

Order of Worship for March 21, 2021 Recording

Prelude:

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

Opening Hymn: “No Temple Now, No Gift of Price” - Hymn #530

Confession and Absolution

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

C: Amen.

P: Return to Me with all your heart, says the LORD, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning, with broken and contrite hearts.

C: For the LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

P: For our sakes, Christ was obedient to death.

(Silence for meditation and self-examination.)

P: O God, in Your kindness, have pity.

C: O God, in Your mercy, wash away our sins. Wash us clean of sin and guilt, the sins that we cannot forget and those we cannot remember. For we have disobeyed You and done wrong; we deserve Your punishment. For the sake of Jesus Christ, turn Your eyes from our iniquity, and cover our guilt, that we may know again the joy of Your salvation.

P: Jesus Christ never sinned. But God treated Him as a sinner, so that Christ could make us acceptable to God.

C: All we, like sheep, have gone astray; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

P: For our sakes, Christ was obedient to death. He was lifted up from the earth that we might be drawn to Him. Because of His death on the cross, we have been made clean. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, your sins are forgiven.

C: Thanks be to God. Amen.

Entrance Psalm

P: Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people,

C: from the deceitful and unjust man deliver me!

P: I love the LORD, because He has heard

C: my voice and my pleas for mercy.

P: Because He inclined His ear to me,

C: therefore I will call on Him as long as I live.

P: The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;

C: I suffered distress and anguish.

P: Then I called on the name of the LORD:

C: “O LORD, I pray, deliver my soul!”

P: For You have delivered my soul from death,

C: my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.

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: Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people,
C: from the deceitful and unjust man deliver me!

Hymn of Praise: *“Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus”* - **Hymn #685**

Old Testament Lesson: Jeremiah 31:31-34

R: “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put My law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

R: This is the Word of the Lord. **C: Thanks be to God.**

Epistle Lesson: Hebrews 5:1-10

R: For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people. And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

So also Christ did not exalt Himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by the Father who said to Him,

“You are My Son,
today I have begotten You”;
as He says also in another place,
“You are a priest forever,
after the order of Melchizedek.”

In the days of His flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the Father who was able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverence. Although He was a son, He learned obedience through what He suffered. And being made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

R: This is the Word of the Lord. **C: Thanks be to God.**

Holy Gospel: Mark 10:35-45

P: The Holy Gospel according to Saint Mark, the tenth chapter

C: Glory be to You, O Lord.

P: And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to [Jesus] and said to Him, “Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You.” And Jesus said to them, “What do You want me to do for You?” And they said to Him, “Grant us to sit, one at Your right hand and one at Your left, in Your glory.” Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” And they said to Him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I

drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, but to sit at My right hand or at My left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. And Jesus called them to Him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord. **C: Praise be to You, O Lord**

Sermon Hymn: “*Lord, Help Us Walk Your Servant Way*”- **Hymn #857**

Sermon: “*Served to Serve*”- **Mark 10:35-45**

We hope the winter is about over since yesterday was officially the first day of spring. But we may still have to face this issue—what an author calls “The Code for Snow Shoveling.”

At any given moment in winter months, there could be a ferocious snow storm blowing through the north United States. The snow stops eventually—hopefully before people run out of bread and milk and eggs--and then people will emerge from their homes and begin the process of clearing the snow from their sidewalks and homes. Are there local social “rules” that assist with snow removal?

Local ordinances aside, snow removal is necessary if you want to leave your home—and help others leave their homes—unless you plan to wait for spring. People may employ shovels or snow blowers and it seems to be common courtesy to help out neighbors in need. That would include the elderly, for example, for whom shoveling could present a health issue, or if you know your neighbors are on an odd shift, or if there is a pregnant mom or parent of young children. These are cases where neighbors might be moved to help each other. But there isn’t a hard and fast rule to this. If you don’t have a relationship with your neighbors or if there are conflicts with your neighbors, regardless of their situation, you may not be moved to help.

Snow blower owners are in a particularly tough spot. The machine makes relatively easy work of what can be a very labor intensive process. If someone who owns a snow blower sees someone else struggling with a shovel by no means are they *obligated* to help, but it could hurt the sense of community within the neighborhood if they don't. Where do snow blower owners stop, then? How many houses is enough? Do they need to clear driveways AND sidewalks? How do they avoid falling into the pattern of being the savior for their block all the time?

One person I spoke with said he started waiting until he hears the shovels stop. Rather than being the first one out or joining the ranks of shovelers, he attends to the task later in the day, which absolves him of having to clear everyone’s sidewalks and driveways. It’s come to that because his neighbors expect him to help, and frankly, he’s tired. Others report making it more of a community affair.

They may borrow the machine once the owner is done and do their own home, passing it along the street in this way (and chipping in for gas to make sure it's available next time). The issue with this, however, is that it's not a community machine, and when it breaks or needs to be replaced, the costs fall to the original owner. Others have gone the route of having a neighborhood owned machine, but this kind of arrangement requires strong community ties. And of course there are people who enjoy being "that" person—the one who does the whole block, and then offers to drive over and help out friends in need.

Voluntary actions that contribute to the well-being of others are not unique to human beings. Known as prosocial behavior, helping, sharing, donating, and cooperating have been found in many social species, including insects, birds, bats, cetaceans, small mammals, and primates. Humans may be unique in the magnitude of help offered because we display a tendency to routinely help others even at great cost to self. This is a nuanced decision. While we may not consciously recognize it, we're likely to help those who can return the favor even if it's not in kind. Our social relationships are built on social debt. Healthy relationships require us to discharge that debt (by helping someone in need) while accepting debt (allowing others to help us).

The one thing people seem to agree on—offline and online—is that if you're relying on a neighbor to help clean your snowy paths, at minimum say thanks.

How much do we help to really help or to help us feel better or less guilty?

Jesus' disciples were climbing over each other to be first in His eyes. We read:

And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to [Jesus] and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John.

Jesus tells them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them." The Gentiles were dominated by the Romans. The Romans could be brutal in keeping people in control, but their preferred method was patronizing. The Caesars liked to call themselves "Benefactor." The idea was that by providing peace, good roads, aqueducts for water, and other public building projects the

people in turn would obey the emperor. It would be like the politician giving the people what they want to get the vote.

But then Jesus says:

But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.

He is saying that following Him means no thought of being on the top and patronizing people. We do not give to control others, but truly to serve.

This might seem to jive with our understanding of democracy, the equality of all people, and cooperation. Businesses have found that they work more effectively if everyone has a part in the decisions. But what motivates us to be a part of that? So often it is what I can get out of it. If I help others, they help me. I may shovel so others can shovel for me when I need it. Or it makes me feel better to do it. Or I don't have to feel guilty. Or I don't have to feel that I owe someone else. That's not what Jesus is describing.

To see what Jesus means we have to see Him. We have to see this in His eyes. The Caesar may have been a benefactor to people. But He needed their loyalty to have the power and wealth to benefit him. He lost that when the Germanic barbarians invaded the empire and were not subservient to him. Hitler and Stalin thought of themselves as benefactors. Adolph Hitler gained power over people by the popular will as he was elected leader of Germany. He helped take them from a nation reeling from depression after World War 1 to the most prosperous nation on earth. But he was nothing without their loyalty to him. Joseph Stalin would never have won an election, but people were so afraid of him that they obeyed him. Years later some Russians still long for the stability they had under Stalin. He may have achieved his power by fear, but it still depended on the people fearing him.

But Jesus has no needs from us. Caesar needed the loyalty of people to have all his power. Hitler gained power over people by popular vote, then took over as dictator. Stalin never would have won a true election, but through fear he had power over the people. But both Hitler and Stalin needed the peoples' obedience to get what they wanted. But Jesus doesn't need our praise and glory. He doesn't need us to be subjected to Him like Caesar. He doesn't need to help us to feel better or less guilty. There are absolutely no strings attached to His service to us. There is nothing we can truly give Him in return that He can't get Himself—like trying to buy the gift for someone who has everything.

Yet, Jesus put Himself in service to us—not just scooping a sidewalk or giving us a few minutes of His time. No, He made Himself truly last in service to us. He wasn't removing the snow for the friendly neighbor or the elderly widow. He was doing it for the obnoxious neighbor whose dog messes in our lawn, whose leaves blow in our lawn, who play music too loud, and who never do their own scooping. Jesus went to the cross for those who totally took advantage of Him, the people who He gave life and who took that life and exchanged it for death.

That changes everything. Jesus puts Himself last so we can be first. And as first we too are willing to be last. He served us so we can serve others.

Whether we want to patronize people like the Caesar did to keep them clearly under us or help them so we feel better for not owing them, we seek to be in control of the situation. The desire stands in the way of really serving as Jesus calls us to do. When we seek that control, then we block the forgiveness that God offers us in Jesus. We want to trust in “me,” not Him. And what is so ironic about that is when we seek to control, we are really the ones controlled—by our sin.

But Jesus didn’t seek that control. As God He had it. He was God almighty not only when He calmed the sea or fed the 5,000, but also when He took abuse, allowed Himself to be taken advantage of, and died on the cross. Yet, instead of trying to be on top of the situation, He placed everything in the hands of His Father. By that He took away the sin that controls us so we can let God be in control and truly serve as Jesus serves us.

Apostles’ Creed:

P: While sin and evil can be clearly seen in the world, we long to see God's glory at work.

C: May we see God's glory in the cross of Jesus Christ.

P: While pain and suffering can be clearly seen in the world, we long to see God's healing at work.

C: May we see God's healing in the cross of Jesus Christ.

P: While death and destruction can be clearly seen in the world, we long to see God's salvation at work.

C: May we see God's salvation in the cross of Jesus Christ.

P: While discord and hatred can be clearly seen in the people of the world, we long to see God's love at work.

C: May we see God's love in the cross of Jesus Christ.

P: While others look away from the face of Jesus Christ,

C: may our eyes be drawn to Him, and our sights be set on His cross.

Prayer of the Church:

P: “Lord, in Your mercy,”

C: “Hear our prayer.”

Lord’s Prayer:

Closing Prayer:

P: Almighty God, our Redeemer, in our weakness we have failed to be Your messengers of forgiveness and hope I the world. Renew us by Your Holy Spirit, that we may follow Your commands and proclaim Your reign of love; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C: Amen.

Blessing: (pastor)

C: Amen

Closing Hymn: “Not All the Blood of Beasts” - Hymn #431

Postlude