

Order of Worship for September 15, 2024

Prelude

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

Opening Hymn: “*Word of God, Come Down on Earth*” – **Hymn #545**

Confession and Absolution p. 203

Service of the Word

Entrance Psalm:

P: Be strong, and let your heart take courage,

C: all you who wait for the LORD!

P: But I trust in You, O LORD;

C: I say, “You are my God.”

P: My times are in Your hand;

C: rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors!

P: Make Your face shine on Your servant;

C: save me in Your steadfast love!

**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: Be strong, and let your heart take courage,

C: all you who wait for the LORD!

Kyrie (*Lord, Have Mercy*) p. 204

Hymn of Praise (*Glory to God in the Highest*) p. 204

Salutation

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us pray... Lord Jesus Christ, our support and defense in every need, continue to preserve Your Church in safety, govern her by Your goodness, and bless her with Your peace; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 50:4-10

R: The LORD God has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning He awakens; He awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught. The LORD God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward. I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those

who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. But the LORD God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame. He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. Behold, the LORD God helps me; who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up. Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the voice of His servant? Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God.

R: The Word of the Lord

C: Thanks be to God

Epistle Reading: James 3:1-12

R: Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

R: The Word of the Lord

C: Thanks be to God.

Alleluia and Verse p. 205

Holy Gospel: Mark 9:14-29

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 9th chapter.

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

P: And when Jesus, Peter, James, and John (After the Transfiguration) came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. And immediately all the crowd, when they saw Jesus, were greatly amazed and ran up to Him and greeted Him. And He asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?" And someone from the crowd answered Him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked Your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able." And Jesus answered them, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to Me." And they brought the boy to Him. And when the spirit saw Jesus,

immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. And Jesus asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." And Jesus said to him, "'If You can'! All things are possible for one who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when Jesus had entered the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" And He said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer."

P: This is the Gospel of our Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

Sermon Hymn: "'Away from Us,' the Demon Cried" - Hymn # 541

Sermon: "From Doubt into Belief" - Mark 9:14-29

On top of our shoulders lie 100 billion neurons. Each of these neurons makes 7,000 connections with other neurons. The total number of connections is from 100 to 500 trillion. Maybe we can understand the number trillion in terms of the national debt, but imagine all of that packed into our brains? By comparison a simple roundworm, a nematode which is 1 mm long, has 302 neurons. We humans are made to think.

With the ability to think comes the ability to question, to doubt. That can be a good thing because it can keep us from foolish things. It is not smart to jump from a window twenty feet off the ground. It is not smart to drive 50 in a school zone where a policeman is waiting. It is not smart to miss your yearly check-ups.

In school we are taught to think critically—to not just accept things, but to find out the truth for ourselves. That kind of doubt led people to think about new things in news ways like the microchip, the electric generator, and the video screen. Think of what our lives would be like without those things.

Critical thinking, though, is not enough. A man named Schrodinger won the Nobel Prize for physics in 1933 in the very intellectual area of quantum mechanics. He said about science:

I can't tell you as a scientist about red and blue, good and bad, bitter and sweet, physical pain and delight, beauty and ugliness, God and eternity. Science knows nothing about them. Science sometimes pretends to answer questions in those areas, but the answers are very often so silly that we don't take them seriously.

The man who encountered Jesus had his doubts. His son was possessed by a demon. It wasn't just that at that moment his son was acting crazy. This happened again and again.

Imagine having to spend all those years as a parent watching your son suffer? We often picture fear and doubt as something we face in quick situations like accidents. Do I jump out of a plane trusting that the parachute will work? Do I leap over the wall trusting that there is not a deep drop on the other side? Do I ask that girl out for a date? Do I take the risk and buy that car? Do I decide to switch from engineering to education? But for this father his doubt involved something day in and day out. Should I stay in a marriage? Can I handle getting older? Can I remain in my faith with all the distractions and doubts I have? Can I have faith for the long term when my marriage is over or I don't see any hope for someone to be married to me, when an illness won't go away, or when I'm stuck with a job I hate?

On top of that, doubt causes pain. The symbol for a question is the question mark. It looks like a fishhook. That is what it does to us when those questions get caught in us. They get our attention, and then sink deep in us, causing so much pain. It isn't just that someone close to us died. It is also the question, "Why did he have to die?" It isn't just the uncertainty when we lose a job. It is the question, "Why did I lose the job? Will I get another one? Will we survive until then?"

In September 1868 a group of 50 army scouts were trapped on a sandbar in the Arikarie River in northeast Colorado by an overwhelming force of Cheyenne warriors. Though the Native Americans outnumbered the scouts, the scouts had killed their horses and used them with pits they quickly dug in the wet sand to protect themselves and had repeating rifles. To encourage his fellow Cheyenne, Chief Roman Nose assured his warriors that the white bullets would not harm them. They had the faith to attack head long against the island, but it did no good. When many of the warriors, including Roman Nose, himself, were shot and fell, the Cheyenne realized how wrong that faith was.

What good is it to have faith when what we believe is false? It would be like kamikazes who tried to sink the U.S. Navy at the end of World War 2. It is like the terrorists who become human bombs and believe this will take them to paradise. Perhaps you have been taught that, "God helps those who help themselves," or "Cleanliness is next to godliness," or "the Bible says that gambling is wrong," or "Jesus never said anything about hell." All of those are false. So many things that people attribute to Christianity are not true, so why believe any of it?

But the other end of the pendulum is to have no faith at all, to have to insist that everything be proven. Then all we are left with is doubts. Nothing can be trusted. Eventually as humans we have to believe in something. Even sworn atheists believe there is no God, not that they can prove it. They have to abandon doubts that say that god could actually exist and actually believe there is no God.

So how do we find that point between the pendulum swings of blind foolishness and total doubt? The same way the man who came to Jesus did. He said to Jesus, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief." We look to Jesus. In Jesus we have the two things needed for faith—certainty and love. Our critical thinking leads us away from things that are not certain. But eventually it will leave us with nothing certain. Our beliefs can give us something to hold on to, one thing we

think we love, but it is empty. But in Jesus we see God, the one certain thing in this universe. T. S. Elliot, who so long doubted God, said, "God is the still point of the turning universe." In Jesus this certain God became one of us. In Jesus we see that the certain God is also the God who totally loves us, the God we can truly believe in.

Jesus knows those doubts because He had them Himself. He is the Son of God. But how did He know that? He had to trust God's word. When the devil tempted Him, He began with the words, "If you are the Son of God?" In other words the devil was saying to Him, "Go ahead and prove it." When Jesus was confronted with people like the man with the demon possessed son, He trusted that His Father would give Him the power to help those people. He drove that demon out, just like He fed the 5,000 and calmed the storm. But He never did those things to prove who He was. He did them to help people. Jesus didn't know intellectually with total scientific proof that death on the cross would take away our sin and that He would rise on the third day. He trusted His Father's word. If He had to wait for that proof, He would never have gone to the cross. But because He believed, our sins have been forgiven. The demon was taken out of the man's son. We, who are so full of doubt, can believe!

We have our doubts. They can be good when they prevent us from believing in foolish things, when we are cautious about getting rich quick or the latest fad or in putting our hands in anything else but God. Those same doubts kept the boy's father from trusting in anything but God. But our doubts then leave us with nothing. That's when we have to leave them behind and cling to Jesus.

Seventh Petition of the Lord's Prayer and Explanation:

Prayer of the Church:

P: Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

Sharing Our Ministry:

Gideon's International

Offering-Voluntary:

Service of the Sacrament

Preface: p. 208

P: It is good, right, and proper that we should in all times and all places give thanks to You, almighty God, heavenly Father for You sent Your Son, Christ Jesus, to defeat the powers and the devil and evil and send Your Holy Spirit to give us the faith to believe that. 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. 208

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

P: We give thanks for Your great power in defeating the devil and Your love in wanting us to be Your own. Bless us as we come forward to receive the true body and blood of Christ Jesus in His supper. Send Your Holy Spirit so that we do not doubt, but believe that by this our sins are forgiven. Hear us we pray the prayer Jesus taught us . . .

Lord's Prayer and Words of our Lord, and Peace of the Lord: p. 209

Agnus Dei (*Lamb of God*): p. 210

Distribution of Holy Communion:

"Jesus Has Come and Brings Pleasure" - **Hymn #533**

"O Lord, We Praise Thee" - **Hymn #617**

Song After Communion: (*Nunc Dimittus*—"Song of Simeon") p. 211

Prayer After Communion:

P: Lord God, our strength, the battle for good and evil rages within and around us, and our ancient foe tempts us with his deceits and empty promises. Keep us steadfast in Your Word and, when we fall, raise us again and restore us through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C: Amen.

Benedicamus and Blessing: p.212

Closing Hymn: *"Your Hand, O Lord, in Days of Old"* - **Hymn #846**

Postlude: