

**Kuhn Memorial Presbyterian Church
955 Main St.
Barboursville, West Virginia 25504
Service of Worship
September 13, 2020**

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

***Call to Worship** Psalm 103:1-5

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless God's holy name.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget God's benefits-

who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
who satisfies you with good as long as you live so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

***Affirmation of Faith** The Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,**

**who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius
Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.**

He descended into hell.

**The third day he rose again from the dead, he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the
right hand of God, the Father Almighty.**

From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

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

Call to Confession Psalm 103:8-10

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

The Lord will not always accuse, nor will God be angered forever.

God does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.

Trusting this promise, we boldly confess our sin to God and before one another:

Prayer of Confession

**Lord Jesus, you have declared: Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. You
instruct us to forgive not once, not twice, not seven times, but seventy times seven!**

**Is that possible when we seem to thrive on quarrelling and division and pronounce others
unworthy of our forgiveness? Instead of responding to your grace with gratitude, we
attempt to limit the love you command us to share. Forgive our hard-heartedness. Increase**

our capacity to understand. Increase our community of faith by your boundless reconciling Spirit. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is the Lord's steadfast love toward those who fear God; as far as the east is from the west, so far the Lord removes our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion for his children, so God has compassion for those who fear the Lord. Friends, believe the good news: in Jesus Christ our sins are forgiven. Be at peace. Amen.

Interlude

Time With Young Disciples

Old Testament Reading

Genesis 50:15-21

Gospel Reading

Matthew 18:21-35

The Morning Message

I'm no math wiz. I was so good at Algebra that I took it twice. But, even with my limitations, I can figure out that seventy times seven is a lot. Jesus math says that when a brother or sister sins against us, we are to forgive the offense. Not once. Not twice, but seventy-seven times. Whoa. Like I said, that's a lot of times.

Jesus is asked how many times we should forgive and he launches into this parable about the ungrateful servant. Now, I confess to you that I had a hard time getting past the words "slave" and "servant." I think we have all had our consciences raised in recent months about cultures that enslave and their implications today. And, I believe we should give that serious consideration going forward. Maybe it's not a coincidence that those words appear in our text today. We are experiencing a turbulent time, a time which includes the turbulence of racial tension, if not crisis.

The point Jesus made was that God has witnessed our lives- the good, the bad, and the ugly. And God has lavished mercy upon us, so that we might experience true liberty-freedom from sin. But, he warns us, if we are forgiven, then turn around and exact revenge on the next person who wrongs us, we have evidently not turned from sin, and renounced its power over us, and turned toward God at all.

Have you ever thought about what the word "lavish" means? It comes from the verb, to lave, to wash. When I think of God lavishing love and grace on us, I imagine standing beneath a great waterfall with fresh, cool, sparkling water coursing over my head, my shoulders, flowing over me all the way down to my toes.

Picture yourself standing under that waterfall. After a run or after mowing the lawn. You're hot and sweaty. Thirsty. You stand under the cascading water. How does that make you feel? Clean? Light? Joyful? Refreshed? Free of all baggage? Baggage we can call "sin."

Good. That's how we should feel. Thanks be to God.

And then disaster occurs. Or we are reminded of something catastrophic. The anniversary of 9/11 rolls around as it did Friday. And all those heavy emotions return, most notably grief and anger. What do we do with that? Those feelings are real. They are legitimate.

There are consequences to sin. And the consequences from that fateful day have changed all our lives. Remember the color-coded threat levels? The first time I heard that announced in an airport, while awaiting a flight, I was so filled with fear I was sick. And then when we did finally board, the passenger to my right was a dark-skinned man with a backpack. There we sat. Shoulder-to-shoulder from San Francisco to Columbus.

I've come to believe fear and anger are fraternal twins. Different... but they are born from the same womb. Sometimes, you can get them confused.

Do you think my seat assignment was an accident? I don't. There have been many times since that I've looked back on that long night in the air, when my fears and anger confronted me. I tried to sleep, but sleep wouldn't come. So, I prayed. I prayed that the man next to me wasn't a terrorist planning to hijack the plane. I begged for God's protection, for a sense of God's presence and power and peace.

God did comfort me in those hours. We landed without incident and went our separate ways. All was well. But, was it?

If we applied this parable to the situation, might Jesus have said to me, "You prayed for my protection, my presence, my love. And, you have those things always. What were your prayers for your brother sitting next to you? Is he not worthy of my love and mercy, too?"

When Jesus spoke to the crowd about forgiveness, he wasn't necessarily talking about those little things that may get under our skin but won't ruin our lives. Like, when the garbage collectors don't show up on their scheduled day, or when your Happy Meal comes without the toy. We can let those things go.

But, what about those things we can't let go? We are all subject to things of consequence about which we may have little or no agency. But, we can decide how we will respond. I spoke some

about this a few weeks ago. We are in the midst of a national crisis. That's a fact. And this crisis comes with color-coded threat levels, too. This should be a sign to us.

We've faced national crises before. We've pulled together. Remember when the members of congress stood on the Capitol steps and sang "God Bless America?"

And each year, when that fateful day rolls around, we pause and remember. We light candles, sing patriotic songs, set up art installations like The Healing Fields at Spring Hill Cemetery. We remember lives lost and heroic acts.

Speaking for myself, while I still grieve, the sharp anger and paralyzing fear have diminished over the years. And that is important because the country has to move forward, addressing opportunities and challenges as they come. And they will.

Who here likes to travel? I like to travel and I don't want to panic every time I board a plane. So, it's important to resolve my fear about who is seated on the plane next to me, or behind me, or even piloting the plane. It's also important because our kids attend school with, and we work beside, and live next door to neighbors of different races, cultures, and religions.

And Jesus says our blessings are their blessings, too.

I was watching a Morning Prayer service from the National Cathedral Friday. At the end of the service, there were photos of the beautiful stained glass windows that adorn that awesome place.

One of the windows featured that morning was the Space Window, which is really named the Science and Technology Window. I've stood beneath it a few times and it is breathtaking. Created by Rodney Winslow, the technique used to design and make that window is much different from the other gothic-styled windows in the cathedral. Winslow worked on it for twelve years, tearing up one design plan after another until he was satisfied.

NASA and a number of astronauts consulted on the project. The colors used in the window are especially intense. It is said that every astronaut reports that the colors they see from space are indescribable, otherworldly, like nothing they have ever seen. Crayola doesn't make a shade or hue that captures the beauty seen from high above the earth.

At the center of the window, the focal point, is a white circle. It is very thin and translucent. It is a piece of the moon, over three billion years old, picked up by Neil Armstrong on the Apollo 11 flight in 1969, at the first moon landing. It represents humankind's greatest achievement to date.

Artists like their works to speak for themselves, allowing the viewer to interact with the piece and drawing his or her own meanings from it. When I see that window, I think of all the men and

women whose lives have been dedicated to the space program, their sense of courage and adventure, how they inspired the next generation of exploration. It is set in this massive cathedral, the “house of prayer for all people,” and, to me, serves as a sign that God is eternally calling us into God’s creative plan as it unfolds from age to age.

And that is what I want to leave you with today. We are in difficult times. We are fixated on whether or not schools will be open and if activities can commence. We received lots of messages yesterday about what “color” Cabell County was designated for this coming week. It is yellow, as of 5pm Saturday. Schools will be in session virtually and in-person. I know that is a relief for all of us. It’s a sign that conditions are not degrading. Hang onto that. Do your part like you are today. Do not despair. We are the people who, with God’s help, applied our intelligence, imagination, ingenuity, and grit to land a man on the moon.

And with God’s help, we will land 2020.

Pastoral Prayer and the Lord’s Prayer

Let us turn our hearts and minds to pray.

Let us lift our prayers for the great concerns of the world: for those in distress or danger, for victims of violence, for the trauma of natural disaster, for those suffering the raging wildfires in California and Oregon, for communities struggling under racial conflict, for the nations of the earth, that all in positions of public trust will act wisely for the benefit of all. For those with bitter memories, that they may find consolation in your care, for the neglected and abused, for those who rescue, treat, and heal, for the brave and the strong, and the eternally optimistic. For celebrations, newborn babies, recreational events, for those who share their bread or their churches, for a meal prepared by someone else, a call or note from a loved one. For the needy, sick or troubled, for all caregivers.

And for ourselves, that we may be aware of the gifts of life, the gifts of salvation and grace, the gift of the Church of Jesus Christ, here and around the world.

In Jesus’ name we pray, saying, 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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

***Blessing**

Go out in love,
reconciled to one another in Christ.
Lay aside the works of darkness
and put on the armor of light.

Live honorably,
fulfilling the law through love for all.
And may God mark you out for salvation;
may Christ Jesus be present among you always;
and may the Holy Spirit reconcile you to one another,
and fulfill the law of love among you. *Laughingbird.net*

***Postlude**

Leading worship today: Mr. Mark Baker
Rev. Cinda Harkless

We offer our thanks to the pastor and congregation of Christ the King Lutheran Church for their gracious hospitality while we await the installation of a new heating and air conditioning system at Kuhn Memorial Presbyterian Church.

Your gifts to God's service are important and appreciated. Tithes and offerings may be deposited in the basket at the sanctuary doors as you leave worship.