

Sunday, August 19th, 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 "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing" - Robert J. Powell 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 Psalms 133 and 18 and printed in our bulletins."

CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Psalm 133 & 18)

How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!

It is like the precious oil on the head, running down upon the beard & over the collar of his robes.

It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion.

For there the Lord ordained his blessing, life forevermore.

The Lord lives! Blessed be my rock, and exalted be the God of my salvation!

The Lord God gave me vengeance and subdued peoples under me.

He delivered me from my enemies and exalted me above my adversaries.

Because He delivered me from the violent, I will extol Him among the nations, and sing praises to His name.

Let us worship God beginning with prayer...

THE PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... Dear Lord and Father of us all, as we gather in worship this morning, may today be different than any other. Help us to sing with new vigor, to pray more earnestly and to listen without distraction. Teach us today what it means to love -- not a love that we have conjured up in our minds, or a love that we have seen on movie screens, but real love. Let today be the day we are transformed because we have been together in your presence. Move us toward genuine patience, kindness and humility. Move us to love especially when it is inconvenient and difficult. Teach us today what it means to love one another as you have loved us. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me to make a joyful noise as we sing together our opening hymn, "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling", #376 in our *Hymnals*.

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

Hymn #1

"Love Divine, All Loves Excelling"

The Hymnal #376

After the hymn the minister will say...

***CALL TO CONFESSION**

God calls us to repentance with a love that will not let us go. Come and fall into the arms of mercy. Come and give your brokenness to God. Let us confess our betrayals as we pray together the prayer of confession as it's printed in our bulletins, pausing at its conclusion for a short period of silent prayer. Let us pray...

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

(In Unison)

God of grace and mercy, we kneel before you today. We recognize that we are unworthy to be called your children; we are unworthy to be called your friends. Yet you love us with a love unlike any we have ever known -- love that is completely unconditional. It feels impossible to love others as you have loved us, especially when that commitment runs counter to our own best interest. But you love us, even in our unworthiness. Forgive us for all the times and ways we have rejected your love. Give us hearts that are open to receiving it -- that we may experience the full measure of the love of a friend like no other. And may we love you always as you deserve in return. Amen.

***SILENT CONFESSION**

Pause for about 30 seconds of silence.

***THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

When we come before God in humility and honesty, God draws near to us with forgiveness and renewed blessing. Jesus came in love, not to condemn us, but to save 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 God, live now in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.
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 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, “Though I May Speak”, Hymn #335 in our *Hymnals*.

The Liturgist will take a seat until after the hymn.

*HYMN

“Though I May Speak”

The Hymnal #335

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

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Please be seated.... God has blessed us with both spiritual and material gifts. Let us now give out of love and gratitude rather than self-satisfaction, rejoicing that quietly and faithfully we are able to help another as we continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings....

The Liturgist will sit down until the Doxology.

THE OFFERTORY

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

"O Love, That Wilt Not Let Me Go" - Robert J. Powell

*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, your heart is wide open to us. You have given to us freely and taught us to return to you a portion of what we have. Grant us glad and generous hearts, and help us be as open to you as you are to us. Help us use your gifts wisely as a demonstration of your love for all people, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Friend. 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**"In the Garden" - C. Austin Miles****Joanna Smith, soprano***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 verse 57 of the seventeenth chapter. If you would like to follow along, turn to page 250 in your pew bibles.

Our story begins immediately after David has killed Goliath. Listen now for the word of God...

“And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand. And Saul said to him, “Whose son are you, young man?” And David answered, “I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.”

When he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. And Saul took him that day, and would not let him return to his father’s house. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his girdle. And David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him; so that Saul set him over the men of war. And this was good in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul’s servants.”

The liturgist will return to his seat in the congregation.

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 twentieth chapter beginning at the thirty-fifth verse. Saul’s maddening anger at David has reached Jonathan such that Jonathan can no longer protect him. This reading is the story of their last meeting and final good byes. 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:

“In the morning Jonathan went out into the field to the appointment with David, and with him a little lad. And he said to his lad, “Run and find the arrows which I shoot.” As the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. And when the lad came to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan called after the lad and said, “Is not the arrow beyond you?” And Jonathan called after the lad, “Hurry, make haste, stay not.” So Jonathan’s lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master. But the lad knew nothing; only Jonathan and David knew the matter. And Jonathan gave his weapons to his lad, and said to him, “Go and carry them to the city.” And as soon as the lad had gone, David rose from beside the stone heap and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed three times; and they kissed one another, and wept with one another, until David recovered himself. Then Jonathan said to David, “Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, ‘The Lord shall be between me and you, and between my descendants & your descendants, for ever.’” And he rose and departed; & Jonathan went into the city.”

L: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Our thanks be to God!

THE SERMON**“BFF’s”**

Poor David. When Goliath lost his head, the Hebrews made David their hero. People threw him a ticker-tape parade and sang, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (I Sam. 18:7).

King Saul’s own son, Jonathan, the heir apparent to the throne, is in awe of this courageous, multi-talented shepherd boy. Like the rest of Israel, Jonathan has probably heard of the Prophet Samuel’s anointing of this son of Jesse to be the next, rightful, king of Israel. Seeing what he has done in battle, Jonathan knows why God has chosen him. So Jonathan resolves to teach this naive kid from the sticks all he knows. Jonathan removes his royal robe and places it on upon David as a symbol of his loyalty to God’s anointed king above all others-- even his own father. The heir to the throne surrenders that throne. Then he takes his armor, belt and sword and straps them around David as a symbol of his protection-- Jonathan’s way of saying that, “No matter what happens, I’ve got your back”; this is his covenant with David, the covenant he will keep-- forever. When Jonathan hears the plots of Saul, he informs his new friend. When Saul comes after David, Jonathan hides him. He commonly issues warnings like this one:

"My father Saul seeks to kill you. Therefore please be on your guard until morning, and stay in a se-

cret place and hide" (19:2).

But Saul is threatened by this kid's success and making him his hero, he makes him his target. From that day forward. The king is already a troubled soul, prone to angry eruptions, mad enough to eat bees. David's popularity splashes gasoline on Saul's temper. Saul makes his own pledge to himself-- "I will pin David to the wall!".

Saul tries to kill Bethlehem's golden boy six different times. First, he invites David to marry his daughter Michal. Seems like a kind gesture, until you read the crude dowry Saul required. One hundred Philistine foreskins. Surely one of the Philistines will kill David, Saul hopes. They don't. David returns double the King's demand.

Next, he orders his servants and Jonathan to kill David, but they refuse (19:1). He tries with the spear another time but misses. Saul sends messengers to David's house to kill him, but his wife, Michal, lowers him through a window. David the roadrunner stays a step ahead of Saul the coyote.

Saul's anger puzzles David. What has he done but good? He has brought musical healing to Saul's tortured spirit, hope to the enfeebled nation. He is the Abraham Lincoln of the Hebrew calamity, saving the republic and doing so modestly and honestly. He behaves "wisely in all his ways" (18:14). "All Israel and Judah loved David" (18:16). David behaves "more wisely than all the servants of Saul, so that his name became highly esteemed" (18:30).

Yet, Saul keeps erupting in undeserved, misdirected anger, rewarding David's deeds with flying spears and murder plots. We understand David's question to Jonathan at the beginning of Chapter 20: "What have I done? What is my iniquity, and what is my sin before your father, that he seeks my life?"

Jonathan has no answer to give, for no answer exists. Who can justify the rage of a man like Saul?

Who knows why a father torments a child, a wife belittles her husband, a boss pits employees against each other? But they do. Sauls still rage on our planet. Dictators torture, employers seduce, ministers abuse, priests molest, the strong and mighty control and cajole the vulnerable and innocent. Sauls still stalk Davids.

How does God respond in such cases? Nuke the nemesis? We may want him to. He has been known to exterminate a few Herods and Pharaohs. How he will treat yours, I can't say. But how he will treat you, I can. He will send you a Jonathan.

God counters Saul's cruelty with Jonathan's loyalty. Jonathan could have been as jealous as Saul. As Saul's son, he stood to inherit the throne. A noble soldier himself, he was fighting Philistines while David was still feeding sheep.

Jonathan had reason to despise David, but he didn't. He was gracious. Gracious because the hand of the Master Weaver took Jonathan's and David's hearts and stitched a seam between them.

David's hearts and stitched a seam between them. "The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (18:1). Their hearts were sown so tightly together that when one moved, the other felt it. When one was stretched, the other knew it.

Proverbs 18:24 tells us "There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother". David found such a friend in the son of Saul.

Oh, to have a friend like Jonathan. A soul mate who protects you, who seeks nothing but your interests, wants nothing but your happiness. An ally who lets you be you. You feel safe with that person. No need to weigh thoughts or measure words. You know his or her faithful hand will sift the chaff from the grain, keep what matters, and with a breath of kindness, blow the rest away God gave David such a friend.

He gave you one as well. David found a companion in a prince of Israel; you can find a friend in the King of Israel, Jesus Christ. Has he not made a covenant with you? Among his final words were these:

"I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20).

Has he not clothed you? He offers you "white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed" (Rev. 3:18). Christ cloaks you with clothing suitable for heaven.

In fact, he outdoes Jonathan. He not only gives you his robe; he dons your rags. "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21 NIV).

Jesus dresses you. And, like Jonathan, he equips you. You are invited to "put on all of God's armor so

that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the Devil" (Eph. 6).

You long for one best friend forever? You have one.

And because you do, you have a choice. You can ... ponder the malice of your Monster, or the kindness of your Christ.

From his armory, he hands you the belt of truth, the body armor of righteousness, the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (vv. 13-17).

Just as Jonathan protected David, Jesus vows to protect you. "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them away from me" (John 10:28 NLT).

Beverly' chooses to maximize Christ. Isn't easy How can you shift your focus away from the man who raped you? He entered Beverly's home under the guise of official business. She had every reason to trust him: personal acquaintance and professional associate. He worked for the state and requested an audience with Beverly-- but he took more than her time. He stole her innocence, her peace, her sense of well-being.

The rapist denied and successfully covered up his deed most foul. As he continued to move up the political ladder, Beverly spotted him on the evening news, encountered him at parties. While he feigned innocence, she churned within.

But not like she used to. Two years after the rape she met her Jonathan. A friend told her about Christ-- his protection, his provision, and his invitation. She accepted it. Memories of the rape still dog her, but they don't control her. She isn't left alone with her Saul anymore. She seeks Christ rather than revenge; she measures choices against his mercy, not her violator's cruelty. Beverly ponders and praises the living presence of Jesus. Doing so has healed her soul.

Major in your evil emperor, if you choose. Paint horns on his picture. Throw darts at her portrait. Make and memorize a list of everything the imbecilic beast stole from you: your childhood, career, marriage, health. Live a Saul-saturated life. Wallow in the sludge of pain. You'll feel better, won't you?

Or will you?

My dad spent a fair amount of time in high school sludging through sludge, doing the dirtiest job of all in the oil fields of east Texas in the 30's and 40's. Know what it was? It was the oil field equivalent of cleaning out a septic tank with a shovel and bucket-- he shoveled silt out of empty oil tanks. The stink stuck to you like super glue. His momma would have burned his clothes if he'd had enough extra to wear the next day. He could scarcely eat, he couldn't date, and his sister made him sleep in the barn, which only made the pigs complain.

Linger too long in the stench of your hurt, and you'll smell like the toxin you despise.

The better option? Hang out with your Jonathan. Bemoan Saul less; worship Christ more. Join with David as he announces:

The Lord lives!

Blessed be my Rock! ...

It is God who avenges me,

And subdues the peoples under me; He delivers me from my enemies!

You have delivered me from the violent man.

Therefore I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the Gentiles,

And sing praises to Your name. (Ps. 18:46-49)

Wander freely and daily through the gallery of God's goodness.

Catalog his kindnesses. Everything from sunsets to salvation-- look at what you have. Your Saul took much, but Christ gave you more! Let Jesus be the friend you need. Talk to him. Spare no detail. Disclose your fear and describe your dread.

Will your Saul disappear? Who knows? Who cares! And, in a sense, does it matter? You just found a friend for life. What could be better than that?

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we give you thanks for the gift of good and true friends, brought into our lives as

instruments of your grace to help us navigate the storms we all encounter; to help us bear the burdens that too often threaten to crush us under their load; and to speak the truth when we most need to hear it and least want to. Thank you for the joy, encouragement, and refreshment you give me through my friends.

Thank you for friends who share their lives and not just their gospel; for those kind souls who offer tears and not just their answers; & for those who give life-giving wisdom and not just mess-fixing formulas.

Bless you Father, for those all-weather friends who turn our hearts heavenward, by simply reminding us that the foundation and fountain of all good friendship is found in the gospel.

Thank you most for our first and best friend forever, Jesus Christ, who sticks closer to us than a brother and who was willing to place our needs before his own, showing his love by laying down his life for his friends. Make us worthy of his love and of the friends gathered around us by your blessed Providence. Keep us strong in our faith so that we may never to do anything to hurt or disappoint those who need our example or to draw upon our strength.

In your mercy, grant us the ability to bear the burdens of others and to forgive their most grievous faults and failings even as you have forgiven us. Give us sympathetic, unselfish, and understanding hearts; tempers and tongues which are always under control; the determination to treat others as we would have them treat us.

O Lord, grant us so to love you and those that love you or us, that we may do those acts that are worthy of your love. Make the love of you to be dearer to us than ourselves or anything else in all creation. We pray this in the most glorious and gracious name of Jesus, our best friend forever, who also 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, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus", printed in our bulletins.

***HYMN OF DEDICATION**

"What a Friend We Have in Jesus"

What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!

What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!

O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,

All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?

We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer.

Can we find a friend so faithful? Who will all our sorrows share?

Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care?

Precious Savior, still our refuge, take it to the Lord in prayer.

Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer!

In His arms He'll take and shield you; you will find a solace there.

***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**

"They Will Know We Are Christians By Our Love"

We will walk with each other; we will walk hand in hand.

We will walk with each other; we will walk hand in hand.

And together we'll spread the news that God is in our land. Refrain:

And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,

Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

***POSTLUDE**

Dr. Elizabeth Davis