Worship for June 27, 2021

Prelude

Welcome and announcements

\*Call to Worship

We worship the God who inhabits our world and indwells our lives.

We need not look up to find God…

we need only to look around…

within ourselves…

beyond ourselves…

into the eyes of another.

We need not listen for a distant thunder to find God…

we need only to listen to the music of life…the words of children, the questions of the curious, the rhythm of the heartbeat.

Let us worship the God who inhabits our world and indwells our lives.

Hymn Great Is Thy Faithfulness *Glory to God 39*

Prayer of Confession

God, you know us better than we know ourselves.

You know our thoughts,

our weaknesses,

our sins,

and you love us still.

Forgive us when we don’t believe such love is true or possible,

when we wonder how you could love us just as we are,

When we forget our intricate instruction,

that we are fearfully and wonderfully made…in your image!

Remove from our minds every thought that keeps us from you.

Break down the walls,

push aside the pride,

and help us trust anew.

You know our hearts and you love us still. Amen.

Take, O Take Me As I Am *Glory to God 698*

Take, O take me as I am. Summon out what I shall be.

Set your seal upon my heart and live in me. Repeat.

Assurance of Forgiveness

Nothing is impossible with God.

There is no place you can go,

no end of the earth to which you can run.

There is nothing on earth or beyond death

that can separate us fron the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

You are forgiven and freed to live in God’s infinite love, grace, and peace.

Scripture Reading Lamentations 3:23-33

Moments With Our Young Disciples

Scripture Reading Mark 5:21-43

Morning Message

Sometimes, in spite of good worship and preaching plans, events take place during the week that are so significant, they have to be set aside in order address more relevant and timely issues.

That’s where I found myself this week and what prompts the need for two gospel readings.

On Thursday, we heard and saw images of a tractor-trailer accident on I 64 that spilled its contents onto the road. The contents were a herd of cows that created all kinds of havoc and additional accidents. It presented a huge challenge for local law enforcement and others. I admit, though, it was somewhat amusing. I sent links to the story to my kids in North Carolina. They found humor in it, too, but then they weren’t wrangling cattle that had crossed the bridge and were strolling through Chesapeake.

Later, from a breaking news report, we learned of a condominium collapse in Miami, Florida. It fell in a cloud of dust and rubble, trapping many people inside. The video of the moment of collapse took me right back to 9-11, the moment the twin towers fell, and of the fear and heavy losses the country sustained that day. And with this event, I knew, we knew, that such a catastrophe doesn’t happen in a vacuum. It stuns a multitude while its leaders try to serve a grieving city.

On Friday, we learned the fate of two individuals convicted in major court cases. One in Minnesota and one here in Cabell County. I found myself quite concerned for the moment when the Derek Chauvin verdict was handed down. No one wants a repeat of last summer’s racial unrest. We have much work to do to heal those wounds.

Closer to home, a young man, a neighbor of ours in his childhood, was sentenced for the violent crimes he committed. I felt compelled to reach out to his family, though I had no idea what to do or say. So, I tested the waters with a non-probing, hopefully, text. There were a few exchanges, and I know if they want to speak further, the door is open.

Also that day, I learned that a person in my orbit was suffering a variety of problems, both physical and emotional. At such times I can offer the balm of the Church- the support of our prayers and the blessed assurance we have in God’s eternal presence and love.

In our Mark text, Jesus is summoned to the home of Jairus. This man’s daughter was very sick, close to death. Before Jesus can make his way to her, a woman, who had suffered an illness for twelve years, approaches him. This woman has suffered physical and emotional pain. She has been isolated from her loved ones. She could not go about the town or go to the market, or even serve her family, because, in that day, she was considered unclean. To interact with her would render others unclean, too. Twelve years she endured this.

There’s a gospel song that goes, “Give Me that Old Time Religion, it’s good enough for me.” I say, “ No, thanks!” I, for one, would not want to return to those old-time religious practices.

This woman has lost a lot, but the one thing that can’t be taken from her, is her belief and trust in the power of Jesus. If only she could touch a little bit of his robe, just a little bit of Jesus- she would be healed. She could resume her life.

And that’s just what happened. She acted at great risk. She didn’t announce herself. Jesus did not seek her out. We don’t even know if Jesus was at all aware of her before she touched him. But, Jesus felt the power “go out” from him. She poured out her whole story and Jesus gives her his blessing, saying her faith had made her well.

By the time Jesus has finished his encounter with this woman, report came that the daughter of Jairus had died. Or so they thought. But, Jairus persisted and so did Jesus. Upon entering the place where she lay, Jesus stretched out his hand and simply says, “Talitha cum.” “Little girl, get up!” And to the others, he says, “Give her something to eat.” Dying bodies have no need for food. Only the living. She would live.

These are dramatic stories. Miraculous stories of the power of Jesus to heal, to restore. In each case, we are to believe that the faith and trust of those in need had affected their healing. OK. But, what about the others, throngs of believers, generations deep, who have known, loved and served Jesus? All those who have encountered trouble, trauma, devastating illness, tragedy. What about their faith? Is it defective?

Of course not. Sometimes Jesus restores the health of the sick. But, sometimes this does not happen. Or, at least, we can’t see any of the normal signs of healing. But, that doesn’t mean that we can’t be made whole, at peace with God and accepting of our circumstances.

Here’s where our Matthew text comes thru for us. He urges:   
“Come to me, all you who are heavy-burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

A yoke is a device that is applied to two beasts of burden so that they move together- at the same pace and in the same direction. If one stops to drink, it’s safe to assume, the other also drinks. If one stops to rest, the other does the same.

This is how close Jesus is to us. We do not carry our burden alone. We are yoked to Jesus who helps us carry that heavy load.

I know you probably hear way too much about my grandchildren, but, they do provide good sermon material. Tad, the younger one, has been sick this past week. It started out as restlessness and crying in the night. His parents would comfort him and return him to his bed. After a day or two, a fever developed and an earache. A visit to the doctor was in order. Ear infection, sinus infection, and tonsillitis. Two kinds of antibiotics. And a lot of TLC. Tad still hurts and the medicine upsets his stomach, and he can’t go the neighborhood pool, which he loves. But, just being in the presence or the lap of Mommy or Daddy is all the reassurance Tad needs. He feels better the closer he is to them.

I am aware of some of your burdens. I am aware of the burdens some of you carry for others. Mother Teresa used to say, there is always someone to pray for and there’s always a front step to sweep. It is always appropriate to seek God’s healing and wholeness- for ourselves and all those experiencing brokenness.

It would be great if we could wake up tomorrow and think, “This might just be the best day ever!”

But, in case it’s not, let me offer this prayer for all of us:

Lord, I want to be made well.

I reach for the hem of your garment,

and there I find those who clothe me with love,

and deep listening,

and encouragement,

and wisdom,

and gentle correction,

just as you would.

I ask for your hands on me

and I get hugs,

and emails,

and texts with GIFs,

and prayers said on my behalf,

as if they had come directly from you.

Though others take me by the hand

and feed me spiritual and physical food

that revives my soul and body.

out of the abundance of the health you offer.

May I share your peace widely. Laura Stephens-Reed

\*Affirmation of Faith The Apostles’ Creed  *Glory to God p. 35*

Gloria Patri *Glory to God 581*

Sharing Our Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer and the Lord’s Prayer

Presenting Our Gifts of Tithe and Offering

Prayer of Dedication

\*Blessing

Go now, with your hope set on Jesus Christ.

Let the Spirit guide you.

Let your righteousness shine like the sun until darkness and light are one.

And wherever you go,

whether you scale the highest heavens or plunge to the depths,

may God’s presence be known to you,

may Christ Jesus welcome you into his embrace,

and may the Spirit assure you that you are loved.

\*Postlude

Congregational Meeting

Announcements

There will be a congregational meeting immediately following worship. The purpose of this meeting is to elect a member of the congregation to the Nominating Committee and to elect the next class of elders to serve on the session.

Nominees are:

Hala Mosrie

Mary Minichan

Valerie Wood

Clara Adkins