

August 2, 2020 – 9th Sunday after Pentecost

Devotion for August 2

Confession and Forgiveness

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

Glorious God, your generosity waters the world with goodness, and you cover creation with abundance. Awaken in us a hunger for the food that satisfies both body and spirit, and with this food fill all the starving world; through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

First Reading: Isaiah 55:1-5

God invites Israel to a great feast at which both food and drink are free. God also promises to make an everlasting covenant with all peoples, with promises that previously had been limited to Israel. As David was a witness to the nations, these nations shall now acknowledge the ways in which God has glorified Israel.

Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.

Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.

See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples.

See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.

Psalm 145:8-9, 14-21

The LORD is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

LORD, you are good to all, and your compassion is over all your works.

The Lord upholds all those who fall and lifts up those who are bowed down.

The eyes of all wait upon you, O LORD, and you give them their food in due season.

You open wide your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.

You are righteous in all your ways and loving in all your works. You are near to all who call upon you, to all who call upon you faithfully.

You fulfill the desire of those who fear you; you hear their cry and save them.

You watch over all those who love you, but all the wicked you shall destroy.

My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD; let all flesh bless God's holy name forever and ever.

Second Reading: Romans 9:1-5

This begins a new section in Paul's letter in which he will deal with the place of Israel in God's saving plan. He opens by highlighting how Israel's heritage and legacy include being God's children, having God's covenants, being given God's law, participating in worship of God, and receiving divine promises.

I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience confirms it by the Holy Spirit—I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh. They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

Gospel: Matthew 14:13-21

After John the Baptist is murdered, Jesus desires a time of solitude. Still, his compassion for others will not allow him to dismiss those who need him, and he is moved to perform one of his greatest miracles.

Now when Jesus heard [about the beheading of John the Baptist], he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." And he said, "Bring them here to me." Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Devotion: The Bread of Life

After Jesus heard that John the Baptist was beheaded during a birthday party for King Herod, Jesus left town. Herod had arrested John because John spoke out about the king's wrongful marriage. Herod wanted to kill him but out of fear that the people might rebel against him, he didn't. But at his party while showing off to his guests he had John beheaded. Then he hears about Jesus and believes that John the Baptist has come back to life. Well, if he killed John what do you think he would do to Jesus? That is why Jesus went to a deserted place. His journey to the cross was beginning.

When the people heard that Jesus had left, they too went to find him. There, in a deserted place, Jesus has compassion for them, heals them and then feeds them. The interesting thing is that we do not go to deserted places to find food or healing. When we lived in Allison, we were always going to Waverly, Cedar Falls and Waterloo to buy what we couldn't get in Allison. We go to the big cities to get what we need, not deserted

places. But in this story, King Herod was in the big city and Jesus was in the deserted place. Herod was not giving the people what they needed but in the wilderness Jesus does. While Herod was entertaining his officials with wine, food, and dance, Jesus was caring for his people not with things that can be bought but with compassion. He even taught the disciples how this works. While they wanted the crowds to go and buy what they needed, Jesus says, feed them yourselves. You have plenty with five loaves and two fish.

How could they feed all those people with so little?

What is Jesus trying to teach them?

The disciples are thinking outside themselves. They think that they have no resources to give to people because they don't know what they have. They too think that they have to go to town and buy what they need. Jesus teaches them to go into themselves, into a world of inner resources, into an inner spiritual presence that can feed people.

Yes, we may have to go to the big cities to get what we need sometimes, but the real food of life is free. We cannot buy what we truly need in life. King Herod relied on his wealth and power to get what he believed that he needed. But as the story of Herod is told, we begin to see how he feared a man who had nothing of earthly value. All his power could not stop what John the Baptist began. Jesus too would be crucified for defying power and wealth but his death would not stop the people from following him. In Jesus we find the true food of life. In Jesus we find compassion, love and forgiveness. In Jesus we find life and eternal life.

Prayers of Intercession

Confident of your care and helped by the Holy Spirit, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

You take resources that appear to be meager, bless them, and there is enough. May your church trust that what you bless and ask us to share with the world is abundantly sufficient. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Your bountiful creation offers sustenance and life for all creatures. Protect this abundance for the well-being of all. Reverse the damage we have caused your creation. Replenish ground water supplies, provide needed rains in places of drought, and protect forests from wildfires. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

You offer yourself to all the nations and peoples of the earth, inviting everyone to abundant life. Bring the prophetic vision to fullness that all nations will run to you and that nations who do not know you will find their joy in you. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. Hear the anguish of tender hearts who cry to you in suffering and satisfy their deepest needs. Bring wholeness and healing to those who suffer in body, heart, soul, and mind. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

You offer freely the fullness of salvation. Give our congregations such a welcoming heart, that our words and actions may extend your free and abundant hospitality to all whom we encounter. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

You gather your saints as one, united in the body of Jesus. Bring us with all your saints to the heavenly banquet. We remember with love and thanksgiving the saints we have known. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

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.

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace. Amen.

Dismissal

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