

Knox/Trinity Summer Worship ~ 05 July 2020

~ Sharing Joys and Concerns as we Gather ~

~ Welcome and Land Acknowledgement ~

We may be gathering from different communities of faith and from different places, but we all gather in the name of Jesus. Steve and I want to acknowledge with gratitude and respect the Lekwungen peoples on whose traditional territory we live and worship today. The Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples continue in relationship with this land. We are ever mindful of the continuing work toward reconciliation that we seek together.

➤ ***O let the power fall on me***

~ Call to Worship ~

Come, people of God. We gather – our hearts overflowing with delight and thankfulness.

Reader 1 We are a company of faith blessed by God.

God's name is to be celebrated in all generations.

Reader 2 With joy and gladness, we praise God forever and ever.

Come, people of God. Let us worship as we join in prayer...

~ Prayer and Words of Hope ~

Almighty and everlasting God, you know that we are sinners, yet you treat us as if we were not; you know that we are unworthy of your love, yet you treat us as if we were. We thank you for welcoming us into your presence. We bow before you in confidence, not because of our goodness, but because of your grace. We pray that you will repeat in us the miracle you have worked in others – converting worshipers into witnesses and believers into disciples.

Together in worship, we face what we might not face alone and in silence we remember and name our own faults and failings...

God of the turning tide change us so that the energy of your forgiveness flows into bold and joyful action, into a humility that is not defeatism, into the strength and confidence to be vulnerable. We pray in the name of Jesus, the Christ. **Amen**

God's grace is boundless. God's forgiveness knows no limitations. God's love overflows upon us. God's promise, incarnate in Jesus, is that we are a forgiven people. Thanks be to God.

➤ *There is room for all*

~ Prayer ~

Loving God open our eyes and our ears to the wonder of your Word so that we may be changed as we grow in understanding. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen

~ Scripture ~

Romans 7: 15-25a

I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. But in fact, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do.

Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. So, I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Matthew 11: 25-30

At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.

All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

~ Message ~

I love this text from Romans because it so accurately reflects how I often feel. Maybe you too can relate to how Paul wrestles with human nature – specifically the question “if we know what is good and right, why can’t we always do it?” Why do we make mistakes and then hide behind dishonesty and self-delusion?

Paul’s words could be spoken by most of us at some time in our lives: *I don’t understand my own actions. That which I want to do, I do not do; and that which I don’t want to do, is precisely what I end up doing.* The exact scripts may vary with each of us, but the stories of our lives are similar.

Paul’s confession can be connected to the inner struggles many of us have with substance abuse, food addictions, workaholic behaviors, and personal ambivalence. We are all the victims of our compulsions and addictions, and irrational powers greater than ourselves. He may also be directing us to deeper human frailties in the wider world connected to how we treat one another – racism, agism, sexism, ableism. Every day we struggle to stay on the right track and often fail to be the disciples we hope to be. No one fully knows our worries and cares and sense of struggle, but they matter to us, and often leave us feeling impotent – spiritually weak – part of the problem, not the solution.

Many of us are stuck – we have good intentions but do not follow through. There is this clash between intention and reality. We are so full of self-contradiction: wanting to do what is right but not doing it. Like Paul, we seek assistance and assurance, and cry out *“Who will rescue me from this body of death?”*

Poor Paul! For him – as for us – this isn’t just a debate about human nature in the abstract – it’s a pouring out of frustration. Even if we do not share Paul’s understanding of sin as a force that possesses us – warring in us contrary to our highest desires – we recognize the reality of sin. The heaviness of the past – confirmed by thousands of habitual responses – can seem to overcome our best intentions.

Why do I lose my temper and snap at the people I love most? Why do I volunteer to do something and then resent it? Why do I tolerate sexist language rather than speaking out? Why can’t I fully overcome my ingrained racist attitudes? Why do I overindulge at a meal instead of eating sensibly? Why am I still avoiding making that call to apologize to my friend? Why do I listen to gossip when I know it is hurtful? Why do I take that first drink – sling that first arrow? When I want to spend time with my children or spouse, but the lure of work entraps me, why do I immerse myself in my phone or computer to the

neglect of the ones who need me most? Why, when I want to reach out to the poor and vulnerable, do I worry so much about the cost in time or money? And the list goes on – we are, each one of us, a bundle of equivocating feelings. When we know the law – the commandments of God – what is good and what is right – why?

You have your inner struggles – I have mine. What is this sin that makes us choose the wrong thing, when we know what is right? What is it about humanity that makes it so difficult to do the good we would choose to do? And how do we overcome it? In complete frustration Paul ends up calling himself a wretch – guilty.

He is a faithful follower of Christ who sees himself struggling to be the disciple he intends to be – wants to be. Paul comes to realize that he is both guilty and forgiven – sinner and saint. Most of us can relate – we struggle to do what God calls us to do. We are always and forever – all of us – both saint and sinner. Yet, whatever our mistakes and frustration with ourselves – whatever our struggle – whatever our inner conflict and confusion, God is there to help – in Jesus.

“Come to me all who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” We can see these words from Jesus as God’s response to Paul’s inner turmoil – his ethical and spiritual angst – and to our own. Jesus provides us with wisdom and guidance as we seek to follow God’s path in our lives despite our faithlessness and ambivalence. Grace abounds even if our lives remain unresolved and the future roils with uncertainty.

Jesus doesn’t try to soothe our angst by telling us that what we do doesn’t matter so much – we are always guilty and forgiven – sinner and saint – our struggle is real, but we are not alone in it. Jesus offers to walk with us – invites us to be yoked to him – firmly linked. He says, *“Come to me.”* Not to a new law, not to a new teaching, not to a secret interpretation or a hidden loophole, not to a book, not to a list – *come to **me***. “If you seek God’s love – if you seek a life that makes some sense – if you want a way of understanding the world that allows you to deal honestly with what happens and not be destroyed – if you want to be who you are created to be – if you want this, then come to me.” Come to Jesus.

It’s a call to relationship – with Jesus and the community that continues Jesus’ life and ministry – the church. Jesus – and the bearable yoke he provides – will not fail. And it’s not that this yoke – this call to relationship – makes no difference or asks nothing of us – yet it fits, it’s the right size – it leads to God – offering wholeness and a peace that we cannot find by our own efforts.

Come to Jesus and discover that what can seem a frantic and desperate task – life with God – is not an earned reward, but a gift. Come to Jesus and discover – as Paul discovered – that we cannot do the good we desire on our own but that it may be possible by God’s grace. Come to Jesus and discover that the task of getting it all correct is replaced by the absolute gift of God’s grace, and our grateful response to that gift.

The yoke Jesus offers is good to bear. It leads to life. To put it on is to be embraced by God’s mercy – to carry it is to fulfill both God’s will and our own deepest humanity. We are called to this new yoke – to a person and a community built around that person.

Today’s passages reflect our everyday experiences as fallible and broken people – sinner and saint – guilty and forgiven. The spiritual journey is a persistent process of falling and getting up again in the context of God’s amazing grace that constantly embraces us.

Are you feeling exhausted? Fed up with yourself? Frustrated by your own inability to get it right? Feeling guilty about not doing what you’re *supposed* to do – pretending to be somebody else? Jesus says, *“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.”* Thanks be to God.

➤ *How can it be?*

~ Gathering at the Lord’s Table ~

For those who need, the bread waits.

For those who yearn, the wine lingers.

For those seeking transformation, the table beckons.

Reader 1 **All are invited,
not because we have faith, but because we trust –
not because we understand, but because we hunger –
not because we know, but because we are loved –
not because we are well, but because we know our need.**

The table waits, and heaven’s host calls.

Reader 2 **Our place is here.**

This is the table where Jesus hosts – the one who came as a servant – washing disciples' feet, feeding them with living bread, loving them into new life. Come to this table all who hunger and thirst.

Reader 1 We remember with thanksgiving the gracious acts of God throughout history and in all creation. We praise our God that we have been invited – to serve one another without pride, to forgive one another as we have been forgiven, to feast together as members of one family.

Reader 2 We remember how Jesus called his followers to himself – how he told stories and taught us to pray. We thank you that he loved eating and drinking around tables where strangers became friends and where outcasts were included.

Like his disciples we meet Jesus again in the breaking of bread as we gather at his table.

We remember and give you thanks, O God, that as he sat at the table with friends – sharing the fruit of the vine and the harvest of the fields – Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it and shared it, saying:

“Take – eat – this is my body which is for you. Do this to remember me.”

When supper was over, he took a cup of wine and raised it, saying:

“This is God’s new covenant, made possible because of my death. Drink this all of you, to remember me.”

Around this table our voices fall silent as we pray for the Holy Spirit to come upon us and upon these gifts of bread and wine. Fill them and fill us with the abundance of Jesus.

– Silence –

The one who breathed on the first disciples is present for us in this bread.

The one whose Spirit stirred the church so long ago now revives us in this cup.

The bread of life – the cup of grace – we remember and share with thanksgiving these gifts in which God comes to us so that we may come to God.

~ **Sharing Bread and Wine** ~

After consuming the elements in your own space, please join in singing...

➤ ***You are holy, you are whole***

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~ **Prayer** ~

Loving God, we give you thanks for the holy mystery of this meal which we have shared. We recognize that all that we are, all that we have, and all that we might be is due to you alone and so we lift to you, compassionate God, the concerns of our hearts and of our world. We pray that you would bind the wounds of violence, intolerance, and self-centeredness that abound. We seek the restoration of your will and your way. Use us, equip us, inspire us to visit the lonely, the tired and the ailing.

We all know of individuals and families that need or desire your healing presence in their lives, Lord, and we name them silently or aloud at this time...

Each one of us has particular anxieties about the world in which we live, the society in which we are enmeshed, the environment of which we are a part. Listen O Lord, to those concerns...

Every person here has their own hopes and fears O God. In your mercy, hear our prayers and respond in love...

We join in singing our prayer as Jesus taught...

➤ ***Our Father in heaven** (The Lord's Prayer – no repeats)*

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~ **Blessing** ~

The pathway is open before us.

Reader 1 **It is a path of peace and hope, filled with God's blessings.**

May we go in peace, bringing hope to all we meet.

Reader 2 **May we go in love, offering caring service when and where we are able.**

And may the grace of the risen Christ, the love of God and the nurturing community of the Spirit embrace us all.

➤ ***May the God of hope go with us every day***

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~ **Sharing Time as we Depart** ~