Order of worship

23rd Sunday after Pentecost

November 8, 2020

Call to worship *(Psalm 78:1-4)*

Give ear, O my people, to my teaching;
incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

I will open my mouth in a parable;
I will utter dark sayings from of old,
things that we have heard and known,
that our ancestors have told us.

We will not hide them from their children;
we will tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord,
and God's might, and the wonders that the Lord has done.

Call to confession

Despite God's clear commandments to us and gracious covenant with us, we often choose to serve the lesser gods of this world. In acknowledgment of our idolatry and failings, resting on the promise of God's mercy and forgiveness, we confess our sin to God and before one another.

Prayer of confession

Loving God, as we examine our life together, our impulses and actions, we see all too clearly that our choices do not reflect your commandments. We fail to love you and we neglect to love our neighbors. You tell us to be ready to meet you at any moment, to stay awake to your presence and prepared to do your will. We remain distracted or complacent, disillusioned or paralyzed. We ask for your wisdom. Focus our attention on our Savior that we might see your vision for this world. Forgive our past mistakes so that we will be free to be the salt and light you call and create us to be. Amen.

Assurance of pardon *(Psalm 70:1)*

Be pleased, O God, to deliver me.
O Lord, make haste to help me!

Friends, believe the good news,
through Jesus Christ we are forgiven!
Thanks be to God! Amen.

Prayer for illumination

Alpha and Omega, you are our beginning and our end, nothing in this life or in this world is absent of your love, presence and power. As we quiet our minds and look to set our worries aside even if for a moment, send your Spirit. Give us wisdom. Instruct us. Shape us. Guide us. Send us. May your Word read and proclaimed be embodied in our actions. Amen.

Scripture readings

Sermon

Affirmation of faith *(from A Declaration of Faith)*

God has not taken his people out of the world,
but has sent them into the world
to worship God there and serve all humankind.
We worship God in the world
by standing before the Lord in behalf of all people.
Our cries for help and our songs of praise
are never for ourselves alone.
Worship is no retreat from the world;
it is part of our mission.

We serve humankind
by discerning what God is doing in the world
and joining God in that work.
We risk disagreement and error
when we try to say what God is doing here and now.
But we find guidance in God's deeds in the past
and in God's promises for the future,
as they are witnessed to in Scripture.
We affirm that the Lord is at work,
especially in events and movements
that free people by the gospel
and advance justice, compassion and peace.

Call for the offering

We commit to serving God. All other loyalties are penultimate. As a sign of our desire to follow Jesus Christ, we give to God a portion of what God has entrusted us to steward.

Prayer of dedication

Almighty God, when our fear of tomorrow threatens to overwhelm us, help us to remember that we serve you and you are omnipotent, loving and abounding in steadfast kindness. As we offer you these gifts, we ask for the wisdom to fill our lamps with the oil that enables us to be the light of the world. May this offering enable others to know your near and good presence. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Prayers of the people and the Lord's prayer

God, we are gathered to worship and pray even if we are in separate places. We are with you, united in Christ, and part of the communion of all the saints, past, present and future. In recognition of the vastness of creation and your never-ending creative power, we humbly and confidently speak our heartfelt hurts and share our deepest hopes.

We choose to serve you this day, knowing that serving you requires our all. Do not let us falter when discipleship gets hard and we are tempted to serve lesser, easier gods. Encourage us with the gift of community and the power of the Holy Spirit. Help us to not grow weary in doing good.

When we survey the state of our world, the suffering and the evil, the conflict and the hardship, we cannot help but cry out to you for help. While we know nothing can separate us from the love of Christ Jesus our Lord, we often rip the fabric of our life together apart, sowing division instead of seeking to be ministers of reconciliation. We know that you are with all those who hurt and we ask for the courage to stand on the side of the oppressed, to seek out those left half-dead in the ditch and to feed your sheep. Increase our compassion for people and indeed for all creation.

As we continue to try to navigate the many storms of this season, we are mindful that we do not do so alone. We are grateful for the ways you provide for us, granting us glimpses of peace that passes understanding, giving us rest that restores and pursing us when we are lost and afraid. We thank you for the gift of one another, those with whom we agree and those whose views we cannot comprehend, each of us your child, made in your image.

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When we are unsure what to do, where to go or how we will serve you well, remind us to refill the oil for our lamps, the oil of gladness and healing, the oil that consecrates and anoints, the oil that allows us to see Christ when he comes to meet us. May our desire to serve you provide the wisdom we need for the living of these days. We make our prayer in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, the one who taught us to say when we pray, *Our Father…*

Charge and benediction *(Colossians 3:12-14)*

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and remain with you always. Amen.

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Liturgy written by Jill Duffield
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