

accusing powers and brought us into a new place, a new hope, and a new joy...

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 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, 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.*

Who here has played king of the mountain? How do you play? How do you win? (you win when you knock the other guy off and you win only until someone else knocks you off) This world sometimes seems to work that way that way, where in order for you to win, someone else has to lose. Jesus came and climbed to the top of a mountain, and instead of pushing others down, he reaches out to pull others up to him and asks us to help those who come after us. Would you like to win in Jesus’ kingdom? ... Then reach out and take Jesus hand with one of your hands and reach out the other to someone else and give them a hand up.

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, “Lead on, O King Eternal”, number 447 in our Hymnal.

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

*HYMN OF PREPARATION

“Lead On, O King Eternal”

The Hymnal #447

After the hymn, the Liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

The riches we enjoy give us the opportunity to be generous and work for good. Through our offerings, we seek to share the good news, to bind up the injured, strengthen the weak, secure justice for the oppressed, and bring back those who have strayed. You are invited to join in this venture 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

"We Gather Together" – Dale Wood

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... We bring our offering to you O God and dedicate both it and ourselves to the work of Christ our Lord. We pray that the dispirited may be heartened, the homeless housed, the hungry fed, and your name be praised and the world be filled with the sound of your name as all things now living give you thanks and glory. Accept these gifts and follow them with your blessing so that we may fulfill the ministry to which Christ has called us. Amen.

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

“The Apostles’ Creed”

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.

SPECIAL MUSIC

“Prayer Perfect” - James Whitcomb Riley

Joanna Smith, Soloist

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 the book of Ephesians, beginning at the fifteenth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page 1017 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

“I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”

The liturgist will return to his seat either on the chancel or with family or friends in the congregation. The preacher will enter the pulpit and say...

Our sermon text this morning is taken from the sixteenth chapter of First Samuel beginning with verse one. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page 248 in your pew bibles. Listen once more for the word of God...

The Lord said to Samuel, “How long will you grieve over Saul, seeing I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.” And Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me.” And the Lord said, “Take a heifer with you, and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.’ And invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for me him whom I name to you.” Samuel did what the Lord commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, “Do you come peaceably?” And he said, “Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord; consecrate yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice.” And he consecrated Jesse and his sons, and invited them to the sacrifice.

When they came, he looked on Eli’ab and thought, “Surely the Lord’s anointed is before him.” But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord sees not as man sees; man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.” Then Jesse called Abin’adab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.” Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.” And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, “The Lord has not chosen these.” And Samuel said to Jesse, “Are all your sons here?” And he said, “There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep.” And Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and fetch him; for we will not sit down till he comes here.” And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. And the Lord said, “Arise, anoint him; for this is he.” Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon

David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

L: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Our thanks be to God!

THE SERMON

“The Eye of the Beholder”

Max Lucado tells of a Saturday morning in 1967 when Little League tryouts were held in his hometown. He got home before lunch, but was too nervous to eat. This was back in the day when everybody didn't get to play. Only those who were chosen. He stared at the phone through lunch. He was excused early from dinner, so he could watch the phone some more-- waiting for it to ring. knowing it would ring, and watching his hopes and faith die a little more with each passing moment that it didn't.

I think we've all known the disappointment of a no call. Those moments when, like Max, we sat by the phone waiting for it to ring informing us that we had been chosen. That we were on the team, that a boy or girl wanted to go out on a date with us. That we were worthy in some way.

It is so common that we have a wealth of english expressions describin those moments when we were disappointed.... Left sitting by the phone.... left standing out in the cold, ... left holding the bag, left waiting at the altar, left out in the field..., or in David's case, left out tending sheep in the pasture.

King Saul has rejected God's ways, and God in turn has rejected Saul as king. So God sends Samuel to a tiny little wide spot in the road about 6 miles outside of Jerusalem called Bethlehem.

It is a moment of crisis in Israel. Everything is coming down around them. Saul, the king they had begged for, has proven unworthy and disobedient. He still looks like a king, but he has lost his ability to lead.

The Philistines are like ravenous wolves at Israel's door. The Philistines are workers of iron with swords, and spears, and shields of iron and chariots of iron. They are giantic warriors with a fearsome reputation warriors.

The Israelites on the other hand, are just a bunch of Farmers and Shepherds, When they go to war, they fight with farm implements and slings. The bible tells us that at one time, there were only two swords in all of Israel-- Saul's and Jonathan's.

At this moment in crisis, God did what God does--- he sent out an invitation to a man in the Israeli equivalent of Toad Suck Ferry, AR or Cut and Shoot, TX, or Shongaloo, LA.

When Samuel arrives at the house of Jesse, the scene takes on kind of a Livestock Show kind of feel. Samuel says, "Bring'em in." and Jesse complies. Eliab.... Abinadab....Shamah.... followed by four more.... Jesse is confused.... counts noses.... 7.... "Jesse I thought you had 8 sons? Where is #8?"

"Oh, David! He's just the baby of the family...."the hakaton".... the **runt** of the litter.... he's out tending the sheep.... "Well, yeah. I've got the hakaton, the runt, left...."

66 Chapters in the bible devoted to David. Only 60 to Moses (and he wrote 5 of the books). Only Jesus gets more room in the bible than this hakaton, David.

Maybe you've been too little, too ugly, too stupid,... the wrong color, wrong gender, or just plumb wrong. But God doesn't look at those things,,, He looks at the heart. And we all know that there, size, color, and gender mean nothing, because one heart looks like another. So what does God look for? a heart that is committed fully to him. And David was a man after God's own heart.

Lord sees not as man sees; man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.

So God extends an invitation to all of the hakatons, the runts, these of you still waiting by your phones for a call that hasn't come. Listen, your phone is ringing.... God has a place for you, he has a job for you to do. All of you who have waited so long that you are afraid that if you answer, it will just be another wrong number, or a call from the wrong person, or a call for the wrong person. apick up the phone. This time the call is for you. God loves to use retreads. Moses ran from justice and God used him. Jonah ran from God but God still used him. Rahab ran a brothel, Samson spent his free time running in and out of brothels. Elijah ran into the mountains. Sarah ran out of hope. Lot ran with the wrong crowd. But God used them all.

And so when they finally call David in, through the voice of a brother. David comes in. His soft boy-

ish face is still covered with pimples rather than a beard. His voice still cracks when he gets excited. And when the old prophet calls him forward and the boy kneels, Samuel raises his hand over the boy's head and God says, "Yes, Samuel, THIS is the one."

God has looked upon his heart, and found exactly what he was looking for. A heart that loves God, desires to be like God, who pursues God. And God says, "I can work with a heart like this one."

And God looks at you and to the surprise of us all, says, "I can work with a heart like this one." And like it or not, you don't get the deciding vote. God does. And he has already cast the deciding vote in your favor.

He has looked at your heart, even down into all the dark spaces, into all of the stale, musty areas that you have kept closed off for so long, afraid of what people would say or think if they knew the real you. And God says, "YOU.... You are worth redeeming. You are worth every moment of time and trouble and treasure I invest in you. You are worth DYING for."

In spite of what others may have said or thought about you. Even in spite of what you think of you, God says, you are the one I have chosen.

God wants to do for you what Samuel did for David. He wants to anoint you, not with a flask of oil, but with the Holy Spirit. He wants to wash you and heal you, and call you into his kingdom. God is FOR you. Are you? Are you FOR you?

Will you believe God, or will you make excuses-- I'm too poor, too old, too weak, too stupid.... I'm not a chief, I'm just content to be another Indian. I can't lead, but I can follow... and God says, alright, then follow me, and you will lead others.

You are either your biggest critic or your greatest cheerleader. What do you say to you? Do you tear yourself down, coming up with excuse after excuse why you will fail? Or do you put a little faith in God and trust what he says, you are special, and there is something God has in mind for you that only you can do. You have his blessing. You have his promise.

Or will you disagree with God? Will you call him a liar? To do that is to be in agreement with Satan, the Father of Lies. That is HIS assessment of you. When you look in the mirror, do you hear the devil sneering back, my but you are an ugly one aren't you! The ears haven't been kind to you have they? You look like ten miles of bad road. who could ever love a face like that? That is the devil's assessment of you and you can listen to that manure if you choose and go on arguing with God, or you can listen to the voice of truth and just get on with life and seize the opportunity in front of you. I am not saying you pretend that you don't have struggles or that you act like what you do is easy, because it's not. It's hard, deliberately so, so that when it's done and you look at what was accomplished, you will know that God had his hand in the process, that he didn't abandon you, and that with him, all things really are possible!

God's judgement is all that matters. It is only what he sees in you that counts. Satan has no vote. And neither do you. God looks at you and says, sure, you've made mistakes, but I can use those very flaws to touch, to heal, and to reclaim others. And when you start out walking with God, and somehow wander away from him, that does not change. The Shepherd God will seek out his wandering sheep, and bring them back. When you fall from grace, it is grace that is there to catch you. Temptations, failures, storms will all come and go, but God's promise, God's presence will abide with you always. It does not change. God is FOR YOU! And if God is for us, who can be against us?

This attitude is exemplified by David when he goes out to face Goliath. At the crucial moment just before they fight to the death, Goliath engages in a little trash talk, supremely confident in his size, and power, and weapons to dispatch this runt of a boy and defeat Israel in the process, "Come to me, you little runt, and I will feed your body to the vultures, the jackals, and the worms."

And David, who sees not a giant warrior, but a fool who has blasphemed the name of the Holy God of Israel and know that justice will come quickly answers back, "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin; but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied."

Paul discovered this principle and wrote:

“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Or we can make it personal by paraphrasing it, “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither poor health, nor college debt, nor pink slips, nor today’s deadline, nor tomorrow’s diagnosis, nor things to come, nor job transfers, nor addictions, nor moral failures, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

The world may think that I am just another hakaton, but I am a hakaton **called by God!** And that is what really matters. God has called me. And if God has called me, I must be worth calling.

Oh, back to that call that Max was waiting for in 1967-- it never came. But mercifully, finally, about 8 o’clock that evening, the doorbell rang. It was the coach, who tried to explain that he thought the assistant coach was going to call, and the assistance coach had assumed that the coach was going to call.... but in any event, Max was on the team. It was years later that Max learned the truth. Somewhere between dinner and the doorbell, Max’s dad had called the coach, cashed in a few favors.... and Max was on the team. Max didn’t care. He was on the team.

Your Father has spoken on your behalf and he wants you on his team. Show up. Suit up. There are still some important games left to play in this season.

You can be an All Star! The God who made a miracle out of David stands ready to make one out of you!

PASTORAL PRAYER

Father, thank you that your ways are not our ways, and that you do not see us as the world does. We get so caught up in cool cars and cooler clothes; hard bodies and the right hair in the right places. Help us to care most about what you care about. Help us to love you and to yield our lives completely to your control. Help us to trust that you truly are in charge here, that you do know what you are doing, that you will not allow even the most fragile of your little ones to be taken from you. Keep us strong in our faith, and confidence in Christ, that we may serve you in this time & place, and honor you with our loyalty forever.

Gracious God, never let us forget whose opinion and judgment really matters. Help us to let go of ourselves and our fears and worries so that we can see ourselves as you see us. Help us to grow in faith, to rejoice always in what you have done, to submit our will and our plans to your will and your plan for our lives, 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, “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name”, #142 in our *Hymnals*.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name” *The Hymnal #142*

*BENEDICTION

We are called to serve Christ as king of our lives. Let us love one another as we are loved and go forth from this place rejoicing in the love of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

“He Is Lord!”

He is Lord! He is Lord! He is risen from the dead and He is Lord!
Ev’ry knee shall bow, ev’ry tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord!