

Knox/Trinity Fall Worship ~ 04 October 2020

➤ *This is the day (verse 1)*

78

~ Welcome and Land Acknowledgement ~

As we gather in the name of Jesus to worship in this virtual way we acknowledge with gratitude and respect the Lkwungen People on whose traditional and unceded territory we gather. The Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples continue in relationship with this land and we are mindful of their hospitality.

~ Celebrations / Joys and Concerns ~

*This God's blessing on you. God's blessing on you.
God's blessing, dear friends. God's blessing on you.*

~ Call to Worship [from Psalm 19] ~

- Reader 1** The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims God's handiwork.
- Reader 2** Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.
- Reader 1** The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul;
the decrees of the LORD are sure, making wise the simple.
- Reader 2** The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the LORD is clear, enlightening the eyes.
- Reader 1** The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever;
the ordinances of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.
- Reader 2** More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb.
- Reader 1** As we gather today in worship may the words of our mouths
and the meditation of each heart be acceptable to God.

~ Prayer and Words of Hope ~

Holy God – Creator, Christ, and Spirit – when we hunger for fulfillment, you meet all our needs – you give us the bread of Life. When we thirst for your presence – you draw near to us in every

place, at any time – you fill our cup to overflowing. You alone are truth – you alone are love – for you are the One who was, who is, and who ever shall be.

Holy One, you are our hunger filled and our thirst quenched – you are our deepest desire fulfilled – so to you, O God – Creator, Christ and Spirit – we give praise with all your people, here and everywhere, now and always.

Out of a desire to be free of past mistakes and start again with you and with one another, we join our voices in confession:

God of mercy, we confess that we have often failed to speak and act with kindness. We have not always cared for others as you care for us. We have not welcomed others as we have been welcomed to your table, nor have we forgiven others as we have been forgiven. We remember the good not done, kind words not spoken, and things we regret. If only we could make these things right! Hear our silent confession...

Friends believe the good news! Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation; the old life is fading – the new life has started to emerge in us. Know that you are forgiven, and so have the courage to forgive one another.... **Amen**

➤ *Open my eyes, that I may see*

500

~ Scripture ~

Matthew 21: 33-46

Listen to another parable.

“There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another.

Again, he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way.

Finally, he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'

But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.' So, they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?"

They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time."

Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes'? Therefore, I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls."

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

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

~ Message ~

A couple of times during the past month while running along the Songhees walkway Mary and I have spotted a beautiful white swan among the other waterfowl. We like him – if it is a “him”. On Tuesday morning he was there, and the tide was low so instead of gliding smoothly it seems as though he kept trying to push himself off into deeper water. I think both of us wanted to give him a gentle push thinking he was a bit high-centered, but we ran on and I didn’t think about him again until reflecting on this parable.

I know, a swan in the vineyard with the wicked tenants – you might be wondering how this is all connected!

Think of the story of The Ugly Duckling by Hans Christian Anderson. In the tale the ugly duckling is the one who doesn’t fit everyone’s expectations – he hatches from an egg that is bigger than the others – he is in the wrong nest – he looks wrong and sounds wrong. He is rejected by one and all. The ugly duckling is the one who is bullied and left out – who becomes the hero. He is the one overlooked and undervalued who suddenly surprises us all. The ugly duckling is a swan who is initially rejected and eventually adored.

There is a great deal of ugliness in our parable today – a great deal of violence – and it is rife with rejection. Like the fairy tale, rejection is a central theme in the passage from Matthew’s gospel. Jesus says, *“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.”*

But let’s come back to that...

Jesus tells a parable that is loosely based on The Song of the Unfruitful Vineyard from Isaiah, chapter 5 in which someone – God? – lovingly prepares and plants a vineyard expecting to harvest plump and sweet grapes but it produced wild and sour fruit that was no good. Jesus parable about the wicked tenants takes things a step further. The vineyard isn’t just yielding wild grapes, the tenants are beating the help and killing off the heir, the owner’s son. They are messing up God’s vineyard, and God loves the vineyard. What is God to do?

The tenants reject the owner (reject God) – then the owner’s emissaries and servants (prophets) – and finally they reject the heir (Jesus). Part of the ugliness of this story lies in how it has been used by the church over the years to justify anti-Semitism – to support pogroms and holocaust and racism in the extreme – ugly. But what if we could think about it as those of us who are sure we know what it is to be Christian (modern day Pharisees if you will) rejecting those who have a different idea of what that means. I wonder if it comes back to that first rejection – thinking that we can run God’s kingdom without God – thinking that unless someone says things that affirm what we already do and believe, then that person cannot represent God – is to be feared and rejected.

Sometimes that’s how we are – how I am – and how we expect the world will work. Ugly. Notice that the violence in this passage is not being initiated by an angry and vengeful God, it results from human greed and injustice. Jesus never says that God is going to harm anyone. Jesus asks, “How should the vineyard owner handle this? What would you do about the perpetrators of violence and injustice?”

The listeners – those Jesus is trying to teach – say to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.” All they can imagine is violence – they condemn themselves.

And here is where the metaphor transforms much like our ugly duckling becomes a swan. Suddenly we leave the vineyard and sit with Jesus and the masons in a building yard. *“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is amazing in our eyes.”* What was once rejected is now valued – because God made it so – and we are amazed.

Then he says, *those who fall upon the stone will be broken by it.* Maybe this affirms what we believe about God – that God is not violent and vengeful – but rather injustice contains the seeds of its own destruction. In the long run the vineyard is not taken away to be given to others. It is opened up by Jesus to new workers called to gather in God’s abundant harvest.

We are among those new workers! The gospels encourage us to take the risk of becoming outcasts by befriending outcasts – to take the chance that we might be ridiculed for hanging out with the ridiculous – to be known for irrational grace. Such radical inclusion affirms the value of each other person. Today as we celebrate World Communion together, we have a renewed opportunity to reach out to one another and to the wider community in friendship – regardless of gender, age, socio-economic status, Biblical literacy, sexual orientation, ethnicity, musical preference – today we can stop arguing about who’s in and who’s out. All are included in God’s harvest. Thanks be to God.

~ Offering. ~

World Communion Sunday celebrates God's gift of relationship around the world and throughout creation. We have received so much, and it is a blessing to share God's gifts. I hope that what we offer will speak of God's love for the world in all its detail and God's love for people in all our diversity. I trust that our gifts will touch the need around us in the name of Christ. I pray that we can share from our abundance so this day will be marked by an outpouring of generosity in Jesus' name. Amen

~ The Apostles' Creed ~

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

~ Gathering at the Lord's Table ~

Reader 1 Friends, the table is here for all and around it there are no divisions. Just as bread is not made from one grain, but from many – and wine is not made from one grape, but from a full harvest – so too, we, who are many, are made one in Christ.

Reader 2 This is a sacrament of unity. Come join neighbours east and west – north and south – and celebrate Christ present with us all. Taste and see that God is good.

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 1 Gracious and loving God, we praise and thank you – you are the creator of all goodness and the source of abundance. In the beginning, your Spirit danced on the waters and brought us life. In your generosity, you created a garden of delights and nourishment – you called us to live with respect in creation and to

care for one another. You brought your people out of slavery into a land of milk and honey – flowing with streams of living water and planted with groves of olive trees.

Reader 2 When we turned away from you – living in greed and violence – you sent us prophets to call us back and remind us to live for a day when no one would be hungry and we would live together in justice and peace. ...And so, with every generation before us, with all who will come after us, we lift our voices in joyful praise...

ALL *O holy, holy, holy God, O God of time and space. All earth and sea and sky above bear witness to your grace. Hosanna in the highest heav'n, creation sings your praise. And blessed is the one who comes and bears your name always!*

Laura Generous God, we give you thanks for Jesus, who came to live with us...

We remember how he called his disciples to follow him and become fishers of all people. 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.

Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried, but you raised him from the dead – and like his disciples we meet him again in the breaking of bread as we gather around 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 – he 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 the cup and raised it, saying: “This is God’s new covenant, made possible because of my death. Drink this all of you, to remember me.”

As we gather in the promise of Christ, we proclaim the mystery of faith...

ALL *Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen, Christ will come again! Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen, Christ will come again!*

Reader 1 The bread used around the world today might be of different types and colors – created from wheat or rice or other kinds of grain. Some will have bread left over at the end of the meal. Some will share such small pieces that it will barely

give every Christian there a morsel. It all represents the body of Christ – new life which is for all of us.

Reader 2 The cup around the world will also be filled differently. It may contain wine – or juice – and some will celebrate with water that had to be carried from a dirty well many miles away. Some will use individual cups, others fancy goblets, still others have been passing around whatever cup was in the home where they were meeting It all represents the new covenant of God’s grace.

Laura We thank you, O God for this sacrament of communion shared with Christians around the world. Pour out your Holy Spirit on the simple gifts of this meal. and on those who partake—that we may 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 and so we sing...

ALL *Amen, amen, O Holy One! Hosanna and amen! Amen, amen, O Holy One! Hosanna and amen!*

~ Sharing Bread and Wine ~

As you eat the bread, think of the many different colors and types of bread being used around the world. The one the universe could not contain is present to us in this bread.

As drink from the cup, think of the variety of believers with whom you celebrate at the Lord’s Table today. 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.

Everyone consumes the elements in their own space...

~ Prayer and Blessing~

Holy One, you have nourished us in this meal, and fed our bodies and souls. We have heard your love – now send us out to speak it. We have seen your love – now send us out to show it. We have been fed by your love – now send us out to share it. And let all things be done for your glory. May we go from this celebration at the Lord’s Table feeling blessed – in peace and in hope to be the church today. We sing our prayer together as Jesus taught...

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

➤ *We will go out with joy* 539 (PCUSA)