

Home Worship February 7th Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

Welcome to worship. My prayers are with those of you suffering from the corona virus and with those of you must venture out into the cold temperatures. God is with you.

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

Everlasting God, you give strength to the weak and power to the faint. Make us agents of your healing and wholeness, that your good news may be made known to the ends of your creation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: Isaiah 40:21-31

The Judeans in exile have a good reason to be hopeful: the one who will bring them to freedom is the God who created the world, the God who subdues the rulers of the earth and gives strength to those who are weary.

²¹Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

²²It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to live in;

²³who brings princes to naught, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.

²⁴Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows upon them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

²⁵To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One.

²⁶Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these? He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name; because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing.

²⁷Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, “My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God”?

²⁸Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.

²⁹He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless.

³⁰Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted;

³¹but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Psalm 147:1-11, 20c

¹Hallelujah! How good it is to sing praises to our God!

How pleasant it is to honor God with praise!

²**The LORD rebuilds Jerusalem, and gathers the exiles of Israel.**

³The LORD heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

⁴**The LORD counts the number of the stars and calls them all by their names.**

⁵Great is our LORD and mighty in power; there is no limit to God’s wisdom.

⁶**The LORD lifts up the lowly, but casts the wicked to the ground.**

⁷Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; make music upon the harp to our God,

⁸**who covers the heavens with clouds and prepares rain for the earth, making grass to grow upon the mountains.**

⁹God provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they cry.

¹⁰**God is not impressed by the might of a horse, and has no pleasure in the speed of a runner,**

¹¹but finds pleasure in those who fear the LORD, in those who await God’s steadfast love. ^{20c} Hallelujah!

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 9:16-23

God entrusted Paul with the responsibility of bringing the gospel to diverse people. Hence the focus of Paul's ministry is not his own rights or privileges as an apostle but the privilege of serving God by freely sharing the good news of Christ with others.

¹⁶If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel!

¹⁷For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission.

¹⁸What then is my reward? Just this: that in my proclamation I may make the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my rights in the gospel.

¹⁹For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them.

²⁰To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law.

²¹To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law.

²²To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some.

²³I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.

The Holy Gospel according to Mark 1:29-39

Glory to you O Lord

Everywhere Jesus goes, many people expect him to set them free from oppression. Everywhere he goes, he heals people and sets them free. Disease, devils, and death are running for their lives. The forces that diminish human life are rendered powerless by Jesus.

²⁹As soon as [Jesus and the disciples] left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

³⁰Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once.

³¹He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

³²That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons.

³³And the whole city was gathered around the door.

³⁴And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

³⁵In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.

³⁶And Simon and his companions hunted for him.

³⁷When they found him, they said to him, “Everyone is searching for you.”

³⁸He answered, “Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.”

³⁹And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons. The word of the Lord..... **Praise to you O Christ**

Sermon

“Those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.” These beautiful words from Isaiah, like all the poetry of Isaiah’s scripture, fill God’s people with hope. This reading of Isaiah’s was written to the Judean people who were exiled, sent from their home to look for a new place to live. War caused this then and war causes this now. All of the wars and violence in central America has people fleeing, exiled from their homes, looking for a better place to live, a place of hope; and so we have a huge problem of immigration and many refugee situations to address in this country. The Judean people are reminded that the creator God is with them and will renew them. We know that God is in our situations on our borders and we pray that God will give them hope and renew them also.

The writings of the bible are full of contrasting conditions: good and evil, light and dark, sin and forgiveness, being cast outside and being brought inside, living and dying and in Mark’s story today about Simon’s mother-in-law, the contrast is dying and rising. Jesus and the disciples come to the home of Simon. When they arrive Simon’s mother-in-law is in bed with a fever. She must have been very sick because the disciples told Jesus at once, ³¹***He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.*** A lot happened in those two sentences. Apparently she is healed right away because she begins to serve them. The word for serving is *diakoneo*, which means not only providing them with food, but also service in general as women did in those days as part of Mediterranean hospitality.

Simon’s mother-in-law was sick and illness of any kind in those days could lead to death. Jesus takes her hand and the Greek translation of ***“he lifted her up”*** is ***“he raises her.”*** ***Raising her up*** is much more serious than ‘helped her out of bed’. This is the contrast: dying and rising. The woman was raised up by the love of God. She didn’t profess her belief in God or give a testimony of faith. Jesus raised her and she began to be a servant.

When I first read this for this sermon, I immediately knew her relief. Last October I slipped on a muddy terrace and my left ankle broke. I pulled out my phone and called Oran in the house but

his phone was shut off. After laying there for a short time, I called on the Lord for help. The Lord said you been get moving. I began to crawl about 100 yards to the house. When I got to the porch steps I called out “Help help!” Oran came out and lifted me up. The ankle needed surgery, a metal plate and screws to mend the bone. It was about 2 weeks before I got up and began to serve. It was wonderful when I could serve again.

I always read about four to six commentaries when preparing a sermon. Preachers and professors take every word, every sentence and the entire story apart by translation, history, social situations and write or speak about them in podcasts. Some people wrote that they thought it was just terrible that this woman without a name, this ordinary woman is healed and right away she is expected to work, cook and serve the men. They all corrected themselves because this way of thinking is modern. We are all becoming aware of gender inequalities, however in the time of Jesus most women didn’t think twice about such things. There was abuse of women which was acceptable and Jesus called this out on numerous occasions.

This story is not only a healing story as much as we really do need healing stories in this time of the pandemic. This healing, this restoration of life for Simon’s mother-in-law is different. This is a call story. Jesus doesn’t heal just to heal, just to prove himself, or just to confirm God’s activity in the world. Jesus heals for the sake of, because of, and assuming that the Kingdom of God is here — and that we are a part of it, that we have a role in it, and Jesus needs us to serve. Jesus is calling disciples. Jesus is calling out the demons and evil in the world. Jesus is calling woman and others to serve him, to serve God and to recognize the hope that Jesus brings.

And as it turns out, and what Simon’s mother-in-law reveals, is that this healing looks an awful lot like how Jesus himself will describe his own ministry, his own power, and his own presence, **“For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”** (Mark 10:45). This first chapter of Mark continues to explain who Jesus is and how important Jesus is for hope in the world.

Whatever has us down, a broken ankle, fever from Covid or another illness, physical and mental illnesses, addictions, worries about loved ones, depression, our hope and strength are from God. ***“Those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”*** Jesus renews us, like the powerful wings of an eagle in flight and we are made strong again to serve. Whether we are in exile, searching for a new home, or struggling through other things, we are restored to serve. 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 the church: for ministries of healing and wholeness, for hospital, hospice, and military chaplains, for those serving in prison ministry, for all who proclaim freedom and release in the name of Christ, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For creation: for insects in the grass, clouds on the mountaintops, for cattle and the rainwater they drink, for the humility to take our place among all creatures of the earth, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For the nations: for all who lead in cities and towns, states and countries; for community organizers, school officials, and CEOs; for international health organizations, that in times of trial, fear, or hopelessness, they find freedom in service to those most in need, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For all wearied by life's burdens: for those who are poor, for those lacking supportive relationships, for those crushed by debt, for those struggling with chronic pain or other sickness, for those exhausted from overwork or stress, and for all who cry out to you especially **Teresa Barnhart and Brad Shippert. For those suffering with the corona virus and other diseases we pray.** 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.**

In thanksgiving for the faithful departed, who were called by name and now rest from their labors, that their lives serve as witnesses to the goodness of God, 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.

Offering Prayer

O God, receive these gifts as you receive us: like a mother receives her child, with arms open wide. Nourish us anew in your tender care, and empower us in faithful service to tend to others with this same love, through Jesus Christ, our saving grace. **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 \mp 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.