

Worship Service- August 7th, 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 pastor will step into the pulpit, welcome everyone, and make these announcements....

The preacher will then ask...

“Are there any other concerns of the church that need to be made known at this time?..... Thank you.”

The preacher will take a seat.

PRELUDE

"Little Prelude in F Major" - J.S. Bach

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

After the Prelude, the liturgist will step to the lectern & say...

“Would you join me in reading responsively our call to worship, adapted from Psalm 50 and printed in our bulletins.”

CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Psalm 50)

The mighty one, the Lord God, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.

Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth.

Our God comes and does not keep silence, before him is a devouring fire, and a mighty tempest all around him.

He calls to the heavens above and to the earth, that he may judge his people:

“Gather the faithful, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!”

The heavens declare his righteousness, for God himself is judge.

“Mark this, then, you who forget God, or I will tear you apart, and there will be no one to deliver.

Those who bring thanksgiving as their sacrifice honor me; to those who go the right way I will show the salvation of God.”

Let us worship God beginning with prayer....

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... O Lord our God, we know that the way to which Jesus calls us is long and narrow, often difficult, dangerous, and sorrow-laden. Yet it is the way we choose, for on this way there is also the joy of Jesus' companionship, and the assurance of abundant life. But you have given us your Word a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Give us also the grace to so receive your Truth, that we may be obedient to your will and trust you as you use us to shape the world around us. Strengthen our convictions and turn us away from foolish doubts so that we may rejoice in your promises and live always for your glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

“Would all of you who are able, please stand and join in singing “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”, #260 in *The Hymnal*.

*HYMN

“A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”

The Hymnal #260

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

*CALL TO CONFESSION

Here is what the Lord says, “What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?” says the Lord; “I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats. Therefore, wash yourselves; make yourselves clean.” In penitence and faith, let us seek God’s cleansing as we and confess our sin and pray together the prayer of confession printed in our bulletins, and pausing at its end for a moment of silent prayer or meditation. Let us pray...

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

(In Unison)

Loving God, we confess the lack of faith that separates us from you and your will for us. You give the gift of wisdom, but we trust the wisdom of others. You offer faith that can move mountains, but we don't feel like it's enough, You give the gifts of healing and miracles, but we want our healing now and we want our miracles to be dramatic. You give us a prophetic word and a discerning Spirit, but we are content to live in the ordinary and tolerate that which violates your character. Forgive our sin and awaken our faith and trust in you so that we may do the great things to which you have called us. Amen.

*SILENT CONFESSION

(pause for about 30 seconds of silence)

***THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be like snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. ... 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, through Christ, has reconciled us to himself and entrusted us with the ministry of reconciliation so 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 return to the lectern and say...

“Please be seated. At this time I want to invite all of our younger friends to come forward for a message from the Lord prepared just for 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 front, the Liturgist will step to the lectern & say,

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Jesus challenged us to sell what we have and give alms for the poor, for where our treasures are, there will our hearts be also. By faith we believe that we are called to commit ourselves to live as our ancestors in faith did-- trusting God in all things. By faith, let us put our whole trust in God, as we continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings...

Take your seat for the offertory.

THE OFFERTORY

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

"God's Love Shine on You" - J.S. Bach/Geoffrey Edwards

***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... As we strive to have faith in you, O God, we give thanks for your faith in us. As we seek to make our home in you, we hope that you will find a home in us, so that all we have, all we say, all we do, may be to your glory. Accept these our gifts and follow them with your blessing so that all of creation may be brought to faith in Christ. We pray in the name of your Son, who gives the gift of faith. Amen.

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...

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

“The Apostles’ Creed”

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 & 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.

The liturgist will invite the congregation to... "Be seated," and then take his seat.

SPECIAL MUSIC

"Siciliano" - J.S. Bach

Dalene Baer, violinist

As the soloist leaves the lectern, the liturgist will step to the lectern & say...

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson this morning is taken from the twelfth chapter of the the Gospel of Luke, beginning with the thirty second verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #905 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the Word of God. . . .

"Jesus said to his disciples, 'Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.'"

The liturgist will return to his seat with his family in the congregation.

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

Our second lesson for this morning are selected verses taken from the eleventh chapter of Hebrews beginning at the first verse. You can find the passage on page 1050 in your pew bibles. Listen once more for the Word of God. . . .

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith he received power of procreation, even though he was too old-- and Sarah herself was barren-- because he considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, "as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore."

All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them."

L: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Our thanks be to God!

THE SERMON

"Life is Hard, but..."

When I was in college, I thought I knew what hard times were all about. When I was a senior with an empty fridge & pantry, and with less than \$2.00 to last me 2 weeks. Fortunately, HEB grocery near campus put boxed macaroni dinners and canned biscuits on sale for a nickel apiece and I survived-- intact except for the fact that I had lost any desire to eat canned biscuits or boxed macaroni ever again.

Since then, I've learned that the problems and challenges have changed, but life still holds surprises that remind us that life is still hard.

This is nothing new either. Remember the words of John in Revelation 1, verses 9 and 10? "I was on the island called Patmos ... and I was caught up by the Spirit" (NEB). John was on an island. Sounds great, doesn't it? That word "island" conjures up images of Acapulco, Bahamas, Can Cun, [add some resort islands where your people go play]. But this island was different. It was more like the island of Alcatraz. Patmos was a prison colony. More than that, Patmos was a death camp. The island of

Patmos was a death camp. Patmos was the Auschwitz of the first century for Christians. To say he was on the isle of Patmos was to say, "Life is hard-- real hard."

But John has more to say than "Life is hard". John goes on to say that "I was caught up by the Spirit." Did you hear it? Did you get it? In the absolute worst of times, John says, God can do the best of things. The Dachau of the first century was the setting for one of the most dazzling revelations, the most Technicolor vision of the future anywhere in Scripture. In the absolute worst of times, God has a habit of doing the best of things. Yes, life is hard. That is a profound half-truth. But the problem with every half-truth is the other half, and in this case, the profounder half. Life Is Hard, **BUT**.... God Is Good.

What is it that enables us to experience and explore the goodness of God in the midst of life's greatest difficulties? How can we let God do the best of things in our lives in the worst of times in our lives? The writer of Hebrews tells us how this morning. It comes from a five-letter word called "faith": the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

The writer of Hebrews defines faith as the ability to see the invisible in the visible, the eternal in the earthly. The list of "by faiths" is the list of leaders like Abraham and Sarah who were able to do the best of things in the worst of times. On Earth, where we are "strangers and foreigners," life is hard. But God is good: We have a "heavenly homeland" or "city" where Jesus' disciples really belong and toward which we journey. Life is hard: We live in a world of unfulfilled promises and realities. But God is good: We journey toward a future where God's design for creation will be fulfilled.

Like John, Paul knew what it was to worship a God who did the best of things in the worst of circumstances. When his life was at its hardest, confined in prison and in chains, Paul wrote one of the greatest answers to the half truth of suffering. Yes, Life is hard, BUT...: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.... And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

In his second letter to the church at Corinth, a church that was testing his patience and showing just how hard a church could be, Paul challenges church leaders to "not lose heart" and gives them instructions as to how to keep the faith: "For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake" (5). Then in verse 8 he begins a litany that puts both halves of the one truth together.

Hard-pressed on every side ... [LIFE IS Hard.]

We are never hemmed in ... [GOD IS GOOD.]

Bewildered ... [LIFE IS Hard.]

We are never at our wits' end ... [GOD IS GOOD.]

Hunted ... [LIFE IS Hard.]

We are never abandoned to our fate ... [GOD IS GOOD.]

Struck down ... [LIFE IS Hard.]

We are not left to die ... [GOD IS GOOD.]

Wherever we go we carry death with us in our body, the death that Jesus died ... [LIFE IS Hard.]

That in this body also life may reveal itself, the life that Jesus
lives ... [GOD IS GOOD.]

For continually, while still alive, we are being surrendered into the hands of death ... [LIFE IS Hard.]

So that the life of Jesus also may be revealed in this mortal
body of ours ... [GOD IS GOOD.]

Thus death is at work in us ... [LIFE IS Hard.]

And life in you ... [GOD IS GOOD.]

How can you, like our fathers and mothers in faith, experience the goodness of God amidst the difficulties and vicissitudes of life? Or another way of asking the same question: How can you have a faith that sees the invisible in the visible?

How did Martin Luther put it?
"And tho this world with devils filled
Should threaten to undo us;
We will not fear for God has willed
His truth to triumph through us.

The Prince of Darkness grim,
We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure,
For lo his doom is sure.
One little word shall fell him."

And what is that one little word? That word is what? JESUS.

The one word can let the Holy Spirit loose in your life until "the best" can happen in the midst of "the worst." Faith is the ability to see how "God is good" in the midst of every "Life is hard."

Pam Thum wrote and performed a song some years back with the title, "Life Is Hard." Listen to these words from her song.

You turn the key and close the door behind you.
Drop your bags on the floor.
You reach for the light but there's a darkness deep inside
And you can't take it anymore.
'Cause sometimes living takes the life out of you and
Sometimes living is all you can do.
Life is hard. The world is cold.
We're barely young and then we're old.
But every falling tear is always understood.
Life is hard, but God is good.
So what is faith, really?
It is knowing what everyone with a brain knows: Life is hard.
But it is so much more. It is also that no matter how hard life gets, **GOD IS GOOD!**

THE PASTORAL PRAYER AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Let us pray. . . Lord Jesus, you set your feet upon the way, and sometimes where you lead we do not like or understand.

Bless us with courage where the way is fraught with dread or danger;
Bless us with good companions when we are lonely and the way demands a common cause;
Bless us with night vision where we travel in the dark so that we may always follow your light;
Bless us with keen hearing where we have no sight, to hear your voice and know your word;
Bless us with humor - so that we may travel lightly;
Bless us with humility to learn from those around us;
Bless us with decisiveness where we must move with speed;
Bless us with lazy moments, to stretch and rest and savor;
Bless us with love, given and received;
and bless us with your presence, especially when we perceive only your absence.
Bless us, lead us, love us, bring us home bearing the gospel of life.

Rest your blessing now upon this bread and cup that it may be for us the body and blood of Christ. Strengthen our faith that we may sense your presence at this table and be lifted above our doubts

and fears into the joy of your kingdom and the hope of eternity, 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.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Invitation

If life were easy, we wouldn't need a Savior. But life is hard, and the days in which we find ourselves hungering for living bread and thirsting for living water grow more numerous with the passing of time. That is why we need to remember that when life is Hard, God is Still good! So for all of us who are weak, he offers strength; for all of us who have fallen, he offers a hand up; for all of us who have needs greater than our abilities, he offers an endless supply of his all sufficient grace. This is the table of our Lord, and he invites all who by faith will receive the gift of his body and blood, to come and to drink deeply of his grace and filled with his strength.

The Words of Institution

On the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord took bread, and after he had give thanks, he broke it & gave it to his disciples saying: "Take, eat. This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In like fashion after they had eaten, he took the cup. After he had given thanks he gave it to his disciples saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, drink ye all of it."

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes again in final victory.

The Distribution of the Elements

The Prayer After Receiving

Let us pray... We thank you, O God, that through Word and Sacrament you have given us your Son who is the true bread from heaven and food of eternal life. So strengthen us in your service that our daily living may show our thanks. Send us into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let all of us who are able stand and join in one voice to sing, "My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less", hymn #379 in our *Hymnals*.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION

"My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less"

The Hymnal #379

*THE BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you, make His face to shine upon you and give you his peace, in your going out and in your coming in; 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 on that day in which there is no sunset and no dawning. 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