

Worship
The Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost
August 30, 2020

Introduction

The prophet Jeremiah speaks of the incurable wound of his suffering yet finds in God's words the delight of his heart. When Peter doesn't grasp Jesus' words about suffering, Jesus tells the disciples they will find their lives in losing them. Such sacrificial love is described by Paul when he urges us to associate with the lowly and not repay evil with evil. In worship we gather as a community that we might offer ourselves for the sake of our suffering world.

Gathering/Announcements

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

Prelude: "Prelude in F Major" [BWV #553] *Johann Sebastian Bach*

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. God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

A. Amen.

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

Silence is kept for reflection.

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. God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. 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: #631 "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling"

Hyfrydol

1. Love divine, all loves excelling, Joy of heav'n to earth come down!
Fix in us thy humble dwelling, all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love thou art:
Visit us with thy salvation, enter ev'ry trembling heart.

4. Finish then thy new creation, pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see thy great salvation perfectly restored in thee!
Changed from glory into glory, till in heav'n we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love and praise!

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. In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

A. Lord, have mercy.

W. For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

A. Lord, have mercy.

W. For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

A. Lord, have mercy.

W. For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

A. Lord, have mercy.

W. Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

A. Amen.

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.

O God, we thank you for your Son, who chose the path of suffering for the sake of the world. Humble us by his example, point us to the path of obedience, and give us strength to follow your commands, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

A. Amen.

First Reading: Jeremiah 15:15-21

Jeremiah's delight in the word of the LORD is contradicted by the heaviness of God's hand upon him and God's seeming unfaithfulness. God's tough love to Jeremiah says that if he repents, he will be allowed to continue in his strenuous ministry. Jeremiah is strengthened by the simple words, "I am with you."

W. ¹⁵O LORD, you know; remember me and visit me,
and bring down retribution for me on my persecutors.
In your forbearance do not take me away; know that on your account I suffer insult.
¹⁶Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy
and the delight of my heart; for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts.
¹⁷I did not sit in the company of merry-makers, nor did I rejoice;
under the weight of your hand I sat alone, for you had filled me with indignation.
¹⁸Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed?
Truly, you are to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail.

¹⁹Therefore thus says the LORD:
If you turn back, I will take you back, and you shall stand before me.
If you utter what is precious, and not what is worthless,
you shall serve as my mouth.
It is they who will turn to you, not you who will turn to them.
²⁰And I will make you to this people a fortified wall of bronze;
they will fight against you, but they shall not prevail over you, for I am with you
to save you and deliver you, says the LORD.
²¹I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked,
and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless.

W. The Word of the Lord.

A. Thanks be to God.

Psalm: Psalm 26:1-8

W. ¹Give judgment for me, O LORD, for I have lived | with integrity;
I have trusted in the LORD and | have not faltered.

A. ²**Test me, O | LORD, and try me;
examine my heart | and my mind.**

- W.** ³For your steadfast love is before my eyes;
I have walked faithfully with you.
- A.** ⁴**I have not sat | with the worthless,
nor do I consort with | the deceitful.**
- W.** ⁵I have hated the company of | evildoers;
I will not sit down | with the wicked.
- A.** ⁶**I will wash my hands in innocence, O LORD,
that I may go in procession | round your altar,**
- W.** ⁷singing aloud a song | of thanksgiving
and recounting all your wonderful deeds.
- A.** ⁸**LORD, I love the house in | which you dwell
and the place where your glory abides.**

Second Reading: Romans 12:9-21

Paul presents benchmarks for faithful relationships with Christians and non-Christians. Love is the unflagging standard of our behavior. When we encounter evil, we do not resort to its tactics but seek to overcome it with good. While Christians cannot control the actions and attitudes of others, we seek to live at peace with all people.

- W.** ⁹Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; ¹⁰love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. ¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. ¹⁷Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. ¹⁸If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

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

Gospel Acclamation

- A.** *Alleluia.* May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our hearts, so that we may know the hope to which God has called us. *Alleluia.* (*Eph. 1:17, 18*)

The Gospel

- P.** The holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 16th chapter.
A. Glory to you, O Lord.

Gospel: Matthew 16:21-28

After Peter confesses that Jesus is "the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (16:16), Jesus reveals the ultimate purpose of his ministry. These words prove hard to accept, even for a disciple whom Jesus has called a "rock."

P. ²¹From that time on, [after Peter confessed that Jesus was the Messiah,] Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²²And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you."

²³But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

²⁴Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. ²⁶For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?"

²⁷"For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. ²⁸Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

P. The Gospel of the Lord.

A. Praise to You, O Christ.

The Sermon

"Follow Me"

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

What does it mean for 21st century Christians to "take up their crosses?" It's not really part of our world - not only crosses, but the whole idea of sacrifice. We think it's a sacrifice when the remote control is broken for the television and we have to get up to go change the channel ourselves.

We live in a world geared to our convenience and comfort. We have cars with thermostats that automatically keep the car at a comfortable temperature. There are cars that now parallel park on their own. We live in a world of reclining chairs that vibrate to take away the tension of the day.

It's a world of jacuzzis and saunas. Where does a cross fit into all of this?

Do you know what sacrifice really means? Of course, our world is different from the world of Christ and the first disciples. In this country Christians aren't hunted down and fed to lions. We don't risk our lives to come to worship.

We don't have to hide our faith. In fact, it's downright respectable to be part of a church. Maybe not as respectable as it was 40 years ago, but it is still respectable. But the question still remains, are we willing to sacrifice for our faith in Jesus Christ?

We spend time learning how to operate a computer, how to improve our golf swing, how to be a better communicator or cook or handyman . . . but how much time have we spent this past year saying "Yes" to learning how to be a better disciple of Jesus Christ?

I read a thought-provoking article entitled, "If you are 35, You have 500 Days to live." You see, if you subtract the time spent sleeping, working, tending to personal matters, hygiene, odd chores, medical matters, eating, traveling, and miscellaneous time-stealers, in the next 36 years you will have roughly the equivalent of only 500 days left to spend as you wish.

No wonder the Psalmist has advised us: "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom."

Is how we spend our days, and our evenings too, important to us? Do we bring our Christian faith into our daily living?

A young man was being interviewed for a position in a small business firm. The applicant had a neat appearance and made a good impression on the owner. He had also prepared an excellent resume in which he listed his pastor, his Sunday School teacher, and a Congregation Council member as references.

The owner of the business studied the resume for several minutes, then said, "I appreciate these recommendations from your church friends. But what I would really like is a word from someone who knows you on weekdays.

How important is our Christian faith to us in our daily life? How would a person who knows you on weekdays describe your daily life?

How important is our Christian faith to us in our daily life? You know, some people deny their faith if it's a threat to their job. Some put popularity before faithfulness to God. Some put their own reasoning above faithfulness to God.

In our day and age, being true to the Gospel and to our Christian faith may not mean facing death, but it does mean a willingness to risk because of what we believe.

All so often, the natural approach in life is to look for our own comfort and convenience, to look out for one's self, to get what you can while you can.

The divine perspective, however, is to search for God's will first of all, even if that means sacrifice. Indeed, in the long run, for our eternal well-being, it is more important to be true to God than to be successful, or popular, or wealthy.

God's perspective sees us as a part of all God's children. God asks us to look out for each other, not only in our own home, or own congregation, but across the country and around the world.

God looks at us not just as individuals, but in our interactions with the rest of His children. When Peter scolds Christ in our Gospel lesson for today, he is thinking of himself - his own grief and loss - as well as Christ's suffering and pain; but he is not looking at the good of all people.

Anytime a person takes a courageous step - a step they know that Christ would take if he were in their place, they are taking up a cross. Many years ago, the USS Pueblo, a ship from the U.S. Navy, was hijacked by the North Korean military.

The incident provoked deep tension worldwide, provoking a diplomatic and military standoff for several days. The 82 surviving crew members were thrown into a period of brutal captivity. For example, 13 of the captured sailors were forced to sit in a rigid manner around a table.

After several hours of strict immobility the door was flung open and a North Korean guard brutally beat the sailor in the first chair. On the second day this ritual was repeated - the man in the first chair was violently beaten. On the third day it happened again to the same man.

Knowing the man could not survive, another young sailor took his place. When the door was flung open the guard automatically beat the new victim senseless. For weeks, each day a different sailor stepped forward to sit in that horrible chair, knowing full well what would happen. At last the guards gave up in exasperation.

They were unable to beat that kind of sacrificial love. These sailors were taking up a cross. Taking up a cross is a commitment to do those things that bring honor to Christ and that help build his kingdom. Good intentions are not enough. We begin with a decision to be God's man or God's woman.

Then we commit ourselves to doing those things we know that Christ would have us do. Practically for us today, what does it mean for a Christian to sacrifice, to take up their cross and follow Christ? What does it mean to you?

Never forget that sacrificing is an act of love. It shows how deeply we care. And believe it or not, we usually get back far more than we have ever given. Amen.

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

Hymn of the Day # 632 "O God, Our Help in Ages Past"

St. Anne

1. O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home.

6. O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come,
Still be our guard while troubles last and our eternal home.

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. God of faithfulness, you bid your people to follow Jesus. Set the mind of your church on divine things. Grant us trust in you, that we lose our lives for the sake of Christ and thereby discover joy in life through him. Lord, in your mercy,

A. hear our prayer.

W. God of wonder, the earth is yours and all that is in it. Heal your creation and give us eyes to see the world as you do. As the seasons change, pattern the rhythm of our lives in harmony with all creation. Lord, in your mercy,

A. hear our prayer.

W. God of all nations, you call us to live peaceably with all. Give us ears to hear one another, even those we name as enemies. Fill all leaders with mercy and understanding, that they advocate and genuinely care for those who are poor and most vulnerable in their communities. Lord, in your mercy,

A. hear our prayer.

W. God of salvation, you promise to deliver us. Give those who suffer a strong sense of your presence and love. Accompany those who are uncertain, raise the spirits of those who are despairing, and heal the sick *especially **the family and friends of Marlyn Carle, Dave Whitlinger, 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. God of community, you call us to rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, and persevere in prayer. Make our congregation a workshop of your love. When we quarrel, bring reconciliation. Help us overcome evil with good. Lord, in your mercy,

A. hear our prayer.

W. God of healing, 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. God of all grace, you give us everlasting life. In love we recall your holy ones who now live in your undying light. In our remembering, give us a foretaste of the feast to come. 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: "Fugue in F Major" [BWV #553] *Johann Sebastian Bach*

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