

Order of Worship for August 20, 2023

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: “Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty” –Hymn #901

Service of the Word

P: The Lord be with you,

C: and also with you.

Prayer of the Day:

P: Almighty and everlasting Father, You give Your children many blessings even though we are undeserving. In every trial and temptation grant us steadfast confidence in Your loving-kindness and mercy; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, 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 56:1, 6–8

R: Thus says the LORD: “Keep justice, and do righteousness, for soon My salvation will come, and My deliverance be revealed. “And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to Him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be His servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast My covenant—these I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices

will be accepted on My altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.” The LORD GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares, “I will gather yet others to Him besides those already gathered.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Epistle Lesson: Romans 11:1–2a, 13–15, 28–32

R: I ask, then, has God rejected His people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew....Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? ...

As regards the gospel, they are enemies of God for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. Just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. For God has consigned all to disobedience, that He may have mercy on all.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

The Holy Gospel: Matthew 15:21–28

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew the 15th chapter:

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

P: Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.” But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came and begged Him, saying, “Send her away, for she is crying out after us.” He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” But she came and knelt before Him, saying, “Lord, help me.” And He answered, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

Apostle’s Creed:

Sermon Hymn: *“Lord of All Nations, Grant Us Grace” – Hymn #844*

Sermon: *“True Acceptance” - Matthew 15:21-28*

Reports show that younger people are less likely to get driver’s licenses than they were in the past. This may not be extensive in Iowa where towns are spread out and there is not a lot of

public transportation. But in metropolitan areas it is true. Some state this may be a result of these young people choosing to be environmentally conscious and reduce the carbon footprint left by everyone having a car.

However, there is another reason. Young people are not as anxious to “get out of the house” and be on their own. Getting a driver’s license and a car was a ticket to get away from mom and dad and be with friends. College was a chance to get on your own. And there was more desire to leave a place like calm Iowa and get to somewhere more exciting like California.

Today, you don’t need to “get out of the house” to be with friends. You can interact with them online. You don’t need to go to a theater to see a movie or a park to play games. You are less likely to be sharing a room with a sibling, and you are not stuck watching what mom and dad have on the TV. So why have a car when you have all you need at home.

People see a lot of young people that way. They see going to college not as a way to get away from home, but a part of what is called “delayed adolescence,” or “emerging adulthood.” Traditionally we think of people having 8 stages in life: infancy (birth to 18 months), early childhood (18 months to 3 years), play age (3 to 5 years), school age (6 to 12 years), adolescence (12 to 18 years), young adulthood (18 to 35 years), middle adulthood (35 to 55 or 65 years), and late adulthood (55 or 65 to death). They add to this “emerging adulthood” from 18 to whatever in the 20’s. And you now have the new concepts of “adulthood” when you practice in your 20’s what people were totally into by the time they left home. The result of this is this kind of attitude about “emerging adults:”

It used to be, too, that adolescents couldn't wait to grow up, to take on the mantle of adult life. Now, it seems they are in no hurry to move out of childhood - ever. When you hear that "boys" of 30 are still playing video games just like any 15-year-old, you wonder what 40 is going to look like for them.

Young men are particularly singled out for this because as men they don’t have the limits age gives to women about being mothers. Men can be much older than woman and still be “marketable” for marriage and raising a family.

The woman that approached Jesus would have been a part of a lot of criticism in her day. Matthew tells us she was “Canaanite.” Mark tells us she was “Syro-Phoenician.” Either way she was bad news for a Jew. In the Old Testament the Canaanites worship pagan idols and sacrifice little children and young women to those gods. God had told the people of Israel to wipe out that pagan worship, but time and again the people of Israel got caught up in it. And it was a Phoenician princess, Jezebel, who caused so much trouble in Israel when she married Ahab king of Israel and introduced a particularly evil form of the worship of the god Baal to Israel. God allowed Israel to be punished for this by allowing many countries to invade their land and conquer them. Finally the people of Israel, who were later known as Jews, learned to avoid all paganism. This included having nothing to do with pagans like this woman.

We know the story from here. Jesus accepts this woman by healing her daughter. Even more than the physical health of her daughter, Jesus says, “Woman, your faith is great.” She went away with a living relationship with God through Christ Jesus.

Young people today can feel with the church like that woman. Many in the church view your generation as lazy, entitled, spoiled, and focused on yourselves. And they see so many young people leave the church. Many of you come from churches in which most of the people have graying heads. So now that you are in college, you don't have to face that situation anymore. You can hang around other people who don't judge you as being different or lazy or spoiled.

But what about Jesus? We hear that Jesus was accepting, that He didn't judge others, that He just loved. However that is not the Jesus we read about in Scripture. He doesn't give us the luxury of being with Him and not being with his Church. No, you don't have to go to a fancy building on Sundays to be with the Church. But you have to be with other followers of Jesus. There needs to be time in our lives when we are where Jesus says He will be—in His Word, in our Baptisms, in the Lord's Supper, and with His people. That probably doesn't happen when we are playing video games or studying for homework or watching videos or going out with friends.

Jesus accepted that Canaanite woman. But why did she come to Him? When she first gives her request to Jesus, he says, "I have come only for the lost sheep of Israel." Then He says, "It is wrong to take the children's bread and throw it to their dogs." Jesus is not rejecting this woman. He is testing her faith. He is confirming two things about her—that she is a "dog" in terms of her worthiness to God and that He will still accept her as a loving God who gives us the faith to trust Him. This woman comes to Jesus because she realizes there is nowhere else to turn. As a person possessed by a demon, her daughter is in desperate shape. Only God can free her daughter of that demon. That helplessness is what makes her look to God for help. And that God turns her to see Him in Christ Jesus.

If we see Jesus as a nice guy who didn't get caught up in all the prejudices of His time and wants us to accept everyone, then we aren't seeing Him like that woman. The God who promises to punish sinners is not a "nice guy." Jesus spoke about hell more than any else in the Bible. He used the word "woe" many times. We need to realize like that woman that we are in desperate shape and we can do nothing about it. Then Jesus is not just someone who is "nice." Then He is our only hope. We then want to go to Him like that woman and beg, not because He wants to see us grope, but only then do we set aside those things that get in the way. Then we can be truly embraced by our Savior, Christ Jesus.

So much of the "acceptance" emphasized in our culture is really about "me." If everyone is supposed to accept each other, then I don't have to worry about my faults. I can just ignore them. We can act like we are accepting, but it is only on the outside.

But Jesus accepts not by ignoring our faults, but by forgiving them. We don't have to pretend our problems don't exist. We can come to Jesus openly, but for him to ignore what is wrong with us, but to nail it to the cross where He died for us.

Then it doesn't matter whether we are Jew or Canaanite, senior citizen, middle adult or "emerging adult." When we come to Jesus like that woman did, then Jesus means everything to us. Then we want to be where Jesus is—with his people. That doesn't mean you have to be here in this church or doing it on a Sunday. But it means that you meet with other people because they are Christians and you do it regularly, not just one in a while. That is real acceptance!

Confession and Forgiveness

P: Merciful God, as we begin this year, we confess how we have failed to love as you love.

C: Merciful God, we confess that, just like Jesus' disciples, we too sometimes lose patience with people who need our help and support. Like the disciples, we find ourselves wishing that they would just go away and leave us in peace. In Your mercy, forgive us. Remind us again of the deep love You showed toward us when we were still in need—a love so deep that it sent You willingly to the cross on our behalf. Show us how to love others as You have loved us. Teach us Your compassion, so that we may be Your hands and feet to those in need.

P: Jesus came when we were in need of mercy and love to die with our selfishness on the cross. 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.

Offering and Voluntary:

Sharing Our Ministry:

Student Surveys:

Prayers:

P: In His life, Christ befriended the outcast and welcomed the sinner.

C: Welcome us, O Father, into Your fold and claim us as Your own.

P: In His life, Christ answered the prayers of those who trusted in Him and came to Him in earnest.

C: Answer our earnest prayers, O God, according to Your good and gracious will.

P: In His life, Christ sought out the people who had strayed away from the path of righteousness.

C: Seek us out, O God, and find in us a willingness to repent and follow Your commands.

P: In His life, Christ healed the sick and brought the dead back to life.

C: Restore us, O Father, with Your life-giving Spirit so we may work together with other believers in the Word of God.

(other prayers)

P: In His life, Christ promised salvation to every person of every race and nation, male or Female, free, or slave.

C: Inspire us, O God, to become Christ-like, speaking words of forgiveness, love and care to those the world has left behind. Amen.

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: *"In Christ There Is No East or West"* –**Hymn #653**

"My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less" –**Hymn #575**

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: *"Jesus Shall Reign"* –**Hymn #832**

Postlude