

Sunday, May 24, 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.”

PRELUDE "O Splendor of God's Glory Bright" by Tom Birchwood 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 8 and printed in our bulletins?”

THE CALL TO WORSHIP (adapted from Psalm 8)

O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens.

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established;

What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?

Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor.

You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;

You have put all things under their feet.

O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Let us worship God beginning with prayer...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... O God, our Father, we know that we have entered into a great heritage and a great tradition. We know that we owe our liberty and our freedom to those who, throughout the years, lived and suffered and sacrificed and died for truth and right. Help us this day to remember them with gratitude, & to follow their example of courage and sacrifice, & to so live that we may be judged as having having been worthy of the price that you and they have paid; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, “God of the Ages, Whose Almighty Hand”, number 262 in our *Hymnals*.

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

*HYMN OF PRAISE “God of the Ages, Whose Almighty Hand” *The Hymnal #262*

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

*CALL TO CONFESSION

How often have we failed to follow after him who has never failed us. In how many ways have we failed to remember his sacrifice and those of His saints who have given us much, even though we have returned so little. In penitence and faith, let us confess our desertions and derelictions as we pray together the prayer of confession printed in our bulletins, pausing at its conclusion for a period of silent prayer. Let us pray...

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of grace and glory, as we gather here to give thanks to you and to those who have sacrificed so much of themselves that we might enjoy the freedom to work and worship with endless opportunities for spiritual and material growth, we confess our unwillingness to commit to any cause greater than ourselves. Our devotion is limited to our reach-- to ourselves and our family. We pack our schedules with hobbies, children’s activities, work, and recreation, until there is no room left to serve your church or even our community as it deserves. When we do give of ourselves to others, we expect accolades, gratitude, and a recognition of our talents by others. Help us to be more like Christ and those whose service to this nation we honor today. Help us to give without counting the cost because it is right, and not because we have more than we need or because it is convenient. Through such

dedication, may we discover our higher purpose and the abundant life which you have promised to all who follow your example, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*SILENT CONFESSION

(Pause for about 30 seconds of silence.)

*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

The Good News is this: When we have forgotten Him, He does not forget us, and the proof of His amazing love is this: While we were still sinners, Jesus Christ died for us... 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.**

As the children leave, the Liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Please be seated. . . All that we have and give thanks for this day are good gifts from our gracious God. Now is the time for us to respond and share a portion of that bounty so that His Word may continue to go forth from this place bringing freedom, peace, and the sure and certain hope of eternal life to all. Let us continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings.

The liturgist will sit down until the Doxology begins to play.

THE OFFERTORY

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

*DOXOLOGY (In Unison)

"Descend, O Spirit of God" - Mark Roberts

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... God of justice and freedom, we give you thanks for all those to whom we owe the life and the privileges we possess. Accept these meager gifts and follow them with your blessing that they may herald a new day of righteousness and freedom in every corner of the world, to the glory of him who lived and died and rose for us all, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

"The Apostle's Creed"

Let us remain standing and reaffirm our Christian faith using the traditional words of the Apostles' Creed printed in our bulletins. Let us say what we believe...

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius

Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.

Invite the congregation to... "Be seated," and take a seat.

SPECIAL MUSIC

"Theme" - John Williams

Dalene Baer, violin soloist

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson this morning is taken from the second chapter of the Letter to the Hebrews, beginning at the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page 1044 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

Therefore we must pay the closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the message declared by angels was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will.

For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. It has been testified somewhere, "What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou carest for him? Thou didst make him for a little while lower than the angels, thou hast crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet."

Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for every one.

The liturgist will return to her seat either on the chancel.

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 twelfth 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...

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. This I command you, to love one another.

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

"Passing the Torch"

If what President John F. Kennedy said is true: "A nation reveals itself not only by the men it produces, but also by the men it honors, the men it remembers." We have gathered here to remember and to honor them, but we know that honoring our veterans with words alone falls terribly short if we do not bring those words to life by honoring them equally with deeds worthy of their sacrifice. When we all walk away from this place, when the weekend is over and all the flags come down, we need to ask ourselves, what more can we do to honor their legacy? How can we give them something more than a ceremony and a moment's gratitude?

Several years ago, Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel enchanted us all with the song of a poor boy who went to New York on a dream and fell victim to the harsh life of the city. Penniless, with only strangers as friends, he spent his days “laying low, seeking out the poorer quarters where the ragged people go, looking for the places only they would know.”

It's easy to picture this young lad, dirty face and worn clothes, looking for work and finding none. He trudges the sidewalks and battles the cold, and dreams of going somewhere “where the New York City winters aren't bleeding me, leading me home.”

He entertains thoughts of quitting. Going home. Giving up—something he never thought he would do.

But just when he picks up the towel to throw it into the ring he encounters a boxer. Remember these words?

In the clearing stands a boxer and a fighter by his trade, and he carries a reminder of every blow that laid him down or cut him till he cried out in his anger and his shame 'I am leaving, I am leaving!' but the fighter still remains.

“The fighter still remains.” There is something magnetic in that phrase. It rings with a trueness.

Those who can remain like the boxer are a rare breed, but unfortunately; very few of us do that. Our human tendency is to quit too soon. When we get to where we can take it easy, we like to sit down and do just that. We have what we want, but how about the next generation? Or the next? Does a fruit tree ever stop producing fruit-- maybe, but when it does, it is cut down. That generation which has been a force for so much good in our world is dying out. They made lots of mistakes to be sure. But they kept getting up, trying again, and today, we call them the “Greatest Generation”. To be honest, I am not sure that they are greater than the generation that came before them-- say, for example, the old World War 1 vets and their families. But there is a huge contrast between ourselves and the Greatest Generation. We want more things-- bigger houses, more dependable cars, more money and security, greater freedom, more love. And when we don't get it, we demand that something be done. Our expectation is that our government should provide everything we need to be happy from cradle to grave-- and without raising our taxes. We want government to protect us and we are willing to trade our freedom for that security. But when a law enforcement officer makes a mistake, we want them prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

We want lifetime healthcare for free, and to make it affordable, we think its fair to cut the compensation of hospitals and doctors, And in return for less money, they must provide new and better technology, increase the amount of time each health professional spends with patients, and improve their bedside manner. And if we don't get what we want, or if someone under pressure to cut costs to meet all the demands being placed on the system makes a mistake, well then we'll just sue them for actual damages and, oh yes, punitive damages.

How different is that from those we honor today? Wounded six times in the Civil War, Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain knew what he was talking about when he stepped up to the podium on Memorial Day 1897.

He spoke of the heroism of his fellow veterans with great eloquence, saying: “However humble or unknown, they have renounced what are accounted pleasures and cheerfully undertaken all self-denials – privations, toils, dangers, sufferings, sicknesses, mutilations, life-long hurts and losses, death itself – for some great good, dimly seen but dearly held.”

Those who have renounced pleasures and undertaken privations come home to find that privation continues for them. The have relied on the promises of our government to provide for their medical needs when they come home, find themselves dying before they can get an appointment to see a doctor and when they do, they are overmedicated to reduce their complaints, simply because we do not have the national will to clean up the outhouse that has become our Veterans Health Care system. The selfless acts now yields a bitter harvest for our veterans.

Almost 150 years ago, President Abraham Lincoln stood before a war-weary nation and spoke of the sacred obligation of our nation to “...care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan.” Those words are inscribed on the entrance above the Department of Veterans Affairs in our nation’s capital and spoken at almost every Memorial Day or Veterans Day event.

Our care for those “who have borne the battle, and for his widow, and orphan” has become a national disgrace and it is a situation that can be changed and must be changed if we are to keep faith with them and with history. How about tomorrow, before you do any thing else, you write a letter to every Congressman, Senator, and the President demanding that they fix this system and letting them know that if they must, raise our taxes to do it. And then keep watch. If it is not remedied, let us remember that on election day and vote out anyone who hasn’t made keeping faith with our veterans their number one priority.

It is time for us to remember that the fight against evil goes on. Evil wasn’t defeated with the surrender of Japan or Germany. It didn’t vanish when the Treaty of Paris was signed. It wasn’t buried with Osama bin Laden or Saddam Hussein. In the last 70 years, how many wars have been fought and how many brave men and women have died? And yet evil is now more pervasive and more threatening than at any time in our history.

We can not make treaties with the Father of lies. He must be fought today, tomorrow, and every tomorrow until Armageddon is won.

Jesus didn’t quit. But don’t think for one minute that he wasn’t tempted to. Do you think he didn’t wince when he his apostles argued and quarreled. Look at him weep as he sits at Lazarus’s tomb. Hear him wail as he claws the ground of Gethsemane.

Did he ever want to quit? You bet.

Stop and listen. Can you imagine the cry from the cross? The sky is dark. The other two victims are moaning. The jeering mouths are silent. Perhaps there is thunder. Perhaps there is weeping. Perhaps there is silence. Then Jesus draws in a deep breath, pushes his feet down on that Roman nail, and cries, “It is finished!”

What was finished?

The history-long plan of redeeming us was finished. The message of God to man was finished. The works done by Jesus as a man on earth were finished. The task of selecting and training ambassadors was finished. The job was finished. The song had been sung. The blood had been poured. The sacrifice had been made. The sting of death had been removed. It was over.

Had his hands not been fastened down I dare say that a triumphant fist would have punched the dark sky. No, this is no cry of despair. It is a cry of completion. A cry of victory. A cry of fulfillment. Yes, even a cry of relief

The fighter remained. And thank God that he did. Thank God that he endured.

Today we remember those who have served us faithfully and well-- not just on the battlefield and in prison camps-- but those who have served their families, this community, and this church, year after year, from generation to generation.

And today we are recognizing our high school and college graduates. Our WW 2 vets may walk a little slower. Their hair is a little whiter. But when they stepped up and answered the call that went out for those willing to serve, they were no older than you.

And today, they are passing the torch to a new generation of Americans, and they charge you to finish the task of securing the blessings of liberty to your children and grandchildren. Because they have fought and given so much of themselves so that you light be free, you are free to ignore the call. You may throw down the torch you have been passed. You may live for yourself. You may take the easy way. But your children will not rise and call you blessed. And when you come to stand before Him who is the author of our faith, the founder of all our freedom, you will not hear, as will these we honor today, “Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter into the joy of your master.”

And if you think that you are not so bad, or that God is so good, it could not happen to you, then remember the haunting question from Hebrews, "How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?"

The same charge is extended to us who have been around a little longer. We may not be able to fight the evil menace of fanatical Islamicism, but we can fight the evil that is all around us here. Ignorance that disguises itself as naivete, sloth that cloaks itself in claims of freedom, ingratitude that masks itself with business, and self absorption that places the worship of God and service to our fellow human beings at the lowest level of our priorities.

My prayer for each of you young people is that 70 or even 80 years hence, when you walk slowly into the last sunset of your life, you may say with Paul, with the fighter, and with these we honor here today, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

Thank you, Paul Simon. Thank you, apostle Paul. Thank you, soldiers, sailors, and airmen. But most of all, thank you, Lord Jesus, for teaching us to remain, to endure, and in the end, to finish.

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Would you pray with me...

Our Father, we thank you for sending Jesus, the captain of every heroic soul to battle and defeat the evil that has ever threatened us with eternal destruction, and for His victory which has freed your children all over the world to worship you in Spirit, truth, and freedom. Never let us forget his sacrifice, or the sacrifice of those he has called to serve the cause of righteousness and freedom. Remind us forever of all that this our life has cost; and help us to resolve never to waste it and never to soil it.

We thank you especially this day, for those you called to leave their families and homes, to abandon safety and security, to sacrifice their innocence and youth, to risk their health, their limbs, their sanity, and even their lives to fight and defeat the enemies of truth and freedom which still rise up and threaten to replace you as master of our souls and the guardian of our freedom. We thank you for all who have died in war; For those who were so wounded in body and mind so that life could never be the same again; For those who in every age and generation who have laid down their lives for their friends.

We pray today for the families and friends of those who have given their lives in service to our nation. May they be comforted in their sadness, and reassured that the sacrifice of their loved ones contributes to a noble cause, in spite of the efforts of politicians to obscure that truth. May they be proud of those they have lost, entrusting their ultimate fate into your gracious hands.

Even as we remember those who have given their lives in the past, we also think of those whose lives are on the line today. We think especially of the men and women who are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, and in other places of conflict and violence. Protect them. Encourage them. Bring them home safely . . . and soon, 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 closing hymn, "Recessional", sung to the tune of "Eternal Father, Strong to Save" and printed in our bulletins.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION (to the tune Melita, "Eternal Father, Strong to Save") "Recessional"

God of our fathers, known of old, Lord of our far-flung battle-line,
Beneath whose awful Hand we hold dominion over palm and pine—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet, lest we forget—lest we forget!

The tumult and the shouting dies; the Captains and the Kings depart:
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice, an humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet, lest we forget—lest we forget!

Far-called, our navies melt away; on dune and headland sinks the fire:

Lo, all our pomp of yesterday is one with Nineveh and Tyre!

Judge of the Nations, spare us yet, lest we forget—lest we forget!

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose wild tongues that have not Thee in awe,

Such boastings as the Gentiles use, or lesser breeds without the Law—

Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet, lest we forget—lest we forget!

For heathen heart that puts her trust in reeking tube and iron shard,

All valiant dust that builds on dust, and guarding, calls not Thee to guard,

For frantic boast and foolish word—thy mercy on Thy People, Lord!

THE BLESSING

Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, who freed us to live in righteousness and love, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

“Let There Be Peace On Earth”

Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me;

Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.

With God as our Father, brothers all are we.

Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me; Let this be the moment now.

With every step I take, let this be my solemn vow:

To take each moment & live each moment in peace eternally.

Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.

*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis