

**Sunday, October 9th, 2016**

*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 10:40am. After a brief prayer with the choir, 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**

**"All Nature Sings!" - Lani Smith**

**Dr.**

**Elizabeth Davis**

**CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP**

**"This Is the Day!" - Dan Dykema**

**The Choir**

*After the choir is finished, the liturgist should step to the lectern and say,*

“Would you join me in reading the responsive call to worship adapted from Psalm 112 and printed in our bulletins?”

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

(adapted from

Psalm 112)

Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments!

**His descendants will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed.**

Wealth and riches are in his house; and his righteousness endures for ever.

**Light rises in the darkness for the upright; the Lord is gracious, merciful, and righteous.**

It is well with the man who deals generously, who conducts his affairs with justice.

**For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered for ever.**

He is not afraid of evil tidings; his heart is firm, trusting in the Lord.

**His heart is steady, he will not be afraid, until he sees his desire on his adversaries.**

He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor;

**His righteousness endures for ever; his horn is exalted in honor. Praise the Lord!**

Let us worship God beginning with prayer....

**PRAYER OF INVOCATION**

Sovereign God, whose judgments stretch our thinking and challenge us in our daily living, you have adopted us into your family and made us to be neighbors to sisters and brothers we have ignored. Filled by Your Spirit and led by Your Word, we pray that you would so draw us into a circle of mutual caring, that the suffering of one is felt by all and injustice anywhere is challenged by Christians everywhere. Transform us by your Living Word so that we may demonstrate your loving mercy to the world. Equip us to grow, to bear fruit, and to serve in Christ's name. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee”, number 464 in our *Hymnals*.

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

**\*HYMN OF PRAISE**

“Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee”

*The Hymnal #464*

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

**\*CALL TO CONFESSION**

God rightfully expects more from us who call ourselves the church. Yet God is ever ready to hear the honest searching of our souls for the path which leads to the return of our integrity. Let us confess that which keeps us from bearing witness to our Father's love, as we pray together the prayer of confession printed in our bulletins, pausing for a moment of silent prayer at its conclusion. Let us pray...

**\*PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

God of action, we confess that when we hear Jesus' words "go" and "do" we often hesitate. We know what Jesus wants us to do, yet we make excuses for inaction and hide behind questions. We resent the intrusion of your Word into the cozy arrangements we have made for ourselves. We withhold our substance and ourselves revealing our faith as hollow and meaningless. Forgive us for turning away

from those in need, for passing by on the other side of the road, and for turning our face and our hearts from you. Forgive us and help us to be faithful to our call. Amen.

\*SILENT CONFESSION

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

\*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Jesus gave his all upon the cross that we might know the certainty of eternal life. Through Christ, we who have confessed our failure to follow the example of Christ in sharing with others in need, are yet assured of forgiveness. Along with his mercy, we are given new commitment and courage so that we may never again fail to extend his grace to those in need... 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

We have been reconciled to the Father by the gift of his Son. Let us now be reconciled one with another and share the peace of Christ. 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, liturgist 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 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.***

Before the service, put a Band-Aid on your index finger, and start the conversation by holding up your finger for the children to see. Ask them to tell you why it is good to put a Band-Aid on a cut finger, and stress that it keeps the wound clean and protected, so that it can heal. Then ask the children what they would think if you didn’t have a Band-Aid, and you put a cut and bloody finger in front of them. Find out if they would want to help you, or if they would run away. Let them know that in the parable of the Good Samaritan, two people passed by a man who was hurt and bloody in the road, and it was finally a foreigner called a Samaritan who stopped and helped (Luke 10:30-35). Stress that there have always been people who run away from bloody situations because they don’t want to get dirty, or they don’t want to get involved. But ask the children if they can guess who Jesus wants us to copy: the two who ran away, or the Samaritan? Emphasize that Jesus wants us to be like the Samaritan, and to help people who are in need — even if they are dirty. Open a box of Band-Aids, and give one to each child so that they can be of help when a neighbor is hurt.

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

“Would all who are able, please stand and join in one voice to sing our next hymn, “God Whose Giving Knows No Ending”, #422 in our hymnals.”

\*HYMN OF PREPARATION

“God Whose Giving Knows No Ending”

*The Hymnal #422*

*After the hymn, the preacher will return to the pulpit and say,*

**“Please be seated... Today marks the beginning of our annual Steward-ship Campaign. Early next week you will receive your Stewardship packet in the mail. Here to explain what to do with it when it arrives, including a new element in it, a Time and Talent Survey”, is Keith DuPriest. Keith...**

**A MINUTE FOR STEWARDSHIP**

**Keith DuPriest**

*After Keith DuPriest steps away from the lectern, the Liturgist will step to the microphone and say....*

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

The greatest commandment is that we shall love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself. It is this love that motivates our giving. As God has loved us, may we return that love with our offerings of talent, time, and treasure, and continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings....

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

THE OFFERTORY "Jewels: Bright Gems for His Crown" - Lani Smith 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... Our Father, may these gifts and our lives be used to increase the knowledge of God among all people, producing patience and endurance, wisdom and understanding, love and joy. We would act with compassion toward one another and toward neighbors near and far. Thankful for the mercy you have shown us, we pledge ourselves and these offerings to extend your mercy to all, through Jesus Christ our Lord. 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... "Be seated," and take a seat.*

### **THE ANTHEM**

**"I Have Felt the Hand of God" - Craig Courtney**

**The Choir**

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

### **SCRIPTURE READINGS**

Our first lesson this morning is taken from the eighth chapter of Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians, beginning at the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page 1008 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

"We want you to know, brethren, about the grace of God which has been shown in the churches of Macedo'nia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of liberality on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints -- and this, not as we expected, but first they gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.

Accordingly we have urged Titus that as he had already made a beginning, he should also complete among you this gracious work. Now as you excel in everything -- in faith, in utterance, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in your love for us -- see that you excel in this gracious work also.

I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.

And in this matter I give my advice: it is best for you now to complete what a year ago you began not only to do but to desire, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a man has, not according to what he has not."

*The liturgist will return to his 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 sermon text today is taken from the tenth Chapter of the Gospel of Luke, beginning at the twenty-fifth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #902 in your pew bibles.

Listen once more for the word of God...

“And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

He said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read?"

And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

And he said to him, "You have answered right; do this, and you will live."

But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?"

He said, "The one who showed mercy on him."

And Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

THE SERMON

“The Miracles at Hand”

One of the staples of family television during my childhood and adolescence and one of the first reality TV shows ever was a weekly program titled “Candid Camera”. It features clips of people’s reactions to impossible situations caught for posterity on hidden cameras.

The object, as the shows producer and host, Alan Funt, put it, was to catch people in the act of being people, and the results are usually very funny, but once in a while you get the feeling that you have seen something significantly true about human nature. You are apt to get this feeling especially when they turn their hidden cameras on people in the act of witnessing miracles.

One of these miracles, as I remember it, involved the rigging up of a bird cage so that the little hanging perch swung back and forth, and the leaves of some of the plants that they had in it fluttered, and you could hear the bird trilling, and everything was entirely normal except that there was no bird in the cage. Various unsuspecting souls were maneuvered over to it, and the invisible cameras recorded their reactions. Down to the last man, not one of them noticed that anything was wrong. When they were asked what they had been looking at, they all replied that they had been looking at a bird in a cage; and when they were asked to describe what kind of a bird it was, some of them were rather vague, but some of them gave quite detailed descriptions-- a yellow beak, a long tail, and so on. In other words, what all of them saw was not what was really there-- a cage without a bird in it-- but they saw instead what under the circumstances they expected to be there, which was of course a cage with a bird in it.

The other one I remember was very much the same with one significant difference. This time the scene was a perfectly ordinary table in a perfectly ordinary lunchroom, and the only thing that was extraordinary was the flower that was sitting in a vase on the table. Somebody would sit down and start drinking his coffee or his milk or whatever it was, and then when he would set it down for a minute in between sips, the miracle would happen. All of a sudden, the extraordinary flower would rear up out of its vase, arch over, and start inhaling the man's drink. This time, unlike the birdless bird cage, they could not help seeing what was really there-- this miraculous flower-- but this time they simply refused to come to terms with it. It did not fit in with their conception of reality because their conception of reality excluded the possibility of the miraculous, so what most of them did was just to cast a few furtive glances around to make sure that nobody else had seen and then move away to another table and try to look as if nothing had happened.

The truth that these examples point to seems to me to be incontrovertible. Again and again in our lives, all of us tend to mistake what our minds *see*, for what is *really* there. We see a bird in the cage even though the cage is empty because we expect to see a bird in the cage. And of course the corollary is that we often fail to see what is unexpected. There are countless examples of this.

Beauty for instance. We expect to see beauty in sunsets and picture galleries and the faces of beautiful people, we expect to hear beauty in the song of a hermit thrush or the Mozart *Requiem*, and it is in these places that we do see beauty and hear it. But of course there is also beauty in the places where we do not expect to find it. We scoop up handfuls of sand from the beach, say, and we see nothing beautiful there--only handfuls of sand. But look at it closely, look again, look so that we begin to see the separate grains, each crystal, and we find that our hands are adorned with splendor.

The cover story of this month's *Texas Monthly* magazine dealt with the couple from Waco, Texas who use shiplap and shabby chic to reshape what America thinks is beautiful. For example, for more than 30 years, just off its downtown area, Waco has had a complex of rusting, decrepit grain elevators. The one thing everyone could agree on was that they were UGLY, a blight on the entire downtown area. They entertained all manner of proposals on how the city might improve the looks of the area around them, most of which involved tearing them down and leaving another overgrown empty lot for the city to deal with.

But in 2014, Chip and Joanna Gaines made a bid on them. And as there were meetings about bringing the silos up to code, they were asked by the city to paint them and make them shiny and beautiful. "And Joanna said, 'Well, but wait a minute. They're beautiful the way they are,'"

A local tourism specialist named Carla who has lived in Waco for 26 years, and who for all that time used to drive blocks out of her way to avoid letting visitors or potential investors in the city catch a glimpse of this eyesore. tells this story and adds, "Now they look beautiful to me. How can that happen?"

And here Carla's eyes got a little wet, because it reminded her of a time in sixth grade, back in Minnesota, when one of her classmates was asked to describe a weed. He said, "It's unwanted. That's what makes it a weed and not a flower;" Carla always remembered that. "I've thought a lot about it. I think that's what Joanna does. She makes things wanted that were once unwanted."

The robbers in Christ's parable jumped on the man who was passing by and tore off his clothes and mugged him and left him half dead by the side of the road. After a while a couple of other men came by who were not half dead but only half alive, perhaps, because when they looked at the man lying in the ditch, what they saw, this priest and this Levite, was just a man lying in the ditch. Half dead. And that is apparently all they saw when they looked at him.

They saw the man, of course, but they also saw the road, and in their mind's eye they saw whatever goal they were traveling that road to reach. They recognized two needs, both of which were at cross purposes: the need of the wounded man for help and their own need to get wherever they were going. We can give them the benefit of the doubt and assume that they were not especially evil or heartless men, at least no worse or more heartless than anyone hearing these words, or speaking them.

They were just blind. When they looked at the man in the ditch, all they saw was what people normally expect to see when they look at another person: they saw just another person, a man who had his problems just they had their problems.

Having seen him, at least in part, they had to decide whose need they were going to serve-- theirs or the man in the ditch. But to see this is to see only part of what there is to see. To see this is to see only the surface, only what was the expected.

As we travel around this world, everyone we meet is the man in the ditch because everyone we meet, whether he looks like it or not, needs to be known, accepted, forgiven and healed. To be really alive, not just half alive, he needs our help, our healing.

But there is a deeper and more terrible truth still to be grasped, because to be really alive, not just half alive, we need to help and heal him. His need for mercy is matched by our need to be merciful. It is not just for his sake that we come to his rescue. It is also for our sakes. And every time we pass him by and leave him to his own misery, we both suffer for it.

In Christ's parable, a third man finally did come along, of course. He looked, really looked, and saw not just a man, but a neighbor, a brother, sprawled out there in the dust with most of the life whaled out of him. He bound up his wounds, set him on his own beast, took care of him. He gave of his talents in binding his wounds and nursing him until he was strong enough to be taken where he could recuperate. He gave of his time, in detouring from his own destination and agenda to take him to safety. And he gave of his treasure in providing for his needs until he could resume his own journey.

Your life and my life flow into each other as wave flows into wave, and unless there is peace and joy and freedom for you, there can be no real peace or joy or freedom for me. The more we give ourselves over to living in extravagant generosity, the more we will experience the joy in which God intends for us to live.

It was not a flower at all, of course, that leaned its head to drink from the glass of a stranger. It only looked like a flower. In some ways it was such a ludicrous little scene that flickered away on our black and white TV screens, but it was enough to make anyone who has tears for such things weep. A miracle happened-- a very small miracle, but a miracle still. The flower bowed its wild and beautiful head and drank. The man could not avoid seeing it. No one could. He was a dingy, tired looking man in his shirt sleeves. Life had taught him long ago that there are no miracles in this hard world. But there before his eyes a miracle had happened! So he got up and moved to another place. That would be the point to weep.

As surely as a sailing ship is made to sail with the wind, so you and I and everybody else in this world are made to live bound to each other as a brother is bound to a brother, each giving and receiving mercy, binding up each other's wounds, taking care of each other. If we really look at our own lives, seeing not what we expect them to be, but what they are, we cannot help seeing that.

So either we get up and move away somewhere, anywhere, as though we had never seen this greatest of all miracles. Or we kiss the flower that bows its head to us, embrace the bright wind that seeks to fill our sails, open our lives to the deepest miracle of reality itself and call it by its proper name, which is Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

The one who walked toward Jerusalem, and put into practice, on a cross, that which he taught on the road in a story about someone who acted like neighbor to one in need.

Go and do likewise and be transformed by the sheer joy of it.

#### THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Would you pray with me...

Almighty God, you have done so much for us in Jesus Christ. You have come to us, spoken to us, embraced us in love. You have called us to be your disciples and you have given each of us a place in your Kingdom. For all that you have done for us, we give thanks.

Now, O Lord, make us to be the sort of people who in gratitude do something for you - loving others as you have loved us; risking in order to reach out to others, as you have reached out to us; serving the needs of others as you have served us in our need.

Give us the grace, the courage, and the energy to do likewise. Chide us when we would pass by on the other side rather than to reach out to those in need. Help us to see in the faces of others, the face of our neighbor, and the face of our Lord. Remind us that, in serving the least and the neediest of our neighbors, we are serving and loving you, through Jesus 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 hymn of dedication, "O What Shall I Render?", #557 in our *Hymnals*.

\*HYMN OF DEDICATION

"O What Shall I Render?"

*The Hymnal #557*

\*THE BLESSING

\*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

"Pass It On"

I wish for you, my friend, this happiness that I've found--  
You can depend on Him, it matters not where you're bound;  
I'll shout it from the mountaintop, I want the world to know:  
The Lord of love has come to me, I want to pass it on.

\*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis