

WORSHIP September 27, 2020

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

<https://youtu.be/G9kLvfb7w14>

(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 2:1-13

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, a sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete; be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and on mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore, God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

2nd Reading – Psalm 25:1-9

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me. Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous. Make me know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long. Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me for your goodness sake, O Lord! Good and upright is the Lord; therefore, he instructs sinners in the way. He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.

Gospel reading – Matthew 21:23-32

When he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?” Jesus said to them, “I will also ask you one question: If you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. Did the baptism of John come from heaven or was it of human origin?” And they argued with one another, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ But if we say ‘Of human origin,’ we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet.” So, they answered Jesus, ‘We do not know.’ And Jesus said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things. “What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ He answered ‘I will not;’ but later he changed his mind and went. The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, ‘I go sir,’ but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said “the first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you; the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.

SERMON – Pastor Joseph Dillion

17th Sunday After Pentecost, Sept. 27th, 2020. “By Whose Authority?” Bethany

Let’s put this lesson into perspective before we begin: the day before Jesus had entered Jerusalem. The crowds hailed him like a hero. Palm branches; songs; songs that proclaimed him Son of David! It was a wild scene. And it didn’t stop there. Jesus goes to the Temple and is disgusted as he looks at the money changers and other businesses in the Temple courtyard, and in his anger clears the place out— “my Father’s house is to be a place of prayer”

Those events got the ruling class more than a little upset and they began in earnest trying to discredit and do away with this person Jesus once and for all.

Our lesson this morning finds Jesus back in the Temple teaching and the ruling class comes out in strength: the elders and the Pharisees come to confront and question Jesus on several issues. Indeed, this morning’s lesson is the first of five confrontations written in Matthew, dealing in one way or another from the Pharisees and elders’ perspective with authority and power, and from Jesus’ perspective, who is about doing the will of the Father. If you would like to read ahead, those verses are as follows: 22:15-22; 22:23-33; 22:24-40; and 22:41-46.

The power brokers we worried that Jesus would turn the people even more against them, and perhaps bring the power and might of Rome down upon them, so they were going to attempt to discredit Jesus by showing him to be a fraud. Since they were concerned about their authority eroding, they wanted to know where Jesus thought his authority to do the things he was doing, came from. What they didn't expect was the answer Jesus gave them in the form of a question about the baptism of John the Baptist. They were not prepared for that. They had basically ignored John while the people knew He was a prophet. So, the politicians took the out— "We don't know." 2,000 years and the politicians still take the same out. Jesus had won round one.

And as we will see in the coming weeks, Jesus follows this encounter up with a parable. This is the parable of the Two Sons. Now in Scriptures we see a lot of stories about two sons, from Cain and Able to this parable, and these stories are always about some type of comparison.

Here the comparison is between the first son who says no and ends up doing what the father asked, and his brother who says yes, and ends not doing what the father asked. In my mind I see these two brothers as teenagers, maybe around 16/17. You all know the type. The one kid who always a little mouthy and one who is always nice to your face. Yet it seems like it is the mouthy, edgy kid that gets things done, and the other one, not so much.

What Jesus is challenging us with in this parable is simple; it's a question: which brother are we? The one who says no at first and then goes and does what the father asks; or the other who says yes and doesn't do what the father asks. This is the challenge to the elders and the Pharisees as well as to the church of today. The power structure of Jesus day knew exactly who they were because Jesus told them who they were. They didn't believe John the Baptist; they weren't about caring for the people as God had directed; they were more concerned with their place, their wealth, their power than being about the work of the Father.

And for Jesus, he had watched as the outcast: the tax collectors; the prostitutes; even the tenant farmers (the people of the land), came to hear John and be baptized by him, and now they come to hear Jesus. So today our mission is to be about the work of the Father, just as it was for the early church. We are to be caring for the poor; the widowed; the ill; the orphaned; to discern between good and evil as best we can. Not always easy, indeed, there may even be times when we say no, but in the end, let us hear the call of Christ to be about the work of the Father in all that we do and all that we say, in spite of all that the world would throw at us. 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.*