

Sermon and Service of the word for June 21st

SONG: "In Christ Alone"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ExnTIIM5QgE&list=PLF983819E873F695C&index=30>

CALL TO WORSHIP:

L: The Lord listens to us in times of trouble and joy.

P: We call to the Lord in our anxiety and fear.

L: God will not turn away from us.

P: God will heal us and restore us.

L: Let the Lord of life enter into your spirits.

P: Lord, come to us and heal our brokenness and sorrow. AMEN.

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious and loving God, come to us in our fears and frustrations. We feel unable to serve and often beaten down by life. Give us courage and strength and help us joyfully serve you by serving others. In Jesus' Name, we pray.
AMEN.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Lord, we are so beaten down by life. We see the shadows all around us and shrink away from your light in our fears. We turn our backs on others because we don't believe that we have anything to offer. Our attitudes and our actions often reflect anger and hostility rather than compassion and hope. Please forgive us, Lord. Please heal and restore us to wholeness and hope. Give us courage to be your disciples. We ask this in Jesus' Name.
AMEN.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Jesus does not say that discipleship is easy. He says that we are called to serve and that he will be with us. That is truly good news. Our service will be supported and encouraged by our Lord who has healed and restored us. Rejoice! For you have been called and made whole by the love of God. AMEN.

READINGS

Jeremiah 20:7–13

Psalms 69:7–10 (11–15) 16–18

Romans 6:1b–11

Matthew 10:24–39

SONG: “The Wonderful Cross”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5dQsNlifM&list=PLF983819E873F695C&index=64>



SERMON: The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)

When you were a child were you ever given a gift but told that if you were not good it would be taken off you? Or perhaps you were told that if you are not good you won't get an ice-cream or something like that. The Bible's exhortation to live in the light and shine in the dark can be a bit like that if we see it as part of the things we have to do to stay saved.

That's where the story of the rich man and Lazarus comes in and also flows out of what was said in last week's sermon. The story reminds us that it is all "gospel" from beginning to end. That's good news for those who still think they need to do something special or live perfect lives before God will love them.

The gospel message in the story is that Lazarus did nothing, nor could he do anything, to earn his salvation. After all he was a helpless beggar. That's good news for each of us who have perhaps grown weary of trying to be super-Christians somehow. We will be beggars like Lazarus all our lives but God still loves us. That's the greatest news we could ever hear. The rich man probably despised Lazarus because he believed him not worthy of God's attention. Sadly the rich man missed the point when he trusted in his own holiness or his Jewishness or even his wealth to allow him entry into heaven.

He must have neglected God's word. Had he read it he would have discovered that it spoke of Jesus and the salvation that can only be ours through faith in the Son of God. He missed the wonderful message of the cross and he didn't understand the promise of God's grace.

It was reported that Luther's last words found on the table beside his death bed were, "We are beggars it is true." What he was saying was that we will never be anything but failures when it comes to earning our way to heaven. He was reminding us that it all depends on God and his grace and mercy.

Yes it is true that God's word invites us to live in the light and shine in the dark but when we fail he will still continue to love us and that won't ever change. As someone once said "Mercy is when we don't get what we do deserve and Grace is what we do get that we don't deserve."

Maybe in the final analysis realising that I am a beggar that God loves despite my weaknesses and failings is the best news we will ever hear.

Here is a question for each of us to contemplate. When like Lazarus and the rich man we die and stand before the judgement seat of God and He says to us, "Why should I let you into my heaven?" What are you going to answer? Amen.

PRAYERS

Christ invites us to come to him with all our burdens, so that he can give us rest. Trusting in his promise, let us pray with confidence to his Father and our Father.

Heavenly Father, bless your church and the work you have called it to do. Make us a resting place for the weary and the heavy laden. Let us be a place where troubled people can take their burdens and place them in your hands. Teach us to bring our burdens to you everyday and place them confidently in your hands knowing that in Christ alone we have been given a new start, and through Christ alone we can have the true peace and the true comfort of forgiveness.

Lord in your mercy: hear our prayer

We pray for all schools and other places of learning, especially schools in our area. Bless the work of teachers and other staff members and strengthen them in their special calling. Use them to prepare our young people to face the world with wisdom and confidence. We ask you to give both students and staff a time of relaxation and refreshment through the holidays and protect everyone who is travelling.

Lord in your mercy: hear our prayer

We ask you to bless our agriculture, fishing, forestry and all other primary industries. When times are difficult, we place our trust in you and ask you to hear our prayers and answer our need. We thank you for rain and sunshine, and we pray that you would continue to send rain when and where it's needed. We ask that you would protect and watch over people who are struggling at this time, and especially those who are unable to put their trust in you. Help them to let go of their burdens and find the true rest only you can give them.

Lord in your mercy: hear our prayer

Protect all those who are starving, malnourished and in poverty, both overseas and in this country. Give us hearts to share compassionately from our abundance to help provide for our brothers and sisters in need. Lord in your mercy: hear our prayer

Bless our government and all in authority. Use our elected leaders to promote goodness, justice and truth. As you have appointed us to be stewards of the earth, help our nation to wisely manage the environment and prevent the degradation of land and water ways.

Lord in your mercy: hear our prayer

Be with all we know who have particular needs, especially (insert names). We pray for those who are entering hospital or recovering from treatment – help them to acknowledge your fatherly will and rejoice in your saving help.

Lord in your mercy: hear our prayer

We trust in your mercy, Lord, and put all our concerns into your hands. We pray through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

SONG: “Shout To the North”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-BRLSq_bJM&list=PLF983819E873F695C&index=76

BENEDICTION

Even if the whole world does not understand, go in God’s peace to bring the news of hope and healing to this world. Be at peace, for God is with you wherever you go. AMEN.