

Sunday, October 30th, 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 10:40 am. 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 "Now Thank We All Our God--Prelude" - Kenneth T. Kosche 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 65 and printed in our bulletins?”

CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Psalm 65)

Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion; and to you shall vows be performed,

O you who answer prayer! To you all flesh shall come.

When deeds of iniquity overwhelm us, you forgive our transgressions.

We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, your holy temple.

By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance, O God of our salvation;

You are the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas.

By your strength you established the mountains; you are girded with might.

You make the gateways of the morning and the evening shout for joy.

Let us worship God beginning with prayer....

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

God of grace, open our minds to receive your enlightenment; Open our hearts to be infused by your love; Open our spirits to be drawn into communion with you. Prepare and strengthen us to go from our worship to share with others the gifts of Christ with which you bless us here. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand and join in singing the 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**

No good thing will God withhold from those who walk uprightly and acknowledge their sinfulness. The God of all mercy invites us to leave our wickedness behind, set our hope in him, and walk with confidence into His new day. Let us confess our sins before God and one another using the prayer of confession as it is printed in our bulletins. Let us pray...

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

God of grace, you call us to worship in sincerity and truth, and we now confess before you the deception in our lives. We confess that we like to keep up a good front, to appear more holy than we are. We try to hide our secret sins and put on smiling faces even when we are afraid or crying on the inside. Proud of our self-sufficiency, we grit our teeth, clench our fists, and attempt to brave our way through life by our self-effort. It is only when we fail, only when we are so lost or lonely that we can not go on, that we turn to you and find ourselves miraculously saved by your grace. Even worse, we show how little we comprehend the gift of Christ's dying and rising for all, by failing to offer the grace we have received to others in need. Lord, have mercy upon us, sinners all. Amen.

***SILENT CONFESSION**

(Pause for about 30 seconds of silence.)

***THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

In Christ we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished upon us so that we might fight the good fight, finish the race, and keep the faith... 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.*

As the children leave, the preacher will return to the pulpit and say...

We are nearing the end of our annual Stewardship Emphasis Season. For anyone who may still be wondering about why we should give, we have a new video that help us all understand.

A MINUTE FOR STEWARDSHIP

Video #3

“Why We Give”

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

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Do we see and receive our material possessions as a reward for our righteousness, or as what they really are-- gifts from God, given from His love for us, in spite of our imperfections and failings and intended to be shared with others in need. Let us demonstrate wise stewardship and give with generous hearts 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

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

"Now Thank We All Our God--Pastorale" - Kenneth T. Kosche

*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... Gracious God, giver of every good and perfect gift we make this offering in gratitude for the grace shown to us, and ask that you might follow it with your blessing so that it may become food for the hungry, love for the lonely, drink to the thirsty, & hope for the despairing. May all who give and receive from you, give thanks for your many mercies. 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.

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson this morning begins at the third chapter of Paul's Second Letter to Timothy, at the twelfth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page 1039 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching.

For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths.

As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."

The liturgist will return to his seat either on the chancel or with family or friends in the congregation.

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

Our sermon text today is taken from the eighteenth Chapter of the Gospel of Luke, beginning at the ninth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #911 in your pew bibles.

Listen once more for the word of God...

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others:

"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank thee that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.'

But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!'

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

"Reformed... According to What?"

The citizens of Jerusalem could look with pride at the Pharisees. They were the doctors and lawyers, accountants and judges. They were the ones who safeguarded public morals and interpreted the law for the good Jews of Judea. They had attended the right schools, and had graduated summa cum laude from Temple University. They set the example that everyone else tried to follow. They didn't mix meat with dairy, they prayed at the right times, ate the right foods, wore the right clothes. They were good men, pillars of their community. they were like the old E.F. Hutton-- whatever they did, people watched and listened. he could have run for office and not one of us would have to every worry about skeletons being drug out of his closet to embarrass him or us.

So when they prayed at the temple, they were aware that others would be watching and they feared revealing their flaws for fear that others would see that as a weakness, something in the light of their

many good qualities as something to be condoned-- or even worse, accepted or embraced as acceptable. Yes sir. He was OK. And he was proud of being OK.

And so he prays loudly praising God, believing that there is no other human being on earth closer to the Almighty than himself. So naturally, when he casts an eye around him in the Temple, and he sees a publican; a tax collector; a man who had sold his birthright as a Jew to collect taxes for those hated, oppressive Romans; a traitor to his nation and a thoroughly despicable human being; he could stand a little taller, hold his head a little higher and gives thanks to God for making him such a good person at the beginning of life, and for continuing to work in his life to make him better each day, until now, he could say with pride that there was no one at the temple better than he!

When I lived in Port Neches twenty years ago, I knew a little girl about 10 years old. She was so sweet that sugar wouldn't melt in her mouth. So perfect that she never get dirty, never spilled at the table, never said or did a bad thing. But she was a Pharisee. When everyone was asked to bow their heads for prayer-- at the table, at church, at a football game, she would bow her head-- but she always kept her eyes open, so that she could report everyone who had their eyes open during the prayer. When someone asked her how she knew they were looking around during the prayer, she answered, "Well, *I* had *my* eyes open. Someone has to do the Lord's work"

Don't get me wrong. The tax collector *is* reprehensible. He sold out his people for cash. If he had it all to do over again, he would make a different choice. But now, for him, in the eyes of his people, there is no going back. In terms of his citizenship as a Jew, he is a non-entity. He couldn't do anything other citizens were allowed to do. He couldn't vote. He couldn't serve on a jury. He couldn't look up. He could only look down and perhaps within. All he could do was to beat his breast, and beg the Father of all mercies, "Please God, forgive me... a sinner." No pretense. No wasted effort of maintaining a false front for the neighbors. No keeping up of appearances. He could only see the glaring reality of who and what he was-- a sinner.

When others spoke of him, they spoke his name as though they had just been made to lick a toilet and they couldn't get that taste, that thought out of their mouths and off their tongues fast enough. Sinner... ewwww. *spit 2 or 3 times.*

And along comes Jesus, who hears the Pharisee's prayer and sees his arrogance displayed to the face of the God who knows what the Pharisees will soon do to his Son, and says, "Pharisee, ewwww..... *spit twice.*"

Then he sees the Publican who has sold everything of real value that he has for money and would love nothing more than to go back and do it all differently, who mourns his sin, who wastes no time sugar coating his wrong, and wastes no effort trying to present them in a better light.

And God is pleased. And the sweet incense of a contrite and broken heart ascends to his heavenly throne, and God is pleased and the Publican goes home clean and justified.

This country has had such moments. We have been the Pharisee, when we supported segregation, and good white folks were afraid of being contaminated by those black people. When we applauded southern governors like George Wallace for blocking schoolhouse doors and proclaiming loudly, "segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever!" We were Pharisees when we applauded the DAR for its policy of not allowing non-white artists to perform and mixed race audiences to be entertained at Constitution Hall from 1932 to 1954.

But we became Publicans, the worst of sinners, *but painfully aware of our sinfulness*, when we watched Marian Anderson electrify the audience, and begin the arduous lift of an entire nation out of their sin, with her voice. For her fellow sinners, *AND the Pharisees* who had shown her such contempt, she sang from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial the song of all of America, "My Country 'Tis of Thee". And she went home justified, and the DAR went home ashamed and publicly chastised.

499 years ago, an unknown Augustinian monk named Luther, had been given the job of teaching the New Testament to his fellow monks at the seminary in Wittenberg, Germany. The more he read, the more he studied, the more convinced he became that the teaching of the Western Church, the Roman

Catholic Church, were wrong on 95 different major issues such as the buying and selling of church office to wealthy families to assure their lazy and unambitious sons an income and position for life. He was opposed to the selling of forgiveness by the church in the form of indulgences.

He wrote letters. He personally lobbied his bishop, his archbishop and even the pope. But all of them were so sure they were right, and right they must be because of their positions. They were men of authority for good reason after all. So finally, he wrote out his list of 95 grievances, or theses, and nailed them to the door of the church for the people to read. He claimed, for the first time since the early days of the church, the authority of the Scriptures, rather than church authority, for his beliefs.

And the authority of the Scripture was enough, and the church was reformed, and saved.

Today the church, all churches, are still in need of reformation. Church authority, whether administered by a pope, a bishop, a pastor, or a General Assembly, is always subject to reformation in the light of Scripture. When we make changes in dogma or structure, it is always subject to the teachings of the Bible. It doesn't matter how many or how powerful are those who align themselves in opposition to a teaching of the church. The only question ever to be asked is, does it comport with God's Word. Jesus himself said that not one jot, not one tittle of the law would ever pass away. The Church would, **but never, NEVER God's Word.**

We are not allowed to reform the church just so that it may be seen in a more favorable light by the people. It doesn't matter how many politicians or pop stars we attract as friends to our cause, if our cause is wrong. And we only know its rightness or wrongness, by how it reflects God's truth, and we know that by the scripture.

Secondly, we do not reform ourselves, We rely on the power of God to make the need reforms. the correct motto of the reformed church is "Reformed and always **being** reformed.... according to the Word of God.

For instance, how open to the reformation of God are we if we say a portion of our Book of Order is unamendable-- it can't ever be changed.... no matter how wrong,.... no matter how unfair or unscriptural... it cannot be amended. Then we as a National Church are in effect daring God to have his way with us and change us just to show us that He is still Sovereign, he is still the authority.... He Is Lord!

In my first pastorate, a professional man came to see me asking for a referral to a Marriage therapist. He confessed that he had broken his vows and had had an affair with a younger, attractive woman who worked for him. But he had become convicted of the wrongful nature of it and how much he had hurt his wife. He wanted to acknowledge his wrong and begin to make things right.

Being new to the area, I asked around for recommendations from colleagues for a therapist to whom I could refer this man. I got a name for a therapist who had good skills and who was also a Christian. He went, and I didn't see him for a couple years.

I finally happened to bump into him at a diner for lunch one day, and I asked him how he was doing. He told me fine, that he had finally managed to repair the breach with his wife. And then I asked, "how come you haven't been back to church?"

"Cause of that therapist YOU sent me to. He was NO Christian. When he asked me what I was there for, I told him. I bared my soul. I confessed everything."

And when I had finished, He replied, "Oh is that all? Half the professors at the university here have done that and worse!"

"And I couldn't stand it. I knew what I had done. I wanted forgiveness. I wanted help in making it right. I wanted to be taken seriously.""

Ten years later in Central Texas, almost exactly the same thing happened. A man in my church came and confessed the same transgression. He knew what he had done was wrong. He confessed his sin. He promised to break off the illicit relationship entirely and pledged to make a fresh start and work hard at the marriage he had taken so lightly. This time, to make sure he knew how serious it was, I asked to pray with him. Together we confessed, his sins and mine. And we asked for God's forgiveness and the help of his Spirit to begin again and do things right. He knew he was being taken seriously.

I saw them about 5 years later, just before moving to Magnolia, walking around the neighborhood one evening after supper. They were holding hands and smiling like dead pigs in the sunshine. They looked really happy. But were they really happy. What do you think? Were they? Can reformation according to the Word of God,,, personal or corporate.... can it really produce that kind of change? What do you think?

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Let us pray... We thank you, Father, that you accept us as we are, flawed and fragile people in need of love and grace, and not as we pretend to be, for we have grown so tired of pretending.

Bring us to the end of ourselves that we may begin again with you, enter again into communion with you. Teach us the fallacy of trying to justify ourselves, and the necessity of being completely dependent upon your compassionate power to be put right. Grant us the gift of humility and a simple trust in your grace toward sinners. Never let us forget that the virtues and graces we have are your gifts to us, and that whatever goodness we show to others is really your doing.

Father, we know that in our ignorance we have cast a shadow upon the dreams and aspirations of others. We have thought too often of ourselves and our own needs, and too seldom of our fellow human beings and of their needs. O God, grant us selflessness.

We have tried by reason and the twisting of our consciences to rationalize wrong into right and at other times told the truth only because we believed it was expedient to do so. O God, plant within us a love of truth and honesty for their own sakes, so that we may do right simply because we know it is right to do right.

We have sought the spotlight, even though we are not big enough to stand in it. We have coveted fame and being known for great deeds, in spite of the notoriety we have achieved for small performances.

So may I go from this place to live my Christianity every day, in the things I shall say to others, in the things I shall do for others, in the way I shall live with others, that my own witness may be made to the love of Christ Jesus, my 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.

Would all of you who are able please stand and join in singing the hymn, "O Word of God Incarnate", number 327 in our *Hymnals*.

***HYMN OF DEDICATION**

"O Word of God Incarnate"

The Hymnal #327

***THE BLESSING**

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make His face to shine upon you and give you His peace-- in your coming in and your going out; in your lying down and in your rising up; in your labor and in your leisure; in your laughter and in your tears; until you come to stand before Jesus in that day in which there is no sunset & no dawning. Amen.

***CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE**

"Change My Heart, O God"

Change my heart, O God, make it ever true. Change my heart, O God, may I be like You.

You are the Potter, I am the clay; Mold me and make me, this is what I pray.

Change my heart, O God, make it ever true. Change my heart, O God, may I be like You.

***POSTLUDE**

Dr. Elizabeth Davis