

**Worship Service from First Presbyterian Church of Magnolia
Sunday, September 6, 2015**

PRELUDE "Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise" - Douglas E. Wagner Dr. Elizabeth Davis
After the Choral Call, the liturgist should step to the lectern and say,

"Would you join me in reading the responsive call to worship adapted from Isaiah 55 and printed in our bulletins?"

CALL TO WORSHIP (adapted from Isaiah 55)

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.

Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live.

Seek the Lord while he may be found,

We will call upon him while he is near;

Let the wicked forsake their way, & the unrighteous their thoughts;

Let us return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on us and may abundantly pardon.

Let us worship God beginning with prayer...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... God of the hungry, we acknowledge our longing for the bread that satisfies, not the gnawing of our stomachs or senses, but the gnawing of our souls. We praise you, that in your creating, you place in us a hunger for the food the world cannot supply. And we give you thanks for the provision of your Word and Spirit that feed our souls. Filled with your Spirit, and attending to your Word this day, may we find our hunger assuaged, and learn to care as he cares, to give as he gives, and to pray as he prayed. Give us grace to believe and receive Christ and his love as your gift. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah", number 281 in our *Hymnals*.

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

*HYMN OF PRAISE "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah" *The Hymnal #281*

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

*CALL TO CONFESSION

We who are tossed about by competing interests and priorities are summoned before God to be drawn back to a life centered by faith. Let us confess our sins before God and one another and pray together the prayer of confession printed in our bulletins. Let us pray... Let us pray...

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION (In Unison)

Holy God, long ago the prophet Isaiah spoke your word of invitation to eat of the bread which can truly satisfy and warning of spending money for that which is not bread. Yet how often we fail to accept your invitation or heed your advice. Forgive us for so often choosing the bread that perishes rather than that which endures. Forgive us for piling up material possessions, as if these can satisfy our hunger for eternal security. Forgive us for devouring empty praise, as if it can feed our hunger for trustworthy affirmation. And forgive us, also, for attending to the diet for our bodies, while neglecting the diet that feeds our souls. Restore us to a right relationship with you, that we may take our place at your heavenly table, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Any who come to Christ hungry for the forgiveness that alone can release the soul from the bondage of sin, and feed one's life with love, will never be turned away. Christ's promise is still true: Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. 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**

Filled once more with God's grace and Christ's peace, 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 preacher will step into the lectern 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 Ms. Karen."

The preacher 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 begin to leave the front, the liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

All that we have in this life is meant to prepare the way for God's faithful into the next, Recognizing that the things of this world are consumed by moth and rust, let us lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven as we continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings.

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

THE OFFERTORY

"Let Us Break Bread Together" - Richard Blake

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... Make our sacrifices of thanksgiving and obedience into instruments of your purposes, O God, for we would be consecrated, along with our gifts. Remember all our offerings with your favor, that they may serve your purposes for humanity. In Jesus' name. Amen.

***THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

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 and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.

Invite the congregation to... "Be seated," and take a seat.

SPECIAL MUSIC

"Celtic Communion" - Mark Hayes

Joanna Smith, soprano soloist

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson for this morning is taken from selected verses of the sixteenth chapter of the Book of Exodus, beginning with the second verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #59 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God...

And the whole congregation of the people of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the

wilderness, and said to them, "Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law or not."

And Moses said to Aaron, "Say to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, 'Come near before the LORD, for he has heard your murmurings.'"

And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.

And the LORD said to Moses, "I have heard the murmurings of the people of Israel; say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat flesh, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread; then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.'"

In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning dew lay round about the camp. And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as hoarfrost on the ground.

When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "It is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat."

The liturgist will return to her seat either on the chancel or with family or friends in the congregation. Thank you for your service.

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

Our second reading today is taken from the Gospel John, the sixth chapter, beginning with the twenty-fourth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #928 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God...

"So when the people saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Caper'na-um, seeking Jesus. When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?"

Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you; for on him has God the Father set his seal."

Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?"

Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see, and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world."

They said to him, "Lord, give us this bread always."

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst."

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

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

“Hunger and Thirst”

“Whoever comes to me will never be hungry. Whoever believes in me will never thirst.”

Now... What does that mean?

It has been long and often misunderstood.

Despite its misuse by proponents of the Gospel of Wealth, the promise of Jesus that we will never hunger or thirst is not one that we were ever intended to take literally. And if I insisted that it was, some of you here today, would raise your hands and voices to tell me that I was mistaken.

So what does it mean? What hunger and thirst does Jesus refer? This is Jesus' recognition that there is a hunger deeper than that of the body. He opened the sixth chapter of John's Gospel by feeding the 5,000. And yet here they are, still hungry, still looking for bread. This is Jesus' recognition that beneath all our hunger and thirst, there is a *hunger* and *a thirst*.

When I lived in Central Texas, I was invited to preach at the evening chapel service at a truly grand retirement facility. After the service, I was asked to seek God's blessing on the evening meal. The manager invited me to stay and hooked me good when he told me they would be serving prime rib. I could tell that this place was an expensive place to retire to. The residents were all dressed to the nines. coats and ties were required for the meal, and the women absolutely sparkled, flashing their expensive jewelry and their sparkly evening dresses that cost a small fortune. To be honest, they all looked more like they were going to the opera than to church. Every hair on every head was immaculately combed and coiffed. The tables were set with fine china, lead crystal, and real sterling silver ware. I was really impressed.

I performed all my required duties and sat down at the manager's table to enjoy the meal, which was outstanding. As the meal neared its conclusion, I noticed that, at table after table, the diners would take the little plates holding the packets of butter and jelly and dump them into their pockets and purses. By the time the meal was over, the guests had headed back to their rooms to prepare for bed, every table had been completely stripped of those things.

I asked the honcho there, "Why do they do that? They can import the best of this stuff from all over the world. Why do they strip the tables of the free stuff like it had just been visited by a horde of locusts? Can't they get snacks in their rooms? Why do they have to steal food?"

"It's just a symptom of their fundamental fear," he answered quietly. "They will take it back to their rooms and dump it into a drawer. Later when they're out, we will go in and clean their rooms and we will throw away drawers full of it. They aren't eating it. They are afraid... insecure... anxious."

Nice clothes. Diamonds. Plenty of money. And they're scared. It's a symptom of a deeper hunger,

So when Jesus talks about hunger and thirst, he's talking about something deeper-- a hunger about life that touches us and completes us in a way that the finest meal and the finest drink can not.

On the plane from Dallas to Phoenix a couple of weeks ago, I sat by an elderly African American woman from Philadelphia on her way to visit her grandchildren. She had a crocheted shawl about her shoulders on the plane, and an old felt hat with a small pheasant feather on the side. We conversed for a bit, until we hit a patch of rough air, and the plane shook, and the seat belt light came on. Her hat came off and she began praying-- with an intensity have only rarely seen outside of a hospital. But by the grace of God, in just a few moments, things settled down and she looked at me and said, "I'm never gonna wear that hat again."

"Why not," I asked, "Its a pretty good hat."

Then she told me the story. When she and her husband first arrived in Philadelphia, money was tight. She hadn't had anything new to wear in so-o-o-o long. One of the small millinery shops was having a sidewalk clearance sale as she walked by-- you know-- one of those where everything is just spread out on some tables and you just pick through it until you find something you like and that fits, and you pay a pittance for it and everybody's happy. She sorted around for a bit, picked up this hat, put it on her head, and it looked so good on her. She looked around for a clerk, but there wasn't one in sight. So she just walked off with the hat on her head. "I stole this hat," she said, "And I ain't gonna meet my Maker in a stolen hat!"

She was getting to that stage of a deeper hunger and thirst. When her longing to be right with God was more important to her than how she looked, or what she wore, or what she ate or drank.

You can bury it deeper than a pipeline. You can cover it with dirt and filth, and dirty jokes. You can shove it down deep and bury under about 5000 calories of your favorite comfort food. You can

plaster over it with criticism and cynicism. You can paper over it with money, gild it with gold, hide it under the mattress beneath all manner of illicit sex. You can try to drown it with liquor, but the fact remains-- IT'S THERE!

And you hear it.... **and you take off the hat.** *"I don't want to meet my maker wearing that hat."*

You can read the bible until you have it memorized. You can buy every tape that says anything about God, or Jesus, or the Bible. You can go to every seminar on religion. You can study all of the wisdom of the Ages on Spirituality. You can even become a professional religious person or, dare I say it, **a preacher.**

But until you stand.... bareheaded.... barefooted.... HONEST.... before God ... you will have **NO** peace of mind.... I believe that. I **know** that.

But when you do, you'll know. You will **know** what Jesus meant. "Whoever comes to me won't be hungry. Whoever comes to me, won't be thirsty." Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

We thank you, God, for your presence with us in every situation, and for the fulfillment of your pledge to satisfy our needs in parched places. We thank you Lord, that Jesus gave himself to us as bread from heaven. As disciples of Jesus, feed and strengthen us by the indwelling Christ so that we can fulfill the commission He gives.

Make us truly aware of our utter dependence upon you for the sustenance that satisfies. Help us to surrender to our Lord Jesus that he may take our lives in his hands, change and transform us, until we reflect and radiate his nature as individuals and as church.

For those discouraged and disillusioned with trying to survive on the fare the world serves, grant that we may be used as instruments of your grace to feed them until they want no more. For those in the wilderness of addiction or poverty, of guilt or despair; for those starving for love, acceptance, affirmation, enlighten their way and ease their burdens that they may find their way to the peace, joy, and love found only as citizens of your eternal kingdom.

As we gather together around the table of the lamb, we pray that each of us may be filled with your goodness, your righteousness. May this bread and this wine be food that endures. May we take our place in the communion of all the saints, and feed upon your mercy forever. In the name of Jesus Christ, 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

At his last meal with his disciples, our Lord Jesus gave us a way to remember his sacrifice of love for each of us by using bread and wine to represent his body and blood. We who could never save ourselves, have been saved by the sacrifice of a sinless lamb, the Son of God.

This meal was never intended to be a reward for the worthy, but as a help to the undeserving. This is not our table, but that of our Lord, and He invites all who have need of his strength or his forgiveness to come and receive the meal of grace he has prepared for you.

The Words of Institution

On the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord took bread, and after he had given thanks, he broke it and 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."

These are the gifts of God for the people of God. 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 Prayer After Receiving

Grant, O God, that the ears which have heard the voice of your songs may be closed to the voice of clamor and dispute; that the eyes which have seen your great love may also behold your blessed hope; that the tongues which have sung your praise may speak the truth; that the feet which have walked your courts may walk in the region of light; that the bodies which have partaken of your living Body may be restored to newness of life. Amen.

Would all who are able please stand and join in singing our closing hymn, "Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts", hymn #510 in our *Hymnals*.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION "Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts" *The Hymnal #510*

*THE BENEDICTION

Because the world is poor and starving,...	... We will go with bread.
Because the world is filled with fear, We will go with courage.
Because the world is in despair, We will go with hope.
Because the world is living lies, We will go with truth.
Because the world is sick with sorrow,...	... We will go with joy.
Because the world is weary of wars,....	... We will go with peace.
Because the world is seldom fair, We will go with justice.
Because the world is under judgment,...	... We will go with mercy.
Because the world will die without it, We will go with love.

It is God who will give you courage and strength to do this.

We go with the grace of Jesus Christ. May all glory go to him.

*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