

Worship for August 8, 2021

Opening:

The world belongs to God, the earth and all its people.
How good it is, how wonderful, to live together in unity.
Love and faith come together, justice and peace join hands.
If Christ's disciples keep silent, these stones would shout aloud.
Open our lips, O God, And our mouths shall proclaim your praise.

Collect:

Almighty God, you sent your Holy Spirit to be the life and the light of your Church. Open our hearts to the riches of your grace, that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in love, joy and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

Readings of the Day:

2 Samuel 18:5-9, 15, 31-33

18:5 The king ordered Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." And all the people heard when the king gave orders to all the commanders concerning Absalom.

18:6 So the army went out into the field against Israel; and the battle was fought in the forest of Ephraim.

18:7 The men of Israel were defeated there by the servants of David, and the slaughter there was great on that day, twenty thousand men.

18:8 The battle spread over the face of all the country; and the forest claimed more victims that day than the sword.

18:9 Absalom happened to meet the servants of David. Absalom was riding on his mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a great oak. His head caught fast in the oak, and he was left hanging between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him went on.

18:15 And ten young men, Joab's armor-bearers, surrounded Absalom and struck him, and killed him.

18:31 Then the Cushite came; and the Cushite said, "Good tidings for my lord the king! For the LORD has vindicated you this day, delivering you from the power of all who rose up against you."

18:32 The king said to the Cushite, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?" The Cushite answered, "May the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise up to do you harm, be like that young man."

18:33 The king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went, he said, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Psalm 130

130:1 Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD.

130:2 Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!

130:3 If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?

130:4 But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered.

130:5 I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope;

130:6 my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning.

130:7 O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem.

130:8 It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

Ephesians 4:25-5:2

4:25 So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another.

4:26 Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,

4:27 and do not make room for the devil.

4:28 Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy.

4:29 Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear.

4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption.

4:31 Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice,

4:32 and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

5:1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children,

5:2 and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

John 6:35, 41-51

6:35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

6:41 Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven."

6:42 They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?"

6:43 Jesus answered them, "Do not complain among yourselves.

6:44 No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day.

6:45 It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.

6:46 Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father.

6:47 Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life.

6:48 I am the bread of life.

6:49 Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.

6:50 This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.

6:51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

Sermon:

We learn a lot about the human condition in our scripture today. We are reminded that life is a challenge for everyone; that there are deep pit experiences when many can wonder if God still knows we are here. And we could proudly proclaim Jesus is Lord of our lives and have no real understanding of the implications of that even deeply held belief. When the lectionary

chops up scripture to place a story before us, we might miss knowing something that takes us to a different understanding. When we read about David lamenting the fact that his son needs to die and requests his general to be gentle; we might hear the sentimentality of a father losing a beloved son and think this is about grief. What about the bigger story? David, God's chosen, has been a dreadful father and has lost the ability to lead the united kingdom of Jerusalem with justice. One son has raped his sister and another son, Absalom, is tearing the country apart in anger. David has done nothing to address his children's actions; perhaps because he is ashamed of his own. This is not a story of grief, this is a story of how even the greatest can lose their way with dreadful consequences for wider humanity.

David got distracted by his own power and influence, he knew he had failed and yet did little to turn around his behaviour. We could judge him harshly but then could we still look in the mirror? We too have erred and strayed like lost sheep. Anyone who has been in a dark pit due to addictions, mental illness or guilt, knows very well that cry from the darkness. When I was working part time in the library at McMaster I had to sometimes work in the sub, sub basement. I was working and someone else left and turned off the lights. There was no light whatsoever, just total and utter darkness. I will never forget that experience of total darkness. When that happens in our lives, we are like the Psalmist crying from the depths. There is nothing of God to see or discern. To hope means patience and courage. The Psalmist is indeed courageous as they wait to hear from God. And God will reach out in those darkest of dark moments. Our human condition is transformed by an empty tomb, light in the darkness and life that rises from death.

Even though Paul has been deeply scarred by the Christian communities he has tried to encourage; he does not lose hope. I am certain that he is angry about the way he was treated but he guides others not to let anger destroy any pathway to forgiveness. Paul makes it clear that to seek work implies that you are doing so to make needy lives better. When I lived in Regina there were always people getting angry at the Indigenous people for not getting jobs. Put aside the reality that most employers would not hire Indigenous people; what right does anyone have to be angry at another person's ability to work. I met a young Indigenous man who was looking for work. He was living on a small amount of social assistance. He told me that he saw that money as his salary for working within the community. He had approached me as the Archdeacon to use one of our abandoned church buildings to offer programmes for youth in a very poor part of Regina. I was inspired by his energy and vision and he did wonderful work. That church building also became the site of the TV show Little Mosque on the Prairie! More of the Church grows out of kindness, forgiveness and being tender-hearted than being driven by wrath and judgement.

You cannot read the Gospels without realizing that the human condition is about people who miss the point most of the time. The good news is God never gives up on us, no matter how off track we become. Jesus is speaking even more about Bread. Obviously people then and people like us now, are missing the point and are still confused. We can think that once we are proclaimed believers that we have arrived. We stand apart as people who have declared their faith in Jesus Christ. Arriving is never the point and the journey is always the place we will find insight and grace. I like that the Anglican Church baptizes infants. It means that commitment to God rests with God and not human acceptance. I once heard a preacher remark that Baptism is the most dangerous act we do as humanity. It takes courage to reach out and bless a life's journey, not knowing where it might lead but also knowing that along

the way there will be darkness and challenge. The Bread promised by Jesus in the Gospel is not only sustenance for our life journey; but the giving up of his own Body is sustenance for all eternity. That and that alone is the power of God's Grace and Love. Dear people of God; be brave and carry on with forgiveness, kindness, love and justice for all the human condition.

Thanks be to God-Amen

Affirmation:

With the whole church we affirm that we are made in God's image, befriended by Christ, empowered by the Spirit.

With people everywhere we affirm God's goodness at the heart of humanity, planted more deeply than all that is wrong.

With all creation we affirm the miracle and wonder of life, the unfolding purposes of God, forever at work in ourselves and the world.

Prayers:

We bring to God

someone whom we have met or remembered today
and for whom we want to pray;

- For those facing the challenges of chronic illness
- For Cheryl McCoy and her family at the death of her sister, Vivian
- Those who continue to mourn the death of a spouse
- Those who are living through instability and facing challenges
- For those celebrating birthdays: Sandra McCurdy, Clare Phillips, Carol Bagshaw, Verna Templer, Janina Lis and Ellie Stittle
- For those celebrating Weddings: Tara Raymond and Justin Kelly on August 7

We bring to God,

someone who is hurting and needs our prayer

We bring to God

a troubled situation in our world

- Victims of Residential Schools and actions of reconciliation and healing
- The Hungry and Homeless and actions for a living income and secure housing
- The people of Barrie, devastated by a tornado and actions of compassion and support
- For the continuing challenges presented by Covid 19 and the Variants

We bring to God,

someone whom we find hard to forgive or trust

We bring ourselves to God,

that we might grow in generosity of spirit,

clarity of mind,

and the warmth of affection.

Closing responses:

O Trinity of Love,
You have been with us at the world's beginning,
BE WITH US TILL THE WORLD'S END.

You have been with us at our life's shaping,
BE WITH US AT OUR LIFE'S END.

You have been with us at the sun's rising,
BE WITH US TILL THE DAY'S END.

AMEN.

Blessing:

This is the day that God has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.
We will not offer to God offerings that cost us nothing.
Go in peace to love and to serve; we will seek peace and pursue it.
In the name of the Trinity of Love,
God in Community, Holy and one. Amen