

Order of Worship for June 16, 2024

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

Opening Hymn: *"How Great Thou Art"* - Hymn # 801

Confession and Forgiveness p. 151

Service of the Word

Entrance Psalm: Psalm 28:6-9

P: Blessed be the LORD!

C: **For He has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy.**

P: The LORD is my strength and my shield;

C: **in Him my heart trusts, and I am helped;**

P: my heart exults,

C: **and with my song I give thanks to Him.**

P: The LORD is the strength of His people;

C: **He is the saving refuge of His anointed.**

P: Oh, save Your people and bless Your heritage!

C: **Be their shepherd and carry them forever.**

ALL: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and shall be forever. Amen.

P: Blessed be the LORD!

C: **For He has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy.**

Kyrie (Lord, Have Mercy) p. 152-3

Hymn of Praise: *"This Is the Feast"* p. 155

Salutation p. 156

Prayer of the Day:

P: Lord God fill us with Your power as You filled Samson to bring down Your judgment on the Philistines. Use the power You give us in Christ Jesus to bring life to the world as Your Spirit leads people to faith in Jesus, who lives and rules with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen**

Old Testament Reading: Judges

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Epistle Lesson: Philippians 2:5-11

R: Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Alleluia and Verse: pg. 156

Holy Gospel: John 19:28-30

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

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

P: Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. When He had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

Sermon Hymn: "*Jesus Sinners Doth Receive*" - **Hymn #609, vs. 1-4, 7**

Sermon: "*Samson*" Judges

In the world of fantasy heroes there seem to be two types. The real big heroes like Captain America, Superman, and Spiderman who not only have special powers, but are also smart and handsome. Then you have those who are more "specialists" like "Flash" or "The Human Torch," who focus on a specific power. One example of that is the "Hulk," who is very powerful, but of limited intellect. When Captain America gives instruction to the Avengers, he gives them specific, detailed statements. But to Hulk he just says, "Smash."

Samson seems like a Hulk character. He rips off the ropes the Philistines use to bind him and kills 1,000 of them with the jawbone of a donkey. But he lets himself get into trouble time and again because of his weakness for women, not the loving relationship of marriage, but the erotic attraction that is so pushed into our faces today. In that way he was like Hercules who let himself be deceived by his wife Megara. But Samson is no simpleton. He is the one who tells riddles like this one in Judges:

Out of the eater, something to eat;
out of the strong, something sweet.

Samson's riddle is about how he found honey in the carcass of a lion he killed. But his enemies were only able to interpret it because his wife forced it out of him. How could someone strong and clever like Samson be so stupid? Why would God use such a flawed hero?

Samson's foolishness reflects on our own. The average American spends 7 hours and 4 minutes staring at a screen per day. Globally, the average screen time per day is 6 hours 58 minutes. Now, you could say that a lot of that is time at work. Yet, Americans spend an average of 3 hours and 43 minutes on their phone per day. Most of that is not talking but keeping track of social media and flipping through the internet.

Though God has given us the most precious blessing on His Son Christ Jesus, what does that mean in our daily lives? Do we make time to let God talk us daily in Scripture? Do we take time in our stressful lives to pray? How much do we live out the eternal life God has given to us compared to things that consume our lives in this world?

Samson is one of the "Judges." He hardly seems like the type of person you'd choose to run a courtroom. But "judge" is an awful translation. A much better word would be "Savior" or "hero." The "Judges" were people who the Holy Spirit empowered to rescue God's people from their enemies. Some, like Gideon and Samuel, were moral people. Jephthah, made a rash oath that ended up leading to the death of his daughter. Abimelech murdered his brothers. Samson falls into that camp of one who could rescue people with his strength, but not be a good leader for the people. So why did God call Samson, knowing his weaknesses?

We can see an answer in how the story of Samson ended. His weakness leads to him having his hair cut off and losing his power. He is blinded by the Philistines and dragged around in chains to provide "entertainment." But in this, His weakest moment, he puts his trust in God. He asks God to give him the power to push over the pillars holding up the temple where the Philistines were worshiping their gods, even though Samson realizes this will kill him, too. The result as the book of Judges tells us is "Samson killed more in death than all in life." God used Samson in his weakness to rescue His people.

Someone else experienced strength in weakness. St. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians:

Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

"For when I am weak, then I am strong," How can that be? We see how in Christ Jesus who is almighty God, yet allowed Himself to become the weakest and experience death on the

cross for us. Jesus turned the weakness of His death on the cross into the greatest victory of all, not killing thousands of Philistines, but taking away the sins of the world.

That speaks profoundly to us. God calls us, not because we are strong or rich or mighty or brilliant, but as we are. God works through even the weakest to bring His work into this world. Why? Because if God works through the weak, then it is seen as coming from God, not us. God doesn't do that because He has such a great ego, but because he loves us and knows that our lives are only fulfilled as we trust in Him. Otherwise we would get proud like Samson or how Paul was tempted to be and forget that our real strength lies in God, not us. It is like being rescued when drowning. The great desire is to struggle, to try to rescue ourselves by our actions. But that only makes things worse. The best thing to do is nothing but place our trust in the lifeguard who is trying to rescue us. Then our weakness leads to strength, to being rescued.

Often lost in the story of Samson is how he came to be. God's angel came upon his mother who was childless and told her she would give birth. She told her husband, Minoah, who believed what she said. They were simple people, but God used them to bring about Samson, who rescued God's people from the Philistines. Without them, there would have been no Samson. Of course God could have simply snapped His fingers and defeated the Philistines, but instead He chose to work through people as He does today.

God chose to save the world through a human, His Son, Christ Jesus. And He did it not with a conquering army, but by His humbling death on a cross. In the greatest weakness God brought the greatest strength. And He continues to work in our world today through human beings like you and me, not with the strength of might, but by His great love in Christ Jesus.

Creed: 5th Petition of Lord's Prayer

Prayer of the Church:

P: Lord in Your mercy . . .

C: hear our prayer.

Sharing Our Ministry:

Offering/Voluntary:

Offertory: *"What Shall I Render to the Lord?"* p. 159

Service of the Sacrament

Preface p. 160

P: It is truly good, right, and proper that we should in all times and in all places give thanks to You, almighty God, heavenly Father for You have used even sinful people like Samson to do Your will. How much greater is the blessing we receive through our Son, Christ Jesus, who did not sin. 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. 161

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

P: Blessed are You, Lord God, for You empowered Samson and the other Judges to rescue their people from their enemies. We thank You that in our Savior, Christ Jesus, who laid His life down for all of us, You have rescued us from the greatest enemies of sin, death, and the devil. Send Your Holy Spirit so that we celebrate Jesus' victory for us as we partake of the sacrament of His true body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. Hear us as we pray in His name . . .

The Lord's Prayer:

The Words of Our Lord: p. 162

Pax Domini (*Peace of the Lord*) and **Agnus Dei** (*Lamb of God*) p. 163

Distribution of Holy Communion:

Communion Hymns:

"As Rebels, Lord, Who Foolishly Have Wandered" - **Hymn #612,**

"Chief of Sinners Though I Be" - **Hymn #611**

Song After Communion: *"Thank the Lord"* pg. 164

Prayer After Communion:

P: Christ Jesus, as You have come in this meal to take away our sins, help us to see our only power lies in what You give us as we face the temptations and perils of this world. We pray this in Your most precious name.

C: Amen.

Blessing: p. 166

Closing Hymn: *"Savior, Again to Thy Dear Name We Raise"* - **Hymn #917**