

Sunday, June 28, 2020

4th Sunday after Pentecost

Announcement:

Wanted: FM Transmitter. If you have a FM Transmitter or know anything about them, please contact Pastor Jeff. We might be able to use one for Drive-In Church.

Confession and Forgiveness

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins. Blessed be the holy Trinity, one God, whose steadfast love is everlasting, whose faithfulness endures from generation to generation. Amen. Trusting in the mercy of God, let us confess our sin.

Reconciling God, we confess that we do not trust your abundance, and we deny your presence in our lives. We place our hope in ourselves and rely on our own efforts. We fail to believe that you provide enough for all. We abuse your good creation for our own benefit. We fear difference and do not welcome others as you have welcomed us. We sin in thought, word, and deed. By your grace, forgive us; through your love, renew us; and in your Spirit, lead us; so that we may live and serve you in newness of life. Amen.

Beloved of God, by the radical abundance of divine mercy we have peace with God through Christ Jesus, through whom we have obtained grace upon grace. Our sins are forgiven. Let us live now in hope. For hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Prayer of the Day

O God, you direct our lives by your grace, and your words of justice and mercy reshape the world. Mold us into a people who welcome your word and serve one another, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

First Reading: Jeremiah 28:5-9

Through a symbolic action Jeremiah insisted that Judah and all the surrounding nations should submit to the king of Babylon (Jer. 27). Hananiah contradicted the word of Jeremiah, who in reply insisted that Hananiah's rosy prediction should not be believed until it came true. God confirmed the word of Jeremiah and sentenced the false prophet Hananiah to death (vv. 16-17).

5 The prophet Jeremiah spoke to the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the Lord; 6 and the prophet Jeremiah said, "Amen! May the Lord do so; may the Lord fulfill the words that you have prophesied, and bring back to this place from Babylon the vessels of the house of the Lord, and all the exiles. 7 But listen now to this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people. 8 The prophets who preceded you and me from ancient times prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms. 9 As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes true, then it will be known that the Lord has truly sent the prophet."

Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18

1 Your love, O Lord, forever will I sing; from age to age my mouth will proclaim your faithfulness.
2 For I am persuaded that your steadfast love is established forever; you have set your faithfulness firmly in the heavens.
3 "I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn an oath to David my servant:
4 'I will establish your line forever, and preserve your throne for all generations.'"
15 Happy are the people who know the festal shout! They walk, O Lord, in the light of your presence.
16 They rejoice daily in your name; they are jubilant in your righteousness.
17 For you are the glory of their strength, and by your favor our might is exalted.
18 Truly, our shield belongs to the Lord; our king to the Holy One of Israel.

Romans 6:12-23

Sin is an enslaving power which motivates us to live self-serving, disobedient lives. Sin's final payoff is death. We, however, have been set free from sin's slavery to live obediently under God's grace, whose end is the free gift of eternal life.

12 Do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. 13 No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. 14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

15 What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! 16 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, 18 and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. 19 I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification.

20 When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. 22 But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Gospel: Matthew 10:40-42

When Jesus sends his disciples out as missionaries, he warns them of persecution and hardships they will face. He also promises to reward any who aid his followers and support their ministry.

[Jesus said to the twelve:] 40 "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. 41 Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; 42 and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward."

Devotion

If we welcome the disciples of Jesus, we welcome Jesus and we welcome God. And when we do there will be a reward.

What is the reward? If we are open to the grace of God, we probably will be gracious. If we are open to forgiveness of God, we probably will be forgiving. As we say in the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses/sins as we forgive those who trespass/sin against us."

Some of the rewards for welcoming Jesus into our lives are love, grace, forgiveness and justice. But, if we do not receive the grace of God, we probably will not be gracious, forgiving, or just. If we feel like we don't deserve the love of God, or if we refuse the love of God, we will probably not be a loving people?

To receive Jesus or his disciples is to enter into the passion, justice, and humility of Jesus and to participate in those blessings. We may have a hard time with what Jesus says, "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." These appear to be very harsh words and I have been told by very good people that that can't be right. I have been told that, "You can't put Jesus ahead of your children." If we think that family should come first, we may be deceiving ourselves. A lot of things come first before our families.

There used to be a commercial on TV of young couples, lovers, only interested in the moment then a big stork shows up with a baby. Obviously, the concept of family was not their first priority and the commercial wanted them to think about what they were doing. This is true with many things. The big one being work and our income. A young man once said to

me, "I will not get married until I have a good job." It sounded like good rational thinking, but I wondered if he should wait that long.

The difference between these things and Jesus is that Jesus comes right out and says that he comes first. But in the real world we think differently. There are many things in our life that we set ahead of Jesus and family. Work, money, alcohol, drugs, and leisure activities just to name a few. The problem we have with Jesus is that Jesus comes right out and says that he should come first and we have a hard time with his directness.

I say this because I have seen how many things especially addictions can control a person's life. It is amazing how hard it is for a person to accept their addiction. Even when the whole family is telling a loved one that their addiction is destroying the family, denial is the first response.

We don't like being told these things. At first, it really makes people mad, but do you think that Jesus is really trying to alienate people here? When he says, "Whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" well, it sounds that way and it doesn't sound right. Don't our children come first? But, let's look at it this way.

If Jesus comes first in our lives, if we as individuals are open to the grace of God, i.e. love and forgiveness and let it live in us, what do you think we will give to our families? To put Jesus above family is not a put down towards the family! To put Jesus above the family can actually create an arena that the family wants to live in. It creates a home where love, justice and forgiveness can be practiced, a home where the one who loves God, loves the others in the home also.

Let's look at this way. Imagine a young man, husband and father was driving down the road one day on his way home from work and turned on the radio. For some reason he turns on a station where a preacher was proclaiming the grace of God and was teaching how Jesus calls us to show kindness towards strangers, even our enemies and how God forgives our sin even while we are still sinners. Unfortunately, that usually isn't the case. What I usually hear is the wrath of God and how bad we are which we already know. We are being told that every day in so many ways. Or, we ourselves are saying it about others. But, in reality it is the grace of God that draws us to God.

So, this young man thinks to himself, "What world does this guy live in? A world of Grace and Forgiveness?" He then says to himself, "I live in an eye for eye and watch out for #1 first world." But, as he contemplates the message, he hears something he likes, forgiveness and peace, which turns his way of thinking a little bit. So much so, that he becomes a student of Jesus.

After becoming a student of Jesus, he starts to practice what he's learning. Like, "Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly." "Fathers, do not provoke your children, or they may lose heart." This leads to a confused wife who isn't too certain what is going on, but it brings her hope. His children don't know what has happened either because their dad is changing. The household attitude is going from, "This is dad's house," to, "This is our home" The kids find this a little strange but they like it.

That is what I think it means about the rewards of putting Jesus before family. When we do this, it creates an arena in which a family lives, a home where love, justice and forgiveness are practiced. It creates an arena where people who love God first will love their family too. It's nice to say we put our family first, but how we treat our family, how we raise our families, is all dependent upon one thing. What do we believe? In what do we put our faith, our trust?

Let me end it this way. Most of us are probably not in the dating stage of life, but for those who are, and for those who can still remember those days, what is or was the most important thing to us about the other person especially when the relationship becomes or became serious. What is important is how they will treat us.

How we treat each other is completely dependent upon who or what is first in our lives. Is it work, money, financial security, alcohol, drugs, bowling, the car, or even our friends? What comes first in our lives? Whatever it is, whatever comes first will give us a good indicator where we will position others in our lives. It will also give us a good indicator where others will position us in their lives.

If we put Jesus first in our lives, where do you think we will position others in our lives? Or, if others put Jesus first in their lives where will they position us in their lives? And, what will be the reward?

The bottom line is this:

When we believe that we are loved by God
When we believe that God can actually forgive our sins
When we believe that we are worthy of life itself
When we welcome Jesus into our lives above everything else,
Then we will begin to see the rewards.

Prayers of Intercession

Called into unity with one another and the whole creation, let us pray for our shared world.

God of companionship, encourage our relationships with our siblings in Christ. Bless our conversations. Shape our shared future and give us hearts eager to join in a festal shout of praise. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

God of mercy, your grace is poured out for all. Inspire authorities, judges, and politicians to act with compassion. Teach us to overcome fear with hope, meet hate with love, and welcome one another as we would welcome you. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

God of care, accompany all who are in deepest need. Comfort those who are sick, lonely, or abandoned especially those suffering from the coronavirus and those hospitalized, and those going through chemo therapy. Strengthen those who are in prison or awaiting trial. Renew the spirits of all who call upon you. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

God of community, we give thanks for this congregation. Give us passion to embrace your mission and the vision to recognize where you are leading us. Teach us how to live more faithfully with each other. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

God of all, help us to see beyond the color of our skin, or nationality and look upon others as your creation. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

God the protector, guide our church leaders to make wise decisions about when to reopen our churches again. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

Receive these prayers, O God, and those too deep for words; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Offering Prayer

God of goodness and growth, all creation is yours, and your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens. Water and word, wine and bread: these are signs of your abundant grace. Nourish us through these gifts, that we might proclaim your steadfast love in our communities and in the world, through Jesus Christ, our strength and our song. Amen.

Blessing

Almighty God, Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Christ is with you. Thanks be to God.