

Home Worship January 31st Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

Welcome to worship. February newsletter is online and in the mail for those who request it. You will see that St. Mark's will open for a small group worship service next week February 7th at 10:30am. Please call the church office or email to be on the list of no more than 30 participants. There will be restrictions.

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✙ one God, whose voice is upon the waters, whose mercy is poured out upon all people, whose goodness cascades over all creation. **Amen.** Let us confess our sin, trusting in the abundant grace of God.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Holy God, you search us and know us. You are acquainted with all our ways. We confess that our hearts are burdened by sin— our own sins and the broken systems that bind us. We turn inward, failing to follow your outward way of love. We distrust those who are not like us. We exploit the earth and its resources and fail to consider generations to come. Forgive us, gracious God, for all we have done and left undone. Even before the words are on our tongues, you know them; receive them in your divine mercy. **Amen.**

How vast is God's grace! Through the power and promise of ✙ Christ Jesus, our sins are washed away and we are claimed as God's own beloved. Indeed, we are forgiven. In the wake of God's forgiveness, we are called to be the beloved community living out Christ's justice and the Spirit's reconciling peace. **Amen.**

Prayer of the Day

Compassionate God, you gather the whole universe into your radiant presence and continually reveal your Son as our Savior. Bring wholeness to all that is broken and speak truth to us in our confusion, that all creation will see and know your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: Deuteronomy 18:15-20

Today's reading is part of a longer discourse in Deuteronomy, an updating of the law for the Israelite community as the people wait to enter the promised land. Here Moses assures the people that God will continue to guide them through prophets who will proclaim the divine word.

[Moses said:] ¹⁵The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet.

¹⁶This is what you requested of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said: “If I hear the voice of the LORD my God any more, or ever again see this great fire, I will die.”

¹⁷Then the LORD replied to me: “They are right in what they have said.

¹⁸I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command.

¹⁹Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable.

²⁰But any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, or who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak—that prophet shall die.”

Psalm 111

¹Hallelujah! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, in the congregation.

²**Great are your works, O LORD, pondered by all who delight in them.**

³Majesty and splendor mark your deeds, and your righteousness endures forever.

⁴**You cause your wonders to be remembered; you are gracious and full of compassion.**

⁵You give food to those who fear you, remembering forever your covenant.

⁶**You have shown your people the power of your works in giving them the lands of the nations.**

⁷The works of your hands are faithfulness and justice; all of your precepts are sure.

⁸**They stand fast forever and ever, because they are done in truth and equity.**

⁹You sent redemption to your people and commanded your covenant forever; holy and awesome is your name.

¹⁰**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who practice this have a good understanding. God’s praise endures forever.**

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Paul is concerned about the way some Corinthian Christians use their freedom in Christ as license to engage in non-Christian behavior that sets a damaging example to other, impressionable believers. Christians have a responsibility to each other that their behavior does not cause another to sin.

¹Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

²Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge;

³but anyone who loves God is known by him.

⁴Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “no idol in the world really exists,” and that “there is no God but one.”

⁵Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as in fact there are many gods and many lords—

⁶yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

⁷It is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge. Since some have become so accustomed to idols until now, they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.

⁸“Food will not bring us close to God.” We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do.

⁹But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.

¹⁰For if others see you, who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their conscience is weak, be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols?

¹¹So by your knowledge those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed.

¹²But when you thus sin against members of your family, and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.

¹³Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling, I will never eat meat, so that I may not cause one of them to fall.

The Holy Gospel according to Mark 1:21-28 Glory to you O Lord

Forces that would bring death and disease have taken hold of a man, yet they recognize Jesus and know what his power means for them. Jesus commands these forces to leave and people are amazed at his authority.

²¹[Jesus and his disciples] went to Capernaum; and when the Sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught.

²²They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

²³Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit,

²⁴and he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.”

²⁵But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!”

²⁶And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him.

²⁷They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, “What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.”

²⁸At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

The word of the Lord..... **Praise to you O Christ**

Sermon

The writer of Mark’s gospel, like each of the gospel writers wants us to know who Jesus is. The very first public display of who Jesus is, takes place in community, on the Sabbath day and it is an exorcism.

Jesus is teaching in the synagogue and a man with an unclean spirit comes in. A demoniac was considered unclean and the law forbids Jesus to associate with him, however Jesus defied such a law declaring that he had come for healing. Jesus teachings are different from the scribes who teach according to the law and the traditions which excluded people. Jesus said that he had come specifically for those who are sick such as this man called a demoniac. Jesus was teaching with authority.

What do you think of when you think of a demoniac? Do you think of someone possessed by evil such as a devil or satanic force? This was the thinking of the people in Jesus time.

Whenever someone was sick of body or mind, there were no tests to determine the cause.

Whenever someone was not behaving in the expected ways of society or whenever someone was physically ill, the cause was believed that they were possessed of an evil spirit or force.

Purity rituals were very important to keep evil away.

In performing the exorcism of the demoniac Jesus is acquiring honor and authority. Jesus act of healing showed a new power over unclean spirits. The man called the demonic calls out to Jesus, calling him The Holy One of God. The expression Holy One of God was applied to Elisha in 2 Kings 4:9 where Elisha “*would restore the correct boundary between the demonic realm of death and the world of life created by God*” according to the Jewish Annotated New

Testament. The expression refers to Jesus as belonging to God, being pure and separated from impurity. This purity is in contrast to the unclean spirits.

How do we think of demons today? Try not to think of modern day movies and books. What might we call an unclean spirit?

We start with the big one, Unbelief: losing one's faith in God, in life as a sacred force, and in our fellow human beings. It is the feeling that nothing can be done to solve our problems. Then, from this one, come the others such as: homophobia, racism, sexism, classism, religious and ideological intolerance, violence at home and at school, poverty, militarism, terrorism, war, greed, extreme individualism, globalization, out-of-control capitalism, media-infused fear that leads to paranoia, and governmental manipulation of information. The pandemic itself is an unclean thing. We must wash our hands and sanitize things all around us.

It is the struggle to believe that change can really happen. A better world is possible. Unless we name the demons, they will name us; they will control us and destroy us. This is probably the most difficult teaching of Jesus for us in this time of division in our world today. Those people most in need, those most different from us, those most difficult for us to accept and love are the very people Jesus came for, the people Jesus commands us to love.

Do you think that you have demonic tendencies? I have never thought of myself to have the sort of mental illness that might cause me to be hospitalized however I know that I often find myself possessed. I am possessed by things that God knows are not good for me. I need to call them out and perhaps you have your own to call out. And although I can name them, I still cling to them. I rely on food to console me when I am anxious. I need to be in control. I fear looking foolish and I can hold onto a grudge when something reminds me of it. I believe these are some things that possess me, my own unclean spirits and call them out and I call on Jesus for healing.

When we think of spirits we remember that the Holy Spirit entered Jesus at baptism. The unclean spirits comes out by the power of Jesus. Tempted to follow our prejudices or our fears, Jesus' teaching will have authority for those of us who hear the grace of God in this and other stories of Christ. Jesus calls to us to repent from the things that possess us and call on him for healing for ourselves and the world of all things unclean. The good news is that change can happen and a better world in Christ is possible. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need. ***A brief silence.*** For all who share the gospel and proclaim freedom in Christ throughout the world: prophets, teachers, pastors, deacons, and lay leaders; for the church and its ministries, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For all God's works in creation: plants and animals, water and soil, forests and farms; and for those tasked with protecting our natural resources and all that exists,
let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For government and leaders: cities and nations, rescue professionals and legal aid attorneys, elected officials and grassroots organizers; for all responsible for the well-being of civil society,
let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For those who suffer in mind, body, or spirit: those who are sick and hospitalized, those living with HIV/AIDS, those struggling with mental illness, those who are hungry or homeless, and all in any need especially **those recovering from surgery, and those who are sick: Teresa Barnhart and Brad Shippert. We pray those suffering with the coronavirus and we pray for an end to the virus with safe vaccinations and treatments.**) We pray for caregivers, hospice workers, and home health aides, **We pray for those in care facilities: Sibyl, Barb, Tammy, Trudy, Jessica, Hazel, Jeanne, Linda, Ed and Marian. We pray for those in military service: Logan, JJ, Bryan, Dustin, Brad and Travis**
let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For the concerns of this congregation: those who travel, those absent from worship, those celebrating birthdays or anniversaries; for the people of God in this place and for other needs in our community, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

Gathered into one by the power of the Holy Spirit we pray as Jesus taught ...

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Invitation to Communion

Beloved: here is bread; here is wine. Here is Jesus. Come and be fed.

Holy Communion Together

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. By the leading of a star he was shown forth to all nations; in the waters of the Jordan you proclaimed him your beloved Son; and in the miracle of water turned to wine he revealed your glory.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me. Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Take your bread/cracker	The body of Christ given for you
Take you juice/wine/water	The blood of Christ shed for you
The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in His grace.	

Prayer after Communion

Christ Jesus, at this table we have feasted on your very life and are strengthened for our journey. Send us forth from this banquet nourished in body and in spirit to proclaim your good news and serve others in your name. **Amen.**

Blessing

God the creator strengthen you; Jesus the beloved fill you; and the Holy Spirit the comforter ☩ keep you in peace. **Amen.**

Dismissal Go in peace. Be the light of Christ. **Thanks be to God.**

Thank you to all who continue to support the work of the church.