

WORSHIP September 6, 2020

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

<https://youtu.be/wtB4mG-Rm2s>

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 – Romans 13:8-14

8. Owe no one anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." 10. Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. 11. Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers, 12. the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light, 13. let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. 14. Instead put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

2nd Reading – Psalm 119:33-40

33. Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes, and I will observe it to the end. 34. Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart. 35. Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it. 36. Turn my heart to your decrees, and not to selfish gain. 37. Turn my eyes from looking at vanities, give me life in your ways. 38. Confirm to your servant, your promises, which is for who fear you. 39. Turn away the disgrace that I dread, for your ordinances are good. 40. See, I have longed for your precepts, in your righteousness give me life.

Gospel reading – Matthew 18:15-20

15. If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. 16. But if you are not listened too, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. 17. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. 18. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19. Again, truly I tell you if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

SERMON – Pastor Joseph Dillion

Let's hear those words from St. Paul one more time: Owe no one anything except to love one another; for those who love their neighbor have fulfilled the law. The commandments, You shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not covet; and any other commandment, are summed up in the statement, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

It is interesting that these words come to us in the midst of this time in our history. A time when division; anger; fear; uncertainty; hate; racial and political divisions are the greatest many of us have ever seen. And on top of all of that, we are in the middle of a global pandemic that's taken the lives of 182,000 of our citizens and caused economic upheaval not seen since the Great Depression of the 1930's. While we would all acknowledge that we believe the words of St Paul – and Jesus by the way – to be beautiful – words that we should aspire too, I think many of us would say that such words at this time are rather naïve. Love – good grief – it seems that we barely tolerate one another most of the time!!

Yet: ah yes, that word YET, as the people of God, to love one another in this time of crisis – in this time when the forces that would divide us are at their strongest – in this time, we are called by Christ to show the world what it means to love one another – to love those whom we disagree with politically – to love those whose skin is a different color from ours – to love those who struggle with mental illness – to love that neighbor who can't ever stop talking about their grandkids. That is what we are called to do by our Lord and reminded that is what we are to be about by St. Paul in his letter this morning.

We must never forget that you and I model for the world what it means to be a Christian person in a crazy world. A world in which those who profess to be Christian lust after power and wealth; a world in which those who profess to be Christian would deny food and water to the poor; a world in which words of hate and division seem more powerful than words of hope and reconciliation – yet they are not. As God's people we can overcome all of the fear, division, hate and anger that the world is throwing at us all in these days by living the life that Christ calls us to. We can change the way the world looks at the church by living a life that is transformed by the power of the love of Christ that has come to us through our baptism and has been nurtured by family, Sunday school teachers, pastors and others throughout our lives. That transforming love that enable us to give hope to those reaching out for a word that gives them a reason to get up in the morning. That transforming love that enables us to change our own lives so that we are about the work of Christ in all that we do!

While we live in a time that seems to propel self about community; a time that seems to put ethnic heritage about the call of the Gospel to love one another; a time when greed is held in greater esteem than generosity; we are called to be something different in this world, and it is Christ who gives us the one tool through which we can change ourselves and the world. And that tool – that gift is Love, if we have the courage to allow ourselves to be transformed by its power. A great leader once said of love this: "Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend. We never get rid of an enemy by meeting hate with hate; we get rid of an enemy by getting rid of the enmity. By its very nature, hate destroys and tears down; by its very nature, love creates and builds up. Love transforms with redemptive power." Indeed so, for as we remember: "God so loved the world, that he gave his son for the world – for us. Today we need to live that story! 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.*