

Sunday, September 24th, 2017

The liturgist and pastor will meet in the hall outside the choir room a couple of minutes prior to the start of the service at 10:45am. The liturgist will enter and take his/her seat. The pastor will follow, step into the pulpit, welcome everyone, 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 "In Christ There Is No East or West" - Gilbert M. Martin **Dr. Elizabeth Davis**
CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP "Rejoice in the Day!" - Dan Dykema **The Choir**

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 Isaiah 55 and printed in our bulletins?”

CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Isaiah 55)

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters;

You that have no money, come, buy and eat!

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

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread?

Why do you barter your labor for that which does not satisfy?

Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near;

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

Let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them.

For God's thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are His ways our ways.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways & my thoughts than your thoughts.

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, so shall my word not return to me empty.

You shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace;

The mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song,

Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;

Instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;

And it shall be to the Lord for a memorial, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

Let us worship God beginning with prayer....

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... God of our ancestors, confront us now as you confronted them. We would not hide our faces from your truth or turn aside from your call. Loose us from our bondage to fear and temptation. Silence our grumbling and complaining. Turn us away from criticism of others who do not conform to our expectations. Straighten our misshapen lives and distorted spirits, that we may rejoice together in the glorious things Christ can accomplish through us. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, “I Come with Joy”, number 507 in our Hymnal.

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

*HYMN OF PRAISE

“I Come with Joy”

The Hymnal #507

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

*CALL TO CONFESSION

Come to the bush that burns but is not consumed. Approach the holy ground where God, who is unseen, is made known. In awe and reverence come before the God from whom we cannot hide. In penitence and faith, let us confess all that separates us from God and one another as we pray together the prayer of confession printed in our bulletins, pausing at its conclusion for a moment of silent prayer. Let us pray...

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

(In Unison)

Faithful and loving God, we have tried to live without you amid the idols we have created. We have closed our minds and hearts to your presence and your invitation. Our advantages have oppressed unknown multitudes of our sisters and brothers who receive only token leftovers from our hands. Our immorality is killing us, and them. O God, is there any way out of the prisons we have built around ourselves? Amen.

***SILENT CONFESSION**

Pause for about 30 seconds of silence.

***THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

God does not always chide, nor remain angry forever. God does not deal with us according to our sins or repay us according to our iniquities. Bless the Lord, who forgives all our iniquity, heals all our diseases, and redeems our lives from the pit. 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**

The God of steadfast love leads us from bondage into freedom & grants us that peace which passes all understanding. 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.*

The Name Game

Play a name game with the children. Have them stand, give their name, and tell you why their parents gave them their particular name. Names can tell us a lot about people — first, they usually tell us whether a person is a boy or a girl, and second, they often tell us something about the person’s family, especially if a child is named after a parent or a relative. Do you know what God’s name is? (They might be surprised to learn that God has a name at all.) Moses discovers that God’s name is “I AM WHO I AM” (Exodus 3:14). Have you ever met anyone with this name? Point out that this name tells us a lot about God — first, it doesn’t limit God to being a boy or a girl, and second, it tells us that God will be whoever God wants to be. God is not stuck in any one time, or place, or race, or nationality, but God can be anywhere and everywhere at the same time. “God Will Be What God Will Be,” and this means that God cannot be limited in any way. Stress that this is good news for us, because it means that God’s love for us has no limits, and God can be with us whenever we need any comfort or help or strength.

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

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

God has given us a good inheritance in a land flowing with milk and honey, and we cannot forget all the benefits we have received from God's hand. God's investment in us bears good fruit when we respond to the physical and spiritual needs in our world with our time and efforts and with gifts that extend beyond our personal reach. Let us give with joy 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

"Communion Hymn" - Michael Ryan

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... Faithful God, grant food and drink to all your children as we share from your bounty. Nourish the spirits of all who give and all who receive, and extend to us the healing we most need. Use the gifts of substance and self offered here to confront injustice in your name with your truth, on behalf of your afflicted people. Accept and sustain these offerings, we pray. 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 & 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.

THE ANTHEM

"Holy Manna" - Joel Raney

The Choir

After the choir finishes, the Liturgist will return to the lectern & say....

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson this morning is taken from the first chapter of Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, beginning at the eleventh verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page 1032 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

"To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his call, and may fulfill every good resolve and work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."

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

The preacher will step into the pulpit & say...

Our sermon text today is taken from the third chapter of Genesis, beginning at the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #40 in your pew bibles.

Listen once more for the word of God...

"Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Mid'ian; and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and lo, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, "I will turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt."

When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!"

And he said, "Here am I."

Then he said, "Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Then the LORD said, "I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Per'izzites, the

Hivites, and the Jeb'usites. And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring forth my people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt."

But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?"

He said, "But I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain."

Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?"

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you': this is my name for ever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations."

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

"Deliverance"

Moe has lived in this barren wilderness for forty years now. He came originally to escape execution at the hands of Pharaoh for killing an Egyptian task master who was bent on beating a fellow Hebrew to death. He came here to hide from Pharaoh's posse among the sheep.

He has grown old here and his health isn't what it used to be. Gout keeps him awake. Arthritis makes him limp. His eyes are weak with age and he squints to see anything at all. His back is bent and his shoulders stoop. But he still manages to look after the sheep of his father in law, Jethro.

Life used to be so different. He used to walk barefoot on cool, polished marble floors instead of the hot and rocky floor of the desert. Finest clothes. Best food you ever tasted. But that was before he had to run for his life. Before the scandal.

Now don't dismiss this story as a fairy tale of some kind. It's all 100% true.

But more than a true story, it's a common story. It's a story of a derailed dream. It's a story of high hopes colliding with harsh realities.

It happens to all dreamers. And since all have dreamed, it happens to us all.

In Moe's case, it was a mistake he could never forget. Moe once struck and killed a man, and before the word could get out, Moe got out-- he'd rather hide than go to jail. So he ran.

The executive became a fugitive.

Most stories aren't as extreme as Moe's. Few spend their lives running from the law. Many, however, live with regrets.

"I could have gone to college on a golf scholarship!" a fellow told me once. "Had an offer right out of school. But I joined a rock and roll band. Ended up never going. Now I'm stuck fixing garage doors!"

"Now I'm stuck!"

That's the epitaph of a derailed dream -- "*Now I'm stuck.*"

Yet, take your high school yearbook to a twentieth-year reunion and read the next chapter. Some dreams have come true, but many haven't. Not that all should, mind you-- I hope the guy who dreamed of being the next Hugh Hefner came to his senses.

Changing direction in life is not tragic. Losing passion in life is.

Something happens to us along the way. Convictions to change the world are downgraded to commitments to pay the bills. Rather than make a difference, we make a salary. Rather than look forward, we look back. Rather than look outward, we look inward.

And we don't like what we see.

Moe didn't. Moe saw a man who'd settled for the mediocre. He was once on top of the world, but working out here with a bunch of stinking, stupid sheep.

But all that changed when he heard the voice from that little bush that caught fire up on the hill. At

first he thought the voice was a joke, but then he heard it again. "Moses. Moses," the voice called.

Moe turned. No one called him Moses anymore.

"Moses. Moses!"

He turned toward the bush. It was glowing. Bright red with tongues of yellow flashing above it. He could feel the heat ten feet away, but when he stepped closer and looked in, the bush wasn't burning.

Moe took another step forward, but the voice stopped him.

"Don't come any closer. Take off your shoes. Where you stand is holy ground."

Suddenly Moe knew who was speaking. "God?" You can't help but wonder what amazed the old fellow more: that God spoke in a bush or that God spoke at all.

Once he had been someone of importance. Adopted nobility. An Israelite reared in an Egyptian palace. His countrymen were slaves, but Moses was privileged. He ate at the royal table. He called the Pharaoh himself, "Daddy."

But his most influential teacher had no degree. She was his mother. Not the daughter of Pharaoh who plucked him from the Nile. His REAL mother who was the Hebrew nursemaid hired to be his nanny. "Moses," you can almost hear her whisper to her young son, "God has put you here for a reason. Someday you will set your people free. Never forget, Moses. Never forget."

But, after killing the Egyptian and being blackmailed by a Hebrew witness, there is no indication he ever intended to go back to Egypt. In fact, there is every indication he wanted to stay with his sheep. Standing barefoot before the bush, he confessed, "**Who am I** to go to the king and lead the Israelites out of Egypt?" (Exod. 3:11).

Why Moses? Or, more specifically, why eighty-year-old Moses?

The forty-year-old version was more appealing. The Moses we saw in Egypt was brash and confident and strong. But the Moses we find four decades later is reluctant and weather-beaten.

Had you or I looked at Moses back in Egypt, we would have said, "This man is ready for battle!" Trained by the ablest soldiers. Instant access to the inner circle of the Pharaoh. Moses spoke their language and knew their habits. He was the perfect man for the job.

Moses at forty we like. But Moses at eighty? No way.

Too old. Too tired. He **smells** like a shepherd. **Speaks** like a foreigner. What influence could he possibly have on Pharaoh? He's the wrong man for the job.

And Moses would have agreed. "Been there... Done that!", he would say. "Those people don't want to be helped. Just leave me here to tend my sheep. They're easier to lead-- for that matter, **cats** are easier to lead!"

Moses wouldn't have gone. You wouldn't have sent him. I wouldn't have sent him.

But God did. How do you figure? Benched at forty and called upon to suit up and start after 40 years in the stands! Eighty. Why? What does he know now that he didn't know then?

The ways of the desert, for one. Forty-year-old Moses was a city boy. Octogenarian Moses knows the name of every snake and the location of every watering hole. If he's going to lead thousands of Hebrews into the wilderness, he better know the basics of Desert Life 101.

Family dynamics, for another. If he's going to be traveling with families for forty years, it might help to understand how they work. After he went on the lam, he married a woman of faith, the daughter of a Midianite priest, and establishes his own family.

But more than the ways of the desert and the people, Moses needed to learn something about himself.

Apparently he has learned it. God says Moses is ready.

And to convince him, God speaks through a bush. "School's out!" God tells him. "It's time to get to work."

It was time to rise and shine. It was for him. And it is for you. That same voice whispers to you. It reminds you that God is not finished with you yet. Oh, you may think he is. You may think you've

peaked, or you may think he's got someone else to do the job.

If so, think again.

"God began doing a good work in you, and I am sure he will continue it until it is finished when Jesus Christ comes again."

Did you see what God is doing? *A good work in you.* Did you see when he will be finished? *When Jesus comes again.*

May I spell out the message? *God ain't finished with you yet.*

Your Father wants you to know that. And to convince you, he may surprise you. He may speak through a bush, his word, or a total stranger. But speak he will. God isn't through with any of us-- until Christ comes again.

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Would you pray with me...

God of light and shadow, your will is past our finding out and your ways beyond our knowing. We understand your purpose for us only in part. But we know also that when the time is right, you will reveal yourself and your plan, so we pray that you will give us wisdom and courage to heed your call.

Save us from holding on too long or letting go too soon. Grant us satisfaction in miles traveled and plateaus reached, words spoken and chapters written, meals cooked and children reared, houses built and homes made, minds calmed and bodies healed, strength bestowed and love shared. When we have done what we can, let there be no guilt for what we could not.

Nevertheless, our Father, lead us not to assume that when our formal employment ends, we have put an end to our reason for being. Break now, we pray, our lifelong bonding of doing work and being paid. Instruct us in the blessedness of giving with no wish for return. Lure us into kindnesses that pledge no compensation. Volunteer us for armies that fight only injustice. Prompt our hands to build homes for the homeless and cook food for the hungry. Warm our hearts to call on the sick and comfort the lonely, love the unlovely and bring hope to the hopeless. Living, we live by your choosing. Teach us not to waste the precious gifts you still bestow upon us.

As we gather together around your family table hosted and supplied by our Lord Jesus, may we be so filled with your goodness that this bread and this wine will be food that endures to eternal life, sustaining our witness and service in Christ's name to the end of our days. May we take our place in the communion of all the saints, and feed upon your mercy forever. In the name of him 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

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 give 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."

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

The Distribution of the Elements

We will be receiving communion by the method of intinction with a common cup. When the invitation to come forward is given, please come forward, receive a piece of bread, and dip it into the cup. Place it in your mouth and then return to your seat by the side aisles. If you are unable to come forward, or if it would be difficult for you, please remain where you are & the elements will be brought to you.

The Prayer After Receiving

With thanksgiving we offer our very selves to you to be a living and holy sacrifice, dedicated to your service. As this bread is Christ's body for us, send us out to be the body of Christ in the world. Give us courage to speak his truth, to seek his justice, and to show his love. Keep us faithful in your service until Christ comes in final victory and we shall feast with all your saints in the joy of your eternal realm, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let all of us who are able stand & join in one voice to sing our hymn of dedication, "Here I Am, Lord", Hymn #525 in our Hymnals.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION "Here I Am, Lord" *The Hymnal #525*

*THE BENEDICTION

*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.