

Script Worship Resources - *Care Full*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UfN_71-GXmk

Pentecost 5, Year B,

27th June, 2021

2 Corinthians 8:7-15 NIV/ Mark 5:21-35 NIV

Prelude *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desire* - S Bach
played by Annie Center

Welcome/Announcements

Pass the Peace

Call to Worship (responsive)

The world is troubled and distressed,
Help us to reach out in faith, O God.

We hear the literal cries of injustice, the weeping of children;
Help us to move when fear immobilizes us, O God.

The news causes us to despair, to feel helpless to do anything;
Help us to trust and hope in You, O God.

Holy Spirit, draw us in, fill us, and renew our faith in this time of worship;
Holy Spirit, send us full of Your light, love, hope, and courage. Amen.

Invocation

O Faithful God

You yearn to be so close to us
that we can know you in every breath,
in every hope, in every relationship.

You long for us to trust in your power
to bring to life new possibilities
where there has been no hope.

Meet us here today and
teach us to recognize
the ways of life and hope into which you are leading us.

So may our desires become your desires,
our work become your work,
and our community
the place where you are sought and found.
In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Hymn

Come, Let Us All Unite to Sing 12

played by Annie Center

Epistle Reading 2 Corinthians 8:7-15 NIV

jus Consecration of Church Leadership

But since you excel in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you[a] – see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

And here is my judgment about what is best for you in this matter. Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so.

Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means.

For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.

Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality.

At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality,

as it is written: “The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.”[b]

Commissioning of Church Workers:

People: In company with your faithful people in every age, we have called out those with gifts for your service, O God. Fill them with the love of Christ and the power of the Spirit as they carry out the church's ministry.

Those Commissioned:

Grant us wisdom, patience and hope when we falter. Give us joy in serving your church and keep us faithful to this calling.

All: *For the ministries taking form within us and for all the callings yet to be, we praise your name, O Lord! Amen*

Hymn

God of Grace and God of Glory 366

played by Annie Center

Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

Almighty God, maker of all, with joy we give thanks for all your goodness. We praise you for the love which has created and sustained us to this day, and for the gift of your Christ who brings us into covenant with you and with all your people of faith. Help us to treasure your gifts and to show our thankfulness by lives wholly given to your service.

We pray for your church whom you have redeemed by the sacrifice of Jesus. Give it pastors and ministers filled with your spirit, and strength to serve by the guidance of your word. Perfect it in love and in compassion, and establish it in the faith of your saints. Unite all your people that one holy church may bear witness to you and your glory.

We pray that you would move our nation toward the justice of your peace. Bless our national, state and local leaders to serve all people with integrity. Purge from us all hatred and prejudice, and build within us your love, that even in our dealings with the other nations of earth we may be servants of peace, truth and justice.

Bless our homes with the joy of your presence. Strengthen our covenants of family and of faith, that our children may grow into fullness of faith, that together we may show forth your praise in our world through deeds and words of love and compassion – especially with those who are alone and Lonely.

Let your grace be seen in seed-time and harvest, in labor and business, in leisure and rest, in arts and culture of our people. May all who do work find fulfillment of their vocations, and all who are in need of work find the relief of new endeavors.

Comfort those who sorrow and are in need, sickness or adversity. Have mercy on those to whom death draws near. Bring consolation to those in mourning, and to all give your peace, for these and all our prayers we bring to you in the name of Jesus our Christ. Amen.

Gospel Lesson - Mark 5:21-35 NIV

When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake.

Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet.

He pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live."

So Jesus went with him. A large crowd followed and pressed around him.

And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years.

She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse.

When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak,

because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed."

Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?"

"You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'"

But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it.

Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth.

He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher anymore?"

Message – *Care Full*

When we think about compassion as Christians, what is the first thing that comes to mind? Is it the poor or the sick? Maybe we think of those in struggling in the Third world, those who lack the means to provide adequately for themselves. Christianity has a long tradition of caring for those in physical need.

As I prepared for today, I reflected on all the ways the Church of the Brethren has helped those who find themselves at the margins without the basic resources necessary to provide for themselves and their families. We can take some humble Brethren pride in our many accomplishments such as Heifer Project, Brethren Disaster Ministries, CROP walk, and many others. But that led me to wonder, is the “least of these” all we are called to care for?

In today’s reading from Mark, we have two stories of healing by Jesus. As he resumes his teaching in Galilee after a brief break in Gentile country, he is approached by Jairus, a leader of the local synagogue, whose daughter is sick and dying. Jairus begs Jesus to come lay hands on his daughter and heal her. Now up to this point, Jesus has primarily been working with those who are at the margins of society, those who are “unclean” and unable to participate and benefit from the cultural and religious structures of Palestinian society. Now we have someone who is with the “in” crowd, someone of wealth and privilege, an esteemed religious authority, who seeks out Jesus in desperation. We know he has some wealth just by the fact that his home has a spare sick room in which she can rest. Chances are, he’s been down all the usual paths available to him to try to cure his daughter. He’s probably engaged the best local physicians as well as performing the appropriate prayers and sacrifices to seek God’s favor. Yet his daughter is failing despite all his efforts, which are made possible because of his status and resources.

In contrast to his story, we are also presented with another story within the greater context of his narrative. In the second story, we have a woman who has been suffering from menstrual trouble for twelve years. She has exhausted all of her resources with physicians in vain, and actually has gotten worse. In comparison to the esteemed Jairus, she really is an outcast. Her continuous bleeding would render her ritually impure, someone who could not closely associate with others in society. She would be forced to keep her distance from others in public, so as not to contaminate them. To accidentally brush against her would be to make oneself impure, and would require a lengthy cleansing process in order to remove that “stain.”

So we’re presented with two situations that require healing from opposite ends of the cultural spectrum. On one hand, we have the pious synagogue leader and on the other, the “unclean” woman who should not even be directly addressing Jesus as a woman, and

certainly not touching him. Yet that is exactly what she does. And she is healed. But the healing is not the extent of the pastoral care that Jesus provides. He feels the power flowing to her, and stops and seeks her out. He doesn't chastise her for touching him. Instead he applauds the faith that made her take such a big risk. We're told there was such a big crowd that his disciples remarked that the bigger question was, "who was not touching his cloak?" That implies she had to push her way through the crowd to be able to touch him, brushing against many others along the way, contaminating them. She was risking being even further ostracized and punished by her community in this attempt that brought her into direct contact, not only with Jesus, but with the crowd around her. Jesus seeks her out because the faith he promotes is not once and done.

It's relational. He could have just let the healing happen and kept moving on, but he needed to pause. He needed to acknowledge her not only as a beloved daughter of God, but also a woman of strong faith. But his concern was not for her alone. He still was committed to the entitled Jairus as well. He immediately sets out again to restore his daughter as well, encouraging his faith as well.

As we reflect on these two stories, I think it's important to recognize that we often focus solely on the needs of those at the margins, and write off those in positions of privilege whose action, or inaction, leads to the continued oppression of the downtrodden. Certainly there is a theme throughout the scriptures that those at the bottom take priority, that the "last shall be first." And that's modeled in our scripture today. Yet even though the kingdom of God reverses the "normal" order we're used to, that doesn't imply that the first just drop off the radar, does it? But how often do we relegate these situations to "bad guys versus good guys" where the bad guys simply need to be vanquished and kicked to the curb?

It occurred to me this week that I have spent a lot of time during June or Pride month, reading about the many anti-LGBTQ+ initiatives happening in state legislatures across the country, often targeting the trans and nonbinary communities, while the Equality Act languishes in the Senate. Which led me to wonder in light of this text, what obligation do I have as a Christian to my sisters and brothers who support these discriminating? While my queer family suffering discrimination and oppression certainly is my priority, does that abrogate me from any responsibility towards those who support that oppression based on flawed theology? Where does grace enter in?

Paul in our epistle reading this morning talks a bit about grace and fairness. While the gist of that passage is about the collection of offering for Jerusalem, he frames that around greater discussion of mutual respect and grace. They have been blessed in their achievements and understanding of the nature of faith, and should show the same grace that Christ modeled for them, with others.

So much of the time we focus on the grace that is extended to us, that we often fall short in extending that same grace to others. It can be all too easy to make situations of injustice into an “us versus them” situation where we become just as guilty of belittling and questioning the worth of others. Yet we are called to grace and love.

In Matthew 18, Jesus tells us it is our duty to lovingly reprove our brothers and sisters who are led astray. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 8 not to allow ourselves to “puff up” in moral superiority to our sisters and brothers whose beliefs are a little off the mark, but to respond in love to help them find their way to the correct path. That’s not an easy path to walk though, is it?

When we see the commentators and politicians of our culture, even some of the pastors, taking our faith to a darker place, it can be very difficult to extend grace and love when the results are on the screens in front of us day after day. We hear of the lawsuits and trauma, and the violence and death, sadly all too often trans women of color, as well as growing numbers of others at the margins as well. But it’s not just the Laura Ingraham’s, Pat Robertson’s, and Marjorie Taylor Greene’s of the world, it’s the millions who have felt their faith is somehow represented in the ideology that supports these situations. The individuals who themselves feel isolated and forgotten, left behind as the world has moved on, and they see salvation in the false hope the powers of the world present.

What are we doing to help allay their fears, even though we may think they are unfounded? How are we including them in conversation? Unfortunately, change does not happen in a vacuum. We have arrived at this place in time due to circumstances and choices that have left some feeling excluded and left behind. That’s not to say we give up the fight for those who are truly being oppressed.

Our story today reinforces the importance and priority of the “least of these.” But we also bear a responsibility to redeem those sheep who have become lost, to play the role of shepherd as the priesthood of all believers. Matthew 18 makes it clear that is our responsibility. We may not be successful, but to not try is not an option.

As we journey forth today, I hope and pray we pause and take a breath when anger and bitterness rise up towards those whose actions have caused hurt and pain for others. As we exhale that breath, may it be in the form of a prayer for the changing of hearts of those whose actions we oppose. To quote Isaiah, we called to be “repairers of the breach”, repairers of the broken, yet that includes all that is broken, regardless of whether it’s in our comfort zone, or those we feel are “deserving.” May we seek to build up and restore each other instead of tearing each other down. May it be so, Amen.

Call to Service

The freshness of God's mercy and love, the continued generosity of God's gifts to us, call for thanksgiving and generosity on our part. This church stands because of the faithful generosity of those who came before us, and its ministry grows today because of the hopeful, expectant generosity that lives in us. Let us gather our gifts together, then, and offer them to God in gratitude, heartfelt commitment, and praise.

Time of Reflection *The Ash Grove*
(traditional Welsh melody)
played by Annie Center

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Generous God, take our gifts this day and use them so that we may be part of your great work in this world. Through our giving, bring a brighter day of justice and love, not just in our community but in the world beyond these walls.

Strengthen our church and the whole United Church of Christ so that we grow together each day into a powerful voice for healing and peace. **Amen.**

Hymn *For We Are Strangers No More 322*
played by Annie Center

Benediction

Postlude *Make Me a Channel of Your Peace*
(Prayer of St. Francis)