

Order of Worship for August 21, 2022

Prelude

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

Call to Worship:

P: We come into Your presence today, Lord, at the beginning of this academic year, gathering in Your house to hear what You have to say to us.

C: We are here, Lord, a group of people, yet individual persons. We are students who wear masks of confidence during the week, but whose stomachs are churning and whose fears are known to You; the professor who must maintain the standards of the University, but who feels deeply the nervousness of the students; the parent who is not so certain of what makes a good parent, but hopes to be a good one; the housewife, merchant, farmer, workman, who need a new push and a reminder of our purpose as Your people; the children whose problems seem so small to the grown-ups, but are more than they can handle and were more than the grown-ups could handle when they were their age.

P: In many ways Your people are individual strangers who have gathered in this place, Lord. Yet as we make our beginning we do it in the confident hope that You are here among us and within us to bind us to Yourself and to one another.

**C: So we begin this worship and this new academic term by invoking Your holy name:
ALL: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.**

Opening Hymn: "*Earth and All Stars*" - Hymn #817

Confession and Forgiveness

P: We confess our sins and sinfulness unto our Lord. O Lord, we confess to You and to each other that we have wronged You in thought, word, and deed.

**C: Lord God, I confess my sins to you. spirits of the righteous are made perfect.
Here you call all peoples and nations--**

P: Our Lord Jesus came to this world to establish the new covenant, to die on the cross so that we may approach God's holy mountain and be in His presence forever. By His power and command I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

Service of the Word

P: The Lord be with you,

C: and also with you.

Prayer of the Day:

P: Almighty and merciful God, defend Your Church from all false teaching and error that Your faithful people may confess You to be the only true God and rejoice in Your good gifts of life and salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Hymn of Praise: *“Shine, Jesus, Shine”*(Norm)

Old Testament Lesson: Isaiah 66:18-23

R: “And I, because of what they have planned and done, am about to come and gather the people of all nations and languages, and they will come and see My glory. I will set a sign among them, and I will send some of those who survive to the nations—to Tarshish, to the Libyans and Lydians (famous as archers), to Tubal and Greece, and to the distant islands that have not heard of my fame or seen My glory. They will proclaim My glory among the nations. And they will bring all your people, from all the nations, to My holy mountain in Jerusalem as an offering to the LORD—on horses, in chariots and wagons, and on mules and camels,” says the LORD. “They will bring them, as the Israelites bring their grain offerings, to the temple of the LORD in ceremonially clean vessels. And I will select some of them also to be priests and Levites,” says the LORD. “As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before Me,” declares the LORD, “so will your name and descendants endure. From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before Me,” says the LORD.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Epistle Lesson: Hebrews 12:4-24

R: In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when He rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and He chastens everyone He accepts as His son.”

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as His children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in His holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. “Make level paths for your feet,” so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.

Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau,

who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done.

You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death." The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear."

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Holy Gospel: Luke 13:22-30

P: The Holy Gospel according to St Luke, the 13th chapter.

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

P: Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as He made His way to Jerusalem. Someone asked Him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?" He said to them, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' "But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.' "Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' "But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!'

"There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last."

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

Sermon Hymn: "Thy Strong Word" -Hymn #578

Sermon: "The Narrow Gate" - Luke 13:22-30

You are on a highway when suddenly the traffic starts to slow down. It gets to the point when everyone in your lane is coming to a stop, but cars are moving in the other lane. Then your lane stops while cars in the other lane whip by. If you have driven long enough you know that even though it is tempting to go into that fast lane, the smart thing is to stay where you are. Sooner or later you will see a sign telling you that the fast lane is ending and the traffic on it must merge into the slow lane. The people whipping by at first will have to stop and wait to get into

the slow lane farther ahead. In fact they are making matters worse because they tie up traffic as they edge their way into the slow lane.

Jesus speaks about the wide and narrow doors. We may picture in our minds that “wide” and “narrow” refer to the amount of people who go through them. So the conclusion is that many more will not be saved than those who will be. It is kind of like those who will make it through engineering at Iowa State in four years. But what makes the door to hell so “wide” is that it seems like the obvious way. The door to salvation is “narrow” because it is not obvious. It is like the lanes on the highway. But if you are smart, you think ahead and realize it is better to trust in God for eternity than anything else in the here and now.

Yet, that is a lot easier said than done. Going to college involves so many choices, so many forks in the road. Which college do I go to? Which major do you pursue? Which classes should I take? Do I use the Cyclone, Cardinal, Gold, or Cyplex meal plan? What does the IU plan have to do with Dining Dollars and Flex meals? Should I go Greek or not? Should I join this club or that? Do I go out with people in the hall or stay home and study? Should I stay with my roommate for another semester? It is like trying to find your way in Friley Hall. You go along a hallway and the hall comes to a fork. If I go one way it dead ends. The other continues on. Soon you lose any sense of going north, south, east, or west. So often the choices we make lead to dead ends.

That is what the world puts before us. At Iowa State University of Science and Technology (that’s its official name) you will be taught to see things only as true if they can be proven by science. They will use the fancy word “empirical,” which means you can put something in a test tube, run it through a machine, place all kinds of data about it into a computer, and prove what is true or false. But what are you supposed to do about your faith in God? What about your Baptism and going to Holy Communion? What do you do with the Word of God? What do Good Friday and Easter mean to you?

At the university we are also taught that diversity is best. It is wrong to claim that you have the truth and someone else doesn’t. Jesus is good, but so are Buddha, Mohammed, and the Hindu wise men. The idea of a “narrow” door is repulsive.

Don’t think that stops after college. What is so emphasized in our world is what works. It didn’t take the January 6, 2021 riot or the present inflation for people to distrust the government. That goes back to Vietnam and the questionable way the US got involved there. All institutions, even and especially churches and charities, are ridiculed with scandals. So we are hesitant to trust anyone when they say they have the truth. We’ll go with what works. So if the majority of people say it is okay to have sexual relations with someone outside of marriage or to believe whatever you want to about God or to that a human is not a human until it starts to look like one in the womb, then it is easy for us to go along with it. And since our children are so important to us, we will do anything so that they fit in. Soccer or dance practice is more important than spending time talking with them about God. Or we put them in front of a screen so we can get a break, but miss out on the time they could have to see Christ through us.

It is so easy to take the wide door—to do what everyone else is doing. In Iowa perhaps 20% of people regularly go to church. Among college students in this country that percentage is more like 2%. Why are you in church now? Are you bored because classes haven't started yet? Is it just a habit because mom and dad always took you to church on Sunday? Even more, why should you come to church in future weeks?

In the midst of all the confusion we can see who stands at the “narrow” door—Christ Jesus. Do you know what a Manichean is? There were many of them 2,000 years ago. Have you ever met a follower to the god Zeus or Ammon-Re? Many people worshiped them 2,000 years ago. Religions come and go. But the message of Jesus—Christianity--continues. Though it seems to have lost its force in our Western world, Christianity is growing leaps and bounds in Africa and Asia. Christ Jesus continues to change lives all over the world.

We also see Jesus in the wonderful miracle of Easter. Maybe it seems scientifically impossible to bring the dead back to life, but just about all historians agree that something special happened after Jesus died on the cross. How else could a little group of frightened followers grow into the greatest force in human history? Islam grew because of military power. Mohammed had people convert or die by the sword. But Christianity only spread with a message—not with any political, economic, or military power.

And look at what Christianity has done. We take for granted things like hospitals, schools, hospices, and concern for human life. All of those began out of the Christian church. 200 years ago in this country virtually all schools and hospitals were run by churches. The Bible was the main tool used to help people speak and read a common language. The antislavery movement was started by Christians. And Christians continue to make a difference as churches today are working to eradicate malaria in Africa, bring food to the hungry, and speak out against those who deny human rights.

Yet, the door where Jesus stands is still “narrow.” It is not what we look to because it is not about what we do, gain, or accomplish. Every other door is “wide,” because it is about how good, wealthy, smart, powerful, or popular we are. It is what we gain or earn. But the door Jesus opens to us is about what He has done and continues to do for us. It is not about us going to God, but about Him coming to us in Jesus. Following Jesus through that door may not seem important while we are cramming for tests, getting up too early in the morning, paying off our bills, getting a date, getting up at 3AM to feed a baby, signing a contract, or saving for retirement. Jesus isn't going to tell us which major to pursue, whether or not to go Greek, whom we should marry, how to invest our money, or which doctor's advice we should take. But He alone calls us to eternal life, to a relationship that will never end.

Confession of Faith: Nicene Creed
Offering and Voluntary

Sharing Our Ministry Student Surveys

Prayers of the Church:

P: Lord, in Your mercy . . .

C: Hear our prayer.

Service of Holy Communion

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

C: It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

The Words of Our Lord (Pastor)

The Lord's Prayer

P: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: Amen

Distribution of Holy Communion

Communion Hymns: *"Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness"* –**Hymn #563**

"Alleluia! Let Praises Ring" –**Hymn #822**

Dismissal (pastor)

Affirming Our Calling:

P: People of God, both your work and your rest are now in God. In Holy Baptism, you died with Christ Jesus to the forces of evil and rose to new life as members of His body. As we begin this academic year, will you endeavor to be faithful to our Lord Jesus through service, worship, and personal prayer? And will you strive to recognize the gifts that God has given you and discern how they may be used in the building of God's reign of peace and justice?

C: I will, and I ask God to help me.

P: Be at peace among yourselves. Encourage the faint hearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

C: Amen.

Blessing (pastor) C: Amen.

Closing Hymn: *"Go, My Children, with My Blessing"* –**Hymn #922**

Postlude