

Sunday, August 12th, 2018

A couple of minutes prior to the start of the service at 10:45am, the liturgist will enter and take a seat on the Chancel. The pastor will enter, offer a welcome, 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 "When in Our Music God Is Glorified" Robert A. Hobby Dr. Elizabeth Davis
When the prelude concludes, the liturgist will step to the lectern & say...

"Would you join me in reading our responsive call to worship, adapted from Psalm 103 and printed in our bulletins."

The liturgist should read only the leader's (plain text) portion.

CALL TO WORSHIP (adapted from Psalm 103)

"Why do we fast, but the Lord does not see? Why do we humble ourselves, but he does not notice?"

When we serve our own interests on the Lord's day; When we fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as we do in that day will not make our voice heard on high.

Is not the fast pleasing to God, a day to humble oneself?

Is it not to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?

Is not the fast acceptable to the Lord a time to loose the bonds of injustice;

To undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free?

Is it not to share our bread with the hungry, and to shelter the homeless poor;

Is it not to cover the naked when they are seen, and not to hide ourselves from our own kin?

On that day our light shall break forth like the dawn, and our healing shall spring forth;

Our vindicator shall go before us, and the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

When we shall call the Lord will answer; we shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil;

If you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,

Then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday, for the Lord will guide you continually;

He will satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong;

You shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.

Let us worship God beginning with prayer...

THE PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... Wise and Gracious God, who has satisfied the hungry and quenched the thirst of longing people, grant us now the gift of attentiveness that our eyes may see the favor of your love. Grant us quickness of imagination that we may see the signals of your promise. Grant us warmth of heart that companionship may bind all within this house in peace and love so we may enjoy your wonder and grace. Grant us strength of wisdom so we may bring answers to the hurting world in which we now live. For the sake of Christ, we pray, and for the sake of all humankind. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me to make a joyful noise as we sing together our opening hymn, "Fairest Lord Jesus", #306 in our Hymnals.

The liturgist will step back out of the lectern for the singing of the hymn.

***HYMN "Fairest Lord Jesus" The Hymnal #306**

After the hymn the minister will say...

***CALL TO CONFESSION**

The Lord has promised to forgive all our iniquity, and to heal all our diseases, satisfying us with good for as long as we live so that our youth is renewed like the eagle's. In penitence and faith, let us come in the assurance of our faith asking his forgiveness as we pray together the prayer of confession printed in our bulletins, pausing at its conclusion for a time of silent prayer. Let us pray...

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

(In Unison)

Spirit of God, we confess that we put on airs more often than we put on the armor of God. We want to do what is right, but our fears and anxieties lead us to hoarding rather than freely sharing, and to self-righteous-ness rather than compassion. Forgive us, O God. Restore us by your mercy that having received the gift of your infinite love, we might turn to our neighbor and give your love away. Forgive us, Holy God. Grant us the wisdom and strength to change our ways, so that we may live as instruments of your grace Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*SILENT CONFESSION

Pause for about 30 seconds of silence.

*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always accuse, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. As far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from 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

Through Christ, God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross. The peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

Share the peace of Christ with others as you will.

After a few moments, the liturgist will step into pulpit and say...

“At this time I want to invite our kids to come forward for a word from the Lord brought to them by Ms. Kathy.”

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 pulpit and say...***

“Would those who are able please stand as we all join together our second hymn, “Come, Christian, Wide Proclaim”, printed in our bulletins.

The Liturgist will take a seat until after the hymn.

*HYMN

“Come, Christian, Wide Proclaim”

(to the tune of Italian Hymn)

Come, Christian, wide proclaim. Life through your Savior slain;
Sing evermore. Christ, God’s effulgence bright,
Christ, who arose in might,
Christ, who crowns you with light, praise and adore.

Work with your courage high, Sing of the daybreak nigh,
Your love outpour. Stars shall your brow adorn,
Your heart leap with the morn,
And, by His Love upborne, hope and adore.

Then when the garnered field shall to our Master yield,
A bounteous store, Christ, hope of all the meek,
Christ, whom all the earth shall seek,

Christ your reward shall speak, joy evermore.

After the hymn, the liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Please be seated.... God is the source of every good and perfect gift. As recipients of his wondrous grace, we have been called to be instruments of that grace and channels of His blessings. Let us give freely and joyfully as we continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings....

The Liturgist will sit down until the Doxology.

THE OFFERTORY "Let All Things Now Living" **Robert A. Hobby**

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... God of great gifts and great love, as we await the coming of your Son in joy and hope and love and peace, may our gratitude be reflected in the gifts we give. Because of our generosity, might others know the blessing of our Lord, living in his love and demonstrating his wisdom throughout all the earth. Amen.

*THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

The Apostle's Creed

Let us remain standing and reaffirm our Christian faith as it is expressed in the traditional version of the Apostles' Creed printed in our bulletins. Let us say what we believe. . .

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into Hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick & 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 sit down.

SPECIAL MUSIC

"Jesus Paid It All"

Dr. David DeSeguirant, Tenor

After the Special Music, the liturgist will return to the lectern & say...

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson for today is taken from the First Book of Samuel, beginning at the second verse of the twenty-fifth chapter. If you would like to follow along, turn to page 257 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God...

"And there was a man in Ma'on, whose business was in Carmel. The man was very rich; he had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. He was shearing his sheep in Carmel.

Now the name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife Ab'igail. The woman was of good understanding and beautiful, but the man was churlish and ill-behaved; he was a Calebite.

David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep. So David sent ten young men; and David said to the young men, "Go up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name. And thus you shall salute him: `Peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have. I hear that you have shearers; now your shepherds have been with us, and we did them no harm, and they missed nothing, all the time they were in Carmel.

Ask your young men, and they will tell you. Therefore let my young men find favor in your eyes; for we come on a feast day. Pray, give whatever you have at hand to your servants and to your son David."

When David's young men came, they said all this to Nabal in the name of David; and then they waited.

And Nabal answered David's servants, "Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants nowadays who are breaking away from their masters. Shall I take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men who come from I do not know where?"

So David's young men turned away, and came back and told him all this.

And David said to his men, "Every man gird on his sword!" And every man of them girded on his sword; David also girded on his sword; and about four hundred men went up after David, while two hundred remained with the baggage."

The liturgist will return to his seat in the congregation.

Thank you for your service.

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

Our sermon text for today is taken from the Book of First Samuel, the twenty-fifth chapter beginning at the fourteenth verse. Book of Kings the twenty-second chapter, beginning at the first verse. If you would like to follow along in your pew bibles, you can find it on page 257 in your pew bibles. Listen once more for the Word of God:

"One of the young men told Ab'igail, Nabal's wife, "Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed at them. Yet the men were very good to us, and we suffered no harm, and we did not miss anything when we were in the fields, as long as we went with them; they were a wall to us both by night and by day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. Now therefore know this and consider what you should do; for evil is determined against our master and against all his house, and he is so ill-natured that one cannot speak to him."

Then Ab'igail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two skins of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched grain, and a hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on asses. And she said to her young men, "Go on before me; behold, I come after you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal.

And as she rode on the ass, and came down under cover of the mountain, behold, David and his men came down toward her; and she met them.

Now David had said, "Surely in vain have I guarded all that this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him; and he has returned me evil for good. God do so to David and more also, if by morning I leave so much as one male of all who belong to him."

And David said to Ab'igail, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! Blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodguilt and from avenging myself with my own hand! For as surely as the LORD the God of Israel lives, who has restrained me from hurting you, unless you had made haste and come to meet me, truly by morning there had not been left to Nabal so much as one male."

Then David received from her hand what she had brought him; and he said to her, "Go up in peace to your house; see, I have hearkened to your voice, and I have granted your petition."

L: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: **Our thanks be to God!**

THE SERMON

"Beauty and the Beast"

Ernest Gordon groaned in the Death House of Chungkai and living with the stench of the dead. If he'd had the strength, he could wrap one hand around his bony thigh. He can't walk; he can't even feel his body. He shares a cot with flies and bedbugs. Diphtheria has drained him of his youthful strength and his childhood faith as he helplessly awaits a lonely death in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp.

He entered World War II in his early twenties, a tough, strong young soldier in Scotland's Argyle and Sutherland Brigade. But then came the capture by the Japanese, months of back breaking labor in the jungle, daily beatings, and slow starvation. Scotland seemed forever away. Civility, even farther.

Allied soldiers, our own boys, have become barbarians, stealing from each other, robbing dying colleagues, fighting for every kind of food scrap-- putrid meat, moldy bread, maggot laden fruit. Food

servers short changed the already meager rations so they could have extra for themselves. The law of the jungle has become the law of the camp.

But then something wonderful happens. Two new prisoners, in whom hope still stirs, are transferred to the camp. Though also sick and frail, they heed a higher code. Dusty Miller, a man who lived his Methodist faith, every minute of every day, and Dinty Moore, a Catholic who saw himself as walking in the shoes of the fisherman, shared their meager meals and volunteered for extra work. They cleaned and dressed Gordon's ulcerated sores; massaged his atrophied legs, and gave him his first bath in six weeks. Slowly, his strength returned and, with it, his dignity.

Their goodness proved contagious, and Gordon contracted a severe case. He himself began to treat the sick and to share his rations. He started giving away his few belongings to others who had greater need. Over time, the tone of the camp softened and brightened. Other prisoners began to follow their example. Sacrifice replaces selfishness. Soldiers held worship services and Bible studies, and Gordon rediscovered the faith he had misplaced so many years before. Decades after the war was over, Gordon became the chaplain of Princeton University, and described his transformation in his autobiographical, *Through the Valley of the Kwai*, with these words:

"Death was still with us... but we were slowly being freed from its destructive grip Selfishness, hatred, and pride were all anti-life. Love ... self-sacrifice ... and faith, on the other hand, were the essence of life ... gifts of God to men... Death no longer had the last word at Chungkai."

You don't have to go to a POW camp to find the fruits of hatred and greed. A dormitory will do just fine. As will boardrooms, bedrooms, and ballfields. People there may still be by the principle of the "survival of the fittest". Every man for himself. Dog eat dog.

Yet, every so often, a diamond glitters in the mud. A comrade shares, a soldier cares, or Abigail, beautiful Abigail, bows before you asking forgiveness and bearing gifts for insults offered by a beast.

She lived in the days of David and was married to Nabal, whose name means "fool" in Hebrew. His father had arranged this marriage to Abigail. She was beautiful outside and inside. She was as wise as her husband was foolish. He thought, being a Calebite, that he had married beneath himself. But then, in Nabal's eyes, everyone was beneath him, including the anointed and future king of Israel.

He was "churlish and ill-behaved--a real Calebite dog He is so ill-natured that one cannot speak to him" (1 Sam. 25:3, 17) He had NO people skills. He never met a person he couldn't anger or a relationship he couldn't spoil. Nabal's world revolved around one person-- Nabal. He owed nothing to anybody and laughed at the thought of sharing with anyone.

Especially David. While on the run from the murderous King Saul, David and his six hundred soldiers protected the farmers and shepherds from brigands and rustlers. Israel had no highway patrol or police force, so David and his mighty men met a definite need in the countryside. They guarded with enough effectiveness to prompt one of Nabal's shepherds to say, "Night and day they were a wall around us all the time we were herding our sheep near them" (25:16 NIV).

Trouble began to brew at the harvest. With sheep sheared and hay gathered, it was time to bake bread, roast lamb, and pour wine. Take a break from the furrows and flocks and enjoy the fruit of their labor. Nabal's men are doing just that. Even if David's men hadn't earned a place at the table due to the effective protection they had provided, the law of hospitality gave David and his men the right to share in the feast as well.

Boorish Nabal scoffs at the thought: Who is David, and who is the son of Jesse? I'm a Calebite... I'm special.... Who is he? Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men when I do not know who they are or where they are from?

Nabal pretends he's never heard of David, lumping him in with runaway slaves and vagabonds. Such insolence infuriates the messengers, and they turn on their heels and hurry back to David with a full report.

David doesn't need to hear the news twice. He tells the men to form a posse-- or, more precisely,

"Strap on your swords!"

David and his troops thunder down on Nabal.

Then, just as suddenly, beauty appears. Intelligence is once again brought to the fore. Brains *and* beauty. Abigail puts both to work. When she learns of Nabal's crude response, she springs into action. With no word to her drunken husband, she gathers gifts and races to intercept David. As David and his men descend a ravine, she takes her position, armed with "two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five sheep dressed out and ready for cooking, a bushel of roasted grain, a hundred raisin cakes, and two hundred fig cakes, ... all loaded on some donkeys" (25:18 MSG).

Four hundred men rein in their mounts. She's good lookin' with good cookin', a combination that stops any army.

Abigail knows the importance of the moment. She stands as the final barrier between her family and sure death. Falling at David's feet, she pleads: "On me, my lord,... on me let this iniquity be! And please let your maidservant speak to your ears, and hear the words of your maidservant" (25:24 NKJV).

She doesn't defend Nabal, but agrees that he is a scoundrel. She begs not for justice but forgiveness, accepting blame when she deserves none. 'Please forgive the trespass of your maidservant' (25:28 NKJV). She offers the gifts from her house and urges David to leave Nabal to God and avoid the dead weight of remorse.

Her warm words melt David's cold and angry heart. "Blessed be GOD, the God of Israel. He sent you to meet me! . . . A close call! ... if you had not come as quickly as you did, stopping me in my tracks, by morning there would have been nothing left of Nabal but dead meat I've heard what you've said and I'll do what you've asked. (25:32-35 MSC)"

David returns to camp. Abigail returns to Nabal. She finds him too drunk for conversation so waits until the next morning to describe how close David came to camp and how close Nabal came to death. "Right then and there he had a stroke and fell into a coma. About ten days later GOD finished him off and he died" (25:37-38 MSC).

When David learns of Nabal's death and Abigail's sudden availability, he thanks God for the first and takes advantage of the second. Unable to shake the memory of the pretty woman in the middle of the road, he proposes, and she accepts. David gets a new wife, Abigail a new home, and we have a great principle: beauty can overcome barbarism.

Meekness saved the day that day. Abigail's gentleness reversed a river of anger. Humility has that kind of power. Apologies can disarm arguments. Olive branches do more good than battle-axes ever will.

Abigail teaches so much. The contagious power of kindness. The strength of a gentle heart. But her greatest lesson, is to lift our thoughts from a rural trail to a Jerusalem cross. Abigail never knew Jesus. She lived a thousand years before his sacrifice. Nevertheless, her story prefigures his life.

Abigail placed herself between David and Nabal. Jesus placed himself between God and us. Abigail volunteered to be punished for Nabal's sins. Jesus allowed heaven to punish him for yours and mine. Abigail turned away the anger of David. Didn't Christ shield you from God's?

Abigail stood between the angry David and her foolish husband. And what did Christ do but stand in between God's anger and our punishment?

Something remotely similar happened at the Chungkai camp. One evening after work detail, a Japanese guard announced that a shovel was missing. The officer kept the Allies in formation, insisting that someone had stolen it. Screaming in broken English, he demanded that the guilty man step forward. He shouldered his rifle, ready to kill one prisoner at a time until a confession was made.

A Scottish soldier broke ranks, stood stiffly at attention, and said, "I did it." The officer unleashed his anger and beat the man to death. When the guard was finally exhausted, the prisoners picked up the man's body and their tools and returned to camp. Only then were the shovels recounted. The Japanese soldier had made a mistake. No shovel was missing after all.

Who does that? What kind of person would take the blame for something he didn't do?

Abigail did it for Nabal. Jesus did it for us.

Christ lived the life we could not live and took the punishment we could not take to offer the hope we cannot resist. His sacrifice begs us to ask this question: if he so loved us, can we not love each other? Having been forgiven, can we not forgive? Having feasted at the table of grace, can we not share a few crumbs?

Do you find your Nabal world hard to stomach? Then shift your gaze to Christ. Look more at the Mediator and less at the troublemakers.

One prisoner can change a camp. One Abigail can save a family. Be the beauty amidst your beasts and see what happens.

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Help us, O God, to give to all with whom we come into contact that which we ought to give.

Help us to give to our parents honor and obedience. Help us to give to our teachers respect and attention.

Help us to give to our employers our best and most careful work.

Help us to give to friends and to those who love us our unfailing loyalty.

Help us to give thanks to those who help us, and forgiveness to those who hurt us.

Help us to share the joy of those who are happy, and the sorrow of those who are sad.

Help us to help those whose work is hard, to praise those who have done well, and to sympathize with those who have failed.

Grant that we may walk as Christ walked; grant that what the Spirit was in him, such he may be also in us; grant that our lives may be refashioned after the pattern of his life; grant that we may do today here on earth what Christ would have done, and in the way he would have done it; grant that we may become vessels of his grace, instruments of his will, to thy glory and honor, through 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 & join in one voice to sing our hymn of dedication, "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy", hymn #298 in the *Hymnal*.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy" *The Hymnal #298*

***THE BENEDICTION**

May the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and his Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

*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