

WORSHIP September 20, 2020

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

<https://youtu.be/Lf6HGcuM45o>

(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 1:21-30

For to me, living in Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me, and I do not know which I prefer. I am hard pressed between the two, my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better, but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for progress and joy in faith, so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again. Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well—since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

2nd Reading – Psalm 145:1-8

I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless you, and praise your name forever and ever. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall laud your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts. On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate. The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed, and I will declare your greatness. They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness, and shall sing aloud of your righteousness. The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

Gospel reading – Matthew 20:1-16

And Jesus said: “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o’clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and he said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So, they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o’clock, he did the same. And about five o’clock he went out and found others standing around, and he said to them, ‘Why are you standing here idle all day?’ They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard.’ When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, ‘Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.’ When those hired about five o’clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong, did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ So, the last will be first and the first be last.”

SERMON – Pastor Joseph Dillion

Sept. 20th, 2020, 16th Sunday After Pentecost. “The 11th Hour.” Bethany

We hear the refine still about equal pay for equal work; for wages that are livable for all workers. It seems that some things haven’t changed over the centuries. Yet this parable of Jesus tells us of a vineyard owner who was more than generous in giving to all—even those who worked just a couple of hours, the same wage. Now this something that just wouldn’t happen in real life, right? Well don’t be so sure about that. Sometimes there are those who live their faith with generosity and concern for those who work for little. Now I wouldn’t have believed it if I hadn’t seen it with my own eyes and lived it.

When I was a child growing up in Fresno, CA., we had neighbors who had a large vineyard. One part of the field went to the local winery and the other field of grapes was dried for raisins. At harvest, Mr. Costentino would go into town to hire workers for the vineyard, and often his grandson and I would ride in the truck with him and then play around the fields—and maybe pick a flat of grapes between the two of us. One year, an early fall storm threatened the crops and Mr. Costentino rushed back into town a couple of additional times to get extra workers. Even his grandson and I had to really work; that's how desperate things were that day. When it came time to pay the workers, everyone received the same pay. Mr. Costentino's son became angry with his day, telling his dad that those who worked half the day, should get half a day's wage. His grandson and I stood open mouthed as we had never seen the two of them argue and then Mr. Costentino spoke: "Julian," he said, "these men worked hard for us today, but there is something else that we must remember Julian. They a wife and children to feed, and gas to buy so they can go to the next job. If they would have worked the whole day, we pay them what--\$5.00/\$7.00? That's just enough to buy food and a little gas. Julian, God blessed us with this land and its' bounty, and you would dare to begrudge me because I share with our workers, what God has blessed us with? I believe that as God has been generous with us, we should be generous with those who help us with the land that God has entrusted to us, as we should be kind and generous with each other." That encounter has stuck with me all these years—long even before I had ever read this lesson of the vineyard.

Let there be no doubt that what Jesus is hoping we get from this parable is an understanding of the tremendous grace of God—a grace that is given to all of his people: to those who walked the dusty roads with Christ; to those who laid the foundation of the Church throughout the centuries; to those who suffered horrific persecution at the hands of the Inquisition; the Nazis; the Communists; Central American death squads; and a hundred other places around the world throughout the centuries. They will receive the reward of the Kingdom of Heaven—the same reward that we, who have suffered little for our faith throughout the years will receive as well.

This Parable reminds us all that we will be treated equally and justly by our Lord and it matters not how long we have been part of the Body of Christ. Whether baptized at birth or baptized at 80. Whether always one who lived their faith, or one who confessed their sins and noted their desire to be part of the Kingdom of God on their death bed, God's grace extends the same gift of grace to all. It may not seem fair in a sense, but God is not concerned with being fair; God is concerned with the giving of grace to all. In God's kingdom, we all receive the same "wage." Eternal life with God.

O perhaps it might upset some that there are those who God allows in just under the wire so to speak, those who did not share all of the work of the Body of Christ on earth, but we should not complain. Indeed, have we not received throughout our lives the blessed grace of God? His grace that has made us His own; the grace that has led us throughout our lives on His path; the grace of God that has forgiven us our sins; the grace of God that has surrounded us with his love; his compassion; His hope in times of darkness and fear. His grace that brings us home to Kingdom of God and New Life. 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.*

