

Knox/Trinity Summer Worship ~ 06 September 2020

~ **Sharing Joys and Concerns as we Gather** ~

~ **Welcome and Land Acknowledgement** ~

We gather in the name of Jesus from different communities of faith and from different places. Steve and I come to you this morning, worshipping on unceded Lekwungen territory. The Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples continue in relationship with this land and we are mindful of their hospitality as we gather in this place.

➤ ***O let the power fall on me***

~ **Call to Worship** ~

Reader 1 Rejoice and be glad for God takes delight in us.

Reader 2 We gather as God's community.

Reader 1 Sing to God a new song. Come and hear God's good news.

Reader 2 We gather as God's community that sings and listens to the good news of Christ's love.

Reader 1 Even when gathered in this on-line way, Christ is in our midst.

Reader 2 We are God's community that prays and shares our faith with one another. Let us worship God who is among us.

~ **Prayer and Words of Hope** ~

Gracious and loving God, your gentle spirit has stirred deep within us. You have called us from many places and backgrounds to celebrate your presence, to give thanks, and to grow together in faith.

May our hearts and minds be open to your wisdom, love and blessings. May we express our deepest faith and love through who we are and what we are called to do.

When we are tempted to evade the accusations of others, give us the courage to face issues directly. When we are tempted to take advantage of our power or position, give us courage to walk in the shoes of the powerless.

When we are tempted to compromise the truth, give us courage to stand for what we know to be right. When we are tempted to ignore the demands of our faith, give us the courage of Jesus, who was faithful all the way to the cross.

We bring our silent confession, O God of mercy, gathered in the name of Christ... **Amen**

As we confess our sin – we remember the opportunity we have been given to begin again – to walk confidently in a new direction. Pardon and peace are ours. Thanks be to God!

➤ *Jesus, we are gathered*

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~ Prayer ~

Gracious God help us to grow as a community of faith. Open our minds and ears to hear your Holy Word. Open our hearts to support one another as we continue to journey in your way. Amen

~ Scripture ~

Matthew 18:15-20

If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses.

If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.

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

~ Message ~

I know that many of you will hear the final sentence of this scripture text from Matthew's gospel and wonder if we are still the church since we are not physically gathering these days – not as large or small congregations – mostly not even gathering in twos and threes – keeping our “bubbles” small and secure.

Many see the church less as a gathering of faithful people and more as an organization filled with rules and tradition and ritual. I suppose we are that organizational presence to some extent, but church is not about a place or our formal procedures and favorite routines. We know that more than ever now that our church home – whether it is Knox or Trinity – is not where we are gathering during the pandemic. We have perhaps a greater sense now more than ever before of the church as *who we are and how we behave with one another and in the world*. We don't just *attend* or *belong to* the church – **we are the church**. And Jesus intends the church to be the place where love and grace never end.

We are all missing our familiar routines and spaces – the uncomfortable pew or cheerful welcome, the coffee and cookies or church school shenanigans. Yet we know that it is our faith in Christ – our connection in the name of Jesus that truly binds us together as **the church**. It is the name we have for Christian community, but in common usage it has unfortunately come to be limited to defining an institution or a building. At the core, church it is simply two or three gathered in the name of Christ – trying to follow Jesus – on-line, in person, on the phone, through email or regular mail, through prayer, in the garden, at the mall, in spirit, in the flesh. Being the church is about community – and following – and having Jesus in our midst – Christ with us always.

Jesus tells his disciples that being the church is important – working together as a community is important. When we gather for prayer or study or to resolve conflict – when we live and work as Jesus taught – when we connect as followers of Jesus, however we are able to do so – then we are assured of the abiding presence of the risen Christ as we seek to grow in God's way and in God's grace.

The Christian thing, according to today's reading, is that when someone in the community of faith behaves in a less than perfect way that we feel we can't ignore, we are supposed to confront them – not go off in a huff – not gossip about it to our closest pew mates – not point and judge and censure. Talk to the person! And the bottom line is not who is right and who is wrong. Jesus doesn't say, “Get the person to agree with

you," or "force your view upon them." The important thing is that the person listens so that community can be restored because losing someone, even **one**, is a great loss.

We are reminded that in the church we strive to forge a communal life that is different from the world around us – different from the culture at large. And if we try every strategy that Jesus suggests to no avail, we are counseled to *let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector*.

If anyone but Jesus gave this advice, I think we'd know exactly what to do. In Jesus' day if the Pharisees or most anyone else told you to treat someone like a Gentile or a tax collector, we would know what that meant because pagans and tax collectors were considered bums, lowlifes, undesirables. People thought they had no place among God's chosen people – no seat at God's holy table.

So when the average person tells us to treat someone like *a Gentile and a tax collector – a lowlife and a bum*, we know that this means to ignore the person – to brush them aside – to have as little to do with that person as possible. **But when Jesus says it – well then it means something different altogether!**

Think about Jesus – the "friend of toll collectors and sinners." Jesus never meet a pagan he didn't seem to like – he even came around in his interaction with the Syrophoenician woman. Jesus did not spurn or shun tax collectors and other *sinners*. Jesus got into trouble with the religious establishment of his day precisely because of his routine willingness to flout moralistic convention and associate with these marginalized people. They are the very ones that Jesus is always chasing – the very ones God persistently pursues to include in the gathered community. God's desire is that the sinner be saved, not condemned.

Jesus was being ironic here, telling his disciples – telling us, that even when we believe we have done all we can to come to an understanding with a person whose behavior is genuinely difficult – we are never finished reaching out in grace and love. Even as Jesus started his ministry reaching out to pagans and tax collectors – those deemed unworthy in his day, so we continue being loving and gracious toward, and hopeful about people who may be marginalized today.

Like it or not, we are frail and fallible people living in and with sin. We need to figure out how to be the church in the midst of it all – amid all the chaos and upheaval of our world today we are called to continue ***being the church***. When we come together in Christ's name – however we are able to do so and despite the disappointment or hurt that

sometimes separate us, we are humbled and strengthened by an awareness of Christ's presence. It is for his sake and in his name that we continually seek reconciliation and harmony. Jesus teaches that even when things go about as wrong as they can the need to extend love and grace persists because the divine hope is for all of us to come to God's holy table. **Amen**

➤ *Jesus calls us here to meet him*

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~ **Gathering at the Lord's Table** ~

Reader 1 **The table of the Lord is ready. It is the table of companionship with Jesus – where love and grace never end – where we grow in relationship with Jesus. It is the table of sharing with the poor and broken – where Christ becomes flesh.**

Reader 2 **We come seeking strength and healing. We come seeking unity with Christ. Come to the table, you who have much faith and you who would like to have more...**

Reader 1 **You who have been here often, and you have not been for a long time... You who have tried to follow Jesus and you who have failed... Come... It is Christ who invites us to meet him here.**

Laura The Lord be with you.

ALL ***And also with you.***

Laura Lift up your hearts.

ALL ***We lift them to the Lord.***

Laura Let us give thanks to our Creator God.

ALL ***It is right to give God thanks and praise.***

Reader 2 **Thanks and praise, glory and honour are rightly yours, compassionate Creator. At the first moment of time, you drew from the deep wells of gentleness and goodness. You wandered the fields, planting the seeds which blossomed into rainbows of beauty – you walked in evening's coolness, scattering the stars and moons into the deep blue-black skies.**

Reader 1 All that you made was given to us that we might eat, drink, and dance with you forever and ever.

But we did not understand all the blessing you offered, choosing to sit in sin's marketplace, as death played its mournful tunes for us. You offered us rest from our wandering ways, whispering to our souls through the prophets' heartaches.

Reader 2 When we could not, or would not, turn back to you, you sent Jesus to rescue us from ourselves.

Graced with your glory, Jesus humbled himself to come to us, to lead us back to you – to bear our burdens, so we might find rest in your hope and healing. Fed by your love, he came to eat and drink with all the outsiders, so we might dance forever in your kingdom of love. Embraced by your gracious will, he handed himself over to death, carrying our sin, so the joy of resurrection might be revealed to us – especially as we gather around his table.

Laura We remember and give you thanks, O God, that as he sat to eat with his friends – 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 the meal 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.”*

Pour out your grace upon us, O God, and upon the simple gifts of this meal. Send your Spirit on us and on what we do here as we gather to eat and drink of the living Word. May we be one in Christ and one with your vision of peace and plenty. In Christ, with Christ, through Christ – by the power of the Holy Spirit – all glory is yours, now and forever. **Amen**

~ Sharing Bread and Wine ~

The one the universe could not contain is present to us in this bread.

The one who redeems us and calls us by name meets us again 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.

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

➤ **Love us into fullness**

MV 81

*Love us into fullness, touch us with your grace;
Jesus, in your mercy, draw us to your face.*

*Love us into fullness, hold us in your care,
Cheer us with your presence here and everywhere.*

*Love us into fullness, and we will be strong;
Jesus, walk beside us, fill our hearts with song.*

~ Prayer ~

Loving God, we give thanks for your faithfulness and abundance that fills all creation. We give thanks for this meal where we celebrate again the gift of your presence among us in Jesus. Trusting in you, we offer all our quiet thoughts and prayers into your care...

We pray for one another as we seek to live out our faith and struggle to be faithful. Send us as your witnesses, empowered by your Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord who asked us to pray together with confident hope, singing...

➤ **Our Father in heaven** (*The Lord's Prayer – no repeats*) **469**

~ Blessing ~

Go from this celebration at the Lord's Table in peace and hope to be the church today. Make each place you go a sacred place. Let others see and experience God through you. Go well... and may the grace of the risen Christ, the love of God and the nurturing community of the Holy Spirit embrace and go with us all. **Amen**

➤ **May the God of hope go with us every day** **726**

~ Sharing Time as we Depart ~