

Order of Worship for August 7, 2022

Prelude

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

Opening Hymn: “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” – Hymn #809

Confession and Absolution p. 184

Service of the Word

Entrance Psalm:

P: Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving;

C: make melody to our God on the lyre!

P: He covers the heavens with clouds; he prepares rain for the earth;

C: He makes grass grow on the hills.

P: He gives to the beasts their food,

C: and to the young ravens that cry.

P: His delight is not in the strength of the horse,

C: nor His pleasure in the legs of a man,

P: but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him,

C: in those who hope in His steadfast love.

Gloria Patri (*Glory Be to the Father*) p. 186

Kyrie (*Lord, Have Mercy*) p. 186

Gloria in Excelsis (*Glory to God in the Highest*) p. 187

Salutation p. 189

Prayer of the Day

P: Almighty and merciful God, it is by Your grace that we live as Your people who offer acceptable service. Grant that we may walk by faith, and not by sight, in the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

C: Amen.

Old Testament Lesson: Genesis 15:1-6

R: After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” But Abram said, “O LORD GOD, what will You give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “Behold, You have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.” And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.” And He brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then He said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” And he believed the LORD, and He counted it to him as righteousness.

R: O Lord, have mercy on us.

C: Thanks be to God.

Epistle Lesson: Hebrews 11:1-16

R: Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible....

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered Him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared for them a city.

R: O Lord, have mercy on us.

C: Thanks be to God.

Alleluia and Verse (sung) p. 190

Holy Gospel: Luke 12:22-34

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

C: Glory be to You, O Lord (sung)

P: And He (Jesus) said to His disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you.

"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

P: This is the Gospel of Our Lord.

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

Nicene Creed (on screen)

Sermon Hymn: “*The God of Abram Praise*” - **Hymn #798, vs. 1-4, 9**

Sermon: “*Faith*”- **Genesis 15**

You’re lying in bed, staring at the ceiling, listening to cars go by. You have no idea how long you have been like this, but it must be a few hours, at least. *Go to sleep*, you tell yourself. *Just close your eyes and: Go. To. Sleep.* You shut your eyes tight, force your body to relax, and wait for the blissful slumber to come. But, nothing happens. More minutes pass and... nothing happens. It’s 3 a.m., and you’re still staring at the ceiling.

We have all been in this situation. Try as we might, it is nearly impossible to consciously *will* yourself to sleep. Sleep comes to those who let their mind wander and focus on anything other than sleep itself. Count sheep, control your breathing, listen to an audiobook, or whatever — so long as it turns your mind from wanting to sleep.

This is a common and familiar example of the “law of reversed effort,” proposed by Aldous Huxley, who wrote:

“The harder we try with the conscious will to do something, the less we shall succeed.

“Proficiency and the results of proficiency come only to those who have learned the paradoxical art of doing and not doing, or combining relaxation with activity, of letting go as a person in order that the immanent and transcendent unknown quantity may take hold.”

Think of when you first learned to ride a bike—or roller or figure skate. In our effort to figure out all that has to be done in doing those things, we overreact and our muscles fatigue in no time. But as we practice, our body learns how to move in just the right ways so we don’t try to do those things, but simply do them.

In Huxley’s words, it’s “*combining relaxation with activity.*”

On a spiritual level people can see this as what faith gives. The Chinese call it, “Wu Wei.” It is not some lazy torpor or an excuse for a day off and Netflix binge. In fact, it is often the very opposite. Wu Wei is to appreciate, recognize, and accept the pull of forces far greater than us. It is to walk the path that opens up and push the door that gives. Call it gut-feeling, intuition, fate, divine calling, or whatever, but Wu Wei is to stop doing what you *think* is right, and to let yourself be pulled by some *other* power.

The word “surrender” comes laden with negative connotations. Surrender is cowardly or weak. Heroes are ones who never back down, and no great story begins with the good guys just giving up. And yet, there is a lot of arrogance in this.

To surrender to a greater power — or a nobler, righteous one — is not an act of cowardice. It is an act of profound wisdom. There is nothing praiseworthy about swimming in a storm or punching a bear in the face. There is wisdom in knowing our limits, in embracing humility, and even in being pushed around.

But is that faith? Is that what Abraham had as he looked at the stars in the sky and trusted that his descendants would be as many as the stars in the heavens? Is that what Hebrews 11 means by faith? Is this what Jesus means by not worrying?

The idea of surrendering to a higher power is wise. It is recognizing the way the world really is. Alcoholics Anonymous is based on the principle that you need help from a higher power. This is what St. Paul talked about in Romans 1 when he said, “They all know God.” But what leads people to do so—to put themselves in the best possible situation like a reed blowing in the wind? It is wise to surrender to a higher power, but it is not faith.

Faith involves first and foremost a relationship. Jesus was not just talking to anyone. He said, “Fear not, little flock.” He was talking to His disciples who saw God as their Father. Faith was not a logical choice to make do with what they had, but the result of their relationship first as God’s children, then more specifically as the flock-disciples of Jesus.

Abraham was not the only person who knew God existed. But he was the one called by God to go to a new land and trust that God would make his descendants a new nation. This wasn’t just a matter of Abraham being smart, but of him receiving the faith to trust in God, even when that led him to leave his homeland.

Why did God choose Abram? Was it because God saw how faithful he would be? This was the same Abram who almost let his wife Sarai commit adultery with the king of Egypt because he was afraid the king would kill him if he knew Abram was her husband. Abram has told Sarai to lie and say Abram was her brother. And in Joshua 24 we learn that Abram used to worship other gods before God called him. Why did God call Abram? He just did.

God goes on to tell Abram to take a heifer, a goat, a ram, a dove, and a pigeon and sacrifice them, splitting them in half and setting them on the ground. In Abram’s world when you made a legal agreement, you would literally “cut a covenant.” Animals would be cut in half and the two parties would walk in the blood between them. This signified that your blood would be shed if you didn’t keep the covenant. After Abram cut the animals, he fell into a trance. Then God came to him and Abram saw a smoking firepot with a blazing torch pass through the animal halves. This was God walking through them. God was sealing His promise to Abram. He would keep His promise even if it meant shedding His own blood. This showed Abram that he could believe in God.

We look to the cross and see God shedding His blood for us. God sealed His promise to us. We can know as Abram did, that God has chosen us. Abram saw all those stars in the sky. But do we? Because of all our electric lights, our sky is not so dark. Drive out into the country

and perhaps you can see the night sky as Abram did, a sky so filled with stars that you can almost walk from one to the next.

It can be hard to see all the “stars” God promises to us because of all the “lights” in our lives. So what are we “chosen”? It is like a competition in school where everyone wins. How hard is it to say that everyone is a winner?

That is where the cross comes in. Death, death by crucifixion, is a big deal. And the death of God’s own Son is an even bigger deal, the biggest of all. God chose Abram, but Abram also saw how costly it was that God chose him. God was willing to shed blood to make it true. God did shed the blood of Jesus so that you and I can know that it is a big deal that we are chosen.

Offertory (*Create in Me*) p. 192

Offering/Voluntary

Sharing His Ministry

Prayer on Faith:

P: “Then the disciples said to Jesus, ‘What must we do, to be doing the works of God?’ Jesus answered them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom God has sent.’” (John 6:28-9)

C: “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1)

P: “For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.” (1 John 5:4)

C: “In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one.” (Ephesians 6:16)

P: “Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith.” (Habakkuk 2:4)

C: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.” (Proverbs 3:5)

P: “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we^[a] have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1)

C: “Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” (Galatians 3: 6)

P: “Jesus said, ‘For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up on the last day.’” (John 6:40)

C: “Jesus said to Martha, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live.’” (John 11:25)

ALL: “But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.” John (20:31)

(other concerns)

**ALL: Almighty God, our heavenly Father, because of Your tender love toward us sinners
You have given us Your Son that, believing in Him, we might have everlasting life.
Continue to grant us Your Holy Spirit that we remain steadfast**

Service of the Sacrament

Preface p. 194

P: It is truly good, right, and proper that we should in all times and in all places give thanks to You, almighty God, everlasting Father, for You have given us faith, not just the ability to believe, but the whole content of what we believe in Your Son Christ Jesus. In Him we see that You are completely faithful to us. Therefore with angels and all the army of heaven we praise and make great Your holy name, evermore praising You and singing . . .

Sanctus (*Holy, Holy, Holy*) p. 195

Lord's Prayer

The Words of our Lord

Pax Domini (*Peace of the Lord*) p. 197

Agnus Dei (*Lamb of God*) p. 198

Distribution Hymns:

"How Firm a Foundation" – **Hymn #728**

"Thy Body, Given for Me, O Savior" - **Hymn #619**

Dismissal

Nunc Dimittis (*Song of Simeon*) p. 199

Thanksgiving p. 200

Prayer after Communion:

P: Almighty and ever-living God, You have given us 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.

Salutation and Benedicamus p. 201

Blessing: p. 202

Closing Hymn: *"I Am Trusting Thee, Lord Jesus"* - **Hymn #729**

Postlude