

**St. Paul's Free Methodist Church
Twenty-Third Sunday After Pentecost**

Call To Worship Awake My Soul

Greeting

This is the day that the LORD has made;

Let rejoice and be glad in it.

This is none other than the house of God,

And this is the gate of heaven.

Praise Hymn Take My Life and Let it Be HFL 294

Prayer

O God, whose blessed Son came into the world that he might destroy the works of the devil and make us children of God and heirs of eternal life: Grant that, having this hope, we may purify ourselves as he is pure; that, when he comes again with power and great glory, we may be made like him in his eternal and glorious kingdom; where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

Amen.

First Lesson Joshua 24:1-3a,14-25

Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God. And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Long ago your ancestors--Terah and his sons Abraham and Nahor--lived beyond the Euphrates and served other gods. Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan and made his offspring many. "Now therefore revere the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. Now if you are unwilling to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." Then the people answered, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight. He protected us along all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed; and the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God." But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the LORD, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm, and consume you, after having done you good." And the people said to Joshua, "No, we will serve the LORD!" Then Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD, to serve him." And they said, "We are witnesses." He said, "Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel." The people said to Joshua, "The LORD our God we will serve, and him we will obey." So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made statutes and ordinances for them at Shechem.

R: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Canticle Wisdom Of Solomon 6:17-20

The beginning of wisdom is the most sincere desire for instruction, and concern for instruction is love of her, and love of her is the keeping of her laws, and giving heed to her laws is assurance of immortality, and immortality brings one near to God; so the desire for wisdom leads to a kingdom.

Hymn

The Kingdom is Yours

Second Lesson *1 Thessalonians 4:13-18*

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

R: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia

URW 402

Gospel *Matthew 25:1-13*

R: Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to St. Matthew.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise replied, ‘No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’ And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I do not know you.’ Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.”

R: This is the Gospel of our Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

Apostles' Creed

Liturgy of Lament written by: Tasha Morrison from Be the Bridge

Just as the Israelites were called to remember we must have a common memory and develop a theology for lament. We must lament our history by first acknowledging it.

Leader: We acknowledge that we stood by when the dwellings of our neighbors were cast down, and we ignored the cries of the innocent. (Jeremiah 9:19) Lord, have mercy.

Group: We lament.

Leader: Lord, we acknowledge we have not learned to do right; we do not seek restorative justice that benefits all. We have not defended the oppressed. We have not taken up the cause of the fatherless or pleaded the case of the widow (Isaiah 1:17). Instead, we have mocked and punished the poor with our partisanship and apathy. Lord, have mercy.

Group: We lament.

Leader: We lament that we stood by as systemic and institutionalized racism became founding pillars and structures in America and within the church. Lord, have mercy.

Group: We lament.

Leader: We have allowed agendas of an empire to become prominent within your church. We understand that empire aims to take and oppress. We have replaced your kingdom with an empire mentality. Lord, have mercy.

Group: We lament.

Leader: We have formed and developed church structures and denominations while excluding the voice of your global church, due to racism and racial segregation. Lord, have mercy.

Group: We lament.

Leader: We acknowledge the racial hierarchies and structures of privilege many have benefited from and many have been oppressed by. Lord, have mercy.

Group: We lament.

Leader: We have ignored the cries of children because they were not our own. We have discounted the pain of mothers because they were not our own. We have turned a blind eye to the affliction of Brown and Black men because they were not our own. Lord, have mercy.

Group: We lament.

Leader: We have replaced your supremacy with idolization of our nation and racial identity. Lord, have mercy.

Group: We lament.

Leader: We have not required justice, we have not loved others well, and we have not walked in humility in our brokenness.

Group: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: We cry out to you, our God and Redeemer, as the only one who can save us from ourselves. Show us our blind spots. Don't let us hide from you in our shame and guilt. Restore us to your perfect union that can be found in Jesus Christ. Lord, show us how to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you (Micah 6:8).

Group: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

Group: Lord, with deep sorrow we lament. In the powerful name of Jesus Christ, let it be so!

Prayers Of The People

The Peace

By dying, Christ destroyed our death;
In rising, he restores our life;
In giving us his Spirit, he grants us peace.
The peace of the Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us take a few moments to greet each other with signs of peace and reconciliation.

Doxology

Communion

The Invitation

You who truly and earnestly repent of your sins, who seek to live in love and peace with your neighbors and who intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God and walking in God's holy ways, draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament to your comfort; and humbly make your honest confession to Almighty God.

The Collect

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love You and worthily magnify Your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

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. (BCP)

The Dialogue

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give thanks and praise.

Thanksgiving

We give You thanks for all Your goodness at all times and in all places. You have shielded, rescued, helped and guided us all our days and brought us to this hour, letting us once again worship You and seek Your help. Blessed are You, Creator God, for by Your goodness we have this bread from the soil and this fruit from the vine.

Sanctus/Praise

It is always right and proper that we should, at all times and in all places, give You thanks and praise. Therefore, with angels and archangels, and with all the inhabitants of heaven, we honor and adore Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying,

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts!

Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.

Glory be to Thee, O Lord, most high. Amen.

The Great Thanksgiving

Almighty God, You created us to enjoy Your fellowship; and even when we turned away, and our love failed, Your love was true. You gave promises to Abraham and Sarah and You were true to Your word. You made covenant with Israel and blessed them. You sent prophets who spoke of a new promise and a new covenant. In the fullness of time, You gave the world Your only Son. You anointed Him by Your Spirit to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to announce salvation to the nations. He healed the sick, fed the hungry and ate with people just like us. Through His temptations and ministry, His suffering and death, His resurrection and ascension, He restored to us the fullness of shalom.

You sent Your Holy Spirit, the Counselor, Who, through the apostles and the church, called us to salvation; You adopted us and daily give us aid in the journey of faith by the same Spirit. Our hearts are full, O God, and in confidence that You will bring us to our full inheritance, and give us our place at the heavenly table with Your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, we offer thanksgiving.

Joining our voices with all the church, we confess:

Christ has died,

Christ has risen,

Christ will come again.

The Gloria Patri

Glory be to the Father

And to the Son

And to the Holy Ghost:

As it was in the beginning,

**Is now, and ever shall be,
World without end. Amen. Amen.**

Prayer of Approach

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, send the power of Your Holy Spirit upon us, and on these gifts, that we may experience anew the suffering, death and resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ. May Your Spirit help us to know, in the breaking of this bread and the drinking of this cup, the presence of Christ Who gave His body and blood for all. And may Your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in service to all the world. Amen.

Words of Institution

In the night of his betrayal, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

In like manner, after supper he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of this, all of you, for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins; do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. Amen.

Words of Distribution

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed upon him in your heart, by faith with thanksgiving.

The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for you, and be thankful.

***References:**

- Board of Bishops FMCNA. "Service of Holy Communion—The Alternate Ritual." *Pastors and Church Leaders Manual*. Indianapolis: Light & Life Communications, 2006. 128-135. Print.
- White, Ron. "Nine Alternative Communion Rituals." (Taken from Options 1, 3, 8 and 9.) *Free Methodist Church of North America*, 2012, fmcusa.org/wp-content/blogs.dir/45/files/2012/02/PCLM_CommunionAlternatives.pdf.

Prayer After Communion

God of mercy, God of grace, we bless and praise you for nourishing us with this Easter feast of redemption. Fill us with your Spirit, and make us living signs of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Community Sharing

Offering

Hymn Of Response We Give Thee But Thine Own 360

Sending Hymn Be Thou My Vision HFL 357

Dismissal With Blessing

Go in peace, to love and serve God and your neighbor; and may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Next Week's Readings: Judges 4:1-7 and Psalm 123, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, Matthew 25:14-30

Preaching This Week: Claire Krober

Preaching Next Week: Pastor Ayebale Barigye