

WORSHIP August 16, 2020

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

<https://youtu.be/sniWI-LNEL4>

(To read the service continue on from here)

GREETING AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

CALL TO WORSHIP

May God bless us in this hour of worship

It is by God's blessing that we live and have our being

May God make his face to shine upon us in this hour of worship.

It is by God's favor that goodness comes from our efforts and service.

May God's graciousness welcome all in this hour of worship.

It is by God's grace that we are embraced in divine love.

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

God is worthy of our praise.

We are here to worship ... let us give thanks and praise to God.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

1st Reading – Isaiah 56: 1, 6-8

Thus says the Lord:

*Maintain justice, and do what is right,
for soon my salvation will come,
and my deliverance be revealed.*

*And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord,
to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord,
and to be his servants,
all who keep the sabbath, and do not profane it,
and hold fast my covenant—
these I will bring to my holy mountain,
and make them joyful in my house of prayer;
their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices
will be accepted on my altar;*

*for my house shall be called a house of prayer
for all peoples.
Thus says the Lord God,
who gathers the outcasts of Israel,
I will gather others to them*

2nd Reading – Psalm 85:8-13

May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us,

that your way may be known upon earth,
your saving power among all nations.
Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth.

Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.

The earth has yielded its increase;
God, our God, has blessed us.
May God continue to bless us;
let all the ends of the earth revere him.

Gospel reading – Matthew 15: 21-28

Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, 'Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.' But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, 'Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us.' He answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' But she came and knelt before him, saying, 'Lord, help me.' He answered, 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.' She said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.' Then Jesus answered her, 'Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.' And her daughter was healed instantly.

SERMON - Pastor Carl Mangold

God's Wide Mercy

When I was a child, I never had a pet dog. So, it's no wonder I never understood what Jesus says today in our Gospel text. My wife Deila had pet dogs as a child and as an adult. Together we have had about a dozen dogs in almost 26 years of marriage. I now understand the reference to dogs and crumbs. We've had big dogs, and small dogs. Some were beggars like our basset Opie who would drool while anyone ate a pear; he loved pears.

Our first dogs together were two greyhounds: Luke was 3.5 feet tall and Pookie, a female, was about 2.5 feet tall but she was the alpha. When we adopted them, we were told that since they were sight dogs, we needed to train them to follow certain directives. So of course, I did this routinely, the same routine and voice commands all the time. When we returned from a walk, I would take them into the house and slowly commend them and then take off their leashes. Then and only when I said “okay” they raced through the house to the treats.

One summer my step daughter and a friend were driving across country in a small car with no air conditioning. They were coming to The Valley for a visit. When they arrived on July 4th, we were having a few friends over and had just sat down to eat our hamburgers. We all rushed over to them to greet them at the door. When we returned to the table there was not one hamburger left on anyone’s plate. Just the crumbs.

This story from Matthew, however, is about more than crumbs and dogs. It and the Isaiah lesson are saying that God’s mercy is extremely wide, as the hymn says: “There’s a wideness in God’s mercy like the wideness of the sea; there’s a kindness in his justice that is more than liberty.” Isaiah’s message is that God wants a house of prayer for all peoples, including foreigners if they hold fast to God’s covenant. Jesus heals the daughter of a Canaanite woman in the region of Tyre and Sidon, which are inside of modern-day Lebanon, and not Israel then or ever. Israel was two kingdoms, the north one was Samaria and the one south was Judea. Judeans worshipped at the Temple in Jerusalem and looked down on the Samaritans up north who worshipped at local shrines there and not at the Temple in Jerusalem. Samaritans were Jews or Hebrews, but deemed to be less good by the Judeans. Canaanites were even lower on the caste scale because they were not Hebrews because they were pagans. The God of Isaiah and Jesus whom we worship calls us to realize that the faith community goes beyond nationality or racial identity. To turn this our God into a nationalistic god is idolatry, and sinful. Likewise, it is sinful to give preference to one race or color above another. God created all of us and all of the human family, whatever their color or place of origin, was created in God’s image. This is an extremely important message for us to remember in these times of racial unrest. It is not our place to judge among people because that is God’s business as to who gets into the house of prayer for all peoples. Indeed, we might be surprised by who does enter God’s house of prayer. It might be folks we never considered worthy. Samaritans, and maybe even Canaanites.

In my childhood neighborhood there were many families with dogs. Dolly the Collie, who looked like Lassie, lived next door to me. Her family was Mill (short for Mildred) and Red Larsen, a childless older couple. Mill and Red were aunt and uncle to all of the kids in the neighborhood, although they were blood relatives of only three of us. They were kind and generous to all of us. To the best of my memory I can’t ever remember that they attended church or religious services. I can’t remember them going to funerals or weddings. Nothing. There was a time when I worried about their salvation; I might have been in seventh grade confirmation class. By the time I graduated high school I had stopped being concerned about their salvation because their actions were at least as Christian as many Christians I knew and maybe more so. I came to understand that message from Isaiah: God wishes for a house of prayer for all peoples, including foreigners who hold fast to God’s covenant. Our Lord Jesus even shows mercy to a pagan woman and her daughter.

I suspect that there were a number of Hebrews that thought what Jesus did was scandalous. His healing of such people and his praising of the pagan mother’s faith might have been some of the impeachable items on their list of wrong doings that led to his crucifixion. In our current times of racial unrest some might show us hostility if we follow Our Lord’s example of reaching across national and religious boundaries when we care for the homeless and feed the hungry and as Isaiah quotes God saying, “keep justice and do righteousness.”

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

As participants in the miracle of creation and as part of a vast universe, we believe that we have been given life by the Creator God who is the source of all, seen and unseen.

As participants in a world of wonder, life, and relationship, we believe that Jesus is our example of God's desire for how we are to live. His ministry, his suffering and death, his resurrection is God's response to our broken lives and a broken world. When we seek to live as Jesus did, it brings healing to the world.

As participants in spiritual realities that give meaning and purpose to life, we believe that God's Holy Spirit calls us to live as spiritual people. In flesh and blood ways, the Spirit calls us to be living expressions of God's presence in the world; a presence of love, trust, compassion, and faithfulness.

May the intention and desire of God the Creator, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit fill our days and our lives with blessing to live as God's people. AMEN

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

God in who we have our being and our faith ... you are the source of all blessing. Nurture our faith in your divine goodness. Deepen our faith that you hear us always. Broaden our understanding of your spirit to see you at work in the world in many and mysterious ways. Empower us to live lives that witness to your love and care for the world. In your grace and love Lord ... hear our prayer.

God in who we have our being and our faith ... we pray for peace. Where there is discord and war, Lord bring peace. Where there is hatred, racism, and disregard for human life and dignity, Lord bring peace. Where there is unease, despair, and restlessness in us, Lord bring peace. We pray for provision. Where there is need for food, clothing, shelter, and the basics to live, Lord bring the blessing of your abundance. Use us to be peacemakers and providers in the circles of our own lives. In your grace and love Lord ... hear our prayer.

God of power and wisdom ... 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.

God of unfailing love ... 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 or you may say both in succession

*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

*Go into your week
knowing you are
loved perfectly,
saved eternally,
and empowered
as a disciple of Jesus
to share God's love
with everyone you meet.*

DISMISSAL

*Go in Peace. Jesus is with you
Thanks be to God.*