

Sunday, October 22nd, 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. After a short prayer with the choir, the liturgist will enter and take his/her seat followed by the Pastor who will 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 "How Firm a Foundation" - 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 Psalm 46 and printed in our bulletins?”

CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Psalm 46)

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change.

We will not be afraid even though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.

God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;

God will help it when the morning dawns.

The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter;

He utters his voice, the earth melts.

The Lord of hosts is with us;

The God of Jacob is our refuge.

Let us worship God beginning with prayer....

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... As we assemble before you, Lord, give us our marching orders. We know we must build on the solid foundation you have provided for us in your Word, if we would ever communicate your truth to our children and their children. So if our hearts are burdened with worrisome cares or selfish desires, unburden them so that we may bear the joyful burden of the gospel. If our minds are tethered to crippling doubts or withering thoughts, unbind them for the freedom of your love. If our wills are weakened by hopeless despair or the smugness of pride, strengthen them for the summons of your kingdom. Be for us a rock and refuge, a strong fortress in which we may ready ourselves for the battles ahead. Preserve us, we pray, and grant us courage to face each day's challenge to live by faith and to serve with abiding trust in you and you alone. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, “Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken”, number 446 in our Hymnal.

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

***HYMN OF PRAISE** “I Will Call Upon the Lord” *Sing the Faith #2002*

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

***CALL TO CONFESSION**

How do we prepare ourselves to live rightly, in keeping with God’s will and purposes? When one prepares a garden for planting, one tills and breaks the soil. When we prepare ourselves for God’s work, we must examine ourselves and allow ourselves to be broken so that the seeds of faithfulness and obedience may be planted in us. In that Spirit, let us confess our sins before God and one another using the prayer of confession printed in our bulletins. Let us pray...

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

(In Unison)

Creating God, you have entrusted us with the responsibility for making decisions which form the foundation of our lives, and for bringing your kingdom into this world. We confess we have not always been wise builders. Too often we have heeded only the voice of our own wants and wills and followed the

fads and fancies of this world. We have failed to build upon that which has been tested and shown to be solid in your Word. We confess that our souls are tarnished and wounded by wrong choices and willful sins. We also admit that, even though we claim to be followers of Jesus who committed everything he had to provide us a living hope, we have not fully committed ourselves to His way when our comfort, convenience, or security have been put at risk. Forgive us we pray and help us to build on a foundation that will last. Amen.

***SILENT CONFESSION**

Pause for about 30 seconds of silence.

***THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

God has rescued us from the sinking sand of our sin, and placed us high upon the rock of our salvation, Jesus Christ. In him we have redemption and the forgiveness of sin. In him is laid the foundation of our freedom. Friends believe the Good News!

In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!

***GLORIA PATRI**

The Hymnal #579

Glory be to the Father, & to the Son, & to the Holy Ghost;

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, World without end. Amen, Amen.

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

Having been reconciled to the Father through the grace of his Son, let us be reconciled to one 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, 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.***

“What Are You Afraid Of”

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

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

We give to express our thanks for the abundant goodness of God and to do our part in passing on the word of God in all its power. Let us give generously and joyfully as we continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes & offerings...

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

THE OFFERTORY

"He Leadeth Me" - Gilbert M. Martin

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... Loving God, we bring this offering as symbol of the choice we make to share in the ministry of Christ to the world. Claim all our energies and creativity, not just the leftovers from our busy days. May this decision make a difference in the lives of the suffering, bringing release and healing, new hope and courage. Multiply, we pray, the power of these gifts to do the good you intend. 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 **"I Will Sing New Songs to the Lord" - Joseph M. Martin** **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 seventh chapter of Matthew's Gospel, beginning at the twenty-first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #840 in your pew bibles.

Listen once more for the word of God...

"Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?'

And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.'

"Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.

And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it."

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

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

Our sermon text today is taken from the book of Joshua, the first Chapter, beginning at the first verse. If you would like to read along, you can find it on page 186 of your pew bibles. Listen once more for the Word of God:

After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, "Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land which I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, as I promised to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory. No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and of good courage; for you shall cause this people to inherit the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded you; turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go.

This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; be not frightened, neither be dismayed; for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, "Pass through the camp, and command the people, 'Prepare your provisions; for within three days you are to pass over this Jordan, to go in to take possession of the land which the LORD your God gives you to possess.'"

And they answered Joshua, "All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you; only may the LORD your God

be with you, as he was with Moses!

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

“The Choice”

Forty years earlier, the Hebrews had come to this same place in the Wilderness. But then their cowardice and lack of faith led them to choose the what they saw as the safety of the Wilderness over the promise of a new and rich land. No one who made that choice then would live to take possession of the inheritance promised first to Abraham and now to them. God then used those four decades to correct the stinkin' thinkin' that had produced a nation of cowardly failures.

Now, it is a new generation that stands at the bank of the Jordan ready to move on with their lives and claim the promise.

Their legacy of cowardice in their ancestors that had been beaten into them by their Egyptian taskmasters had raged, untouched, too long, infecting everyone who encountered it, leading to abandoned dreams, ravaged marriages, truncated hopes.

But now they stand at the Time has come to declare war on the pestilence that goes by the name "I can't."

It attacks our self-control: "I can't resist the bottle." Careers: "I can't keep a job." Marriages: "I can't forgive." Our faith: "I can't believe God cares for me." Our Mission: "I can't invite them to church, What if they say no?"

"I can't." Had Joshua mumbled those words, who would have blamed him? His book begins with bad news: "After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD" (Josh. 1:1).

There had never been another like Moses. When the Hebrew people were enslaved, Moses confronted Pharaoh. When the Red Sea raged, Moses prayed for help. When the ex-slaves were hungry, thirsty, or confused, Moses intervened, and God provided food, water, and the Ten Commandments. Moses meant more to the Hebrews than Napoleon, Alexander the Great, or Julius Caesar meant to their people. Even George Washington shares Mount Rushmore with three other presidents. If Moses' face were carved into Mount Sinai, the Hebrews would never let another share the honor with him.

Oh, the dismay, the grief, the fear. And yet, before the grass had begun to sprout over Moses' grave, God told Joshua, "Moses ... is dead. Now therefore, arise" (v. 2).

Why so soon? Why not take a little extra time to mourn? Why not linger for a bit and consider the options? . . .

Just think about what Joshua is asking them to do.

He wants all of the men to come forth and be circumcised.... not with a Wilkinson Steel, perfectly sharp surgical blade wielded by a trained and experienced surgeon. No, he wants them to take a piece of flint, a sharp rock they find on the ground somewhere, and allow themselves to be circumcised by one who has never done such a thing before.

Then he wants the whole two million member nation of Israel to cross a raging river at the height of the rainy season-- not just the men still aching and bandaged from their recent surgery, but the women children, and even babies. Why not wait until the dry season when the crossing will be more manageable? Or at the very least, give us a little time and we can figure a way to span the Jordan with some kind of bridge.

Then when they are all across the river with no way to retreat, he expects them to take on the Canaanites, a people who dwarf the israelites in numbers as well as physical size. They have a well trained, well armed force inside the walled fortress of Jericho.

Why not wait?..... Because **Moses may be dead, but their God is very much alive.** It is God, not Joshua or Moses, whose power and presence changes the math of their situation. With God beside them, they go from having no chance to win, to having a guarantee of success.

God gave Joshua reason for faith. Listen again to his first words to Joshua: "Arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land **which I am giving to them.**" (Josh. 1:2).

Not "the land I might give them."
Not "the land you must conquer."
Not "the land of which you must prove worthy."
Not "the land you must earn, confiscate, or purchase,"
But "the land which I am giving to them."

The transaction had already happened. The land had already been transferred. The conquest was a *fait accompli*. Joshua wasn't sent to take the land but to receive the land God had taken. Victory was certain because the victory was God's.

This is how God explained it to Joshua:

"Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory." (Josh. 1:3-4)

Keep in mind, the Hebrews were gypsies. They owned nothing that they couldn't pack up and move. Yet in one grand gift, they were given the deed to the land of their dreams. God dangled the keys of Canaan in front of Moses' protege and said, "Take it for a spin." And in one of Israel's finest moments, Joshua said, "Yes." He received his inheritance.

Is it time for you to receive yours?

You have one. If you have given your heart to Christ, God has already given Canaan to you. He "has blessed [you] with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3).

Note the tense: "he has blessed." Not "he will bless, might bless, or could bless," No, the deed to Promised Land has been recorded and filed in your name. You have access to "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."

Unfortunately, this may well be the best-kept secret in Christendom, We underestimate what happens to us when we believe and choose to trust Christ. Conversion is more than a removal of sin. It is a deposit of power. It is as if your high-mileage, two-cylinder engine was extracted and a brand-new Ferrari engine was mounted in your frame. God removed the old motor, caked and cracked and broken with rebellion and evil, and replaced it with a humming, roaring version of himself-- He embedded within you the essence of Christ. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

You are fully equipped!

Need more energy> You have it.

More kindness> It's yours.

Could you use some self-control, self-discipline, or self-confidence> God will "equip you with all you need for doing his will" (Heb. 13:21).

In Canaan you do not fight for victory. You fight from a position of a victory that is already yours. In the wilderness you strive. In Canaan you trust. In the wilderness you seek God's attention. In Canaan you already have God's favor. In the wilderness you doubt your salvation. In Canaan you know you are saved. You move from wanting to believing you already have.

This is part of God's message to us: "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs-- heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:16-17).

If we are co-heirs with Christ, why do we struggle through life? Our inheritance should mean perfect peace, yet we feel like a perfect mess. We have access to the joy of Jesus, yet plod along like arthritic tortoises. God promises to meet every need, yet we still worry and fret. Why?

First, I think most of us don't know about our inheritance, No one told us that the land is already conquered, that the battle is already won. Some Christians never live out of their inheritance because they don't know they have one.

But now you do. Now you know that you were made for more than the wilderness. God saved you from Egypt so that he could bless you in the Promised Land.

God brought us out so he could lead us in. He freed us up so he could raise us up.

The gift has been given, Will you trust it?

And therein lies the second explanation for our weaknesses.

We don't believe in our inheritance. That was the problem of Joshua's ancestors. They didn't really believe that God could give them the land. The good life of the Hebrews could have begun four decades earlier, a point God alluded to in his promise to Joshua: "Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses" (Josh. 1:3). The reminder? I made this offer to the people of Moses' day, but they didn't take it. They chose the wilderness, Don't make the same mistake.

Joshua didn't. Much to his credit he took God at his word and set about the task of inheriting the land.

How about you and me? God gives us the choice. We can choose to believe and receive the wondrous gifts that await us for all eternity. Or we could make the choice the Hebrews made 40 years before at this same spot.

Choose to measure your life, not by your ability, but by God's. Even though you can't forgive, God can. And since he can, you can.

You can't break the habit, but God can. Since he can, you can.

You can't control your tongue, temper, or sexual urges, but God can. And since you have access to every blessing of heaven, you, in time, will find the strength.

The Promised Land and the Abundant life are yours for the taking. Make the mental shift from the wilderness to the Promised Land.

The wilderness mentality says, "I am weak, and I'll always be weak." Promised Land people say, "I was weak, but I am getting stronger."

Wilderness people say, "I'm a victim of my environment." Promised Land people say, "I'm a victor in spite of my surroundings."

Wilderness people say, "These are difficult days. I'll never get through them." God's people say, "These days are Glory Days. God will get me through."

Imagine what would happen if just one generation of Christians lived out of their inheritance. Men and women would turn off Internet porn. The lonely would find comfort in God, rather than in the arms of strangers. Struggling couples would spend more time in prayer, less time in anger.

A generation of Christians would vacate the wilderness.

The Choice is ours. But it is a choice we must make every day of our lives. Moses and Joshua assembled the people, read them the law and reminded them of their promise and obligation to keep it in return for the continued blessings of Almighty God. Choosing to live in God's way, is not a promise you make once and then forget about. It is a choice we make every day, sometimes several times a day. Your answer must always be the same-- "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

A new day, a whole new life awaits us. A new season of accomplishment, discovery, and strength. Choose to leave "I can't" behind you. Choose to make "God can" the banner you carry before you.

And then... Choose to cross the Jordan. Choose to take possession of your inheritance. Choose life.

God has set that choice before you this day. May you choose wisely.

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Would you pray with me...

Eternal and Watchful Father, we thank you that your words have been gathered together so that they can be "a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path." May we make them a part of us so that they can become for us the foundation for life.

And help us to unmask the many other words that we hear-- those that entice us to find meaning in wealth, power, pleasure, or fame-- as being the dangerous lies that they are. In a world where people sell their souls for a moment's pleasure, or fifteen minutes of fame, help us to stand firm in our loyalty to your word. We thank you for the companions in faith that you provide for us, for the church wherein we can share mutual joys and burdens. May each storm through which we go teach us something new, and may

we always see your rainbow promise of being with us in every time and place, in the name of the Christ whose words still challenge and surprise. Amen.

Then give us strength to choose wisely-- to do what we cannot do and to be what we cannot be; remembering that by ourselves we can do nothing, but that with you all things are possible, 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 & join in one voice to sing our hymn of dedication, "God of Grace & God of Glory", hymn #420 in our Hymnals.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION "My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less" *The Hymnal #379*

*THE BENEDICTION

God forth into the world in peace. Wherever you go, remember that it is God who is calling you there. Wherever you are, God is with you. He has a higher, nobler purpose in your being there than you may ever know. Believe this and go in the love of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

"Sanctuary"

Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary, pure and holy, tried and true;
With thanksgiving, I'll be a living sanctuary for You.

*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis