

Order of Worship for 2-25-24

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

Opening Hymn: “‘Come, Follow Me,’ the Savior Spake” - Hymn #688

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

C: Amen.

Epistle Lesson: Romans 5:1–11

R: Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Confession based on Romans 5:1-11:

R: “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

P: But do we feel at peace?

C: We struggle with illness, loneliness, the winter cold, tight finances, crazy schedules.

R: “Through Christ we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

P: Do we feel that God’s love has been poured into us?

C: How can we rejoice in suffering?

P: The problem so often is that we forget what has God has done for us. It goes way down the list of our daily thoughts.

C: Almighty God, remind us again:

R: “For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

P: If Christ died for us even when we were enemies to You, think of what that mean for us now:

R: “Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life.”

C: Hearing that good news again, we come to You Lord for forgiveness.

P: By the authority and command of our Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all of your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

R: “More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”

P: That is why we have joy even in the face of all adversity. Nothing can separate us from God!

C: Thanks be to God! Amen!

Entrance Psalm:

P: Remember Your mercy, O LORD, and Your steadfast love,

C: for they have been from of old.

P: You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD!

C: He is their help and their shield.

P: The LORD has remembered us; He will bless us;

C: He will bless those who fear the LORD, both the small and the great.

P: We will bless the LORD

C: from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the LORD!

**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: Remember Your mercy, O LORD, and Your steadfast love,

C: for they have been from of old.

Prayer of the Day:

P: O God, You see that of ourselves we have no strength. By Your mighty power defend us from all adversities that may happen to the body and from all evil thoughts that may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen

Old Testament Lesson: Genesis 17:1–7, 15–16

R: When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be blameless, that I may make My covenant between Me and you, and may multiply you greatly.” Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, “Behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you...

And God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.”

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Holy Gospel: Mark 8:27–38

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 8th chapter

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

P: And Jesus went on with His disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way He asked His disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” And they told Him, “John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.” And He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered Him, “You are the Christ.” And He strictly charged them to tell no one about Him.

And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. And He said this plainly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But turning and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

And He called to Him the crowd with His disciples and said to them, “If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? For what can a man give in return for his life? For whoever is ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

Childrens' Message (8:30)

Sermon Hymn: *"Praise Be to Christ"* **Hymn #538**

Sermon: *"Who Do You Say I Am?"* - Mark 8:27-38

How many friends do you have? It used to be people could count that on their hands. First of all you had to be around people to be their friends. Secondly you had to have time to spend with them as friends. But now people can have hundreds of friends through the marvel of modern technology. Young people, and even many older ones as well, connect to each other through social media. You get on something like "Facebook" and each day let hundreds of people know what is going on in your life without leaving home and in a few minutes.

What if we could invite God and have Him as one of our "friends." What might we learn from Him?

How do I search for God? He belongs to no school or company and has no email address. How would we even be able to see a picture of Him? Where do we find Him?

I can check on the internet and google "God." It will give us all kinds of references to God given by many people all over the years, but what is there from God Himself. I can look at nature, the power of a hurricane or lightning bolt, the vastness of the universe the delicacy of a butterfly's wings, the intricacies of the muscles just in one of our fingers and the mysteries of the human brain. I can see in those things the God who created Him. But how do we find God?

Wait a minute! I've got something.

(Keys in) Who are you?

(The replies on the screen says) **God.**

God? God who?

I am Yahweh, I am who I am. I am God.

Yes, but where do You live?

I am everywhere.

How old are You?

I am eternal. I am ageless.

What do You look like?

I am spirit. I am God almighty.

Okay, if You are almighty, can You get me a job when I graduate? Can You set me up with a date for that girl I'm afraid to ask out? Can You give me a better test result the next time I see the doctor? Can You get me through Physics?

Blocked.

Blocked! Abraham got to talk to God directly. Samson prayed to God, who gave him the power to push down the pillars and destroy all those Philistines. Hannah prayed to God, who allowed her to become pregnant. David prayed to God, who guided his stone to a bull's eye on Goliath's head. Hezekiah prayed to God, who sent an angel to wipe out the Assyrian army. The early Christian prayed to God, who shook the room they were in. But what do I get from God? Blocked!

(A cross shows on the screen)

What is that? I ask for God, and all I get is that.

Who do you say I am?

I was trying to talk to God. Who are you?

What do other people say about Me?

Oh, You're Jesus. People say lots about You. I see all kinds of stuff in social media about You. Many people say You were a good man, who taught acceptance and was nonjudgmental. They say Christians talk a lot about you, but don't live like You. Millions of Moslems see You as a great prophet. In the lesson people said You were the Christ, the Messiah.

I guess they say You're God.

Who do you say I am?

Does it really matter? What do You have to do with passing grades, paying bills, cleaning up diapers, fighting the flu, getting back my lost investments, and getting married?

I guess You're God.

Who do you really think I am?

Why don't You make it easy for me? Prove it! Pay off my credit card debt. Fast forward me to a beach or ski slope for spring break. Turn the economy around. Put an end to terrorism. Eradicate cancer and AIDS.

I can say You're God, but what does that do for me?

I went to the cross to give you everlasting life.

Okay, that was 2,000 years ago. Politicians promise us better times. Salesmen tell us that they have what we need. The university tells me that students are first. Friends tell me to ask when I need help. But so many of those promises don't come true.

That sounds too easy.

If anyone would come after Me, he must deny Himself, take up his cross and follow Me.

What does that mean?

Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will gain it.

You mean it is not free?

No, it is costly, in fact the most costly thing of all.

So it isn't so easy.

No, it is the hardest thing.

Then what chance do I have?

Follow Me.

Follow You? Hey, there are thousands of people dying in place like Gaza and Yemen because they lack basic needs. The rape of women is accepted in the Congo. The Mexican border is a mess with the drugs cartels and human trafficking. Scientists say that even if we radically change our carbon emissions, we can't stop global warming. Who are you? I want God, a God who will do something for us.

Where are You, God?

(Pause)

God, where are You?

(Pause)

God, who are You?

(Pause)

The computer is okay. Why won't He answer? All I get is silence. It is like beating my head against a wall. I wonder how people who have lost their spouse of 50 plus feel? Or those whose children grow up to be destructive/ Or battered children? Or those paralyzed by depression? This is bad enough.

God! God!

(A cross becomes visible again.)

God?

Who do you say I am?

Oh, it's that Jesus, again. I can't get anything from God, but that Jesus then pops up.

Who do you say I am?

You're Jesus. I know that.

But who am I?

Yes, You're God.

You want to see God?

Yes.

Here I am.

All I see is a cross.

How about this?

(A baptismal shell comes up)

What does that have to do with you?

I came to you first in Baptism.

Now look at this.

(The bread and wine of Holy Communion)

I tell you this is My body; this is My blood.

Now see this.

(Picture of people)

I can't see you.

Look again.

Is this supposed to be “Where’s Waldo?”

I still can't see You. I just see people.

You see Me in others.

How?

In those who hurt and have need.

But especially you see Me in other Christians.

But where are You when I hurt?

I am with you always.

Yes, You say that, but where are You?

I told you, I am with you.

But that's just words.

Let there be light.

What?

You see light. It is there because of “just words.”

All you see, even you are because of words—My words.

Also, when you hurt, I give you people.

Yes, but they are just people.

I'm a person.

Yes, but you're God.

**That's right. But I am also human.
And I come now through people.**

How?

**Where two or more are gathered in My name,
I am with them.**

But why not will everyone?

Whoever loses His sake for My life, will save it.

But why Christians like me, Why not others?

(Pause)

God where are You?

(Silence)

God, I want answers!

(Silence)

(The cross appears again)

Who do you say I am?

Yes, I know You're Jesus.

Follow Me.

Where's God?

Follow Me.

But where? How? When? Why?

Follow Me . . .

God didn't ask, "Who am I?" until He came to us in Jesus. Moses wanted to know, "Who are you?" and only got the answer, "I am who I am." Job demanded that God give the answers

Job wanted, but God was only silent. But in Jesus God now asks us, “Who am I? Why? Because if we want an answer from God to the question, “Who am I?” can you imagine the answer? Can we solve pi? Can say exactly where an electron is at a definite point in time? Can we stop global warming? Can we fix our economy? All of those are like the tiny hills going immediately south of here on Lynn Avenue compared to the Mount Everest of God. If we try to figure God, all we end up with is more questions. That’s why Jesus said, “What good would it be for a man if he gained the whole world, but lost his soul?” We could think we had everything figured out. But we’d still come up short. God, who seems hidden to us, becomes even more hidden.

But Jesus asks, “Who do you say I am?” Then we see the cross. We see Him, a real human being like you and me, going to the cross and taking the punishment for our sins. All the injustices of this world, all that has gone wrong, was placed on His shoulders so He could die with it. In Him God is no longer hidden. We see someone we can trust, someone we can love. We become like the child who sees the outstretched arms of his loving mother and just knows everything will be all right . . .

Who do you say I am.

You are the Christ, God and man, my Lord and Savior.

Follow Me.

Apostle’s Creed:

Prayer of the Church:

P: Lord in Your mercy . . . **C: Hear our prayer.**

8:30 AM service continues...

Hymn: “O Christ, Who Called the Twelve” - Hymn #856

The Lord’s Prayer

Closing Prayer:

P: Heavenly Father, it is Your glory always to have mercy. Bring back all who have erred and strayed from Your ways; lead them again to embrace in the faith the truth of Your Word and to hold it fast, through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Blessing: (Pastor)

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn: *“When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”* - **Hymn #425**

11 AM Service Continues:

Offering

Call to Communion:

P: Christ Jesus asks us, “Who do you say I am?” We answer by following Him as we join together to hear His Word. We also hear His call to come to His Supper. In this meal he offers to us His true body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. We answer His call and join in His feast.

The Words of our Lord

The Lord’s Prayer

Distribution:

Hymns: *“O Christ, Who Called the Twelve”* - **Hymn #856** *“Jesus Comes Today with Healing”* **Hymn # 620**

Dismissal:

Closing Prayer:

P: Heavenly Father, it is Your glory always to have mercy. Bring back all who have erred and strayed from Your ways; lead them again to embrace in the faith the truth of Your Word and to hold it fast, through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Blessing:

(Pastor)

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn: *“When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”* - **Hymn #425**