, only children.

There is no greater truth than this:

We are his. Unalterably.

He loves us. Undyingly.

We are meant to be connected to Him. We were designed to abide in Him. We are never so foolish as when we try and live our lives beyond the reach of His longer than forever love. And we are never so strong, so wise, so grown up, that we can disconnect from his Grace, any more than a fish can disconnect from the water in which he lives.

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Would you pray with me... Creator of all that lives, maker of all that breathes, source of all that grows, nothing can long exist apart from you. Lord Jesus, you are the vine and we are branches, created to be joined to you. Help us to live in you. Secure us in the faith of all the saints. Make us love what you love, and to desire what you promise, that amid all the changes of this world our hearts may be fixed where true joy is found. Help us to abide in you, our rock, our fortress, our defender, our fount of every blessing, our true vine, 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 invitation, "Abide with Me", #543 in our hymnals.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION

"Abide with Me"

The Hymnal #543

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.

*THE CHORAL RESPONSE

"Blest Be the Tie That Binds"

Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above.

*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis