JUNE 14, 2020 SERVICE

GATHERING

GREETING AND PRAYER OF THE DAY

Grace and peace be yours this day. Let us pray. God of compassion, you have opened the way for us and brought us to the home of your heart. Pour your inspire love into our hearts, that we may freely share your blessings and faithfully proclaim your grace in our words and deeds in all we do. Amen.

WORD

PSALM: Psalm 100

 1Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all you lands!

  2Serve the Lord with gladness; come into God’s presence with a song.

 3Know that the Lord is God, our maker to whom we belong;

  we are God’s people and the sheep of God’s pasture.

 4Enter the gates of the Lord with thanksgiving and the courts with praise;

  give thanks and bless God’s holy name.

 5Good indeed is the Lord, whose steadfast love is everlasting,

  whose faithfulness endures from age to age.

HYMN *“My God And I”* *(I. B. Sergei)*

*My God and I go in the field together*

*We walk and talk as good friends should and do*

*We clasp our hands, our voices ring with laughter*

*My God and I walk through the meadow’s hue*

*We clasp our hands, our voices ring with laughter*

*My God and I walk through the meadow’s hue*

*He tells me of the years that went before me*

*When heavenly plans were made for me to be*

*When all was but a dream of dim reflection*

*To come to life, earth's verdant glory see*

*When all was but a dream of dim reflection*

*To come to life, earth's verdant glory see*

*My God and I will go for aye together*

*We'll walk and talk just as good friends do*

*This earth will pass, and with it common trifles*

*But God and I will go unendingly*

*This earth will pass, and with it common trifles*

*But God and I will go unendingly*

SECOND READING: Romans 5:1-8

1Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. 3And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

  6For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. 8But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

GOSPEL HYMN #798 *“Will You Come And Follow Me”*



GOSPEL: Matthew 9:35--10:23

35Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. 36When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; 38therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

 10:1Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. 2These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; 3Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; 4Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

  5These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, 6but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ 8Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. 9Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, 10no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food. 11Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. 12As you enter the house, greet it. 13If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. 14If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. 15Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

  16“See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. 17Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues; 18and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles. 19When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; 20for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. 21Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; 22and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 23When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.”

MESSAGE

Someone just recently shared with me,

after watching sheep in Ireland for 6 years,

that sheep love being in the community of a sheepfold.

It is there that they press against each other and keep warm,

protect each other and keep safe.

Sheep have an important role in caring for each other.

And I think that it is safe to say that we all love the image

 of a Shepherding God who faithfully cares for us sheep,

whose steadfast love for us is known through the sheepfold.

It’s an image of God that often brings solace to our hearts,

especially when life feels chaotic, when we feel helpless and uncertain,

when we are in need of being protected and guided along life’s paths.

And rightfully so, knowing that God is our Shepherd brings us great joy,

bringing us to sing praise in response to being known and seen by God,

grateful to have received the loving care of our God in this life.

And yet, in our scriptures today, we hear that our Shepherding God

 does something more than guide us sheep into the care of the sheepfold,

something more than bring us in to safety and security.

We are asked to emerge, to reach out to lost sheep,

and we are given direction to move into the unknown.

We are given a mission to proceed

 into what may not always be safe and secure.

We are given a mission to serve those who are hurting,

but may not always have the ability to receive what we have to offer.

Because the reality is that we live in a broken world.

People do not always have the eyes to see God’s word,

or the ability to discern what is evil and good,

even though we all need to be fed by God.

As followers of Christ, we are given a mission to serve our world.

We are called to bravely enact the love and care we receive from God

and reach out to those who are suffering from hardship,

to those who are weakened by life’s blows,

to those who are forced to endure injustice.

There is something more for us in this life to do

than to just nestle in to the security of the sheepfold.

As followers of Christ, we are called out of our comfort zones

 into what may very well be danger zones,

 to act in compassion towards those who are harassed and helpless,

and to help bring healing to those who are sickened and diseased

by the ills and evils of this life.

We can be certain that the places we are called to serve God

stretch beyond the walls of our churches and into our communities,

our cities, our nation, and our world.

To remain focused only upon our families,

upon our small social circles, upon our own churches, even,

is to lose sight of the calling that God has for us all to serve our world.

Now, I know it may be hard to think of how to do so,

especially when healthcare is outsourced to the work of capable

medical professionals who can treat illness,

 and have the calling to help heal the sick.

I know it may be hard to think of how to so,

especially when our government has many programs and capable workers bringing change and assistance to those who are in need.

There is a lot of great work that happens on a systemic level

 within our country to help those who are suffering.

But what about those things that fall through the cracks

 of our systems of care that are already overwhelmed beyond capacity?

What about those things that make our hearts and our souls sick?

And what about what happens to us when our bodies

are overwhelmed with the heaviness and the anxiety

that comes with trying to make sense of all that we face, and we are

struggling to walk and proceed with the darkness and chaos before us?

As followers of Christ, we are given a mission to serve our world.

We are called to bravely enact the love and care we receive from God

and reach out to those who are suffering from hardship,

to those who are weakened by life’s blows,

to those who are forced to endure injustice.

I ask you to emerge from the safety of the sheepfold, to help other sheep,

to hear Jesus’ invitation to follow him to serve others,

to have your eyes opened to see those around you

that you are called to assist, that you are called to comfort,

that you are called to reach out and stand up for or walk beside.

Who is right there before you that is struggling with illness,

or suffering from injustice?

Who is right there before you that is aching and in need of prayer?

Who is right there before you that can use the gift

 of a caring and compassionate voice or helping hand?

I know that serving other sheep in a pandemic is not easy.

Serving God when it’s not a pandemic isn’t easy either.

There are a lot of reasons or excuses we give to not serve,

and we may try to remain nestled into the comfort of the sheepfold,

that is until our consciences or hearts speak to us.

And when we do have the courage to emerge,

it may even be a lot more difficult than we imagined.

We may not be received by those we reach out to.

We may think our efforts do not make a difference at all.

It may even feel as though we are sent like sheep into the midst of wolves.

But the truth is, those who may look like wolves

are really only hurting and lost sheep.

When we emerge from our sheepfold,

God will give us the tenacity and strength we need to endure,

and the wits to be smart and wise, and the hearts to be tender and innocent.

God will give us the words we need to say,

and the compassion we need to journey with others.

Even though what we face may be frightening at times, we do not need to worry.

God would not call us to this mission to serve other sheep

 unless we would be given the grace to be brought through this.

Although we are called to journey with others, to reach out, to endure,

 the outcome is never up to us. We are only called to be faithful

with what is before us, loving those whom we meet along the way.

The love of God poured into our hearts

is enough to sustain us each step of the way.

HYMN OF THE DAY #692 *“We Are An Offering”*

*We lift our voices, we lift our hands, we lift our lives up to you: we are an offering.*

*Lord, use our voices, Lord, use our hands, Lord, use our lives, they are yours:*

 *we are an offering.*

*All that we have, all that we are, all that we hope to be,*

 *we give to you, we give to you.*

*We lift our voices, we lift our hands, we lift our lives up to you:*

 *we are an offering, we are an offering.*

PRAYER

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Called into unity with one another and the whole creation, let us pray for our world which we are called to embrace and serve in love. *A brief silence.*

Holy One, you bring us together and call us your own. Bless all who help us grow in faith. Guide your church, that we might be a people whose hearts are transformed by your love, and a people who hands are emboldened to serve. Shepherding God: Your mercy is great.

Holy One, the whole earth is yours. Where there is fire, bring cool air and new growth. Where there is flooding, bring abatement. Where there is drought, bring rain. Inspire us with the conviction to care for your earth, and all of its people, seeing always what is in our hands to do. Shepherding God: Your mercy is great.

Holy One, we have created divisions you will not own. In places of conflict, raise up leaders who work to develop lasting peace and reconciliation. Help our world rise up against racism and any form of discrimination. Encourage organizations and individuals who care for all forced to leave their homes, and settle in a new place or land. Shepherding God: Your mercy is great.

Holy One, you care for those who are harassed and helpless. Protect and defend those who are abused. Heal those who are sick, especially those struggling directly or indirectly from the COVID virus. Help those who are facing illness, and going through cancer treatments to respond to your healing touch. Feed all who hunger and without proper nutrition or gainful employment. Empower all whose voices go unheard, and help us respond to the pressing needs of our neighbors. Shepherding God: Your mercy is great.

Holy One, you bring all people to yourself. We give thanks for your beloved people who have gone before us, and are home now with you in heaven. Sustain us in your mission until the day you bear us up to join the saints in light. Shepherding God: Your mercy is great.

Receive these prayers, O God, and those too deep for words; through the love and grace of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

LORD’S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,**

**your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,**

**now and forever. Amen.**

SENDING

BLESSING

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.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Christ is with you.