

Sunday Home Worship, February 7, 2010

Call to Worship

Leader: What shall we render to the Lord for all of the Lord's bounty to us?

People: We will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.

Leader: Taste and see that the Lord is good.

People: Happy are they who find refuge in God.

From Psalms 116 and 34

Call to Confession

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a mind that is sound.

Trusting in the Lord's love, let us offer to God our prayer of confession, confident in the promise of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word and deed. We have not loved you with our whole heart and mind and strength; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. In your mercy forgive what we have been, help us amend what we are, and direct what we shall be, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

Silent Confession

Declaration of Forgiveness

Leader: Hear the good news! The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

People: He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, that we might be dead to sin and be alive to all that is good.

Leader: In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Let us give God glory.

Sung Response of Praise

Glory Be to the Father

GLORIA PATRI

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;

**As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen. Amen.**

The Peace

The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Scripture Readings

Job 38:1-3, 22-24

Acts 8:26-37

Meditation

I couldn't help but remember Job, this morning. Job is guy in the Old Testament who has everything go wrong, all at once, and is left asking why God has it in for him. In fact, he's quite upset with God and justifiably asks that God answer him for the wrongs he has endured even though he has done no wrong. When the LORD appears, God is

shrouded in a whirlwind, howling in the voice of a storm: “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?” God turns the tables on Job, saying: “I’ll ask you the questions, not the other way around.” Among those questions are: “Have you entered the storehouses of the snow, or have you seen the storehouses of hail, which I have reserved for the time of trouble?” (Job 38:22-23)

Surely this crippling snow has brought with it a time of trouble. There’s the trouble with getting out, the trouble that some are having with power, there’s the trouble with many who lack adequate shelter, and there’s the trouble for those driving either to clear the roads or to get to some place with whatever urgent matter has them going. God has opened up the storehouse doors! But, as in Job, what that really means is that despite the troubles, there is something about our God that defies our own judgments and complaints. God is still both the mighty one and the one whom remains worthy of our trust and hope.

Actually, the snow gives us a way of affirming the goodness of God. Isn’t it beautiful? Hasn’t this storm been absolutely amazing? I’m writing this on Saturday morning watching it continue to fall outside my dining room window. Neighbors Chris and Phoebe Henderson are outside clearing walks and driveways on our street. Not just their own walk and driveway, but those of others. Others are taking an exploratory trek through the knee high accumulation. Dogs are tearing around in jubilation, exhilarated by the new white playground. The snow has interrupted our routines. It has slowed us down and given us a new take on what this day has to offer.

I missing that we can’t get together for worship today. But the snow makes me mindful of how special Sundays are supposed to be. Our worship days are modeled after the Jewish Sabbath in many respects. On the Sabbath, God commands that no work should be done so that the people can remember we aren’t to be 24/7 employees of some implacable tyrant. The Sabbath was given to help us remember we are a free people. When we get together for worship, we do so with gladness, enjoying the fellowship of others, singing our praises to God and with a reminder that God speaks good news for who we are. The snow gives us a chance to experience Sabbath anew.

The passage from Acts about Philip meeting with the Ethiopian eunuch tells a story of similar nature. Philip is minding his own business when the Spirit of God nudges him to strike up a conversation with a stranger. God may have been preparing this encounter for ages, but for Philip and the man he meets, this is all about surprise. Surprise! The story from Isaiah is about Jesus, who bore our sufferings on the cross and has renewed our relationship with God. Surprise! The foreigner, the stranger, is so gripped by the story, he wants to be included in the number of those who find God’s love powerful in their lives. “Hey, there’s some water,” the eunuch notices all of a sudden, “will you baptize me into the fold?” Surprise! Philip finds himself empowered to be God’s messenger and the servant of the good news of Jesus, baptizes the eunuch and then, suddenly snatched away to be doing the next bit of encouragement that God has in store for him.

Here are a couple of groups of questions for you to consider this day: What surprises might God have had in store for you in this snowstorm? Are you surprised by the beauty? Did the imposed hibernation get you to relax in ways you didn’t know you needed? Did it connect you with family members or neighbors in a new way? And so, the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch: How is it that these two very different

people made such a divine connection? What was the spark that arched between them? We are starting our *Unbinding Your Heart* Lent Event in a few short days. In our small groups, in worship and in our daily prayers we are asked to open our hearts to the delightful way in which the Spirit's of God is present to us. Does the Spirit seem present in the snow, in the opportunity to be home or contained within the neighborhood? How is the Spirit at work in the care we might have for one another, generated by neighbors' kindnesses, in how we might miss our friends at church, or how we might reach out to someone alone?

As you worship in this unusual setting today, I encourage you to ponder these things in a spirit of openness and thanksgiving. Think about giving a call to someone who is shut in alone today. That's an assignment for you. Take some time to get out and play a bit as you are able (even if it's to take a picture of this historic snowfall). Say thank you to God for this surprise.

Prayers of the People

Living God, you have given us a glorious day. We give thanks for shelter in the storm, for the beauty of the snow covered earth, for the connections we have with others, this day.

In the midst of our thanksgiving for these gifts we do offer prayers for the following:

For those who have reason to be anxious about being cut off because of the weather (silent moment of prayer) – Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

For those who work today, nurses, firefighters, road crews, and other essential personnel (silent moment of prayer) – Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

For those who are sick or are anticipating surgery (silent moment of prayer) – Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

For those who are homeless, or who are confronted with keeping hearth and home together. In the midst of our crippling crisis, we continue to remember the people of Haiti in our prayers, as well (silent moment of prayer) – Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Lord, as you taught us, so also we pray together: **Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.**

Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.