

Home Service for July 7, 2024

Welcome and Announcements

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

Take nothing for the journey of faith. Only then will we truly give God the glory for our success.

Call to Worship:

Take off your shoes! We are standing on holy ground. Shake off the dust!
We are ready to start afresh. Let us worship God and receive Christ's teachings,
that we may be renewed and strengthened to share God's love with the world.

Opening Prayer:

Loving God, who opens our hearts to the mysteries of faith in ordinary and extraordinary moments, come near to us today. Make known among us and within us your strength, that we might experience your power that uses what the powers of this world call weakness to demonstrate your Almighty love to all creation.
Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Merciful God, forgive us when we are paralyzed by confusion and doubt.
Strengthen our faith, that we may not only believe, but may be filled with the power to help and heal. When others reject or refuse our ministry, help us to be forgiving and grace-filled. Grant us the courage to accept those things that cannot be changed, that we may be freed from anger and resentment. Forgive us when our disappointment clouds our wisdom and confuses our actions. Guide us on this path of ministry, that we may be filled with the joy of our ministry. Amen.

Words of Assurance:

God's grace is sufficient for all our needs, covering all our sins. God's power is made perfect in our weakness, as Christ redeems our lives and reconciles us fully and completely to God. Amen and amen.

Read Psalm 48

Great is the LORD, and most worthy of praise,
in the city of our God, his holy mountain.

² Beautiful in its loftiness,
the joy of the whole earth,
like the heights of Zaphon^[b] is Mount Zion,
the city of the Great King.

³ God is in her citadels;
he has shown himself to be her fortress.

⁴ When the kings joined forces,
when they advanced together,

⁵ they saw her and were astounded;
they fled in terror.

⁶ Trembling seized them there,
pain like that of a woman in labor.

⁷ You destroyed them like ships of Tarshish
shattered by an east wind.

⁸ As we have heard,
so we have seen
in the city of the LORD Almighty,
in the city of our God:

God makes her secure
forever.^[c]

⁹ Within your temple, O God,
we meditate on your unfailing love.

¹⁰ Like your name, O God,
your praise reaches to the ends of the earth;
your right hand is filled with righteousness.

¹¹ Mount Zion rejoices,
the villages of Judah are glad
because of your judgments.

¹² Walk about Zion, go around her,
count her towers,

¹³ consider well her ramparts,
view her citadels,

that you may tell of them
to the next generation.

¹⁴ For this God is our God for ever and ever;
he will be our guide even to the end.

Prayers of the People:

When we are brand-new disciples, we can hardly wait to be sent out on mission for Christ. We are eager to proclaim, to shout God's praise to the people, to comfort, guide, and heal. But time takes its toll on us. We begin to let doubt assail our enthusiasm. And then we hear Mark's gospel message. Jesus is ridiculed by his hometown people. They can't imagine that one of their number could actually be God's chosen One. They are focusing on what they know....that he is a carpenter, the son of a carpenter, and brother to James, Joses, Judas, Simon and several sisters. He reminds them that they are short-sighted. And with sadness he recalls that even the prophets are not honored or respected in their hometowns. That is the world into which Jesus is sending his disciples, cautioning them to take nothing extra with them. He suggests that they rely on the hospitality of people, and when it is not present, to shake the dust off their shoes and move on. We have trouble with that because we want everyone to like and support us. Lift us up from our fears. Place us squarely on the path of service. Guide our feet and our hearts in your direction, merciful God. As we have lifted up the names of people and situations near and dear to us, let us also remember that this world, which is hurting and scarred, needs our prayers and our service. Point us in the direction of service to you, for we ask this in Jesus' Name. 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 5:1-5, 9-10

All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "We are your own flesh and blood. ²In the past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the LORD said to you, 'You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.'"

³When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, the king made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel.

⁴ David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years. ⁵ In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years.

⁹ David then took up residence in the fortress and called it the City of David. He built up the area around it, from the terraces^[a] inward. ¹⁰ And he became more and more powerful, because the LORD God Almighty was with him.

Read the Epistle Lesson: 2 Corinthians 12:2-10

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. ³ And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—⁴ was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell. ⁵ I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. ⁶ Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say, ⁷ or because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹ But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Mark 6:1-13

Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. ² When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.

“Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? ³ Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph,^[a] Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him.

⁴ Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.” ⁵ He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. ⁶ He was amazed at their lack of faith.

Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. ⁷ Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits.

⁸ These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. ⁹ Wear sandals but not an extra shirt. ¹⁰ Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. ¹¹ And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.”

¹² They went out and preached that people should repent. ¹³ They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

Message

As I read the Epistle and Gospel lessons for today, one word kept coming to mind and that word was paradox. Do you know what a paradox is? Our lessons today concern the idea of a paradox in Christian living, a paradox of values, and a paradox of expectations. According to the dictionary a paradox is: a statement that seems to contradict itself but expresses an element of truth. We live with things, ideas and values being in paradox to each other all the time.

Let us be honest with ourselves, we like winners. Our culture, our country, our society are caught up with the idea of winning. Winning, succeeding, getting ahead, overcoming great obstacles these are the ideals, these are the goals that society places on all people. We can see this as evidence by our preoccupation with sports. We like to see our team win.

Not only in sports, but throughout all of life, we like to see and know about people who have succeeded. We like to read, or watch stories on TV of people who have overcome great mental or physical obstacles, then making a success of their lives. We like to see the underdog get ahead and become a winner. At the same time, we all know that we all cannot be winners by the world's standards, but in God's eyes we can when we allow God's paradox to take place in our lives. The paradox which says those who are weak in the eyes of society, are strong in God's eyes. Both our Epistle and Gospel lessons today are speaking of a paradox. They speak of being strong while being weak.

A statement in our lesson from 2 Corinthians is a paradox, it says, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." How can a person have power when he or she is weak? According to our human standards, this is a paradox. But as we study these two lessons, we will see an element of truth to this statement about power in weakness.

Let us start by looking at Jesus and his life. Jesus lived in the weakness of God and in that weakness he became strong. He lived in the paradox of life. Jesus was a paradox to the people in his time. His life style, his birth, his death were paradoxical statements of how God's power would be manifested on this earth. Jesus himself appeared weak to many of his contemporaries. They were expecting a kind of Superman. They anticipated spectacular signs and unmistakable evidence of his divinity. But all they saw was a carpenter's son, a local boy, a prophet without honor. Our Gospel told us that the people said: "Where did this man get all this? What is the wisdom given to him? What mighty works are wrought by his hands! Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?"

Our text says: Yet all the power of God came to expression in that "weakness". The weakness of God proved mightier than the strength of men. Jesus just didn't fit the image people had of the Messiah. They expected a mighty king after the fashion of king David. A man who would lead a mighty army, a man who would make this small nation of Israel strong and powerful. A leader who would defeat the Romans.

But they got a babe born in a stable, a carpenter's son who for approximately 30 years didn't even make a stir among the people. When Jesus did finally go about his ministry, he walked, he lived with outcasts, he ate with sinners, he made enemies of the priests and the rulers.

He had a band of only twelve men who were uneducated fisherman, or tax collectors, or religious radicals. He didn't say anything to the Romans but talked to the house of Israel. He healed people, he forgave sins, he made wine, he calmed the sea.

He talked about the love the Father had for his children, and he said he was the Son of God. Jesus died because he didn't fit the expectation and did not have the value system the people of Israel expected. Jesus came as a servant to men. He came to show that God didn't want men of superhuman ability, but he wanted men who would believe in God's power for their lives. He showed that God wanted people who would live in this paradox. He showed that when you are weak, believing in God and not self, then you are really strong. Jesus truly lived the ultimate paradox in the eyes of the people he grew up with.

Then in the Epistle Paul tells us that God told him three times that: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." With that knowledge Paul was able to also write: "That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

If we are true with ourselves, we must admit that we do live by the paradox. God's grace is sufficient for us, each and every day or every moment of every day. When we have sinned, when we grieve, when we are tossed about by the circumstance of life, God's grace is sufficient for us. In our weakest moments, God's grace is sufficient for us, too just like Paul.

Jesus lived the paradox and Paul understood it and wrote to his followers to follow it. God's grace is all we need in life to get by. Not wealth, not fame, not fortune, but God's undeserved grace. Grace that was given by the paradox of the cross, for out of death came life.

God calls us to live in the paradox of life for there is truly a paradox between the demands of our world, and the demands of our God. Our world calls us to be strong, to succeed, to be upward mobile, but our God calls us to surrender, to be dependent on him, to worry about our neighbor, to treat others with kindness, humility and honesty. Yes, this a paradox that has been around for a long, long time, but what joy we can find by living it. Amen.

Benediction:

Beloved, go from this place blessed with divine contentment in the deep and beautiful knowledge that in all things, the power of the crucified and resurrected Christ dwells in you. Amen.