

Worship
The Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost
August 23, 2020

Introduction

In Isaiah the people are advised to look to their spiritual ancestors as the rock from which they were hewn. Jesus declares that the church will be built on the rock of Peter's bold confession of faith. God's word of reconciliation and God's mercy are keys to the church's mission. Paul urges us to not be conformed to this world but to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, using our individual gifts to build up the body of Christ. From the table we go forth to offer our spiritual worship through word and deed.

Gathering/Announcements

P. = Pastor **W.** = Worship Assistant **A.** = All in attendance

Prelude: "Abide with Me" *C H H Parry*

Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness

P. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

A. Amen.

P. Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

(silence for self-examination)

P. Gracious God,

A. have mercy on us. We confess that we have turned from you and given ourselves into the power of sin. We are truly sorry and humbly repent. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things we have done and things we have failed to do. Turn us again to you, and uphold us by your Spirit, so that we may live and serve you in newness of life through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

P. In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

A. Amen.

Opening Hymn # 619 "I Know That My Redeemer Lives!"

Duke Street

1. I know that my Redeemer lives!
What comfort this sweet sentence gives!
He lives, he lives, who once was dead:
He lives, my everliving head!

8. He lives, all glory to his name!
He lives, my Savior, still the same;
What joy this blest assurance gives:
I know that my Redeemer lives!

Greeting

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

Kyrie (said)

- W.** Have mercy on us, Lord, and hear our solemn prayer.
A. We come to hear your living word; it saves us from despair.
- W.** Have mercy on us, Christ, and wash away our sin.
A. Pour out your grace and make us whole that new life may begin.
- W.** Have mercy on us, Lord, make sin and shame depart.
A. Renew us with your saving pow'r; create in us new hearts!

Canticle of Praise (said)

- A. Come, let us join our cheerful songs with angels round the throne; ten thousand thousand are their tongues, but all their joys are one.**

**"Worthy the Lamb that died," they cry, "to be exalted thus!"
"Worthy the Lamb," our lips reply, "for he was slain for us!"**

**Jesus is worthy to receive honor and pow'r divine;
and blessings, more than we can give, be, Lord, forever thine.**

**Let all creation join in one to bless the sacred name
of God who sits upon the throne, and to adore the Lamb.**

The Prayer of the Day

P. Let us pray.

P. O God, with all your faithful followers of every age, we praise you, the rock of our life. Be our strong foundation and form us into the body of your Son, that we may gladly minister to all the world, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

A. Amen.

First Reading: Isaiah 51:1-6

Just as God had called Abraham and Sarah and given them many descendants, so now God offers comfort to Zion. God's deliverance will come soon and will never end.

W. ¹Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek the LORD.

Look to the rock from which you were hewn,
and to the quarry from which you were dug.

²Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you;
for he was but one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many.

³For the LORD will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places,
and will make her wilderness like Eden,
her desert like the garden of the LORD;
joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song.

⁴Listen to me, my people, and give heed to me, my nation;
for a teaching will go out from me,
and my justice for a light to the peoples.

⁵I will bring near my deliverance swiftly, my salvation has gone out
and my arms will rule the peoples;
the coastlands wait for me, and for my arm they hope.

⁶Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath;
for the heavens will vanish like smoke,
the earth will wear out like a garment,
and those who live on it will die like gnats;
but my salvation will be forever, and my deliverance will never be ended.

W. The Word of the Lord.

A. Thanks be to God.

Psalm: Psalm 138

W. ¹I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with | my whole heart;
before the gods I will | sing your praise.

A. ²**I will bow down toward your holy temple and praise your name,
because of your steadfast | love and faithfulness;
for you have glorified your name and your word a- | bove all things.**

W. ³When I called, you | answered me;
you increased my | strength within me.

- A.** ⁴**All the rulers of the earth will praise | you, O LORD, when they have heard the words | of your mouth.**
- W.** ⁵They will sing of the ways | of the LORD,
that great is the glory | of the LORD.
- A.** ⁶**The LORD is high, yet cares | for the lowly, perceiving the haughty | from afar.**
- W.** ⁷Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you | keep me safe;
you stretch forth your hand against the fury of my enemies; your right | hand shall save me.
- A.** ⁸**You will make good your pur- | pose for me; O LORD, your steadfast love endures forever; do not abandon the works | of your hands.**

Second Reading: Romans 12:1-8

In response to God's merciful activity, we are to worship by living holistic, God-pleasing lives. Our values and viewpoints are not molded by the time in which we live but are transformed by the Spirit's renewing work. God's grace empowers different forms of service among Christians, but all forms of ministry function to build up the body of Christ.

W. ¹I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

³For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, ⁵so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.

⁶We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ⁷ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; ⁸the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

W. The Word of the Lord.
A. Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

A. Alleluia. You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Alleluia.
(Matt. 16:16)

The Gospel

P. The holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 16th chapter.

A. Glory to you, O Lord.

Gospel: Matthew 16:13-20

At a climactic point in Jesus' ministry, God reveals to Peter that Jesus is "the Messiah, the Son of the living God," and Jesus responds with the promise of a church that will overcome the very gates of Hades.

¹³Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

¹⁷And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."²⁰Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

P. The Gospel of the Lord.

A. Praise to You, O Christ.

The Sermon

"Your Choice"

A cartoon in The New Yorker magazine a number of years ago showed two Russian comrades walking around the outside of the Kremlin. The caption has one comrade saying to the other, "In a democracy it would be nothing but choice, choice, choice all the time."

Not only in a democracy is that the case but in life generally it is choice all the time. And we know that choice is not only inescapable but often difficult. It is both inescapable and difficult because we recognize how very important the matter of choice is.

If you think about it for a moment, you can see its importance. Choices confront us at every step of our way through life. We must choose an occupation, select a spouse to be with us, determine a place to live, make the choices which are part of being citizens in a democracy, and the list could go on and on - big decisions and small ones.

And the choices, once they are made, forge a person's basic character and one's life. Now, while choice always confronts us, there are times when it takes on special significance. We can see this in our Gospel lesson for today. Knowledge about Christ and his mission had spread.

Teachings which were quite different from what had formerly been heard had come from his lips. Healings had taken place. Happenings which were hard to understand had occurred, notably the feeding of the 5,000 and the 4,000.

In disturbing fashion, Christ had rebuked the scribes and Pharisees - the religious leaders of his day. It required no great insight to see that the forces of opposition were joining against him and so against his faithful followers.

Were these followers prepared to face this kind of assault? This is what had to be determined - where did his followers stand - what did they believe?

And so Christ, when he came to the district of Caesarea Philippi sought to assess the strength of his followers. The discussion began comfortably enough. "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" Christ asked. And the answer could be given quickly.

The disciples had only to report what people were saying about Christ - that he was John the Baptist, Elijah or Jeremiah or one of the other prophets. Such answers were easy to give and safe to advance. But Christ would not let the matter rest in such comfort. The focus was then narrowed.

"But who do YOU say that I am? Now that is a real question! That put each of the disciples really on the spot. "But who do YOU say that I am?" What would be your response if Christ asked YOU that question? - - -

Now, I doubt that Christ asked that question because he was concerned about HIS REPUTATION! He asked it, rather, I think because he was concerned about HIS DISCIPLES. He had come into the world as the Savior, the Messiah, and he knew this.

Nothing the disciples could say, nothing that the whole world could say, could ever change this fact. His role among humanity would not be altered by any opinion poll; his saviorhood, his messiahship, did not depend upon a vote - a vote of his disciples, or of anyone else.

It is apparent, however, that WHO his disciples believed him to be was a matter of immense importance to him.

What they believed was important to him because THEY were important to him, and because the whole of creation - including you and me - are important to him.

What his followers believed concerning him would make a difference to them and to the world, and Christ was concerned about that difference, and he continues to be concerned about that difference.

You see, what you believe and the type of relationship that you have with God, will make a difference in your life and in the life of others. For you see, what you believe about Christ will determine your values, your attitudes, your actions, and it will determine your future.

That is why the reading and study of Scripture - which is the Word of God - is so essential to one's life. That is why it is so important to strengthen and deepen your relationship to God NOW through worship, prayer, and Christian education.

And when we read Scripture, listen to Scripture, study Scripture, and thus discern and learn the will of God **then** we need to go and do what should be done! Jesus Christ is now physically gone from our midst - that is why He says what He does to Peter and to us: we are now His representatives and we have to make decisions about life in his physical absence.

Too often, though, we find ourselves like the small town farmer and the railroad - story that I have shared before. This railroad was planning to close a little used spur. However, there was such an uproar that a town meeting was called at which the president of the railroad was present.

A farmer stood up and said the spur was vital to the town's economic health. "How often do you use the line, sir, to ship your crops?" he was asked by the president. "Never, I send them nowadays by truck."

"Do you use the train to travel as a passenger?" "Well no, the last time I was a passenger on the train was 10 years ago." The president then responded: "Then why do you think this unprofitable spur line should be kept open? Why is it so vital to the town?"

"For crying out loud," shouted the farmer, "every night I walk down to the tracks to watch the train go by. It's my recreation!"

For us, the parallel is clear: no one would think of abolishing the Ten Commandments; heavens, that's unheard of! And we have to follow the Beatitudes - after all what Christ has to say is vitally important. But is it - to you? Do we take seriously the teachings of God?

When push comes to shove and we need to exercise those commandments and beliefs, well, do we??? Indeed Christ is the source of authority - but only if we - as his followers - accept that authority, understand it, and follow it.

And that is the real nub of the matter. All too many want to live as they please, pick and choose from Christ's teachings what is appropriate and relevant for them, decide where God is really right and where he really isn't, and keep putting off any real commitment to God and His will, that is, until some time in the future when it's more convenient.

Thus, who do YOU say that Christ is? For you see, it is true that what you believe about Christ will make a difference in your life and your living, and it will definitely make a difference about your future! Amen.

The peace of God that passes all human understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Hymn of the Day # 629

"Abide with Me"

Eventide

1. Abide with me, fast falls the eventide.
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me.

5. Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes,
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies;
Heav'n's morning breaks and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

Peace

P. The peace of Christ be with you always.

A. **And also with you.**

The Apostles' Creed

P. Let us now confess our faith with the words of the Apostles' Creed.

**A. 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 into hell,
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.**

Prayers of Intercession

W. Let us pray.

W. Confident of your care and helped by the Holy Spirit, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

W. Lord our rock, you are our foundation in Jesus Christ, your Son, whom we confess as the living God. Prepare your church for its mission in bearing witness to Christ, both here at home and throughout the world. Lord, in your mercy,

A. hear our prayer.

W. You call forth praises from the far reaches of the universe to the smallest of creatures. Join our songs to theirs, that a spirit of praise and thanksgiving will arouse us to cherish this wondrous home you give us. Lord, in your mercy,

A. hear our prayer.

W. All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O Lord. Direct the leaders of countries, legislators and magistrates, mayors and councils, to walk in your ways. Help leaders regard those in need with mercy and fulfill your loving purposes in the governance of peoples. Lord, in your mercy,

A. hear our prayer.

W. Though we walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve us, deliver us, and fulfill your purpose for us. According to your steadfast love, grant healing and wholeness to those who are bereaved, in trouble or adversity, or sick and in need of care *especially **Pat Brick, Merlinda Bisese, Denise and Pat Wylie, Kenneth Shoemaker, and Carol Miller, those suffering from the coronavirus, and those whom we now name in our hearts before You . .***
.. Lord, in your mercy,

A. hear our prayer.

W. You call us into this community, in which we, though many, are one in Christ. May we recognize in ourselves and in one another the unique gifts you have given us for the building up of the church for the sake of the world. Lord, in your mercy,

A. hear our prayer.

W. We call on your spirit of caring. Be with us as we continue to live through this coronavirus pandemic. Enable our scientists and doctors to find the necessary cures and vaccines so that this pandemic may be overcome and that we may return to a more normal life. May we show Christian compassion as we reach out to those experiencing grief and need during this time. Lord, in your mercy,

A. hear our prayer.

W. You are the everlasting Rock from which we were hewn, and you restore your people to joy and gladness. In blessed memory and hope, we thank you for the lives of our beloved dead. Bring us with them to our heavenly home. Lord, in your mercy,

A. hear our prayer.

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

A. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

P. Lord, remember us in your kingdom and continue to teach us to pray:

**A. Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

Blessing

P. The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.

In the name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

A. Amen.

Dismissal

W. Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

A. Thanks be to God.

Postlude:

"Glorificamus"

John Redford

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