

WORSHIP October 4, 2020

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

https://youtu.be/Mr_n1oi2PN4

(To read the service, continue on from here)

GREETING AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

CALL TO WORSHIP

Worship is a time to learn the ways of God.

As God's love is genuine, may our love toward one another be authentic.

Worship is a time to be caught up in the Spirit of God.

We call upon God to instill within us a spirit of generosity, hospitality, and hope.

Worship is a time to nurture peacefulness within and among ourselves.

We pray for a humbleness of heart and a willingness to forgive and receive forgiveness.

May this time of worship nurture us in the ways of God.

A BRIEF CONFESSION

If we say we have no sin, if we believe we are not broken; we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

God of forgiveness, God of healing ... fill us with your truth, your grace.

We trust that your mercy is our forgiveness, your compassion our healing.

God of forgiveness, God of healing ... fill us with your truth, your grace.

We live in the power of a forgiving God.

We live in the presence of Jesus the Christ ... we are forgiven, thanks be to God. Amen.

GREETING

The Lord be with you

Be filled with the spirit of God today.

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

1st Reading –Philippians 3:4b-14

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more. I was circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law, blameless. Yet whatever gains I had; these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ.

More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow, I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own, but this one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

2nd Reading – Psalm 80:7-15

Restore us, O God of hosts, let your face shine, that we may be saved. You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it. You cleared the ground for it; it took deep root and filled the land. The mountains were covered with its shade, the mighty cedars with its branches; it sent out its branches to the sea, and its shoots to the River. Why then have you broken down its walls, so that all who pass along the way pluck its fruit? The boar from the forest ravages it, and all that move in the field feed on it. Turn again, O God hosts; look down from heaven, and see, have regard for this vine, the stock that your right hand planted.

Gospel reading – Matthew 21:33-46

Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. “When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other slaves, more than the first and they treated them in the same way. Finally, he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance!’ So, they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” They said to him, ‘He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.’” Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the scriptures: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone, this was the Lord’s doing, and it is amazing in our eyes.’” Therefore, I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. This one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.” When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

SERMON – Pastor Joseph Dillion

Pentecost 18, Oct. 4th, 2020. “And the Tenants are Who?” Bethany Lutheran.

We have another parable dealing owners and tenants and workers. But we need to keep in mind that all of these three parables deal with the Kingdom of God and the authority of Jesus. Today’s parable deals specifically with two things: the patience of God and who are the tenants who produce good fruit—and good fruit here means a great deal more than a good crop, but who it is that produces good fruit for the kingdom of God.

It would be easy for us to say that Jesus here means the Pharisees and other leaders who were ignoring the needs of the people and who were not living the spirit of the Law and the faith of God. Well maybe, but I would suggest that we are far removed from that time and perhaps we should put ourselves in the place of those who are carrying the faith of God forward in the world, and perhaps we should ask ourselves as those who call themselves the people of God: How are we representing Christ in the world? Are we the good tenants? Or are we those who are about the faith when it suits us and makes us look good, and when was the last time we ask ourselves, who is it that we truly believe is the corner stone of who we are and how we are to live in the world? The world of hate, chaos, denial, power, and wealth; or the Christ who calls us to be something more than the world would have us be.

In the parable, the tenants thought they had it made. The owner was far off. They were in charge of the vineyard and its' produce. They didn't see the owner for perhaps years and finally someone comes and they chase him off. And how is it do we act in the world today? Do we care for the poor, the hungry, the homeless, the widowed, the oppressed? Do we speak for justice? Do we speak for those who serve us and put their lives on the line, as well as those who deal with prejudice and injustice day in and day out? Do we remember whose we are as well as where we are?

I believe that these are the issues these parables are speaking too for us. It is a hard time in which we live, and it is difficult for us to imagine ourselves being about the work of the world rather than the work of Christ. Yet, today, Christ is asking us to reflect and pray about our life in him as against the life we live in the world. The question for us is "Are we the good tenants, producing good fruit for the Kingdom? And do we remember who the corner stone truly is? Amen.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

*We believe in God,
Creator of the universe,
Giver of every good gift,
Author of life itself.*

*We believe in Jesus Christ,
who reminded us of the coming of God's kingdom,
who commanded us to care for those in need,
who taught us to store up treasures in heaven, not on earth,
and who gave us the example of self-giving love.*

*We believe in the Holy Spirit,
who inspires us to faithful stewardship of God's gifts and
that God has given us gifts to be shared freely and generously, in a spirit of love and joy.
We believe that faithful stewardship is an act of worship,
a means of praising God who has blessed us abundantly.
We believe that God has great things in store for us,
for it is in giving that we receive. AMEN*

(Allen & Sara Ewing-Merrill, 2004)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Holy God, giver love and blessing ... bless our lives, lead us in your ways, gives us hearts for gratitude and service. Fill us with your grace, that what we desire is also what you desire. Grant us the understanding that our hearts' true desire is the love of you. May the love of Christ urge us on, may we walk by faith. In your grace and love Lord ... hear our prayer.

Holy God, giver love and blessing ... bless those who govern. Bless the leaders of nations, countries, towns, and cities. Bless all those who lead in all manner of ways – social, political, and religious. Fill the hearts of all with your wisdom. Guide us in the way of justice and integrity for all. Guide us to walk by faith. Holy God, tend to those who suffer in mind, body, and spirit. Tend to the tired, the dying, the poor and the hungry. Help us to follow the love of Christ, a love which urges us on to seek and serve Christ in others. In your grace and love Lord ... hear our prayer.

Holy God, giver love and blessing ... We pray for Bethany members on our prayer list. Give them the blessing of your presence amid their times of trial. We pray for our congregation in this time of suspended worship that we will still continue to be a committed community of faith seeking to be the light of Jesus in our community and world. In your grace and love Lord ... hear our prayer.

Holy God, giver love and blessing ... We pray for our world in a time of pandemic and societal distress and change. Give our leaders wisdom, compassion, insight, and courage to lead in ways that serve all the people under their charge. We pray for doctors and nurses, EMT's, and all those on the frontline of healthcare amid this COVID-19 pandemic. Give them health, energy, compassion, and the strength to care for those struggling with illness and hospitalization. In your grace and love Lord ... hear our prayer.

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 blessing, 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 of 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

You may say traditional Lord's Prayer or use the Aramaic translation printed below

*O Creator, the one who gave birth to the universe,
You are the sacred source of our being.*

*Focus Your ways, Your light, within us.
Make us useful for Your purposes here on earth so that
Your desire and our lives become one.*

Grant what we need each day in bread and insight.

*Loosen the cords of mistakes binding us,
as we release the strands we hold of other's guilt.*

*Do not let surface things delude us, snare us, and lead us away
from You and Your purpose.*

*But free us from what holds us back, give us power to
live as you intended and created us to live.*

*From You comes the all-working will, the lively strength to act,
the song that beautifies all and renews itself from age to age. AMEN*

BENEDICTION

*People of God, look for Jesus!
Seek him as a treasure in this great wide world.
Seek him in the eyes of your loved ones and in the eyes of strangers.
May your heart burn within you as the Lord draws close to you this week.*

DISMISSAL

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