

Home Service for July 14, 2024

Welcome and Announcements

You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship.

Dance before the Lord with instruments of praise. Know that you are adopted into the family of God.

You may find looking or listening to Amazing Grace helpful for the sermon.

Call to Worship:

We set our hope in Christ and live for the praise of his glory. As David danced before the Lord, we too can offer God our thanks with shouts of praise and thanksgiving.

Opening Prayer:

Creator God, in praise and adoration our spirits dance before you today. You have created this wondrous universe and all the magnificent things within it. You have blessed us with so much throughout our lives, even to this day of praise and thanksgiving. Let our spirits soar! Let our hearts sing boldly of your wondrous love. We celebrate your love and presence with us, and it is in the name of your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, that we offer this prayer. AMEN.

Prayer of Confession:

In the midst of our "summer" lives, O Lord, so many things have claimed our attention. We worked hard this year to earn a little rest and recreation, to break away from the stresses of our everyday living. But in the midst of all this change, we have too often pushed our worship of you aside. We have focused so much on our needs for physical change and peace that we have neglected our spiritual hungers and thirst. Forgive us when we are tempted to stray from our worship of you and focus entirely on ourselves and our own needs. As we celebrate this day, help us to remember all the wondrous things you continue to do for us. Let us look at the world as a place of delight. And when we encounter situations in which sorrow and hurt abound, help us to be ready to bring hope and peace. Be with us in this warm days of summer, preparing us for ministry and mission, in your holy name. AMEN.

Words of Assurance:

God is merciful and pours God's love on us abundantly. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Hallelujah! AMEN.

Read Psalm 24

The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it;
²for he founded it on the seas
and established it on the waters.
³Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD?
Who may stand in his holy place?
⁴The one who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not trust in an idol
or swear by a false god.^[a]
⁵They will receive blessing from the LORD
and vindication from God their Savior.
⁶Such is the generation of those who seek him,
who seek your face, God of Jacob.^{[b][c]}
⁷Lift up your heads, you gates;
be lifted up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
⁸Who is this King of glory?
The LORD strong and mighty,
the LORD mighty in battle.
⁹Lift up your heads, you gates;
lift them up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
¹⁰Who is he, this King of glory?
The LORD Almighty—
he is the King of glory.

Prayers of the People:

Lord of the dance of life, you have breathed into us your creative, joyful Spirit. You have lifted us from the dust into the swirling joy of your presence. We are so grateful for all that you have done for us. Each day reminds us in many ways of your mercy and your love. Yet there are times in our lives when we have felt lost and alone. We have been hurt and frightened and wondered where you were.

Remind us again of your loving presence. Place your hands of healing on our lives. Comfort us when we become afraid, lost, lonely, and fearful. Prepare us to serve you faithfully all our days. As we have lifted the name of dear ones to you who are in need of your healing love, cause us to reflect on our needs for your love and our response in dedicated service to you. Be with us now, in this time and place, and in all the places and times of our lives. For it is in Jesus' Name, we pray. AMEN.

Lord's Prayer

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

Read the Old Testament Lesson: 2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19

David again brought together all the able young men of Israel—thirty thousand. ² He and all his men went to Baalah^[a] in Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name,^[b] the name of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim on the ark. ³ They set the ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were guiding the new cart ⁴ with the ark of God on it,^[c] and Ahio was walking in front of it. ⁵ David and all Israel were celebrating with all their might before the LORD, with castanets,^[d] harps, lyres, timbrels, sistrums and cymbals.

¹² Now King David was told, “The LORD has blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he has, because of the ark of God.” So David went to bring up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing. ¹³ When those who were carrying the ark of the LORD had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf. ¹⁴ Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the LORD with all his might, ¹⁵ while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the LORD with shouts and the sound of trumpets.

¹⁶ As the ark of the LORD was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, she despised him in her heart.

¹⁷ They brought the ark of the LORD and set it in its place inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and David sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before the LORD. ¹⁸ After he had finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, he blessed the people in the name of

the LORD Almighty. ¹⁹ Then he gave a loaf of bread, a cake of dates and a cake of raisins to each person in the whole crowd of Israelites, both men and women. And all the people went to their homes.

Read the Epistle Lesson: Ephesians 1:3-14

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he^[a] predestined us for adoption to sonship^[b] through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸ that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, ⁹ he^[c] made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment— to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

¹¹ In him we were also chosen,^[d] having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹² in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. ¹³ And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Mark 6:14-29

King Herod heard about this, for Jesus' name had become well known. Some were saying,^[a] "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him."

¹⁵ Others said, "He is Elijah."

And still others claimed, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago."

¹⁶ But when Herod heard this, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!"

¹⁷ For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married. ¹⁸ For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." ¹⁹ So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, ²⁰ because Herod feared John and protected

him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled^[b]; yet he liked to listen to him.

²¹ Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. ²² When the daughter of ^[c] Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests.

The king said to the girl, “Ask me for anything you want, and I’ll give it to you.” ²³ And he promised her with an oath, “Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom.”

²⁴ She went out and said to her mother, “What shall I ask for?”

“The head of John the Baptist,” she answered.

²⁵ At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: “I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter.”

²⁶ The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. ²⁷ So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John’s head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison, ²⁸ and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother. ²⁹ On hearing of this, John’s disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

Message

“Amazing grace, how sweet the sound – that saved a wretch like me!” God’s grace is amazing, truly amazing. We are all in the very same condition in this life. All of us are sinners. All of us ought to be condemned. But God’s grace is truly amazing. ROMANS 3:22b-24 tells us: “There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”

The Epistle Lesson for today comes from Paul’s letters to the Ephesians, which he wrote while he was sitting in jail. Things couldn’t be any worse for him. He was locked up, alone, abandoned, and waiting for his trial. Paul had personally experienced what he is writing about. Paul had been a Christian for over 25 years as he wrote them in 60 A. D. Paul tells us who God says we are in Jesus Christ. And who we are in God’s eyes is much more than anything our siblings, significant other, children, friends, bullies, or ex may say about us. What God says about us is what ultimately matters. God tells us four things that we are in Jesus Christ through the Apostle Paul, that we are blessed, chosen, adopted, and sealed in Jesus Christ.

Paul begins his letter by saying that we are blessed. He wrote these words with chains on his hands and feet. He says, in Jesus Christ, we are blessed! Wherever

we find ourselves, Paul says that in Jesus Christ, we are blessed. He reminds us that God has it all and He gives it all. He says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places”. Paul says that you are blessed in Christ with every spiritual blessing. This is real! These blessings through the Holy Spirit are not imaginary or illusions. They are in the heavenly places, for each of us! God doesn’t hold them back or in. God lavishes them out. Paul says, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight”. Do you know what the word lavish means? It means to “bestow something in generous or extravagant quantities on”. God lavishes the riches of His grace upon us. He lavishes that redemption, that forgiveness. He isn’t stingy. You are rich in Jesus Christ. You are blessed in God’s Son.

Listen to the words of Paul. Paul wrote, “He chose us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him” God chose us. He picked us out. He selected you and me. He set us aside for Himself. He did it before the creation of the world. This was all intentional and part of the plan. It was not our own doing or influenced by us. It is not based on anything in us that we could lose or live up to. We don’t have to justify His decision, earn it, or pay Him back. What’s more is that then in God’s eyes, through Jesus, He sees us as holy and blameless before Him. God’s choosing us is a wonderful thing, and it carries many blessings.

Being chosen leads us to praising God for that salvation He has won and given to us. How can we not praise and thank Him for that? This being chosen points us to Jesus and His Word. We are pointed to the One Who achieved our salvation and to the mean that He gives it through. This truth comforts us in trials and temptations since our salvation in Jesus is sure and certain. It is finished and final through Jesus’ blood and merit. There is nothing we need to do, we just receive! There is no way we can mess it up or not do it right. He has done it all! This blessing then also encourages us for holy living. We want to live in response to this choosing, calling, and salvation. God has chosen us in Jesus Christ.

Paul then continues to another wonderful truth. He says that we are adopted. We were born into, Adam’s family. This is a broken, bad, and bickering family. It is not one that you want to be a part of. And like in all families, we inherit things from our parents. We have inherited from these parents, Adam and Eve, blindness. We know nothing in spiritual matters or things. We inherited death, both spiritual and physical. We inherited our sinful nature.

But in Jesus Christ, God has taken us out of that family. Our adoption day was our baptism day, where we were buried and raised with Christ to new life, and to a new family! We are no longer blind or dead. We are children whom God cares for, whom He loves, and whom He forgives and claims as His own. As part of this family, like all children, we are given an inheritance, eternal life, and have a place in God's Kingdom because of Jesus. And He did it all out of love. He wanted to do it, and did it gladly. He paid our adoption price with the blood and life of His Son, Jesus. Rest assured, you are part of this family, through Jesus. Paul says that you are adopted through Jesus Christ.

Paul then concludes by telling us that we are sealed in Jesus Christ. In the ancient world, everyone had their own unique seal. It was like a social security number. It was unique and your own. These seals could be wax ones. For animals, they could be a brand. For soldiers and slaves, it could be a tattoo. In the ancient world, seals showed ownership. Paul says that God has placed His seal on you! He has placed His name on us! When did that happen? From that moment we gave ourselves to Him!

Not only has our God sealed us, He has given us His Holy Spirit, who is the down payment for that inheritance that we so long for. The gift of the Holy Spirit says there is more coming! The best is yet to come! There are many gifts of the Holy Spirit. First of all the gifts of the Holy Spirit is faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God. We can use God's gifts as he provides them to us. It is very important to remember to grow in faith – first and foremost. We grow in faith as we hear God's word, as we study God's word, and as we read God's word. We do not have to run from one end of our nation to the other looking for God. God is here, in his word. God's gift of faith is amazing grace on display. God's grace is discovered in his word, sealed in us by his Spirit, and should be seen in our lives. The Holy Spirit is the guarantee, for He sustains and makes us faithful until the end. God has sealed you, placed His name on you, and given you the Holy Spirit. In Jesus, we are blessed, chosen, adopted, and sealed.

God's grace is truly amazing! God choose us when we sought him not. God redeemed us with blood even though we sin daily and much. God seals our future with the gift of his Holy Spirit. Our Christian faith is our confidence that heaven is our home. Amen.

Benediction:

God's love for you is real and alive in your hearts today. Go in peace, knowing that the Lord of Love and Life is with you. Bring God's peace to all you meet, this day and all your days. AMEN.