**A Service of The Word and Sacrament**

**Sixteenth Sunday After Pentecost**

**September 8, 2024**

“I have found the paradox that if I love until it hurts, then there is no hurt but only more love.”

Mother Teresa

**RINGING OF THE BELL**

**THE PRELUDE**

**GREETING**

Whoever you are, and wherever you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.

**Praise be to God!**

**\*INTROIT “Surely the Presence of the Lord”**

**Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place;**

**I can feel his mighty power and his grace.**

**I can hear the brush of angels’ wings,**

**I see glory on each face;**

**Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place. (Second time—acapella)**

**\*CALL TO WORSHIP**

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you.

**And also, with you.**

Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy.

**How awesome is the Lord Most High, the great King over all the earth.**

He will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help.

**He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the need from death.**

May all the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you.

**May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples justly and guide the nations of the earth.**

In the last days the mountain of the Lord’s temple will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.

**Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped.**

Praise the Lord, all you nations; Extol him, all you peoples.

**For great is his love toward us. The faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord!**

Please pray with me,

**Glorious are you, O God! Glorious are you! Your praises are to be sung in the morning and in the evening. Your honor is on our lips and our hearts are lifted as we bless your name. Bless this community of faith, we pray, with your Holy Spirit as we seek to serve you in Jesus’ name. Amen.**

**\*HYMN “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore You” # 4**

**\*A LITANY OF FAITH (Using the United Church of Christ Statement of Faith)**

Let us say again what we believe about God.

**We believe in You, O God, Eternal Spirit, God of our Savior Jesus Christ, and our God, and to Your deeds we testify: You call the worlds into being, create persons in your own image, and set before each one the ways of life and death. You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin. You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.**

Let us say again what we believe about Jesus.

**In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death, and reconciling the world to yourself.**

Let us say again what we believe about God’s Holy Spirit.

**You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues and races.**

Let us say again what we believe is our calling as we live together in the church.

**You call us into Your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your servants in the service of others, to proclaim the Gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ’s baptism and eat at his table, to join Him in his passion and victory.**

Finally, let us say again what God has promised us.

**You promise to all who trust you: forgiveness of sin and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your Realm which has no end. Blessing and honor, glory, and power, be unto you. Amen.**

\***RESPONSE “Lord, I Want To Be a Christian” #454**

**PSALM 146 (Responsively) Readers: Charlotte & Jerrison Werdeo**

(The Psalms are time-honored prayers spoken by people of faith. Psalm 146 is a prayer that reminds us of God’s powerful work in human history.)

Praise the Lord!  
Praise the Lord, O my soul!

**I will praise the Lord as long as I live;  
I will sing praises to my God all my life long.**

Do not put your trust in princes,  
in mortals, in whom there is no help.

**When their breath departs, they return to the earth;  
on that very day their plans perish.**

Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,  
whose hope is in the Lord their God,

**who made heaven and earth,  
the sea, and all that is in them;  
who keeps faith forever,**

who executes justice for the oppressed;  
who gives food to the hungry.

The Lord sets the prisoners free;

**the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.  
The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;  
the Lord loves the righteous.**

The Lord watches over the strangers;  
he upholds the orphan and the widow,  
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

**The Lord will reign forever,  
your God, O Zion, for all generations.  
Praise the Lord!**

**THE NEW TESTAMENT James 2:1-13 Readers: Charlotte & Jerrison Werdeo**

(The book of James offers us practical instructions on how we are to live as people of faith. In the text we’re about to hear, notice two things: 1) in the church it’s important that we give right regard to those who are struggling through life; and 2) the last line of this morning’s reading, ‘mercy triumphs over judgement.’

My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, ‘Have a seat here, please’, while to the one who is poor you say, ‘Stand there’, or, ‘Sit at my feet’, have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you?

You do well if you really fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For the one who said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’, also said, ‘You shall not murder.’ Now if you do not commit adultery but if you murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So, speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. For judgement will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgement.

**SERMON ON THE STEPS Blessing of the Back Packs**

Dear God, you are our Teacher, Creator, and Guide through all of life. As we prepare for the beginning of a new school year, we ask your blessings on these backpacks, our students, and teachers.

We thank you for pens and pencils that are held by big and little fingers

**Bless the words that flow from these pens and pencils and bless the ones that write with them.**

We thank you for crayons and markers.

**May they be used to show the wonder of creation and each child’s imagination.**

We thank you for notebooks, folders and binders we can fill with our thoughts and stories.

**Bless the ones who fill them with writing and drawings.**

We thank you for the books we read, for the books that teach us our history,

**Bless these books, and the minds of the children who read them.**

We thank you for our lunch boxes, filled with food to help our bodies and minds grow.

**Bless the food our children eat. We pray that there will be enough for all.**

We thank you for teachers who love children and who will fill their minds with knowledge. We thank you also for principals, counselors, custodians, nurses, aides, cafeteria workers and bus drivers who take care of our students.

**Bless these for the sacred work entrusted to them.**

We for the patience and encouraging words of parents, grandparents, and childcare providers.

**Bless these and their sacred work.**

We thank you for children and their work in school that their knowledge might grow and their imaginations soar.

**Bless our children with students in all that they do, work and play, for it is all sacred work.**

**\*HYMN “Sing Them Over Again to Me” # 319**

**THE GOSPEL Mark 7:24-37 Readers: Charlotte & Jerrison Werdeo**

From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophoenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, ‘Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.’ But she answered him, ‘Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.’ Then he said to her, ‘For saying that you may go—the demon has left your daughter.’ So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, ‘Ephphatha’, that is, ‘Be opened.’ And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. They were astounded beyond measure, saying, ‘He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.’

**SERMON “Begging for the Welfare of Others”**

**INGATHERING OF PRAYER CONCERNS**

**PASTORAL PRAYER AND LORD’S PRAYER** (St. John’s: *debts/debtors;* St. Paul’s: sins/sin against us)

**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 (*debts*/sins), as we forgive (*our debtors*/those who sin 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. Amen.**

**THE OFFERING**

Why do we give an offering? An offering says, ‘thank you’ to God. An offering enables us to support a local church with its expenses. An offering promotes work beyond the local church like church camps, mission co-workers, seminaries, and advocacy. An offering expresses our spiritual need to care for others. Or again, an offering says, ‘thank you’ to God.

**\*RESPONSE “Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow” # 780**

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God, all creatures here below;**

**Praise God above, you heavenly host: Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

**\*OFFERTORY PRAYER**

**We bless you God for coming to us in Jesus Christ. Words alone cannot express our heartfelt gratitude for the abundance of your mercy shown towards us. Receive, we pray, our offering, which is meant to be gift to your work in our midst. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.**

**SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION**

The Gospel tells us that on the first day of the week our Lord was raised from death, and that evening while at table with two disciples He was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

**This is the joyful feast of the people of God.**

**Come from the east and the west,**

**from the north and the south,**

**and gather about Christ’s table.**

This table is for all Christians who wish to knowthe presence of Christ and to share in the community of God’s people. God be with you.

**And also, with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them up to God.**

Let us give thanks to God Most High.

**It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

We give You thanks, God of majesty and mercy, for calling forth the creation and raising us from dust by the breath of Your being. We bless You for the bounty of the earth and for the vision of the day when sharing by all will mean scarcity for none. We rejoice that You call the entire human family to this table.

We come in celebration of the gift of Jesus Christ, whom You sent in the fullness of time to be the good news. Born of Mary, Christ lived among us to reveal the mystery of Your Word, to suffer and die on the cross for us, to be raised from death and then to live in glory. We bless You, gracious God, for the presence of Your Holy Spirit in the church. We praise You with joy.

**Holy, Holy, Holy God of love and majesty,**

**the whole universe speaks of your glory, O God most high.**

**Blessed is He who comes in the name of our God.**

We remember that on the night of betrayal and desertion, Jesus gathered the disciples for the feast of Passover. Jesus took bread, gave thanks to You, broke it, and then offered it to the disciples, saying: “This is My body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.” In the same way he took the cup, saying: “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” Therefore, we proclaim the mystery of our faith.

**Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.**

We spread Your table, O Lord, with these gifts. We present to You our lives, committed to Your service. Send Your Holy Spirit on this bread, this cup, and us. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**BREAKING OF THE BREAD AND POURING OF THE CUP**

**SHARING OF THE ELEMENTS**

**\*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

**\*HYMN “My Life Flows on in Endless Song” #476**

**\*ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**\*COMMISSION AND BENEDICTION**

**\*POSTLUDE**