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Worship
February 7, 2021

(To watch the videotaped version of the worship service, click the link below)

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/Uct8qX94ICK-omDHSc71en4w>

GATHERING

GREETING & ANNOUNCEMENTS

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

OPENING HYMN - "O for a Thousand Tongue to Sing"

CALL TO WORSHIP

Come, people of God, and worship the Christ.

***Once we were separated from him, aliens and strangers who did not belong,
without hope and without God in the world.***

Once we loved darkness rather than light. Once we could not sing the Lord's song.

But now we are joined with Christ, brought near through his blood, for He is our peace.

Now we who lived in darkness have come into the light have been given a new song.

Let us come and worship the Living Light of Christ!

A BRIEF CONFESSION

Let us confess our sins, trusting in the abundant grace of Christ.

A moment of silence

***You are acquainted with all our ways. We confess that our hearts are burdened by sin: our
own sins and the broken systems that bind us.***

We turn inward, failing to follow your outward way of love.

***We distrust those who are not like us. We exploit the earth and its resources and fail to
consider the generations to come.***

Forgive us, gracious God, for all we have done and left undone.

***Yet we are forgiven by our God through the Risen Christ, and we are called to be the
beloved community living out Christ's justice and the Spirit's reconciling peace. Amen***

HYMN OF PRAISE - "Thy Word"

GREETING

The Lord be with you

Be filled with the spirit of God today.

We worship to open our hearts for God's blessings.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading

Isaiah 40:21-31

*Have you not known? Have you not heard?
Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?
It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,
and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;
who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,
and spreads them like a tent to live in;
who brings princes to naught,
and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.*

*Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown,
scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth,
when he blows upon them, and they wither,
and the tempest carries them off like stubble.*

*To whom then will you compare me,
or who is my equal? says the Holy One.
Lift up your eyes on high and see:
Who created these?
He who brings out their host and numbers them,
calling them all by name;
because he is great in strength,
mighty in power,
not one is missing.*

*Why do you say, O Jacob,
and speak, O Israel,
'My way is hidden from the LORD,
and my right is disregarded by my God'?
Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The LORD is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.
He gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.*

*Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted;
but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.*

Second Reading

Psalm 147

*Praise the LORD!
How good it is to sing praises to our God;
for he is gracious, and a song of praise is fitting.
The LORD builds up Jerusalem;
he gathers the outcasts of Israel.
He heals the broken-hearted,
and binds up their wounds.
He determines the number of the stars;
he gives to all of them their names.
Great is our Lord, and abundant in power;
his understanding is beyond measure.
The LORD lifts up the downtrodden;
he casts the wicked to the ground.*

*Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving;
make melody to our God on the lyre.
He covers the heavens with clouds,
prepares rain for the earth,
makes grass grow on the hills.
He gives to the animals their food,
and to the young ravens when they cry.
His delight is not in the strength of the horse,
nor his pleasure in the speed of a runner;
but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him,
in those who hope in his steadfast love.*

*He has not dealt thus with any other nation;
they do not know his ordinances.
Praise the LORD!*

PSALM RESPONSE – “Bless the Lord, My Soul”

GOSPEL READING

Mark 1:29-39

As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, 'Everyone is searching for you.' He answered, 'Let us go on to the neighbouring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.' And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

SERMON

5th Sunday After the Epiphany, Feb. 7, 2012. "Jesus Makes a House Call." Bethany. The events at the synagogue are over and it is late in the afternoon and Simon's mother-in-law is ill. Simon has seen what power Jesus has over illness and request if Jesus could come and take a look at his mother-in-law, so Jesus makes a house call. And Jesus does heal Simon's mother-in-law and later many others who either came to Simon's home or followed Jesus and Simon there, were also healed. The power the Word that Jesus has is getting around rather quickly in the region of Galilee. But more is to come. And yet there are times are there not, when we wonder where is Jesus at those times when we call out in anguish? Those times when a loved one is stricken with the virus or cancer? Those times when the unexplainable occurs and horror happens and those whom we love are injured or worst? Or those times when we enter the dark, painful journeys into the wilderness of our lives? Can we feel Jesus then? Is He there for us? We may not be able always to feel Him, or to sense his presence, but He is there, and He still makes house calls. I believe that many of us have had faith experiences that we don't talk about very much because they are so out of the ordinary. Perhaps a time when we experienced a vision of Jesus; or an illness that threatened our lives suddenly went away; or a time when it seemed that we died and were told in a vision, NOT YET. A time when we received a call from Christ that changed our lives. Or a time in a great personal crisis when a strange calm came over us and we were able to deal with the crisis at hand. In all those cases Jesus was there with us. We might not have seen or known that his presence was there at the moment, but later, we knew that there was no other possibility.

I believe that many times we feel like we are in the wilderness, very much like Jesus experience during his time of temptation in the wilderness. A time of aloneness, sometimes a place of great darkness and pain. Yet Jesus is very aware of these places, for He has been there. Sometimes we are invited to be there. There to strengthen our faith; our hope; our compassion and understanding toward others. At times when we believe that we are in a barren, empty place without God, there we often find that God is there waiting us to realize that this barren empty space is really sacred space. Space where we can speak to God most honestly; even speak to God in the anger that the Psalmist often spoke to God in the midst of tragedy for the nation, for the individual.

For is it not the place most often we are forced into prayer; forced to speak with God from our hearts, without the trappings of our technology and all that we have that distracts from the presence of God? I think so.

Here in the silence of the barren place, Jesus and the Spirit come as we open ourselves to their presence and we are guided into our prayer—our conversation with God. A conversation that Jesus models for us at the end of this lesson this morning: verse 35: “In the morning, while it was still very dark, Jesus got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.”

There is one more interesting part of these last verses that speak of Jesus in the deserted place. Simon and his companions were the only ones to find him. I wonder if they were the only ones willing to go to the deserted place? Perhaps this is a reminder to us about those times when life takes us to the dark, barren places that seem empty, desolate, for Mark tells us that it is there that we will find Jesus praying—praying for us and all the others in the deserted place. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY - “For the Sake of Christ”

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

We believe that God is Spirit, and we worship Him and must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

We believe that God is Light, and that if we walk in the light, we then have fellowship not only with one another, but with our Lord as well.

We believe that God is Love, and that everyone who loves is born of God and know God.

We believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

We believe that Jesus Christ is the Resurrection and the Life and that whoever believes on Him, will abide forever.

(from the Book of Common Worship by Wilbur P Thirkield)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

As we are guided by the Spirit, let us offer our prayers for the church, for the nation, for all in need, and for our world.

A brief silence

Pastor: Gracious God, in this time of worry, fear, division, uncertainty, we pray that you will bring insight, compassion, understanding, and strength of character to our leaders of communities, churches, states, and nation that calm and direction will be restored to our people. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

Reader: Gracious God, we pray that we shall use wisely all the gifts of our world: the water that provides life to us all; the land that provides our food; for you call us to be good stewards of all that you have made, and we ask that you let it be so. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Pastor: Lord, we pray for the safety of all who protect us: police officers and firefighters, military personnel, peacekeepers, and for the leaders of governments. We pray that all act with justice and understanding to all whom they encounter. And Lord, we pray for the time when peace will come, and violence will be no more. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Reader: We pray for our world, nation, and community in the midst of this Covid-19 pandemic. We know that health care workers are having to make difficult decisions of life and death. Give them wisdom in those decisions. Give strength that they may give care to those suffering with Covid and other diseases, and we ask that you would protect them from illness and despair. We also pray for all who are ill here at Bethany and we ask for hand of wholeness and healing; comfort and strength for all who are ill of body, mind, or spirit. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Pastor: Listen to each of us Lord, as we come to you in this moment of silent prayer. It is into Your hands, great and compassionate God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Listen to each of us, Lord, as we come to you in a moment of silent prayer

Into your hands, great and compassionate God, we commend all for whom and about which we pray, trusting in your mercy through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

OFFERING (Please mail your weekly offering to the church - 4300 N 82nd St. Scottsdale, AZ 85251)

PRAYER OF BLESSING

God of all blessings, giver of all good gifts; day by day you shower us with what we need to live and prosper. With glad and generous hearts and in a response to thanksgiving, we return a portion of our wealth. May what we give be a symbol of our gratitude and a blessing of your love for those who may be helped through our offering. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

BENEDICTION

May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ fill you with every good blessing. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN – *“How Can I Keep from Singing”*

DISMISSAL

Go in Peace...to live and serve in the way of the cross. Thanks be to God.