

Order of Worship for May 19, 2024

Prelude:

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Listen to the promise of Jesus on the night before He died:

John 15:26-27

P: “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness about Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

P: Like the disciples, we wait for Jesus’ promise to be fulfilled.

C: Lord, send us the Counselor!

Acts 2:1-12

P: When the day of Pentecost arrived, the disciples were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?”

Opening Hymn: “Holy Spirit, Ever Dwelling” – Hymn #650

Confession and Forgiveness

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

C: Amen.

P: In that name, and with that faith--as dear children approaching a loving parent, as sinners redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, as believers filled with the Holy Spirit--let us confess our sins to almighty God.

C: Let us seek forgiveness.

P: Most merciful God,

C: We have been unworthy and disobedient children. We have ignored our Father's admonitions, disregarded our Savior's instructions, and grieved the Holy Spirit. We are not worthy to be called children of God. But we beg You—of Your fatherly compassion, by Your saving merits, at Your inviting call--to

have mercy on us and grant us Your forgiveness.

P: God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life. To those who believe in Jesus Christ, the heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit that they may be children of God. Rejoice in the Lord; your sins are forgiven--in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

Prayer of the Day:

P: God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as You sent upon the disciples the promised gift of the Holy Spirit, look upon Your Church and open our hearts to the power of the Spirit. Kindle in us the fire of Your love, and strengthen our lives for service in Your kingdom; through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Hymn of Praise: *“Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord”* - **Hymn #497**

Old Testament Lesson: Ezekiel 37:1-14

R: The hand of the LORD was upon me, and He brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. And He led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. And He said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord GOD, You know.” Then He said to me, “Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the LORD.” So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them.

Then He said to me, “Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, “Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.” So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

Then He said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.’ Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O My people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O My people. And I will put My Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.”

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Epistle Lesson: Acts 2:13-21

R: But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine." But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

"And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on My male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out My Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Holy Gospel: John 16:4b-15

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 16th chapter

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

P: Jesus said, "I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. But now I am going to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do He comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see Me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is Mine; therefore I said that He will take what is Mine and declare it to you.

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

Sermon Hymn: "Come, Holy Ghost, Creator Blest" – Hymn #498**Sermon: "The Creative Word" - Ezekiel 37**

"You're out!" the umpire says as the batter watches the ball go by. "No way!" says the batter. "It was outside!" "Three strikes, you're out," says the umpire as he points the player toward the dugout. The player can say the pitch was outside. Watching on TV the slow motion instant replay with a computer imaged strike zone on the screen the announcers can say it was a ball. But those are just opinions. Those are just descriptions. The umpire's call is prescriptive. It commands. It doesn't matter what we, the batter, or the instant replay show. The batter is out. He must go to the dugout. The umpire has authority. What he says must happen.

But why? Is the pitch a strike because it can be proven to be a strike? Is it a strike because the umpire's decision altered the ball's direction to make it a strike? No, it is a strike because Major League Baseball has agreed to give that authority to the umpire. Otherwise it would be mass confusion with so much time spent arguing over whether it was a ball or a strike. Even with the instant replays used as challenges in pro-football, both sides could still argue many calls either way. You still need an official to make the final call. And think of all the times that would stop the flow of the game

That is really true with all human authority. We obey the government because we agree to listen to it. Jefferson spoke in the Declaration of Independence about the government ruling by the "consent of the governed." Without that we'd have mass chaos. We pay for things with money. Why? Because we all agree that the money has the value to purchase. Otherwise a \$20 bill is just a worthless piece of paper.

But what about what God says to us? For centuries people believed what God said was the way it is, even if people didn't follow what God said. The Ten Commandments didn't just describe a way to live; they were the only way to live. They should be prescriptive, not descriptive. But what if we agree to say otherwise?

People will look at the laws in the Old Testament about what to eat or not eat, about having slaves, about having more than one wife, and say, "We don't follow those laws today." Why not? "Because our society has changed." Therefore those laws don't apply to us today. What made those statements true was that back then everyone agreed to them. But our world has changed, so those rules no longer apply." And we see that in the controversies over creation and evolution, homosexuality, and abortion. Is what God says count only as long as we agree to Him, in other words, "by the consent of the governed"?

Our message today is based on Ezekiel 37. Ezekiel was a prophet who was taken with some of the people of Israel into captivity into Babylon. By this time all that was left to Israel was the tiny kingdom of Judah, the area around the city of Jerusalem. God had allowed many nations to invade the land of Israel. He allowed the Assyrians to destroy the northern half of Israel. Then the Babylonians conquered the south and left in place of King Jehoiachin his uncle Zedekiah to rule. Zedekiah was a vassal. That meant he was to rule the land, but only on behalf of Babylon. Why did all of this happen to Israel? Because they decided that God's Word did not apply to them. It wasn't that they got together and made a referendum saying to God, "Your Word no longer applies." No, they just gradually drifted away from it. It wasn't so much that they objected to God's land. They just acted as if it were irrelevant.

In the past several Sundays we have been hearing Jesus talk to His disciples on the night before He died. If we just focus off that part of God's Word, what do we have? "Love one another as I have loved you." "Be one as I and the Father are one." Are we one with one another as we argue with our husband or wife or parents or children? We want to remain in Jesus when we are in trouble, but keep him at a distance when He might "get in the way." The result is that God's Word is something we discard. It's like the newspaper-something we use less and less because of the internet.

But God tells Ezekiel, “Prophecy to these bones.” To prophecy is to speak God’s Word. As Ezekiel speaks God’s Word, the bones link together; then flesh and skin form over them. Finally they come to life like a vast army. Ezekiel emphasizes that these were “dry” bones. They had been there for a long time so that only the bones were left. These aren’t the bodies of those who might only have looked dead. They were totally dead. Yet God’s Word not only commanded those bones; He brought them back to life.

God’s Word is not descriptive or even prescriptive. It is creative. God’s Word has authority whether or not anyone agrees with it. It doesn’t need “the consent of the governed.” It is self-authoritative. What God says is, regardless of what anyone else thinks or does.

We see that in what God told Ezekiel. Through most of the book of Ezekiel He is warning the people who had gone into exile in Babylon with Ezekiel that later the Babylonians would destroy Jerusalem and the temple and take many more captives as exiles. They didn’t want to hear that message. Then when those new exiles began to come to Babylon and tell them that Jerusalem had been destroyed, God commanded Ezekiel to bring them a message of comfort. The people of Israel had treated God’s Word as if it was irrelevant. As a consequence of that, their nation was destroyed. They became like the valley of dry bones. But from that lifeless nation God would bring new life. He would restore the nation. And that would happen as the Persian emperor would conquer Babylon and allow the captives to return from exile and restore Israel.

But even more God would bring life from death by his creative Word as He began the Church. Today is Pentecost. We heard the story of that first Pentecost. A group of disciples of Jesus was gathered together in Jerusalem. Jesus had ascended into heaven ten days before. But the Holy Spirit, who breathed new life into the valley of dry bones, breathed new life into the disciples as they spoke to people in their own language about Jesus. He turned the Church from a tiny group of disciples into a movement that was to overcome the mighty Roman Empire and spread the faith all over the world. That didn’t happen because people agreed to follow God’s Word. It happened because God’s Word created that faith in them, just as the dry bones were turned into a vibrant army.

That’s God’s Word to you and me today. It doesn’t depend on whether or not we agree with it. That is a good thing, because then we’d never be forgiven; we’d never have the hope of eternal life. It doesn’t even depend on whether or not we believe—God’s Word is not effective because our belief makes it that way. My baptism, the benefits given in Holy Communion, and my going to God for forgiveness don’t depend on how I feel. They all depend solely on God’s Word which says they are so.

“Remain in Me, and I will in you.” “Love one another as I have loved you.” “Be one as I and the Father are one.” Those words are not just advice to us. They are simply commands. That is God’s creative Word, God making happen what we could never do. As we go to the cross and hear God’s Word tell us how much He loves us, then we do remain in Him, love as He loves us, and join as one with each other. God’s Word doesn’t say it; it does.

Confession of Faith: Third article of Creed p. 323

Prayer of the Church

Sharing Our Ministry

Offering

Invitation to Holy Communion:

P: The Holy Spirit, who breathed life into the dry bones that Ezekiel saw and filled the disciples on Pentecost, comes to us today in very definite ways— through God’s Word, baptism, and the Lord’s Supper. We join together in the special meal of Jesus’ true body and blood trusting that through it He forgives us to our sins and the Holy Spirit breathes new life into us. We obey Jesus’ command and join in the Holy Communion.

The Words of our Lord and Lord’s Prayer

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

C: Amen.

Distribution

“Come Down, O Love Divine” – **Hymn #501**

“O Day Full of Grace” – **Hymn #503**

Prayer After Communion: P: God, our Creator, earth has many languages, but Your Gospel announces Your love to all nations in one heavenly speech. Make us messengers of the good news that, through the power of Your Holy Spirit, everyone may unite in one song of praise, through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Blessing of the Seed and Soil:

P: While earth remains, there will be day and night, summer and winter, planting and harvest, cold and heat. For as the rain and snow come down from heaven and do not return until they have watered the earth, making it blossom and bear fruit, and give seed for sowing and bread to eat, so shall the Word, which comes from God prevail.

C: It shall not return to Him fruitless without accomplishing His purpose of succeeding with the task He gave it.

P: Lord of springtime and harvest, bless these plants as symbols of the seed that is sown throughout the world that it may nourish and sustain Your people. And so water the soil with Your gentle rain and warm it with Your golden sunshine, that it may bear fruit to the glory of Your name and the welfare of Your people.

C: Amen.

Dismissal of Children:

Hymn: *“On What Has Now Been Sown”* - **Hymn #921**

Blessing: (pastor) **C: Amen.**

Closing Hymn: *“Holy Spirit, Light Divine”* – **Hymn #496**

Postlude