

Worship in the Home: August 16, 2020

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Worship in the Home

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Lectionary 20

August 16, 2020

In this time of world-wide crisis, congregations throughout this church are not able to gather for worship as the body of Christ. While you cannot be together in person, we can hear the word of God and hold each other in prayer. We offer this brief resource as an aid for prayer in the home. As with our prayers in the gathered assembly for worship, you are encouraged to prepare or adapt them locally for your context.

In Isaiah we hear that God's house shall be a house of prayer for all people and that God will gather the outcasts of Israel. The Canaanite woman in today's gospel is a Gentile, an outsider, who is unflinching in her request that Jesus heal her daughter. As Jesus commends her bold faith, how might our church extend its mission to those on the margins of society? In our gathering around word and meal we receive strength to be signs of comfort, healing, and justice for those in need.

The Prayer of the Day may be prayed.

Let us pray.

God of all peoples, your arms reach out to embrace all those who call upon you. Teach us as disciples of your Son to love the world with compassion and constancy, that your name may be known throughout the earth, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

First Reading: Isaiah 56:1, 6-8

The prophet calls upon Israel to do justice in view of God's imminent intervention to save. Righteousness and obedience define who belongs to the Israelite community—not race, nationality, or any other category.

¹Thus says the LORD:

Maintain justice, and do what is right,
for soon my salvation will come,
and my deliverance be revealed.

⁶And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD,
to minister to the LORD, to love the name of the LORD,
and to be the LORD's servants,

all who keep the sabbath, and do not profane it,
and hold fast my covenant—
⁷these I will bring to my holy mountain,
and make them joyful in my house of prayer;
their burnt offerings and their sacrifices
will be accepted on my altar;
for my house shall be called a house of prayer
for all peoples.

⁸Thus says the LORD God,
who gathers the outcasts of Israel,
I will gather others to them
besides those already gathered.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 67

¹May God be merciful to ^lus and bless us;
may the light of God's face ^lshine upon us.

²Let your way be known ^lupon earth,
your saving health among all nations.

³Let the peoples praise ^lyou, O God;
let all the ^lpeoples praise you.

⁴Let the nations be glad and ^lsing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity and guide all the nations on earth.

⁵Let the peoples praise ^lyou, O God;
let all the ^lpeoples praise you.

⁶The earth has brought ^lforth its increase;
God, our own ^lGod, has blessed us.

⁷May God ^lgive us blessing,
and may all the ends of the earth ^lstand in awe.

Second Reading: Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32

God has not rejected Israel. Rather, the call and gifts of God are irrevocable so that, while all have been disobedient, God has mercy upon all.

[Paul writes:] ¹I ask, then, has God rejected the chosen people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. ^{2a}God has not rejected the people whom ages ago God chose.

²⁹For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. ³⁰Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, ³¹so they have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy. ³²For God has imprisoned all in disobedience in order to be merciful to all.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel: Matthew 15:21-28

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus teaches his disciples that true purity is a matter of the heart rather than outward religious observances. Almost immediately, this teaching is tested when a woman considered to be a religious outsider approaches him for help.

²¹Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²²Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." ²³But he did not answer her at all. And his

disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." ²⁴Jesus answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." ²⁵But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, **help** me." ²⁶Jesus answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." ²⁷She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." ²⁸Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly.

The gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

Reflection

Having read these readings, think of this:

If we tell the truth, we all are among the disobedient, as Paul so clearly says. We also are rightly among the foreigners, standing with the outsider woman, begging for help. We too are the **dogs**, with no right to the bread. But God holds all together in mercy, the ancient covenant people of the Jews but also those of us from the many peoples who have been gathered by the Lord. From Isaiah, from Paul, and from the Gospel according to Matthew, Christians have been learning the humility of the woman: "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs." Because of his cross and resurrection, Jesus Christ makes bread available to all the peoples, including us — the bread of the eucharist when we can gather, but always the bread of his healing word. And so we come to see our neighbor in a stunning new way: another needy person beside us, under God's mercy.

If you have a hymnal (or using the graphic below), you might now sing or read "Day by Day" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 790); "In Christ There Is No East or West" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 650); "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 588).

[In Christ There Is No East or West \(Harmony\)](#)

[There's a Wideness in God's Mercy \(LORD, REVIVE US\) \(Melody\)](#)

Confident of your care and upheld by the Holy Spirit, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need, responding with the Canaanite woman to each petition "Help us, O Lord."

A brief silence.

We pray for the Christian church around the world,
for humility where the church is dominant,
for courage where it is oppressed,
and for faithfulness when it cannot assemble for worship:

A brief silence.

Bless your church, faithful God:

help us, O Lord.

We pray for your bountiful earth,
for cleaner air,
for the fields on which our food grows,
for the renewal of lands and waters that have suffered from disregard:

A brief silence.

Protect your earth, creative God:

help us, O Lord.

We pray for the nations of the earth,
for the peaceful resolution of disputes around the world,
for just policies that care for the poor,
and for the upcoming political conventions in our land:

A brief silence.

Save humankind, sovereign God:

help us, O Lord.

We pray for all in need of healing,
for the residents of Beirut and other distressed cities,
for those suffering from hurricane damage,
for those sick and dying of COVID-19,
for the unemployed,
for people without medical care,
for medical workers and researchers,
for the outcasts of our society,
and for those we name here:

A brief silence.

Heal the sick, merciful God:

help us, O Lord.

We pray for a spirit of respect the world's religions,
for wisdom concerning the many houses of prayer,
and for guidance where religion serves as an arm of the government:

A brief silence.

Direct all people of faith, gracious God:

help us, O Lord.

We pray for schools around the globe,
for educators who must plan for the fall,
and for children without the resources to [access remote](#) learning:

A brief silence.

Guide us, compassionate God:

help us, O Lord.

We pray, finally, for ourselves,
for whenever we feel tormented by demons,
and for all our family and friends:

A longer period of silence.

loving God:

help us, O Lord.

We mourn the deaths of those we love,
and we praise you for the lives of all your faithful people.
At the end, gather us all into the joy of your presence.

A brief silence.

Grant us salvation, eternal God:

help us, O Lord.

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

Amen.

Offering

Please remember to mail in your offerings so that Grace can continue to serve you.

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.**

If you have a hymnal (or using the graphic below), you might now sing or read "Jesus Shall Reign" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 434); "Oh, For a Thousand Tongues to Sing" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 886).

[Jesus Shall Reign \(Harmony\)](#)

[Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing \(Harmony\)](#)

Then conclude with these prayers:

Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Almighty God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless us now and forever.

Amen.

Due to copyright restrictions, we are only able provide downloadable hymns that are in the public domain. Other suggestions provided above may be found in Evangelical Lutheran Worship. To purchase a copy of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* for the home, visit the [Augsburg Fortress website](#) or call 1-800-328-4648.

Devotional Music Links: For your individual or group devotion, you may choose to listen to the following choral recordings made available through Augsburg Fortress: "[May God Bestow on Us Grace](#)," "[Creating God Your Fingers Trace](#)," "[When to the World the Savior Came](#)."

Readings for the Week:

Monday Psalm 87. **Tuesday** Romans 11:13-20. **Wednesday** Matthew 8:1-13. **Thursday** (commemoration of Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux, died 1153) Psalm 138. **Friday** Ezekiel 31:15-18. **Saturday** Ezekiel 36:33-38. **Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost** Isaiah 51:1-6; Psalm 138; Romans 12:1-8; Matthew 16:13-20.

Daily Prayer Resources are available, including simple forms of Morning, Evening, and Night Prayer; Responsive Prayer; and prayers for mealtimes and other occasions.

Reflection material: Gordon Lathrop. Intercessory Prayer: Gail Ramshaw

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Please keep in your prayers this week: Kevin Johnson, Barbara Metzger, Rob Johnson and Steve Lindberg (Streeter Family Friend's & Kin), Noah Klenken (Fred Fixsen's Nephew), Cal Curtis & Patty Thompson (Carole Holten's Son-in-Law & Sister), Bill Warner, David Warner, Emily (Ben & Casey's Daughter), Terry Newgard, Judy Wingses.

Pastor Bill Sass – Sermon for Sunday, August 9, 2020

"Get Out Of That Boat!"

Matthew 14:22-33

Gerald Hill, a Baptist pastor in Powderly, Texas, tells about a friend of his who was serving a mission church in Alaska. The water was so bad in that Alaskan community that a thick red scum would appear over the top of it. This little mission congregation was in the process of building a new church building. Since this was a Baptist church, the baptistery (a small pool in the sanctuary) was installed and being used even though the building was not complete.

On one occasion, the baptistery had been filled, and the red scum had appeared. It would be skimmed off on Sunday morning before the service began. The building inspector happened to show up and began to inspect the premises. "What is this red rug doing back here?" he asked as he stepped onto the red scum, and immediately he went out of sight into the baptistery! True story. I guess the message is that people can't walk on water! Not ordinary people anyway! And that is exactly the point of this story from Matthew's gospel: JESUS WAS NO ORDINARY MAN, AND THE EFFECT HE CAN HAVE ON THE LIVES OF THOSE WHO TRUST HIM IS DRAMATIC. Consider the setting. The disciples are out in a boat. A storm has come up suddenly and unexpectedly, and the disciples are afraid. This is a critical element of the story. JESUS COMES TO US TOO WHEN WE ARE TROUBLED AND FEELING HELPLESS.

Fear is a terrible thing, isn't it? Max Anders in his book THE GOOD LIFE tells about watching a television program when he was a kid, in which a huckster went from town to town with a huge rattlesnake in a glass cage. The man would cover the glass with a blanket, and take it into a saloon. There he would tell the people what was under the blanket in the cage and would bet that the toughest, bravest man in town would not be able to hold his hand against the glass without jerking it back when the rattlesnake struck.

Well, the townspeople went wild with excitement. After deciding who they thought was the toughest, bravest man in town, they went to tell him about the bet. Of course, having everyone choose him as the toughest, bravest man in town made it impossible for the guy to resist the challenge. So he went to the saloon where all the folks bet on him.

After all bets were taken, the huckster tore the blanket off to reveal the biggest most menacing, evil-eyed reptile ever seen by man. Annoyed by the light and noise, the snake coiled to strike, his rattles buzzing nervously.

The toughest, bravest man broke out in a cold sweat. But prodded by the townspeople, he moved his hand toward the glass. The snake coiled even tighter. Slowly, the man inched his hand toward the glass and finally touched it. As he did, the snake struck with fury. And reflexively, the toughest, bravest man jerked his hand away. A stunned silence fell over the saloon. No one could believe it. The man looked around in anguish and humiliation, then stormed from the saloon. The huckster collected his money and left town before the defeated man had a chance to collect his courage, and come after him. Then the con artist moved on to the next town to repeat the scene and, once again, win the bet. He almost always won.

Why? Because no matter how big and brave and tough the frontiersmen were, the threat of that striking reptile through the invisible glass was a fearsome thing. The only thing between them and certain death was a thin pane of glass. The huckster knew it would hold, they did not trust it. The huckster knew there was nothing to fear except fear itself, and he played on that fear to make his living.

Yes, fear is a terrible thing. And sometimes it is so subtle. In his book THE COMMON TABLE, John Cowan tells about a young priest friend of his who took over temporary responsibility for the most affluent Episcopal church in the state of Minnesota. But, he was puzzled about church meetings. On the surface, all was well: a perfectly fine group of well-to-do people doing their best to do what was best. But he had the feeling something was going on, that he didn't understand. Unable to bear the ambiguity any longer, he asked an older priest who had been associated with the parish for several years what he was sensing, but could not name. The older priest said, "Try the word fear."

That was it! Everything made sense if he took as his basic assumption that most of these folks were scared out of their wits. Sure, they were well-to-do. They were presidents of this and vice presidents of that, leading politicians, income-producing brokers, insurance agents, restaurateurs. They owned expensive cars, homes with pools, club memberships, condos in Aspen, and homes in Florida, and they were all scared silly because they lived on the edge of the cliff. One mistake, one change in management, one recessionary cycle, and the paycheck that supported all that wealth could slip away, causing them to lose their lifestyle, and along with that, their right to belong to their community of friends. Frayed collars, and secondhand dresses weren't appreciated at this church. And what it was, was fear.

To be sure, fear is a terrible thing. And if statistics compiled by the American Kennel Club are any indication, fear is becoming more pervasive all the time. Yes, I said The American Kennel Club. According to their records in 1975, cuddly poodles were the most popular purebred dog in America. There were only 952 registered Rottweilers, a fierce breed often used as a guard dog. By 1994, the poodle population had been cut in half while Rottweilers had increased 100 times. I guess we could say that America is not only going to the dogs—but mean dogs at that! We are a fearful people—fear of crime, fear of losing our jobs, our health, etc. How we need the reassurance that comes from knowing when our hearts are troubled and we feel most helpless that Christ comes to us. CHRIST COMES ACROSS THE TROUBLED WATER AND SAYS TO US, “DON’T BE AFRAID, IT IS I.” AND HE BECKONS US TO LEAVE THE SECURITY OF THE BOAT AND WALK ON THE WATER.

I don’t know what walking on the water would mean for you. It means different things to different people. A mother wrote in to READERS DIGEST sometime back to tell about her son, Nathaniel, who was a freshman in high school. Nathaniel was discussing the upcoming “Military Ball” with his friend Jason. Since both boys were JROTC cadets, their attendance was mandatory, but taking a date was optional. When Nathaniel asked Jason if he planned to invite anyone, the would-be military officer replied, “Look, Nat, I could go to war. But I could never ask a girl for a date.” For Nathaniel, getting out of the boat and walking on the water might mean asking a girl for a date.

For Elizabeth Blackwell, it meant something entirely different. Elizabeth wanted to become a doctor in the 1840’s. At that time, medical schools were just for men. Elizabeth Blackwell had to fight just to get in. Finally, at one school, Geneva College of Medicine in New York, the students voted to let her in as a joke. But the head of the school didn’t know it was supposed to be a joke, and he let her in.

When she got there, the students made fun of her. They refused to share their notes with her. Some professors even tried to keep her out of their classes. She refused to give up. In 1849, she graduated at the head of her class. When no hospital would allow her to practice, she opened her own hospital. Then she opened a medical school to train women. Elizabeth Blackwell “got out of the boat” and walked on the water, you could say.

In the book, A 2ND HELPING OF CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE SOUL, Bill Sanders writes of a young neighbor named Nikki who learned to walk on the water. When Nikki was in the seventh grade, she was diagnosed with leukemia. Nikki went through the necessary chemotherapy and the resulting loss of hair. To be different as a seventh grader is a kind of death.

Without hair, Nikki was very different from her peers. She was a generally popular girl, but still she faced hurdles. Kids would sneak up behind her and snatch her wig off. People would stare and laugh. No one would sit with her in the cafeteria or in math class, and the lockers on either side of hers had been vacated. Nikki told her neighbor, Bill, that she could handle losing her hair. And with her faith in God, she could handle losing her life. But the hardest part of her illness was losing her friends.

Nikki’s parents had given her permission to stay out of school, but then Nikki changed her mind. She had heard a story about a seventh grader in Arkansas who was bullied for bringing his Bible to school. The boy handed his Bible to his biggest tormentor, and he said, “Here, see if you’ve got enough courage to carry this around school just one day.” Those three bullies became his three friends.

Another story that affected Nikki was of a boy from Ohio named Jimmy. Ohio didn’t have a state motto, so Jimmy wrote a proposed state motto, then set up a petition to get the motto approved by the state. Jimmy got enough signatures to take his petition to the State Legislature. Because of Jimmy, Ohio’s official motto is, “All things are possible with God.” Anyway...

Nikki set out for school the next Monday as usual. Her parents drove her. When she got to school, Nikki hugged and kissed both her parents. Then she said, “Mom and Dad, guess what I’m doing to do today?” Her eyes began to tear up. “Today, I’m going to find out who my best friend is. Today, I’m going to find out who my real friends are.”

Then Nikki took off her wig and set it on the car seat. "They take me for who I am, Daddy, or they don't take me at all. I don't have much time left. I've got to find out who they are today." Then Nikki asked for her parent's prayers, and she walked into the school. Not a single person bullied her, or taunted her.

I don't know what walking on water would be for you. Going back to school? Asking for that promotion? Inviting your next door neighbor to come to a Bible study or church with you? All I'm saying is, don't let fear defeat you. You have a friend, who comes to you in your hour of greatest need and says, "Don't be afraid, you can do it. Step out of the boat, and walk on the water with me."

AMEN

"S.D.G."

Worship at
9:00 am on
Aug. 16th,
here at
Church.