

**September 17, 2006**

Slide Show.

## **Welcome and Announcements**

Flowers.

We will be hold coffee hour downstairs immediately after worship. If you need assistance we have a lift at the Main Street end of the church. If you need assistance one of our ushers will be glad to help you.

The Stock Dinner was last night. Thanks for those who made that possible and thanks to all who came out in support of our mission trip.

Called to Care Luncheon is today. If you can't make lunch, but our interested in participating in any of the Called to Care programs – such Baby Bundles, Meal Chain, Condolence Reception Committee or Parish Visitors please fill out a form during coffee hour. I would also like to say that if you are interested in helping out with the parish visitors – by baking or knitting or making something (anything) – let me know.

If you can pick up someone who is no longer driving on the way to church (or church night) let me know.

Which brings me to my next topic - Church Night will be this Monday. Thanks to Gail Higginbottom the meeting will be accompanied with dinner.

Submissions for the Advent booklet are the end of this month. If you have not turned yours in please do so. I have several slots left for those people who would like to share some of their advent thoughts with us.

Acolyte sign-up will be available as you exit the church to my left. See bulletin for details for the training session and Acolyte lunch which will follow.

We have some guest singers today. During the children's time our VBS kids will perform for us. So greetings and thanks you for contributing to our worship experience. The way in which this will be done – is I will invite the VBS kids up front and then I will ask all of the other church school kids to come forward. After the Fiesta Kids sing, we will sing our second hymn at which time the banner will begin at the back of the church and process forward. All of the children at the front of the church will join the parade as the banner passes by and any children who did not come forward can get in line as the banner passes their pew. I know that is a lot of information – are there any questions??? This will get easier as the year progress.

Our special thanks to a non-member – but friend of the church – Tony Batterson. This week she donated a Connecticut Sun Official Basketball to the church. The plan is to auction it off on e-bay and give the proceeds to Baby Bundles. So our thanks to her. If you want to know more about that you can talk to Mike he is the e-bay King.

Any other announcements??? Jim, Eileen, Ann

That having been said, I would like to invite John and Cody Foley forward to light our candles.

*And as they are doing that I would like to remind you that -  
Whoever you are, and wherever you find yourself on the  
journey of faith, you are welcome to come as you are and  
receive the riches of God's blessings.*

### **Call to Worship**

Our help is in the name of God,  
who made heaven and earth.

Let us worship God by opening our service with

**“Wade in the Water”** found on page **371** of your Chalice Hymnal.

Prayer of Confession: Let us confess our sins before God and one another.

***M: Almighty and merciful God, you created and are creating still.***

P: In your presence our limits lie stark before us. We confess our unclean lips, our cold hearts, our turning away from neighbors, our broken promises, and our unrepentant hours. Forgive us, O Holy One.

***M: We confess that we have squandered the gifts you have given. We have neglected the land. We have grasped for goods. We have used each other. We have loved power more than people. Forgive us, O Holy One.***

P: Cleanse from us the illusion of innocence. Come in to our hearts, and make us new again. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

### **Assurance of Pardon**

In Jesus Christ, God knows and receives us  
As we are.

Friends listen, give thanks and live. (slight pause)

May the peace of the Lord be with you always...

With joy let us greet one another with a sign of the peace.

As every one is settling back into their seats, I would like to invite Peggy King forward for our first scripture reading.

**Amos 5:18-24** - Alas for you who desire the day of the LORD! Why do you want the day of the LORD? It is darkness,

not light; as if someone fled from a lion, and was met by a bear; or went into the house and rested a hand against the wall, and was bitten by a snake. Is not the day of the LORD darkness, not light, and gloom with no brightness in it?

I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

## **Gloria**

## **Offertory**

Let everyone give – not grudgingly or out of necessity – but from the fullness of our gratitude to God. (Pause) The mornings offering will now be received.

## **Song of Presentation**

## **Prayer of Dedication**

Almighty God, we give you thanks for the gift of your Holy Spirit in this hour of worship and in our lives

Accept, we pray, this offering of your people.

Remember in your love *those who have brought it*  
And those for whom it is given;  
and so follow it with your blessing  
that it may promote peace and goodwill among all people  
and advance the realm of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Time with the children** – I would like to invite the VBS kids to come forward and stand up here.

And now I ask that the rest of the children come and join me up here so you have a front row seat for our mini concert.

OK kids let see if you remember what to do. When the hymn begins what do you do. That's right - WAIT for the banner. And walk out how??? Right slowly. Thanks you.

Our second hymn is on page 701 "Shall We Gather at the River"

Our Gospel Lesson comes to us from the book of Mark Chapter 1, verses 1-13. Please listen for the word of God...

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way;  
the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
'Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight,'"

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by

Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

This is the Good News. Thanks be to God.

## **Anthem**

### **Sermon**

### *Wade in the Waters*

Did you know that Mark is the only Gospel that begins with the baptism of Jesus?

In an attempt for ecumenical diplomacy many Christians will say that ultimately Christians believe the same thing – we read from the same book, we baptize individuals into the church, we partake in communion and so on. And yet we, as denominations – like the authors of the gospels. Just look at how we emphasize different things in designing our churches and conducting our worship. Subtle as these differences may be they are *illustrative* things to which we ascribe the most value.

For example:

As you enter liturgically “High Church” (such as a Catholic church) you will first pass by the baptismal font where (if you were Catholic) you would mark yourself with the sign of the cross – and before taking your seat you might kneel as a



symbol of praise and humility. From your pew, you would observe an altar (at the front of the church), a lectern or pulpit (up to its side) and a cross overlooking the altar.

*As a member of a modern Pentecostal church* you would enter a sanctuary *devoid of a communion table or any religious symbols* – and attention would be directed to a single pulpit from which the word of God is proclaimed. Concealed up behind the pulpit or perhaps somewhere down below it, would be an emersion tank for those who like Christ sought to be cleansed by water.

Still, more mainline Protestants (like us) would enter a relatively simple space – rarely adorned with stained glass or other religious symbols. The baptismal fount would be inconspicuously placed to the side - near a front wall. And a plain wooden table and perhaps an empty cross – symbolizing the resurrected Christ – these things being in a secondary position to the pulpit – because in the Protestant church **Word** is central to the worship experience.

So we design our buildings differently, we express ourselves differently and we use different language. And often those differences – particularly the linguist ones – cause a visceral reaction within us.

It is out of the fear of such a visceral response that I did what I did. I tricked all of you. I intentional chose a sermon title that was not offensive. Had I been more honest, I would have called it "Let's talk about sin." But we in the liberal church – and though we might think ourselves a moderate town church – as part of the UCC we are part of a large liberal organization – and we don't like talking about sin. But we should. We say the Lord's Prayer because Jesus did it; we do communion because Jesus did it; we do baptism because Jesus did it – *why not talk about facing temptation because Jesus did it.* You can call it whatever you like - evil, Satan, sin – but ultimately it is whatever separates us from the work of God and at-oneness with God.

The Gospel of Matthew takes the story of Jesus one step further than that of Mark. It says, "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and

'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him."

Yet here we are - **the *Liberal Church*** – *and despite your political views that is what we are - the Liberal Church* doesn't like to talk about Satan *or sin*. Yet how can we not:

When men and women are killing and getting killed for someone else's agenda.

When families are torn apart by betrayal or addiction.

When teens are ostracized for not drinking and not having sex.

When a little girl cowers in her bed - waiting to be visited in the middle of the night by her father.

How can we not talk about sin?

When a dark-skinned child stands at the sink trying to wash off his face so the other kids won't make fun of him.

When those in their golden years see only darkness in a life of solitude.

When battered men and women suffer in silence.

When teens have no one to turn to when they begin to question their sexuality.

How can we not talk about sin?

When we live in relative comfort while others go without basic necessities.

How can we not talk about sin?

Friends, *if we pretend that sin does not exist* or that sin does not separate humankind from God and the work of God – we are deceiving ourselves.

Jesus was baptized – so we are baptized. We would **love** to stay in that water with him – just wading *in water* that refreshes and renews us (slight pause)

But life isn't like that, is it?

*In fact*, once we are out of the water - it is pretty darn tough. Just as Christ was tempted, so are we. I imagine

that once you leave this place today, all of those same will be out there - *just **waiting** - to pull you away from faith-filled lives - and the love of God.*

But when that happens I hope you remember the voice from heaven that said, "This is my Beloved; with you I am well pleased." By your baptism you were brought into this – the body of Christ. Through the waters of baptism we are called to live a Christ-centered life – proclaiming in word and deed that God is the Lord your God.

### **Pastoral Prayer**

Let us pray: O God you are our Faith in Ages Past, our strength in years to come and for that we give you thanks. (slight pause) We thank you too for redeeming us from lives of sin and loneliness. Through Christ Jesus ***we have been raised from the dead*** and resurrected into new life.

Help us, Dear Lord, to live each day to the fullest; leaving behind the pursuit of unbridled power and unjust profit. Forgive us for identities grounded in something other than your love. Help us to be more like Jesus – patient, trusting and open to your guidance and bidding. Help us to be less

about us - and more like Christ – faithful and true. And *guide us* in living as those who are freed and forgiven.

Source of Healing, we pray for the many hurts that we have - some known only by you. For those *in marriage near divorce*, for those of us whose loved ones are sick and those of us who are ill ourselves, for those whose feelings have been deeply wounded by others, for those of us who are financial strapped or seeking employment, for those fighting addiction, for those of us who need to express deep personal hurts, for victims of domestic violence and the horror of war – for all of this and more we quiet our hearts now and seek to draw near to you.

Oh Lord, we ask your special blessing upon...

Touch these lives with your strong and powerful hand – offering them your touch that sustains, renews and recreates. May your love and care give them strength and hope.

God of life, your throne is surrounded by saints who were welcomed by your great love. We give thanks for their lives and witness, and ask that we may faithfully follow their example. And as we wait for the full harvest of your spirit, we humbly ask for your continued love and guidance as we seek to walk in the path of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, who lives and reigns with you forever, Amen.

Our final hymn can be found on page 366 - Water, River,  
Spirit, Grace (Walk down quickly)

### **Benediction**

And now,

Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness;

Be of good courage;

Hold fast to that which is good;

Render to no one evil for evil;

Strengthen the fainthearted;

Support the weak;

help the afflicted;

honor all people;

Love and serve God,

Rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.