

Order of Worship for August 15, 2021

Prelude

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

Opening Hymn: *“Blessed Jesus, at Your Word”* – Hymn #904

Confession and Forgiveness: p. 151

Service of the Word

Entrance Psalm:

P: The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding.

C: His praise endures forever!

P: Praise the Lord! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart,

C: in the company of the upright, in the congregation.

P: Great are the works of the LORD,

C: studied by all who delight in them.

P: Full of splendor and majesty is His work,

C: and His righteousness endures forever.

P: He has caused His wondrous works to be remembered;

C: the LORD is gracious and merciful.

P: He provides food for those who fear Him;

C: He remembers His covenant forever.

P: He sent redemption to His people; He has commanded His covenant forever.

C: Holy and awesome is His name!

**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: The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding.

C: His praise endures forever!

Kyrie (Lord, Have Mercy) p. 152-3

Hymn of Praise (*“This Is the Feast”*) p. 155

Salutation p. 156

Prayer of the Day

P: Almighty God, whom to know is everlasting life, grant us to know Your Son, Jesus, to be the way, the truth, and the life, that we may steadfastly follow His steps in the way that leads to life eternal; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen

Old Testament Reading: Proverbs 9:1–10

R: Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn her seven pillars. She has slaughtered her beasts; she has mixed her wine; she has also set her table. She has sent out her young women to call from the highest places in the town, “Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!” To him who lacks sense she says, “Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. Leave your simple ways, and live, and walk in the way of insight.” Whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse, and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury. Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Epistle: Ephesians 5:6–21

R: Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not associate with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Holy Gospel: John 6:51–69

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 6th chapter

C: Glory to You, O Lord (sung)

P: [Jesus said:] “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in

him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on Me, he also will live because of Me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not as the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as He taught at Capernaum.

When many of His disciples heard it, they said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” But Jesus, knowing in Himself that His disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, “Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is of no avail. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe.” (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray Him.) And He said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to Me unless it is granted him by the Father.”

After this many of His disciples turned back and no longer walked with Him. So Jesus said to the Twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that You are the Holy One of God.”

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: **Praise to You, O Christ.** (sung)

Alleluia and Verse p.156

Sermon Hymn: “*You are the Way; Through You Alone*” - **Hymn #526**

Sermon: “*Hard Words*” – **John 6:51-69**

Will it play in Peoria? First mentioned in an 1890 book, the phrase gained popularity in the vaudeville circuit of the early 20th century, and was even used by one of President Nixon’s aides to describe a policy that was unpopular on the east coast, but would work well in the Midwest. Because of that, Peoria was used as a test market. Comedians, musicians, advertising agencies and pollsters would start in Peoria, using it as a way to figure out what people thought or how they would react. The LWML even used the phrase when their national convention was held in Peoria a few years ago.

Finding out what would play in Peoria wasn’t about challenging the status quo or trying to get people to change their minds. It wasn’t about hard words. It was about convincing others, figuring out what they already thought or already wanted. If it played in Peoria, it would be popular and well received anywhere.

Jesus didn’t seem to be concerned with how popular or well-received his words would be. He was only concerned with speaking the truth. He was only concerned with the message he had to share, and the mission he was on from his Father in heaven. Jesus didn’t care if it played in Peoria or Palestine. He only cared about the truth. And he would use hard words, difficult teachings and sayings, if that’s what was needed.

Jesus used hard words throughout his ministry. We think of the Sermon on the Mount as being full of nice, happy, positive clichés, but it includes phrases like “Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” When a rich young man came to Jesus asking what he must do to inherit eternal life, Jesus told him to give away all that he had. When a disciple asks Jesus how many times he should forgive his brother, Jesus tells him, not seven times, but seventy times seven times. He told his disciples to take up their crosses and follow him. They couldn’t follow him and expect a steady stream of riches to come their way. They couldn’t follow him and expect cheers and popularity.

Jesus also told his disciples to love their enemies and to love their neighbors as themselves. Both of those are hard words. Those are difficult words. They’re hard to hear, and even harder to do.

But the words Jesus uses here are among the hardest, most difficult, he ever spoke, especially based on the reaction of those who hear them. Instead of drawing crowds to him, almost everyone went away, even some of those who had been following him before. What made these words of Jesus so hard? Was it the fact he was talking about eating his flesh and drinking his blood? Outside of the cannibalism idea condemned by most cultures, just drinking blood of anything would have been deeply offensive for the Jews Jesus was speaking to. Blood was life. Blood represented the life given by God to people and animals. Blood needed to be drained from an animal before it could be cooked and eaten, according to the Jewish dietary laws. Even as the early church later debated how “Jewish” Gentile converts had to be to become Christian, the prohibition on drinking blood remained.

But more than that, Jesus’ words were hard because they pointed to his death, and how those who follow him would be joined in his death. Many went away from Jesus, but some remained. In any and all circumstances, the disciples in John's gospel are committed to being with Jesus. "Where else would we go?" asks Peter "You have the words of eternal life." To be with Jesus, to know Jesus is to be in the best place. It is to be in the presence of eternal life. It is to have life.

The words of Jesus are hard for us, as well. It’s hard for us to commit to a Christian view of sexuality when the world is straying in any number of directions away from that. It’s hard to commit to a Christian view of the value of all life when the lives of the elderly, the unborn, and the infirm are seen as insignificant. It’s hard to commit to self-sacrifice when we’re surrounded by messages that tell us to take and buy and get. It’s hard to love our enemies when we’re surrounded by messages saying we need to defeat or remove those who disagree with us.

G.K. Chesterton wrote, “The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried.” We still reject Jesus when following him would be difficult. We reject Jesus when it would affect our identity, when it would affect how others see us. We reject God’s commands on how to care for the world around us. We reject God’s commands and fail to care for God’s servants, persecuting them when they say something uncomfortable or unsettling. The hard words of Jesus are a stumbling block for us as they were for the disciples who left Jesus. The words of Jesus offend, defy logic, and are absurd.

The words of Jesus are hard, but bring life. As Peter says, and as we sing in the Gospel response, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” The words of Jesus are hard, but they are life-giving. They speak law and judgment, but they also speak love and forgiveness. They speak the hard truth of our sin and our inability to save ourselves, but they also speak the words of the one who died on the cross to save us.

The words of Jesus are hard, but they give us something certain and sure to hold onto. In the midst of doubt and despair, there is no greater comfort and hope than the words of Jesus. Even when those words are the source of our unsettled souls, still they remain our only hope. The words tell us of how much God loves us.

Thursday was the pandemic-delayed Field of Dreams game in Dyersville, Iowa, featuring the Chicago White Sox and the New York Yankees. In the movie *Field of Dreams*, the main character Ray Kinsella, played by Kevin Costner, hears a voice. The voice tells him to do crazy things, like building a baseball field in the middle of his cornfields, or go on a road trip to find a reclusive author. Following the words is hard, and almost costs him his farm. Yet the movie ends showing listening to the words brought healing to him, his family, and others.

The words of Jesus are harder than commands from a mysterious voice to build a baseball field in the middle of nowhere. Following them can cost your life. Hearing the hard words of Jesus that point out your sin causes guilt. But the words of Jesus also bring eternal life. And those words are found nowhere else. Where else could we go?

In a mysterious way that I don’t quite understand, the Holy Spirit uses God’s Word to give us faith in Jesus and all the rest of God’s amazing promises. The Bible assures us that God loves us, that Jesus died for our sins and rose again, that there is life after death, and that there is hope for this life through the Lord’s will and ways.

Creed: Nicene Creed

Prayer of the Church

P: Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

Service of the Sacrament

Preface p.160

Sanctus (“*Holy, Holy, Holy*”): p.161

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

P:

C: Amen.

Lord’s Prayer and Words of our Lord p.162

Peace of the Lord and Agnus Dei (*"Lamb of God"*) p. 163

Distribution Hymn: *"Here, O My Lord, I see Thee Face to Face"* - **Hymn #631**
 "Jesus, Priceless Treasure" – **Hymn #743**

Song After Communion: *"Thank the Lord"* p. 164

Prayer After Communion:

P: Almighty and ever living God, You have given great and precious promises to those who believe. Grant us the perfect faith which overcomes all doubts, through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C: Amen.

Blessing p.166

Closing Hymn: *"Seek Ye First"* - **Hymn #712**

Postlude