

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

August 16, 2020

Cross of Glory Lutheran Church
Brooklyn Center, MN

PRELUDE

WELCOME

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, whose steadfast love is everlasting, whose faithfulness endures from generation to generation. **Amen.**

Trusting in the mercy of God, let us confess our sin.

Reconciling God,

we confess that we do not trust your abundance, and we deny your presence in our lives. We place our hope in ourselves and rely on our own efforts. We fail to believe that you provide enough for all. We abuse your good creation for our own benefit. We fear difference and do not welcome others as you have welcomed us. We sin in thought, word, and deed. By your grace, forgive us; through your love, renew us; and in your Spirit, lead us; so that we may live and serve you in newness of life. Amen.

Beloved of God, by the radical abundance of divine mercy we have peace with God through † Christ Jesus, through whom we have obtained grace upon grace. Our sins are forgiven. Let us live now in hope. For hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

GATHERING HYMN #650

In Christ There is No East or West

1 In Christ there is no east or west,
in him no south or north,
but one community of love
throughout the whole wide earth.

2 In Christ shall true hearts ev'rywhere
their high communion find;
his service is the golden cord
close binding humankind.

3 Join hands, disciples of the faith,
whate'er your race may be.
All children of the living God
are surely kin to me.

4 In Christ now meet both east and west,
in him meet south and north;
all Christly souls are one in him
throughout the whole wide earth.

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

KYRIE

In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Amen, amen.

HYMN OF PRAISE

Refrain: This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose blood set us free to be people of God. Power and riches, wisdom and strength, and honor and blessing and glory are his. *Refrain*

Sing with all the people of God, and join in the hymn of all creation: Blessing and honor, glory and might be to God and the Lamb forever. Amen. *Refrain*

For the Lamb who was slain has begun his reign. Alleluia. *Refrain*

PRAYER OF THE DAY The Lord be with you. **And also with you.** *Let us pray . . .*

God of all peoples, your mercy knows no bounds or borders, and your arms reach out to embrace all those who call upon you. Empower your church to be open to your living presence among us, that we might share your healing love with all the world, through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. Amen.

READING: Isaiah 56:1, 6-8

¹Thus says the LORD:

Maintain justice, and do what is right,
for soon my salvation will come,
and my deliverance be revealed.

⁶And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD,
to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD,
and to be his servants,
all who keep the sabbath, and do not profane it,
and hold fast my covenant—

⁷these I will bring to my holy mountain,
and make them joyful in my house of prayer;
their burnt offerings and their sacrifices
will be accepted on my altar;
for my house shall be called a house of prayer
for all peoples.

⁸Thus says the Lord GOD,
who gathers the outcasts of Israel,
I will gather others to them
besides those already gathered.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

SPECIAL MUSIC

Keith Williams

One Bread, One Body ~ John B. Foley, arr.: Mark Hayes

One bread, one body, one Lord of all, one cup of blessing which we bless.
And we, though many, throughout the earth, we are one body in this one Lord.
Gentile or Jew, servant or free, woman or man, no more.
One bread, one body, one Lord of all, one cup of blessing which we bless.
And we, though many, throughout the earth, we are one body in this one Lord.
Many the gifts, many the works, one in the Lord of all.
One bread, one body, one Lord of all, one cup of blessing which we bless.
And we, though many, throughout the earth, we are one body in this one Lord.
We are one body in this one Lord. We are one body in this one Lord.

GOSPEL: Matthew 15:10-20, 21-28

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹⁰Jesus called the crowd to him and said to them, “Listen and understand:¹¹it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles.” ¹²Then the disciples approached and said to him, “Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?” ¹³He answered, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. ¹⁴Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit.” ¹⁵But Peter said to him, “Explain this parable to us.” ¹⁶Then he said, “Are you also still without understanding? ¹⁷Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer? ¹⁸But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. ¹⁹For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. ²⁰These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile.” ²¹Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²²Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.” ²³But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, “Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us.” ²⁴He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” ²⁵But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” ²⁶He answered, “It is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.” ²⁷She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” ²⁸Then Jesus answered her, “Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Pastor Ali Tranvik

Let us pray. Open our eyes that we may see your word in the world. Open our ears that we may hear your word in the world. Open our hearts that we may be your word in the world. Amen.

I spend much of my days staring at a computer screen. I would of course normally be at church or out in the community, meeting with people, meeting with you. But in the midst of this pandemic, much of my time is now spent in front of a screen, where I am inundated with news stories like:

- “U.S. economy faces possible decade-long recovery” (NYTimes)
- “Enormous Explosion Rocks Beirut, Killing More Than 100, Wounding Thousands” (NPR)
- “Minnesota Department of Education finds that 25,000 students don’t have the technology or the internet access to participate effectively in distance learning this fall” (Sun Post)
- “Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park, Crystal, New Hope among highest COVID-19 case rates in state of MN” (CCX Media)

The more I read these stories, the more I find myself turning inwards—consumed by my own worries, overwhelmed by my own fears, trapped in my own head. Stuck in-doors, I turn *in* on myself.

Which is why I so value being part of a faith tradition, especially in these isolating days. I love being brought outside of myself and into fellowship on Sunday mornings when we worship together on Zoom. I cherish connecting with the Cross of Glory community on Tuesday mornings for Bible Study. I crave Wednesday evenings, like tonight, when we record worship in the sanctuary, and I can hear the music-making of Keith and Mark and Erik. Being part of a faith tradition reminds me that I’m part of something that is much bigger than me—that I’m part of a story that precedes me, that continues to unfold all around me, and that will follow me, long after I’m gone. At its best, tradition draws us outside of ourselves and into community—into relationship.

But it is tradition that Jesus seems to take issue with in today's Gospel story from Matthew. Just before our assigned passage begins, the Pharisees (the religious leaders of Jesus' day) notice that Jesus and his disciples aren't following the traditions of their tradition, rules like washing their hands before they eat. For us, hand-washing is a matter of physical cleanliness (especially now in this pandemic), but for the Jews, it was a matter of *spiritual* cleanliness. So the Pharisees—the ultimate insiders—say “hey Jesus, why do your disciples break with tradition and eat with defiled hands” (15:2)? It was a fair question. They were just trying to follow the rules of their tradition. That's what it meant to be faithful!

But Jesus rebukes them, saying that their preoccupation about the *rules* has caused them to lose sight of what tradition is all about in the first place, which is *relationship*. They are practicing tradition for tradition's sake. “For the sake of your tradition you make void the word of God. You hypocrites” (15:6-7). Jesus offers a harsh critique of the Pharisees—the ultimate insiders—claiming that their tradition no longer serves as a means to foster relationship, but as a means to regulate relationships, a means to distinguish who's clean and who's unclean, who's pure and who's impure, who's in and who's out.

And then in our passage today, Jesus continues and clarifies: “It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles” (15:11). Which is to say, it's not what one eats or how one eats that makes a person unclean, it's what comes out—not only out of their mouth, Jesus says, but out of their very heart. “For out of the heart,” Jesus says, “comes evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander” (15:19). It's not your hands that defile, Jesus is saying, it's all your words, all your prayers, all your songs, all your nice-sounding sermons, all your creeds and doctrines, all justifications of your own faith... *that's* what defiles.

It is not lost on me that I am a bit of a modern-day Pharisee here, someone whose line of work depends on tradition, someone who's up here in a pulpit speaking words from my mouth that come from my heart. “That's what defiles,” Jesus says. As a supposed “insider” of the faith, a religious leader, that's not quite the pick-me-up I was hoping for. Not the affirmation of faith I had anticipated.

If the first part of our Gospel story challenges the categories of who's clean and who's unclean, who's pure and who's impure, who's in and who's out, the second part explodes them all together. After this exchange with the Pharisees, Jesus and his disciples head to the district of Tyre and Sidon, where they encounter a woman who begs Jesus to heal her demon-possessed daughter. This nameless woman is the ultimate outsider. She's a Canaanite, not an Israelite. She's a Gentile, not a Jew. She's a woman, not a man. And on top of that all she's loud and annoying. “Send her away,” the disciples urge Jesus (15:23). “She is not one of us, not clean and pure like us, not an insider like us. Plus she keeps shouting at us. Just get rid of her already!”

What follows is one of the more unsettling encounters in scripture. In response to the Canaanite woman's pleas, Jesus appears rude at best, first ignoring her, then claiming he's come to save the Jews, the insiders. But she persists, and finally Jesus insults her, saying “it's not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the *dogs*” (15:26).

Jesus' words are harsh, uncomfortable, unsettling. But perhaps the Canaanite's words in response are even more so: “Yes, but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table,” she says (15:27). In other words, “Yes, I am a dog. Yes, I'm defiled. Yes, I am unclean. Yes, I am impure. Yes, I am an outsider. Yes, *of course* I'm a dog—why else would I be on my knees begging for mercy and healing!?”

Upon hearing her words, Jesus commends the woman's faith and heals her daughter.

It's easy to focus by Jesus' words in this exchange (and it's important to grapple with them – that's perhaps a sermon for another day), but by healing this woman's daughter, perhaps Jesus wanted us to know that the Canaanite woman understood something about tradition that the Pharisees and the disciples didn't get: that God's grace and mercy and healing has always been for those seen as dogs (Bolz-Weber). That ours has always been a tradition of "dogs," of outsiders and outcasts, of those deemed "unclean" and "impure," of *sinner*s, of those who are unworthy, of those who need Jesus' mercy and healing, and know they need it.

The Canaanite woman says, essentially, what we said in the Words of Confession when we began our worship service today. We are sinners. We are dogs. We are unworthy to be at Jesus' table. But we'll take even the crumbs, because we need Jesus.

The Canaanite woman understood something about tradition that the Pharisees and the disciples didn't get: that if tradition becomes about rules instead of relationships, if tradition becomes a mean of distinguishing insiders and outsiders, then we've got it all wrong. Because with our God, there is no insider and outsider. We are all outsiders. And yet, we have a God who feeds us anyway, not just with crumbs, but with a feast. A God who feeds us not *under* the table but offers us a place *at* the table. The Jews next to the Gentiles, the Israelites next to the Canaanites, the men next to the women, the old next to the young, people who like hymns next to the people who like contemporary music, the Republican next to the Democrat, the Cross of Glory softball team next to the Grace Fellowship softball team (who, unfortunately broke our winning streak this past week), black next to the white, rich next to the poor, people like you next to people like me. We have a God who shows us that traditions are not about who's in and who's out, but about the boundless bread that's shared with all of us dogs. Boundless bread that is abundantly given not because of us but in spite of us.

This is our unfair, undeserved, grace-filled, boundary-breaking, life-giving tradition, my friends. So may we boldly claim it, and may we continue to test it, as the hymn says that we're about to sing in a few moments. May we both claim and test our heritage, that our faith may not become deadened by doctrines, but may be alive to the God who is exploding boundaries and expanding tables so that all people can take part in the feast. Maybe even you and me. Amen.

Sources:

- Carla Works, "Commentary on Matthew 15:[10-20] 21-28," *Working Preacher*, August 17, 2014.
- Cornel West, "There is Joy in the Struggle," *Harvard Divinity School*, May 31, 2019.
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (ed. Eberhard Bethge; New York: Touchstone, 1997).
- Luke Powery, "The Heart of the Matter," *Duke Chapel*, August 30, 2015.
- Nadia Bolz-Weber, "A Sermon on Grace, Dogs, and Sass-Mouthed Women," *Patheos*, August 20, 2014.

HYMN OF THE DAY #729

1 The church of Christ, in ev'ry age
beset by change, but Spirit-led,
must claim and test its heritage
and keep on rising from the dead.

The Church of Christ in Every Age

2 Across the world, across the street,
the victims of injustice cry
for shelter and for bread to eat,
and never live before they die.

3 Then let the servant church arise,
a caring church that longs to be
a partner in Christ's sacrifice,
and clothed in Christ's humanity.

4 For he alone, whose blood was shed,
can cure the fever in our blood,
and teach us how to share our bread
and feed the starving multitude.

5 We have no mission but to serve
in full obedience to our Lord;
to care for all, without reserve,
and spread his liberating word.

CONFESSION OF FAITH Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius
Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he
rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will
come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the
resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

PRAYERS of the PEOPLE

God of all ages, we give you thanks for your church in every time and place. For those who have gone before us, for those who will come after us, and for those who share in this tradition today. We thank you for the community here at Cross of Glory, for our Wildfire partners, for all the rich expressions of your tradition across this country, and for those beyond our borders. By your Spirit, help your church to both claim and test our heritage, that we keep on rising from the dead.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of all peoples, your mercy extends beyond the barriers and boundaries we draw. Forgive us for the ways we fail to welcome the "outsiders" in our midst, especially those with physical and mental disabilities, those who lack shelter, those who struggle with substance use, and those who have been marginalized due to age, ability, race, religion, gender, or class. Empower us to share not just the crumbs of your table but a place at your table, so that all peoples may feast on your grace, your healing, and your love.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of all living things, you have blessed us with the bounty of the earth. Relieve waters choked by trash, renew soils stripped of nutrients, and refresh the air heavy with pollution. As the end of the summer growing season draws near, keep us mindful of those laboring in the harvest, and equip us all to be good stewards of your precious creation.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of all healing, we cry out your name and beg you to heal all the demons that possess us: aching bodies, lonely hearts, tired spirits, troubled minds. We pray especially for those in need of healing in our church community today: for Bev Hoium, Gil Hartlage, Lee Howe, Julie Mortenson, Georgie Proctor, Doris Boyum, Terry and Carol Stejskal, Nancy Hengel, for Caroline and Rick, family of Dan and Julie Aulwes, and for Jeffrey, son of Harriet Halvorsen. Hear us, see us, touch us, heal us.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In the bold and confident hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

OFFERTORY

We give thanks for the many kinds of gifts that God has first given us, and for many kinds of gifts that the people of God steward to the work of the church. If you are able to give a financial gift, you are encouraged to do so by mailing it to the church office (5929 Brooklyn Blvd, Brooklyn Center, MN 55429). Thank you!

OFFERTORY RESPONSE

For Everyone Born

1 For everyone born, a place at the table,
for everyone born, clean water and bread,
a shelter, a space, a safe place for growing,
for everyone born, a star overhead,

Chorus and God will delight when we welcome all to the table,
with joy, compassion and peace:
yes, God will delight when we welcome all to the table, with justice and joy!

2 For young and for old, a place at the table,
a voice to be heard, a part in the song,
the hands of a child in hands that are wrinkled,
for young and for old, the gift to belong, **Chorus**

3 For everyone born, a place at the table,
to live without fear, and simply to be,
to work, to speak out, to witness and worship,
for everyone born, the gift to be free, **Chorus**

OFFERING PRAYER

God of goodness and growth, all creation is yours, and your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens. Water and word, wine and bread: these are signs of your abundant grace. Nourish us through these gifts, that we might proclaim your steadfast love in our communities and in the world, through Jesus Christ, our daily bread. Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Lord remember us in your kingdom and teach us always to pray.

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.

BENEDICTION

Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. God, the creator, † Jesus, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the comforter, bless you and keep you in eternal love. Amen.

SENDING FORTH SONG

Never Gonna Let Me Go

Once I was lost wand'ring in darkness

No life inside no hope in sight

But He called my name and He healed my blindness

Set me ablaze now I'm alive with

His love breaking through my heart of stone

Love breathing to awake my bones

Love reaching out to save my soul

Love never gonna let me go

And now my heart so full of worship
I can't hold back no I can't contain it
For all He's done Jesus my Savior
I am ablaze and full of thanks for

His love breaking through my heart of stone
Love breathing to awake my bones
Love reaching out to save my soul
Love never gonna let me go
Love calling me as I am
Love making me new again
Love lifting me when I can't
Love never gonna let me go

Wherever you've been
Whatever you've done
Come as you are come into His open arms
Wherever you've been
Whatever you've done
(Come as you are come and find)
(Come as you are well come find His love)

Your love breaking through my heart of stone
Love breathing to awake my bones
Love reaching out to save my soul
Love never gonna let me go
Love calling me as I am, Love making me new again
Love lifting me when I can't, Love never gonna let me go
Love never gonna let me go, Your love never gonna let me go

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Christ is with you.
Thanks be to God.

<p>Congregational Support as of 7/31/2020 Annual Budget: \$225,000.00 Year to Date Budgeted: \$132,008.35 Year to Date Received: \$125,626.38 Difference: \$-6,381.97</p>
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Community Announcements

- Join us today after worship on Zoom for Virtual Coffee Hour! This is a great way to catch up and connect with one another during this time apart. Grab a cup of coffee and stick around for a brief time of small group fellowship immediately following the service.
- All are welcome to take part in Cross of Glory's Bible Study, which meets Tuesday mornings at 9:30 am on Zoom. You can join by using the same Zoom information that we use for worship on Sunday mornings.
- Cross of Glory's softball games have resumed again. If you're interested in cheering them on, join us Monday night 8/17 at 8:20 pm at the north field at Centennial Park. Fans will sit physically distanced - bring your own lawn chair!
- Please contact Pastor Ali Tranvik for pastoral concerns and needs. You can reach her by email (atranvik@crossofglory.us) or by phone (763-533-8602).