

**Worship Service First Presbyterian Church of Magnolia
Sunday, August 20th, 2017**

The liturgist will enter about 10:40 am & take his seat near the organ. The pastor will step into the pulpit, welcome everyone, & 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.”

The preacher will take a seat.

PRELUDE

Dr. Dan Dykema

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 67 and printed in our bulletins?”

CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Psalm 67)

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us,

That His way may be known upon earth, and His saving power among all nations.

Let the peoples praise you, O God;

Let all the peoples praise you.

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth.

Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.

The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, has blessed us.

May God bless us always so that all the earth may revere him.

Let us worship God beginning with prayer....

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... O Lord, too often we have become ensnared in the subtle lies of the enemy, relying upon human rules instead of embracing the Way, the Truth and the Life, which is Jesus Christ. Dissolve the divisions that separate us, so that being united in mutual love, we may accept and forgive one another, just as we have been accepted and forgiven at the cross. Open our hearts to hear and understand your Word, and turn our thoughts to you, O Lord, that we might hear and that our souls might live, for in you and through you alone is the life we seek. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, “O Christ, the Great Foundation”, #443 in our *Hymnals*.

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

***HYMN OF PRAISE**

“O Christ, the Great Foundation”

The Hymnal #443

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

***CALL TO CONFESSION**

God does not intend to have us remain separate from him or others by our sins. Therefore, he invites us to come and confess our sins so that we may be forgiven and made one with our Creator and his creation once more. In penitence and faith, let us pray together the prayer of confession printed in our bulletins, pausing at its conclusion for a brief period of silent prayer. Let us pray. . . .

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Our Father, we ask your forgiveness for pretending that we are wise enough to know who you love and who you don't, as if your care were not for all of us. We want people to be like us before we help them, and we welcome into our company only those who will benefit us. Forgive us from thinking that there is anyone so low as to be beyond your love and concern, and forgive our arrogance in making such a presumption. Reconcile us to those we have treated as less than worthy; mold us into a community where all your children are accepted and loved. Amen.

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

***THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

When we were strangers, separated from home and from God because of our sin, Jesus Christ brought reconciliation. We and all who have sought His forgiveness have been changed from enemies into friends, counted as righteous, and confirmed forever as God's beloved. 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

Christ is our peace. He came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. We are no longer strangers, but citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. 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 all of our younger friends to come forward for a Word from the Lord brought to them by Pastor Mike”

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.***

Hold up some pictures of popular foods. Ask the children, "Is any of this food too dirty to eat?" Point to an order of bacon and eggs, and explain that in the time of Jesus, pork was considered dirty, so good religious people didn't eat bacon. Then point to a cheeseburger, and let them know that good Jews didn't mix dairy products (like cheese) with meat, so a cheeseburger was considered dirty. Show them a picture of fried catfish tell them how religious people weren't allowed to eat fish without scales.

Then ask them if Jesus considered any of this food to be unclean and inedible. No! Tell them that Jesus says in today's lesson, "it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles" (Matthew 15:11). See if they can guess what this means. Explain that Jesus is not concerned about the kinds of food we put in our mouths, but he is very concerned about the kinds of things we do with our mouths -- whether we use our mouths to lie, to swear, to insult, to call other people names. Ask the children if they have ever heard anyone use "dirty language," and then point out that all these kinds of speech are dirty, and they make us feel unclean. Close by saying that Jesus does not care whether we put cheeseburgers in our mouths or not, but he cares a great deal about what comes out of our mouth.

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

“Would all who are able, please stand and join in singing our next hymn, “In Christ There Is No East or West”, #439 in our *Hymnal*.

*HYMN OF PREPARATION

“In Christ There Is No East or West”

The Hymnal #439

After the hymn, the Liturgist will step to the microphone and say...

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

God has blessed us so that we might be a blessing to others. God has called us to open our hearts and our wallets so that those in distress may find relief and his Love, so let us continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings....

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

THE OFFERTORY

Dr. Dan Dykema

*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 you have blessed us, O God, we are eager to share. May we offer more than crumbs from your table. May none be sent away empty of the blessings you intend for all. We want our offerings to preserve and extend life to your children, here in this place and wherever our influence can reach. What is in the offering plates is only a part of what we offer so that your reign of unity and peace may come. 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, "Please. Be seated," and then sit down.

SPECIAL MUSIC

"Gweedore Brae" - John Crowther

Dalene Baer, Violin Soloist

After the Soloist is finished, the liturgist will return to the pulpit and say....

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first reading this morning is taken from the Prophet Isaiah, selected verses taken from the fifty-sixth chapter, beginning at the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page 636 in our pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

"Thus says the Lord:

‘Keep justice, and do righteousness, for soon my salvation will come,
and my deliverance be revealed.

‘And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord,
to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants,
every one who keeps the sabbath, and does not profane it,
and holds fast my covenant—

These I will bring to my holy mountain,
and make them joyful in my house of prayer;
their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar;
For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

Thus says the Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel,
I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered.”

The liturgist will take a seat with the congregation with their thanks.

The preacher will then return to the pulpit and say...

Our sermon text for today is taken from selected verses of the Gospel according to Matthew, the fifteenth chapter, beginning with the twenty-first verse. I would encourage you to follow along and you can find this passage beginning on page #849 in your pew bibles. Listen once more for the word of God.

²¹ And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²² And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and cried, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely possessed by a demon.”

²³ But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, “Send her away, for she is crying after us.”

²⁴ He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

²⁵ But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.”

²⁶ And he answered, “It is not fair to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.”

²⁷ She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.”

²⁸ Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed instantly.”

Leader: ...This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

“The Eleven Foot Pole”

When we were younger, MUCH younger, back when little boys thought that all little girls had cooties, and little girls thought that little boys were booger eating morons, we spoke of certain people and things with contempt and fear, saying, “I wouldn’t touch (him, her, or it) with a ten foot pole.” The expression seems to have had its origins in the graveyards of New Orleans, where family tombs were constructed with a shelf built over a pit open at the far end of the shelf. When someone died, the tomb was opened and the corpse was laid upon the shelf to repose in peace. But one year to the day later, the tomb was reopened and the bones and other remains on the shelf were unceremoniously pushed off the shelf into the pit beneath using ten foot poles. Since that time, the ten foot pole has become a metaphor for things unworthy or unhealthy to be touched. Rodney Dangerfield, the late stand up comedian, used to complain that when he was growing up, he had bruises all over his body from people touching him with ten foot poles.

But I supposed compared to others, he was lucky. At least people would touch him. How many people are there in this world that we wouldn’t touch with a ten foot pole-- people with whom we want no conversation, no friendship, no contact of any kind. India has a whole class of its citizens that are referred to as “untouchables”. How bad would a person have to be, what would they have to do, to arouse such intense feelings in you that you would do whatever you had to do to keep your distance from them? With what kind of person would you be unwilling to share a pew with, to sit next to at a crowded Christmas Eve Service where escape from them would be next to impossible? What would be most likely to separate you from them? Their appearance.... a certain foul odor about them... their politics.... their line of work?

I am sure if we look deep enough within ourselves, we will find someone that would require us to pull out our ten foot poles to maintain a “safe” distance. The disciples certainly did. They were probably not happy with Jesus at this moment. Jesus had led them out of the nation of Israel, the people to whom Jesus has said time and again that he was called to go, and instead has led them into the region of Tyre and Sidon, a land of heathens, pagans, idolators-- a place of spiritual whores who had sold themselves to the worship of Baal in exchange for the hope of good crops and a household of sons to work the land. These are the people that Moses and the people of Israel had been ordered to utterly destroy when the Israelites took possession of the Promised Land in Canaan, because the people were irredeemably corrupt. In Matthew 10, when Jesus sends out his followers by twos to proclaim the Good News, he specifically restricts them from bringing good news to these people saying, “Jesus sent out these twelve, instructing them as follows: “Do not go to Gentile regions and do not enter any Samaritan town. Go instead to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near!’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give”

Jesus uses Tyre and Sidon as the evil straw man in Matthew 11, and likens them to the worst of the worst, the ancient city of Sodom which was destroyed for its wickedness, when he says, “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you! And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be thrown down to Hades! For if the miracles done among you had been done in Sodom, it would have continued to this day. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for the region of Sodom on the day of judgment than for you!”

Jesus and his disciples are tired, they have been contending with the Pharisees and doing non-stop healing and preaching for weeks. Jesus has led them here where no one should know them, and where the Pharisees won’t follow. Here they can eat, and sleep, and pray, and rest themselves for a bit. And suddenly

this woman, this Canaanite starts loudly calling to them seeking help for her demon possessed daughter. If she keeps this up, soon everyone will know that a holy man is among them who has the power to heal and the chance to recharge their batteries will be gone.

And Jesus says nothing. The disciples come to Jesus and beg him to send her away. She had crossed a line here. By right and law, Jesus or any one of his disciples could have picked up rocks and hurled them to drive her away at the very least, and to injure or kill her if she tried to stand her ground. Yet he didn't.

She drew close enough to look Jesus in the face and explain her problem once more. "My daughter is possessed by a demon. I need the help that only you can give."

Finally Jesus replies, and not in a kind way. It wasn't as mean spirited as it could have been. But still it was far from friendly. He said, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs."

Sounds kind of mean, and way out of character for Jesus. Some good folks are willing to begin making excuses for Jesus-- he was tired, she was uppity. Feminist theologians presume to judge Jesus, and say, "See there, isn't that just like a man!" But it's best to judge Jesus by the product of his efforts, not the process.

We have to note that the word for "Dog" that Jesus used was not the one reserved for the dogs that roamed the streets in packs scavenging to survive and more than willing to bite any hand that tried to feed it. No, the word he used was the one that referred to family pets. Loved, but just not quite in the same way as the children of the household. Further, Jesus commends her for her faith. Jesus only uses the word great with the word faith twice in Matthew's Gospel in commending an individual for their faith, and both times it is to a Gentile. Here for this woman, and elsewhere for a centurion.

He was not reinforcing the boundaries and barriers between himself and the woman who approached. He was providing her a way to reach him.

As a kid up at Camp Pioneer, a Boy Scout Camp south of Mena, Arkansas. we swam in the Mountain Fork River. We had enough water to swim in because many years before, someone had dammed up the river, with an earth and concrete structure. The water flowed over the dam constantly. After a summer shower or thunderstorm, the added volume of water was such that if one didn't pay attention, one could be swept over the dam and drowned in the swirling currents or dashed upon the rocks just below.

To prevent this from happening. we had one staff member whose job it was to stand on top of the dam. In his hands he held a long red and white striped pole. If someone was in danger, he would reach out to them and pull them to safety with his pole.

That is what is happening here. Jesus is reaching out his pole. He is extending it out over and beyond the boundaries established by men, and giving her a chance to grab hold and pull herself to safety.

I often think how wonderful it would be if all the dangers and perils of this world had someone like our Camp Pioneer lifeguards, standing between us and danger with a pole that they could use to reach out to us and pull us to safety.

And thanks to this story of the Canaanite woman, we are reminded that we do. We are our biggest enemy in this life-- blithely drawing lines to separate what we are willing to do for Jesus and what we won't... who we will reach out to in Jesus name and and who we won't... when and where we will go, and when and where it is just too much to ask.... who is worth saving, and who can just go to hell.

That's how it was in Jesus' time. Jews separated forever from Gentiles. No mingling. No getting to know each other. No expression of concern for one another. Everything on God's green earth neatly divided into two categories-- us and them. We don't waste our concern on them, & they don't care about us.

Thank God for this Canaanite, the heathen that came to Jesus for help, and had love enough for her child and faith enough in Jesus to take whatever abuse came her way, as long as she also received the healing for her daughter. She was determined to stay there asking for help till hell freezes over if that is what it took. So she responds humbly and quietly to Jesus' challenge-- "Even the dogs get to eat the crumbs from the table."

And Jesus acknowledges her faith... a faith that led her to take what could easily have been seen as

an insult from Jesus and still respond in faith and humility that refused to leave without a blessing.

She puts Jesus in his place-- as Lord of all life.

And Jesus puts her in her place as his beloved child and a member of the family regardless of the circumstances of her nationality.

In John Bridgewater's play, *Abraham Lincoln*, a dialogue occurs between the President and a woman passionate for the Northern cause in the Civil War. She asks for news of the war, and he replies, "There is news of victory. They lost 2700 men, and we lost 800. The woman was ecstatic.. How splendid," she said.

The President was obviously disturbed by her reaction. "Thirty five hundred human lives were lost...."

But the woman interrupts, "Oh, you mustn't talk like that Mr. President. There were only 800 that mattered."

The President dropped his shoulders as tears welled up in his eyes, and he replied, "Madam the world is larger than your heart.."

The world is larger than the political party you belong to. It is larger than your race. Larger even than right and wrong. "While we were still sinner, Christ died for us."

Let your Faith and your love for Jesus be your eleven foot poles so that you can overcome the boundaries around you to reach the unreachable, love the unlovable, touch the untouchable. Couldn't we have used an eleven foot pole in Charlottesville this week.

In closing, let me offer a poem by Edward Markham, paraphrased to reveal a slightly different perspective:

I drew a circle that shut Him out!
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But He and Love had the wit to win
He drew a circle that took me in...

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Let us pray... We give you thanks O God for building a house without walls in a kingdom that has no end. Work in us, O Lord, so that we may build on the foundation you have laid.

Help us to understand that there is not one of us who deserves even the crumbs that fall from Your table, yet you grant to us all-- Jew and Gentile - young and old - rich and poor - black, white, sinner, and saint - the bread of life. Help us to not only understand, but to joyfully share your others.

We thank you Lord for your call to enter into your realm where there is peace, wholeness, and right relationships between all people and yourself. Help us to recognize all people as our brothers and sisters, no matter where they come from, or what they have done in the past, and no matter what the differences may still exist between us. Give us the eyes of Christ - and place within us his heart of compassion, his mind of truth, and his words of wisdom and his power to heal. Remind us that you are at work among us and grant us trust and faith in your power to overcome those things which keep us apart.

Transform us, Lord, to be the sort of church that is known for the breadth of its embrace; the sort of congregation that is always able to make room at the table for another; always out seeking and inviting others to come and worship, to sit beside us on a pew while together we feast upon your grace, 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 and join in one voice to sing our closing hymn, "Not Worthy, Lord, to Gather Up the Crumbs", sung to the tune of "Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart", and

printed in our bulletins.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION

“Not Worthy, Lord, to Gather Up the Crumbs”
(to the tune of “*Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart*”)

Not worthy, Lord, to gather up the crumbs
With trembling hand that from Thy table fall,
A weary, heavy laden sinner comes
To plead Thy promise and obey Thy call.

I am not worthy to be thought Thy child,
Nor sit the last and lowest at Thy board;
Too long a wanderer and too oft beguiled;
I only ask one reconciling word.

One word from Thee, my Lord, one smile, one look,
And I could face the cold, rough world again;
And with that treasure in my heart could brook
The wrath of devils and the scorn of men.

And is not mercy Thy prerogative—
Free mercy, boundless, fathomless, divine?
Me, Lord, the chief of sinners, me forgive,
And Thine the greater glory, only Thine.

*THE BLESSING

*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. Dan Dykema