

Sunday, August 26, 2018
14th Sunday after Pentecost

PRELUDE

“Down to the River to Pray”
Shelbey Guffey
Carter Humphreys

***GATHERING SONG**

“For the Beauty of the Earth” vv. 1, 2, 4

ELW 879

For the beauty of the earth,
for the beauty of the skies,
for the love which from our birth
over and around us lies:

Refrain

Christ, our God, to thee we raise
this our sacrifice of praise.

For the wonder of each hour
of the day and of the night,
hill and vale and tree and flow'r,
sun and moon and stars of light: ***Refrain***

For the joy of human love,
brother, sister, parent, child,
friends on earth and friends above;
for all gentle thoughts and mild: ***Refrain***

***GREETING**

P *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

G **And also with you.**

***PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P *Holy God,*

G **your word feeds your people with life that is eternal. Direct our choices and preserve us in your truth, that, renouncing what is false and evil, we may live in you, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen!**

SPECIAL MUSIC

“Amazing Grace”
Shelbey Guffey
Carter Humphreys

FIRST READING

Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18

In the Near East, covenant means agreement or alliance. It describes relationships and is the primary word used to characterize the relationship between God and Israel. By delivering Israel, God has already begun the relationship. Joshua calls upon the people to respond.

¹Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God. ^{2a}And Joshua said to all the people, ¹⁴“Now therefore revere the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. ¹⁵Now if you are unwilling to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

¹⁶Then the people answered, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; ¹⁷for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight. He protected us along all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed; ¹⁸and the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God.”

Reflection

This text is from Joshua’s farewell address before his death after the conquest of the lands that God had promised to Israel. To whom does he speak? (verse 1) Whose voice does he speak in? (verse 2a) What does he urge the people to do? (verse 14) The urging to “put away” the gods that their ancestors served may come as a surprise if you read the rest of Joshua, but it isn’t a surprise to those of us who have been reading the prophets. Who does Joshua want the people to serve? What does he say to those who don’t want to follow his advice and serve the Lord? (verse 15) Does this surprise you? What is his choice for himself and his family? How do the people respond? (verse 16) Why do they say they will make this choice? (verses 17-18) How did that turn out? Why do you think that they might serve other gods? Why is it difficult to serve God only? In what ways are you tempted to serve other gods? What gods are most difficult to give up in order to serve God alone?

Psalm 34:15-22

¹⁵The eyes of the LORD are up- | on the righteous,
and God’s ears are open | to their cry.

¹⁶**The face of the LORD is against those | who do evil,
to erase the remembrance of them | from the earth.**

¹⁷The righteous cry, and | the LORD hears them
and delivers them from | all their troubles.

¹⁸**The LORD is near to the | brokenhearted
and saves those whose spir- | its are crushed.**

¹⁹Many are the troubles | of the righteous,
but the LORD delivers them from | every one.

²⁰**God will keep safe | all their bones;
not one of them | shall be broken.**

²¹Evil will bring death | to the wicked
and those who hate the righteous | will be punished.

²²O LORD, you redeem the life | of your servants,
and those who put their trust in you will | not be punished.

Reflection

This is the third week we have read Psalm 34. In this section of the psalm, the psalmist reminds the people why we should worship the Lord alone. (verse 15) What happens to us when we worship a god other than the Lord? (verse 16) Does following the Lord mean that we will never experience trouble or difficulty? (verses 17-19) What is the promise of God when we do experience trouble, when our spirits are crushed? Even though it seems like evil is winning, the psalmist assures us that ultimately the Lord will help those who trust in God. (verses 20-22) I know I often experience difficulty and troubles, and I worship with people who do, but who trust in the Lord. How do you experience difficulty in life and God's help?

SECOND READING

Ephesians 6:10-20

Like a general giving a rousing speech to troops before battle, this letter closes by calling on Christians to be equipped for spiritual warfare against evil. The full armor of God includes truth, righteousness, peace, faith, the gift of salvation, and the word of God inspired by the Spirit.

¹⁰Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹²For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. ¹⁵As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. ¹⁶With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. ¹⁹Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

Reflection

This text continues the theme of struggling against evil and lack of faith in God, the Father of Jesus Christ. What is the author's exhortation? (verse 10) We often hear, especially in our culture, that we need to be strong on our own. In contrast, who does the writer of Ephesians say we need to depend on for strength? (verse 11) Why does it not work to depend on our own strength? (verse 12) Who are the rulers, the authorities, the "cosmic powers" and the "spiritual forces of evil"? I think of the powers many struggle against, such as addiction, poverty, racism, and those who use those powers to keep people in bondage. What powers do you experience struggling with? The author repeatedly uses the words "to stand," in verses 11, 13, 14. There are many times we might want to turn and run away, or to sink down in surrender to evil. What gives us the strength to stand firm? What is the armor that we are to put on? (verses 14-17)

How will the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes that make us ready to proclaim the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of foundation, and the sword of the Spirit help us to withstand the fake news that we might as well just give in and go along. As you take up these things, notice the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Which words of God help you most? Is there a Bible verse, or a story, or a hymn that comes to you and gives you the strength of the armor of God in times of trouble? How does prayer for one another and for yourself help in those times?

***GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

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**Alleluia. Lord, to whom shall we go?
You have the words of eternal life. Alleluia.
Alleluia, alleluia. Alleluia.
Alleluia, alleluia.**

***GOSPEL**

John 6:56-69

The “hard saying” that offends Jesus’ disciples is his claim that his followers must eat his flesh and drink his blood. The followers who return to their old lives know something about how odd this sounds. Simon Peter, on the other hand, knows something about the scarcity of living, gracious words. He asks the most important question: “To whom shall we go?”

[Jesus said,] ⁵⁶“Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. ⁵⁷Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. ⁵⁸This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever.” ⁵⁹He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

⁶⁰When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?” ⁶¹But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, “Does this offend you? ⁶²Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? ⁶³It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ⁶⁴But among you there are some who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. ⁶⁵And he said, “For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.”

⁶⁶Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. ⁶⁷So Jesus asked the twelve, “Do you also wish to go away?” ⁶⁸Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”

Reflection

This text is the last one in the “bread of life” chapter of John. I know that many preachers go on vacation in August, so they won’t have to preach four weeks in a row about Jesus as the bread of life. I think Roger has done a splendid job of taking on this challenge! In this text we hear again Jesus saying that he is the bread of life, and that those who eat his flesh and drink his blood will live in him, and that’s the only way. Where did he speak things things? (verse 59) Why do you think that is important? Who was listening to him? (verse 60) What was their response to this teaching of Jesus? What does their response reveal to Jesus (and to us) about

their faith? (verses 61-64) Do we choose Jesus? (verse 65) How do we come to faith in Jesus? Like the people of Israel to whom Joshua spoke his last words, many of the people who had been following Jesus gave it up. (verse 66) What happens when we turn away from Jesus? (verse 58) What is the response of the twelve when he asks them if they also will leave? (verses 67-69) How did they remain faithful? Or did they? How does Simon Peter's response help us to stand in faith?

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Kris Langdon

SERMON

**Bread of Life
*Kicking Junk Food***

Rev. Roger Lenander

SONG OF THE DAY

"Will You Come and Follow Me"

ELW 798

vv. 1-2 All, v. 3 Men, v. 4 Women, v. 5 All

"Will you come and follow me
if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown
in you and you in me?

"Will you leave yourself behind
if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind
and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare,
should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer pray'r
in you and you in me?

"Will you let the blinded see
if I but call your name?
Will you set the pris'ners free
and never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean,
and do such as this unseen,
and admit to what I mean
in you and you in me?

"Will you love the you you hide
if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside
and never be the same?

A brief silence.

That God bless the church universal in every place, inspiring strength and courage to boldly proclaim the mystery of the gospel, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

That God the creator bless wild animals and family pets, prairies and kitchen gardens, beaches and sandboxes, mountains and hearths, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

That God spread the gospel throughout the nations of the world, announcing the words of eternal life to peoples in every land and country, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

That God remember the poor and the brokenhearted and rescue all those in trouble and heal those who may be ill *especially Irene, Alivia, David, Lisa and her baby Lara, Klaire, and Dorothy, Linda, Kay*, and for those we name before you aloud or silently in our hearts (pause for 10 seconds), let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

That God protect members of this congregation along all our ways and empower us to serve Christ in sincerity and faithfulness, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

That God redeem the lives of those who have served in the faith and raise them up, according to the promises of Jesus Christ, the bread that nourishes eternal life, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

Almighty and loving God, we look to you in hope and trust, knowing that you will do far more than we can ask or imagine, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen!

***SHARING OF THE PEACE**

☞ *The peace of Christ be with you always.*

☞ **And also with you!**

OFFERTORY

"I Am the Bread Of Life"

Chorus

I am the Bread of Life

All who eat this Bread will never die

I am God's love revealed

I am broken that you might be healed

All who eat of this heavenly Bread

All who drink this cup of the covenant

You will live forever

For I will raise you up *Chorus*

No one who comes to Me shall ever hunger again
No one who believes shall ever thirst
All that the Father draws shall come to Me
And I will give them rest *Chorus*

***OFFERTORY RESPONSE** *(The final chorus of "I Am The Bread Of Life")*

***OFFERING PRAYER**

P *Merciful God,*

C **you open wide your hand and satisfy the need of every living thing. You have set this feast before us. Open our hands to receive it. Open our hearts to embrace it. Open our lives to live it. We pray this through Christ our Lord. Amen!**

***DIALOGUE**

P *The Lord be with you.*

C **And also with you.**

P *Lift up your hearts.*

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

P *Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.*

C **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

***PREFACE**

P *It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
that we should at all times and in all places
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,
through our Savior Jesus Christ;
who on this day overcame death and the grave,
and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life.
And so, with all the choirs of angels,
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:*

***HOLY, HOLY, HOLY**

**Holy, holy, holy Lord God,
God of might and power;
holy is the Lord.**

**Holy, holy, holy Lord God,
God of might and power;
holy is the Lord.**

**Hosanna in the highest,
hosanna here on earth.**

Blest is he who comes

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in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest,
hosanna here on earth.
Blest is he who comes
in the name of the Lord.

***THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE**

P *In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.*

*Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.*

***LORD'S PRAYER**

P *Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.*

G **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!**

***INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

P *Come, let us eat, for now the feast is spread.*

***BLESSING**

P *The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and
keep you in his grace.*

G **Amen!**

***PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

P *Jesus Christ, host of this meal,*

C **you have given us not only this bread and cup, but your very self, that we may feast on your great love. Filled again by these signs of your grace, may we hunger for your reign of justice, may we thirst for your way of peace, for you are Lord forevermore. Amen!**

***BENEDICTION**

P *May God, whose power working in us
can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine,
grant you the gifts of faith and hope.*

*Almighty God, Father, \mp Son, and Holy Spirit,
bless you now and forever.*

C **Amen!**

***SENDING SONG**

“Welcome Table”

**I’m a-goin’-a eat at the welcome table,
I’m a-goin’-a eat at the welcome table,
some of these days.**

**I’m a-goin’-a eat at the welcome table,
I’m goin’-a eat at the welcome table,
some of these days.**

**I’m a-goin’-a feast on milk and honey,
I’m a-goin’-a feast on milk and honey,
some of these days.**

**I’m a-goin’-a feast on milk and honey,
I’m goin’-a feast on milk and honey,
some of these days.**

**I’m a-goin’-a wade ’cross Jordan’s river,
I’m a-goin’-a wade ’cross Jordan’s river,
some of these days.**

**I’m a-goin’-a wade ’cross Jordan’s river,
I’m goin’-a wade ’cross Jordan’s river,
some of these days.**

**I’m goin’-a wade ’cross Jordan’s river,
some of these days.**

***DISMISSAL**

P *Go in peace. The Spirit sends us forth to serve.*

C **Thanks be to God!**