

Sunday, July 17th, 2016

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

“Trumpet Tune” arr. Robert Lau

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 30 and printed in our bulletins?”

THE CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Psalm 30)

I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up, and did not let my foes rejoice over me.

O Lord my God, I cried to you for help, & you have healed me.

O Lord, you brought up my soul from Sheol, restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit.

Sing praises to the Lord, O you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name.

For his anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime.

Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning.

You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy,

My soul will praise you and not be silent and I will give thanks to you forever.

Let us worship God beginning with prayer...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... Gracious God, we greet you this morning with joy and thanksgiving. We would not dictate the manner of your appearance among us, but ask that you would make us alert and receptive. Prepare us in this hour for the joy of your presence and the fullness of life you intend. Wash us in the fountain of your truth, that we may be clean and trust in your mercy. Show us this day what you would have us do, and, whether it be great or small, equip us to respond to those opportunities with faith, love, and obedience through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, “Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken”, number 446 in our *Hymnals*.

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

*HYMN OF PRAISE

“Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken”

Hymnal #446

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

*CALL TO CONFESSION

Are we sometimes enraged because God does not do things our way? Who among us has not wanted to shape God to our own specifications? Let us remove the artificial limitations we place upon the God of all Creation, so that in penitence and faith we might experience the fullness of His grace. Let us pray together the prayer of confession as it's printed in our bulletins, pausing for a moment at its conclusion for a period of silent confession. Let us pray...

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Ruler of all worlds, we know we have not lived up to your high intentions for us. You send us out as ambassadors of peace, and instead we pick fights with our sisters and brothers. You commission us to travel light, and we become bogged down with our possessions. You ask us to help ease the burdens others carry, but we add to them. You call us to joy loving and living at peace with all, but instead we create ghettos. Our lives do not reflect the authority of Jesus Christ in our midst, for we choose to claim only those teachings we like and to practice the few we find convenient and harmless. Forgive us, mighty God, and turn us from our destructive ways. Amen.

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

*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Buried with Christ in baptism, you have been raised with Christ through faith. God forgives our sin, canceling the claims of the law against us, and freeing us to live in newness of life... 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, the preacher will step into the lectern and say...

We just finished a very successful Vacation Bible School. We are grateful to all of you who played a role in its success. Let me ask first for those who helped with snacks each night to stand up.... And those who brought cookies or treats for the kids or the teachers... Those who helped with registration or took pictures.... Those who handled story time, crafts, and recreation.... Those who served as helpers with any of it... And those of you who brought kids, grandkids, or neighbors' kids to take part. May God bless you all. And so that the rest of you can see for yourselves what happened over the three evenings, we have a short video to share with you.

VIDEO RECAP OF 2016 VBS

“Pets Unleashed”

After the video the liturgist will step into the lectern and say...

“Would all of you who are able, stand and join together in singing our next hymn, “O Zion Haste”, which is printed in our bulletins.”

*HYMN OF PREPARATION

“O Zion Haste”

O Zion, haste, thy mission high fulfilling, To tell to all the world that God is light,
That He who made all nations is not willing One soul should perish, lost in shades of night. *Refrain*
Publish glad tidings, tidings of peace; Tidings of Jesus, redemption and release.

Proclaim to every people, tongue, and nation That God, in whom they live and move, is love;
Tell how He stooped to save His lost creation, And died on earth that we might live above. *Refrain*

Give of thy sons to bear the message glorious; Give of thy wealth to speed them on their way;
Pour out thy soul for them in prayer victorious; And all thou spendest Jesus will repay. *Refrain*

He comes again! O Zion, ere thou meet Him, Make known to every heart His saving grace:
Let none whom he Hath ransomed fail to greet Him, Through thy neglect, unfit to see His face. *Refrain*

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

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Please be seated. . . God bids us travel light on this journey through life. We make elaborate excuses for the vast accumulations most of us have undertaken instead. This is a good time to examine our motives, Our relationships to our neighbors whose vineyards we covet and exploit, and our responsibilities to one another. The church of Jesus Christ seeks to re-order the world's priorities. Our offerings help us as well as all others we seek to help, so let us give joyful and generously 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 “Children of the Heavenly Father” arr. Robert Lau 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... Gracious God, we recognize that we cannot truly love you without also loving our neighbor. It is out of gratitude for your amazing grace extended toward us, that we make this offering. We have heard your voice, O God, and are compelled to give from the rich abundance you have entrusted to us. Receive and bless these gifts that they may be used wisely in doing good to all people and to equip laborers to bring in a bountiful harvest to enlarge the kingdom 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.

SPECIAL MUSIC

"Jesus Loves Me"

The 2016 VBS Alumna

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson this morning is taken from Paul's letter to the Galatians, the first chapter, beginning at the sixth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page 1012 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God..."

"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel -- not that there is another gospel, but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, If any one is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed. Am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ."

The liturgist will return to his seat on the chancel.

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

Our Gospel lesson this morning is taken from Luke, the tenth chapter, beginning at the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #901 in your pew bibles.

Listen once more for the word of God...

"After this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to come. And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and salute no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' And if a son of peace is there, your peace shall rest upon him; but if not, it shall return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages; do not go from house to house.

"Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you; heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off against you; nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.'"

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

"When the Answer Is No"

It would be rather easy to get the impression that Jesus did not want many disciples. In the verses from Chapter 9 that immediately precede this one, Jesus spoke to people who would have been his disciples. One said, "I'll follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head". That's not exactly inviting. "Lord, I'll follow you wherever you go, but let me first bury my father." "Let the dead bury the dead, you come and follow me." That doesn't draw a crowd. "I'll follow you wherever you go, but let me first say goodbye to my family." "If you put your hand to the plow and look back, you're not fit for the kingdom of God."

It would be easy to get the impression that Jesus did not want many disciples. Of course, historians of religion know that this was the pattern of teachers and wise leaders in ancient times. They screened fairly carefully would-be followers. A guru, a wise man lives up in the mountains in a cabin, isolated. A would-be disciple goes up and knocks on the door. The wise man comes to the door. "What do you want?" "I want to be your disciple." He slams the door in his face. The person goes the second day. "I want to be your disciple." And the wise man spits on him and closes the door. The third day, "I want to be your disciple." And the wise man hits him with a stick and closes the door. Finally the wise man listens. "I want to be your disciple." "Now I see you're sincere; come in."

So it was not Jesus alone; rabbis sometimes did this, carefully screening disciples. years ago I heard a story about a young American who wanted to be a Trappist monk. He went to monastery and told the Abbot, "I want to become a monk."

"Really?" "Yes."

"Well, it means seven years of silence, after which you get two words." "Yes."

After seven years of total silence, the Abbot called him in and said, "You now can say two words."

He said, "Bed hard."

"Are you going to stay?" ... "Yes."

After seven more years of total silence the Abbot called him in, "You can now say two words."

He said, "Food Awful."

"Are you going to stay?" "Yes."

After seven more years, the Abbot called him in one last time before he was to take his final vows and said, "What would you like to tell me?"

He said, "I quit."

And the Abbot said, "Well, it's just as well. You've done nothing but complain ever since you've been here."

It would be easy to get the impression that Jesus didn't just want any and everybody. And yet in our text today he has quite a large group, from which he selects teams, thirty-five teams, to go out before him and preach.

He is popular in a way. There are a lot of people who say "yes" to him in spite of the demands. I'm not really surprised, personally. I find that people prefer a challenge, prefer something that's demanding, prefer something that's important, something that demands discipline and sacrifice, rather than just mealy mouthed, watered down, anybody can do it, there's nothing to it, you don't really have to do anything, you don't even have to be there kind of an invitation. People want more. I believe young people want more than warm fuzzies and fun and games when they come to the church. People expect that the God of heaven will expect something of them, sometimes at great cost.

Fred Craddock once preached a sermon to his congregation in Cherry Log, Georgia, from a text from James in which it was quite clear that one of the virtues of the Christian life was restraining our desires for earthly pleasures. Curbing appetite, not satisfying appetite. In the course of the sermon he said, "Just because you can afford it, doesn't mean you can afford it. Having the money is not a green light to getting it. As long as anybody sleeps in a cardboard box, as long as any child is hungry in the world, you cannot afford it. "

For what kind of life is it anyway to come to the end of it and somebody says, "What did you

do?" "Well, I shopped. Had nice trips."

After the service that day, he didn't know whether he would be stoned or not, because these people are, you know, able and sufficient. This elderly woman (I say elderly, she was older than Fred was at the time if you can imagine that), said she wanted to talk to him. He said, "Yes."

She said, "I'm in the process of finishing our home, our retirement home." And Fred said, "Yes?"

"My husband and I have been planning this home for some time and it's about finished."

"Where is it?" he asked.

"It's right at the edge of town in a new luxury gated development."

"Nice home, I take it?"

"Yes, \$1.4 million."

And she described it. Six bathrooms was the only thing he remembered after that but you know what goes with that. I said, "How many people are going to live in this?"

"Well, it was to be for my husband and me, but he died last year." "You're going to live in that by yourself? \$1.4 million?"

She said, "Well, my husband made a lot of money."

Fred said to her, "You cannot afford that house. I'm not talking economically, I'm talking about being a Christian." A trophy house at the end of life? Surely not. And she wanted me to say something about it. Just as some of you are ill at ease with the way you spend your money.

So Jesus made it clear. "When you go now, when you tell people about the kingdom of God, I don't want you to take a lot of extra stuff. Just go with what you have. Depend on the hospitality of those who welcome you. And when you go, don't move around from house to house looking for a better place with a softer bed or better food.

"No, you stay where you are," Jesus told them, "because I don't want anybody to get the impression that you're making economic differences in the name of God." Whether it is a straw mattress or something that causes you to float in midair, you accept it, and whatever they set before you, you eat it. Don't look down at the table and say, 'Oh goodness, okra... again.'"

What does he mean by eating what is set before you? He means that what is set before you sometimes will be Jewish food, sometimes Gentile food. "Don't reject one or the other because I do not want anyone to think we make any racial or ethnic distinctions before God; not economic, not racial, national, ethnic, not at all. I want you to make it clear that everybody, whether they eat out of the Community Food Pantry at Asbury Methodist, or entertain thirty guests at table with gourmet food, before God is the same. Is that clear?"

"Yes, that's clear."

"And then I want you to say to them, 'Now, the kingdom of God is here.' That's the good news; God's love and grace is here in the person of Jesus Christ. Now, you will go into some places and they will reject you. You won't be welcome, no hospitality, no food, no anything. "

"Well, what are we to do?"

"You are to leave, following the ancient pattern of shaking the dust off your feet, and leaving. In other words, just say, I leave you to God. You are not to fuss at the people."

"But what if they say 'no' to the message?"

"It's not up to you to get anybody to say 'yes' or to get anybody to say 'no.' How they respond is not your business. Leave that to God. You just give the good news."

"But if they reject it .. ."

"If they reject it, the message is the same. To those who accept it you say, 'The kingdom of God is here.' To those who reject it, you say, 'The kingdom of God is here.'"

The message is the same because I want you to understand that your message, your life, your behavior, your relationships are not determined by other people. Whether they say 'yes' or 'no,' that's not the point. You are to be children of God. Don't you remember the teaching? If you speak to those who speak to you, what good is that? Pagans do that. If you're nice to those who are nice to you,

what's that? If you invite those who invite you, what's that? If you're generous to those who are generous to you, what's that?

You're to be as God is, who gives the rain and the sun, on the good and the bad, the just and the unjust alike. Why? Because God is love and love does not react to anybody and say, 'So, if you're going to be like that'; God is God and God acts out of God's own character, which is love. Now that is the way you are to be. If someone says 'no' that's not the point. Your job is to say, 'Good news, God loves you.'

I think that is probably, for me at least, the most difficult of the teachings of Jesus. "Do not react to anybody's behavior but act out of your own character as a child of God. For God is kind, even to the ungrateful and selfish." How can God do that? The same way you can; the same way I can.

I spent a lot of time this week flipping back and forth in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Late at night and early in the morning I was using my concordance and my references trying to find a passage that would support us and would justify an occasion in which I would be in the right if I were unkind to somebody, a family member, neighbor, business partner, clerk, client. I was looking for a verse in which I could have scriptural support for reacting to unkindness with unkindness. I could not find a verse; I could not find a single verse. You see, the final work of grace, the last thing God is trying to do with us in this life, in anyone's life, is not just going to heaven. "I want to go to heaven." Of course you do.

The final work of grace is to make a person gracious, to be gracious as God is. Even to those who say, "No."

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Would you pray with me...

Lord, you know us altogether, and how difficult it is for us to forgive those who wrong us, or worse, those we believe have wronged you, or have rejected your message. The acid of bitterness and a vengeful spirit have threatened to eat away my peace. Yet I have stubbornly rationalized every unlovely motive. I have said, "I am clearly in the right". or "It is only human to dislike a few people." or "This one deserves no forgiveness." How well I know that neither have I ever deserved the forgiveness which you have always freely granted me.

So, Lord Jesus, we ask now for the grace to forgive these hurts. Even now, I am divided about it, only partially willing to release it.

But you can manage even my reluctance, my loitering feet. Take now my divided will and make it of one piece. Make it wholly yours.

Wrest the resentments that still cling to our hearts. Cleanse every petty thought. Make our lives and witness sweet again.

Please forgive us, but only to the extent that we have forgiven. And bless those who have wronged us and rejected you, even to the degree that you have blessed each of us. For these great mercies I thank you, who gave us the supreme example in forgiving even those who killed you and who, in your mercy, 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, "Here I Am, Lord", number 525 in our Hymnals.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION

"Here I Am, Lord"

The Hymnal #525

THE BLESSING

*THE CONGREGATIONAL 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