

June 14, 2020

Good Morning Bethany Worshippers and Guests,

As we enter the long church season of Pentecost, we do so looking back to last Sunday, Trinity Sunday. Last week we heard from our ELCA Bishop, Elizabeth Eaton. Her message was timely, urgent, and a call to action as people of faith. I too had prepared a message for last Sunday, but deferred to our Bishop as her message was sent out across the nation to all ELCA Lutheran congregations. So, for this Sunday, I offer to you the sermon message I had prepared for last Sunday. If you choose to watch the video of the service, you will hear the same scripture readings from last Sunday. If you choose to read the service, the Call to Worship and prayers are different, the scripture remains the same. Of course, you can always do both.

We will continue to work at improving our videotaped worship service. I want to begin incorporating some music to the worship service. Our musical accompanist, Kristan, had her baby this past week on Wednesday, June 10th ... Theresa Anne weighed in at 7lbs 15ounces and was 20 inches long. All went well, give thanks for a healthy baby. When Kristan is able, I will ask her to be part of these videotaped worship services to provide some music and some solo musical offerings. That will enhance the worship experience.

For today, I pray that God bless your worship experience. We continue to be a church united, no matter our not being able to gather in person for worship. We are connected by God's spirit, our common faith, and our love for one another. Feel free to email (ricklawrence715@gmail.com) me at any time with whatever is on your mind and I will read and respond. If you would like to call me (480-947-5525 – office, 480-580-5641 – home), that option is always available too. Let's work at keeping connected. Coming together to Worship in person again will be evaluated at the end of this month. We will keep you updated. Have a blessed Sunday and may God be with you.

Pastor Rick

WORSHIP June 14, 2020

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9W0StzTNdxQ&t=461s>

(To watch the service on You Tube click the link above. To read just continue)

GREETING AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

CALL TO WORSHIP

God of all Creation, what do you require of us?

You call us to do justice, to seek peace & reconciliation, to stand with the marginalized and forgotten, to love kindness, to show compassion and unconditional caring for those in need, and to walk humbly following in the steps of Jesus. We lift up not the work of our hands but the power that sustains our service. AMEN.

A BRIEF CONFESSION

God is good! God is gracious! God is merciful! To God we bring our confession:

Where we have failed to honor your desire for our lives;

Good and gracious Lord, have mercy and forgive us.

Where we have failed to act when needed;

Good and gracious Lord, have mercy and forgive us.

Where we have acted with malicious intent;

Good and gracious Lord, have mercy and forgive us.

God is good! God is gracious! God is merciful! We are a forgiven people!

GREETING

The Lord be with you

May God surround us as Creator, Savior, and Comforter.

We worship a magnificent God!

SCRIPTURE READINGS

1st reading – Psalm 8

*O Lord, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!*

You have set your glory above the heavens.

*Out of the mouths of babes and infants
you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,
to silence the enemy and the avenger.*

*When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;
what are human beings that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?*

*Yet you have made them a little lower than God,
and crowned them with glory and honor.*

*You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under their feet,
all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.*

*O Lord, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!*

Gospel reading – Matthew 28:16-20

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

SERMON

Trinity Sunday

SOME DOUBTED
Matthew 28:16-20

June 11, 2017

Some Doubted ????? ... Come on!!!!

What does Jesus have to do

after his resurrection from the dead before the disciples would believe it ... after being killed
on a cross and coming out of the tomb three days later ... ALIVE?



Does he need to do a tap dance???



Maybe a juggling act???



Levitate before their eyes

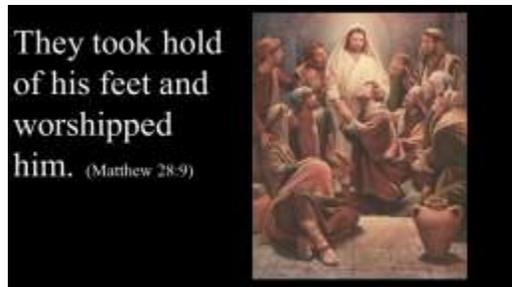
Come on!!!!

What does it mean ... “*they worshipped him; but some doubted*” ... seems a contradiction in terms. How do you worship and doubt at the same time?

Just eight verses before in this reading from Matthew

that we hear today ... just eight verses before, you can read that the women who discovered the empty tomb and were swept up in the vision of an angel confirming their experience ... you can read that they went back and reported all this to the disciples. (Matthew 28:8)

Further, you can read that Jesus met them and said, “*Greetings*” And that they came to him, took hold of his feet and worshipped him. (Matthew 28:9)



Well, one thing I believe we can take away

from this strange juxtaposition of verbs ... *they worshipped/some doubted* ... one

*they worshipped
some
doubted*

take away could be, is that the “miraculous” and “miracles” are not progenitors of faith.

I mean, these disciples

have witnessed Jesus do many miracles ... giving sight to the blind,
mobility to the crippled, they saw him
cure the sick,
still storms and walk on water, they even
observed his raising Lazarus from the dead.

Why was it such a “stretch” to believe he rose from the dead himself?

Perhaps, just perhaps, the doubt

being experienced here by the disciples as they worshipped the resurrected Jesus ... perhaps
the doubt more so centered on the VIABILITY of continuing on with Jesus’ ministry.

**The viability
of continuing on
with Jesus’ ministry**

From their perspective ... the Roman Empire is BIG and OMINOUS;

It doesn’t tolerate (very well) allegiance to anything other than Rome.
Jesus’ cross testifies to that, no matter the resurrection.

Then there's the Jewish religious hierarchy ... this is BIG and OMINOUS too;
it doesn't tolerate (very well) challenges to
interpretations of the law;
religious leaders rather like their authority
and power among the people;
they actually colluded with Rome to get
Jesus executed.

Miracles aside, no matter the resurrection ... the prospect of carrying on Jesus' ministry

in such a climate as this seems impossible ... this doubt isn't about believing in Jesus and trusting
that his resurrection is real, that he is truly alive; it's
about believing that his ministry and teaching can
make a difference, change things, make the world
a better place filled with God's love.

So worship - YES - worship is important, it is an expression of faith in the living God,
worship inspires thanksgiving acknowledging God as both Creator & Provider,
worship brings meaning to life and nurtures the humble recognition that
God is God and we are the created ones.

This the disciples believed with all their hearts and could give their lives to this ... but,

to trust that love of neighbor as yourself meant to care for all people regardless of who they were;
to trust that turning the other cheek amid violence could bring peace;
to trust that praying for your enemies would change them;
to trust that caring for the poor and the lowly would not deplete resources, but
enhance the lives of all;
to trust that not judging the outcast but seeking to understand them, could bring healing.

This was Jesus' ministry ... and the **seeds of doubt** as to the viability & workability
of such ways in the world are just as much alive and ready to sprout forth today, as it was then for
the disciples ... and so *they worshipped him; but some doubted.*

*they worshipped him; but
some doubted*

Isn't that the story of our lives these days ... with our nation in an upheaval



over our age-old problem of RACISM, where we as a nation have tried to address this awful issue time and time again, but nothing seems to really change no matter the laws that may change.

Climate Change has been being talked about for decades ... yet still we cannot not be agreed



as to whether it's real or not
whether the science is wrong or right
whether it's human caused or nature caused,
nothing seems to happen to really make a

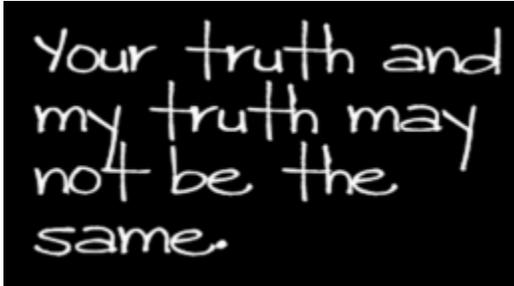
difference.

With the gap between the *haves* and *have not's* ever expanding... it becomes easier to blame



the poor for their plight rather than help them or to change the system creating more opportunity and equalizing pay disparities.

With what's true and not true being so readily manipulated for public consumption ... it



becomes a simplistic temptation to judge the other and label them as hats ... of some just not know what to believe and this is driving a wedge between people of good heart

In such a world ... how does

love of neighbor,
turn the other cheek,
prayer for the enemy,
care for the poor, and a

nonjudgmental posture towards those with whom we disagree ... in such a world, how does Jesus ministry take hold among us, take root in us as a community

of faith who define ourselves as
followers of Jesus?

I understand why some of the disciples worshipped & doubted

at the same time ... they loved Jesus,

he taught them much,

he lived what he taught, he walked the walk ... and they saw that,

they believed in him, and

knew that he loved them too and forgave them ... so,

it must have been *overwhelming* to consider the risks of continuing Jesus' ministry; and it must have been *daunting* to think of how impossible it seemed that such a ministry would take root, let alone flourish.

And so, ***they worshipped him; but some doubted.***

When Jesus met with the disciples in Galilee (as we read today), he wasn't

meeting with them to alleviate their doubts, or to chide them about having doubts ... he was

meeting with them to "***commission them***" for ministry – ***doubts and all.***

He wasn't calling them to a

certainty, to a

sureness of success, or a

clarity about what the ministry would accomplish ... he was calling them to do it though,

"Go", he said.

"Go and teach them", he said.

"And remember, he reminded

them, *I am with you to the end
of the age.*

In this present time in which we are living

with racial divides so raw and apparent,

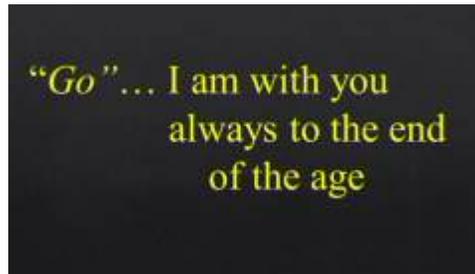
with knowing that over 50 years ago we went through something of the same thing,

color;

turn the other cheek ...even though the world teaches otherwise;
pray for the enemy ... even though it's so hard to do;
care for the poor ... even though it may stretch your own resources;
do not judge ...even though your judgment may be correct sometimes, instead, strive to

understand.

For this is what we are sent to do ... we do it for the love of God and we have the promise
of Jesus presence with us to do it ... "Go" ... I am
with you always to the end of the age..



AMEN

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

God loves all of creation and had loved us into being. We believe, are awe struck, and live in the creating light of God's great love.

Jesus is God's love in the flesh. We believe he is the human expression of God on earth. His ministries of healing, teaching, and feeding the hungry bear witness to how deeply God values each of us. In his death and resurrection, Jesus brings into focus how God's love reaches into the depths of our brokenness to bring healing and new life.

The Holy Spirit is God's love active in and among us today. We believe that God's Spirit is our energy for ministry, service, and actions of kindness. We call on God's Spirit for all that we do and can become as the People of God. AMEN.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Great God of Creation, we are the people of your creation. You have made us in your image. Help us to always seek to live into that image. It is an image of mercy, compassion, and love. It is an image of generosity, service, and care. It is an image of wisdom, intellect, and spirit. All these divine attributes you have woven into the fabric of our being. Help us, empower us, to live lives that reflect your divine image. Lord, in your mercy ... hear our prayer.

Great God who became human in Jesus, we are the people you came to save. In the spirit of Jesus we pray for each other. We ask your blessing of presence and healing to be with all those on our Bethany prayer list, with those sick from COVID-19, with those who have lost loved ones, with those suffering emotionally and spiritually, with those who put their own lives at risk to care for the sick. We ask your blessing of peace to be a powerful presence in our communities, our nation, and our world. We ask your blessing of wisdom to be inform leaders of nations to lead in ways that unite and bring well-being to our world. Lord, in your mercy ... hear our prayer.

Great God whose spirit fills our world, we are the people of your inspiration. Help us to be open and receptive to your desire for us and for all creation. Your spirit is our power to live as Jesus calls us to live. Your spirit is our power to change where we need to change. Your spirit is our power to be the People of God in a world desperately in need of what you can give for the well-being of all. Lord, in your mercy ... hear our prayer.

A Prayer Litany for Peace :

We pray for all those who hunger and thirst for justice, that their lives and their work might be rededicated to doing the work of Christ.

We pray for the homeless and displaced people of our nation and the world, that they might find comfort, that their suffering might be lightened.

We pray for persons who are lost and in pain, that they might find the love of Christ that exists in the love we show to each other.

We pray for the children and the youth, who are so often neglected and discounted, but who have so much to offer, for they are not merely the future, but are a vital part of the present.

We pray for guidance and strength in times that are uncertain at best and life-threatening at worst, and when our lives are in transition.

We pray for our loved ones who face illness, pain, joy, sorrow, loss, grief, love, compassion, kindness, rejection, and stress in their daily lives.

We pray for peace, for there is no greater gift of God.

We pray all these things in Jesus, who lived a life of radical service all his days. Amen.

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

PRAYER OF BLESSING

Let us pray:

God of mercy and grace, the eyes of all wait upon you, and you open your hand in blessing. As you give to us the good things of life, both physical and spiritual, help us in turn to be of a generous spirit using our gifts to serve others and to honor you. 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

*Let the majesty of the God the Creator
be the light by which you walk,
the compassion of the Jesus
be the love by which you walk,
the presence of the Spirit
be the power by which you walk. Amen.*

DISMISSAL

In the presence and power of God the Creator, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit we go to serve the Lord. Thanks be to God.