

Order of Worship for 8-30-2020 9 AM

A video of the service will “go live” at 8:30 AM Sunday morning on Memorial’s YouTube page here: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqritUPMNz38pvRJo4-17Kw> and on Memorial’s Facebook page here: <https://www.facebook.com/mlcomes/>

You will then be able to watch it beginning then as if you were watching a normal service or watch it anytime later on demand.

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

Opening Hymn: *“From All That Dwell Below the Skies”* - **Hymn # 816**

P: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

Holy Gospel – Matthew 16:21-28

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the sixteenth chapter.

C: **Glory to You, O Lord.**

P: From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord! This shall never happen to You." But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a hindrance to Me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man." Then Jesus told His disciples, "If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come with His angels in the glory of His Father, and then He will repay each person according to what he has done. Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: **Praise to You, O Christ.**

Confession and Forgiveness:

P: Jesus said, "If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." But do we want to take up that cross?

C: It is so easy to center our lives on what makes things easy and comfortable for "me." We so often live our lives with that purpose—either by consuming what give pleasure to us or protecting ourselves so we do not have to feel uncomfortable.

P: We confess to God our selfishness.

Lord God, we live as if the cross of Jesus means nothing. We live for all kinds of things, but not for You.

C: We forget what Jesus tells us, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?"

ALL; Lord, have mercy on us.

P: Jesus says, "Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. Through Baptism God has drowned our old selfish self to bring to life a new life, a life willing to lose our lives for Jesus' sake. On the cross Jesus took away our sins. Your sins are forgiven.

C: Thanks be to God. Amen.

Entrance Psalm

P: Delight yourself in the LORD,

C: and He will give you the desires of your heart.

P: Commit your way to the LORD;

C: trust in Him, and He will act.

P: He will bring forth your righteousness as the light,

C: and your justice as the noonday.

P: Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for Him;

C: fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices.

ALL: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

P: Delight yourself in the LORD,

C: and He will give you the desires of your heart.

Prayer of the Day

P: O Lord, You have called us to enter Your kingdom through the narrow door. Guide us by Your Word and Spirit, and lead us now and always into the feast of Your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen

Old Testament Lesson – Jeremiah 15:15-21

R: O LORD, You know; remember me and visit me, and take vengeance for me on my persecutors. In Your forbearance take me not away; know that for Your sake I bear reproach. Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by Your name, O LORD, God of hosts. I did not sit in the company of revelers, nor did I rejoice; I sat alone, because Your hand was upon me, for You had filled me with indignation. Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? Will You be to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail? Therefore thus says the LORD: "If you return, I will restore you, and you shall stand before Me. If you utter what is precious, and not what is worthless, you shall be as My mouth. They shall turn to you, but you shall not turn to them. And I will make you to this people a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you, but they shall not prevail over you, for I am with you to save you and deliver you, declares the LORD. I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked, and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless."

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Epistle Lesson – Romans 12:9-21

R: Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Sermon Hymn: “*Christ Be My Leader*” - Hymn # 861

Sermon: “*Cost of Following*” - Matthew 16:21-28

One of the challenges during this pandemic that seems to have made things worse in the United States is our culture of self-reliance and individualism. Sometimes, those are good things. We like to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps, do things on our own without needing any help. Yet those same qualities have made it harder to work together, to move beyond individual actions to have a collective response. We talk about our rights and not our responsibilities.

Now, this is often the case, hearing about people putting themselves first. In a normal year, the news would be full of athletes holding out for more money, putting their interests ahead of what's best for the team. As the virtual conventions finish up and the campaign ads start to cover the airwaves, we will hear politicians making all sorts of promises about putting our needs first, but we'll also hear politicians pointing out how their opponents have put their interests ahead of representing the people they were elected to serve. But athletes and politicians aren't the only ones who have trouble putting others ahead of themselves. We all do.

Perhaps that's why the words of Jesus hit the disciples so hard in today's Gospel lesson. It comes right after last week's lesson, where Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus commends Peter for his insight, pointing out that knowing who Jesus really is comes from God. But then Jesus keeps talking.

This is the first time Jesus tells his disciples clearly what is to come. This is the first time they hear that Jesus isn't going to lead a successful rebellion against Rome. Instead, Jesus is going to Jerusalem where he will suffer. He will be put on trial. He will be crucified. He will die.

And this is hard for the disciples to hear. They thought Jesus was a different kind of Messiah. They thought he was the kind of Messiah that would lead them to glory. They thought he would keep them safe. But now they have to wrestle with the cost of following Jesus.

The disciples already knew about the cost of following Jesus. Peter, Andrew, James and John had left their fishing boats and families behind. Matthew had given up his tax collecting booth. The others had left their families and careers behind, as well. They had given up a lot to follow Jesus.

But now they were learning that the cost of following Jesus was even greater than they realized. Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah showed that his identity is rooted with that of Christ. If Jesus is a messiah who must suffer and die, then that might happen to Peter and the others, as well. If Jesus is going to sacrifice his life, you may have to do the same.

But that's not all that Jesus predicts will happen. Jesus starts telling his disciples about his upcoming suffering and death, yes. But he doesn't stop there. Jesus predicts his resurrection as well. He predicts his victory over sin and death. The disciples don't understand it yet, but someday they will.

Jesus has to suffer. Jesus has to be rejected. And that means we will, also. We will suffer for following Jesus. We will be rejected for following Jesus. When our Lord called us to follow him, he called us to take up our cross. Discipleship is not easy. Not now. Not ever. It's tempting to believe that we are doing something wrong when it gets difficult. It often seems to us that the Christian life should be easy and, if it is not, that we're doing something wrong.

While we might not fear suffering the same cruelty as Jesus suffered on the cross—the fear the first apostles display here that would lead to them hiding behind locked doors after Good

Friday—there is as much to be wary of in the twenty-first century as there was in the first century.

There is a cost to following Jesus. Sometimes, that cost is in what we give up, opportunities we pass by because we know that doing so wouldn't be right. Sometimes, that cost is what we take on, trying to fit in church or time for prayer or Bible study when our schedules are packed. But the cost for us is small compared to those in other parts of the world.

Several years ago, an issue of the *Lutheran Witness*, our denomination's monthly magazine, was all about Christian persecution throughout the world. It described persecution present in Kenya, Ethiopia, Russia, France, and elsewhere. It described how churches were destroyed during communist rule in East Germany and Russia. It described how Christians in West Africa are shunned by their families when they refuse to participate in ancestor worship. It even described how the head of the Lutheran Church in Ethiopia, the same church body that Kebede works with, was killed by the communist regime in that country in 1979. The 20th century was the bloodiest in Christian history. In the mid-20th century, Christians were 20 percent of the Middle East's population. Today, the high estimate is 5 percent.

When talking about the cost of following Jesus, it's hard to avoid talking about Dietrich Bonhoeffer's death. A German Lutheran pastor, he had the chance at the eve of World War 2 to remain safe in the United States, teaching at a seminary in New York City. Instead, though, he returned to Germany, where he would lead the Confessing Church in opposition to the state church which had embraced Nazi ideals. He was arrested for his part in a plot to kill Hitler. In his book *The Cost of Discipleship*, he wrote "[w]hen Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die." A contemporary of Bonhoeffer, Hermann Sasse, said something similar: "To believe in the cross always means also to carry the cross. A yes to the cross of Christ is also a yes to my cross."

But the promise of Jesus is not just in an example to follow. It is in what he did that we try and fail to imitate. In his self-sacrifice, in his death in the cross, there is resurrection, new life.

Because of His death, we have new life. Jesus has called us to live as his people in faith. When Jesus spoke to his disciples, he encouraged them to take up their cross and follow him, in what would seem to be one of the least manipulative invitations ever given. Life in this world will not be easy. It will not be filled with the best that this world has to offer. But it will be filled with God's love.

When we teach about Jesus, when we follow Jesus, we shouldn't be surprised that we face opposition. But because of the opposition and persecution Jesus faced, because of the persecution that led to his death on the cross, we can face whatever the world throws our way. We know that we don't face persecution alone. We know it's the cost of following Jesus. It's a sign that the church exists. What we do know is that Jesus overcame death, and promises the crown of life to those who remain faithful. Because of Jesus, we can remain faithful.

Second Petition

All: “Thy Kingdom Come.”

P: What does this mean?

ALL: The Kingdom of God certainly comes by itself without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also.

P: How does God’s kingdom come?

ALL: God’s kingdom comes to us when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity.

Third Petition

All: “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

P: What does this mean?

ALL: The good and gracious will of God is done even without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also.

P: How is this done?

ALL: God’s will is done when He breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, which do not want us to hallow God’s name or let His kingdom come; and when He strengthens and keeps us firm in his Word and faith until we die. This is His good and gracious will.

Hymn: “Take My Life and Let It Be”- Hymn #783

Prayer of the Church:

P: Lord, in Your mercy . . .

C: Hear our prayer.

The Lord’s Prayer:

Closing Prayer:

P: O God, we thank You for Your Son Who chose the path of suffering for the sake of the world. Humble us by His example, point us to the path of obedience, and give us strength to follow His command; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C: Amen.

Blessing:

(Pastor)

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn: “The Wonderful Cross”