

Sunday February 11, 2018 - 10:00 a.m.

*Please stand if you are able

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

We Gather Around God's Word

Bells and Chimes Call To Worship:

Introit: *"Make Me a Servant"* (See PowerPoint)

***Prayer of Invocation:** ☩

L: O Holy One, on mountaintops and valley floors you reveal to us the light of your love. Our hearts desire is to bask in the amazing glory of the divine presence. With each encounter we are changed and transformed.

All: Draw us nearer that we might receive a double portion of your Holy Spirit.

Help us, O Holy One, to live our lives as a reflection of divine glory.

May we walk among our brothers and sister as a blessing, bearing light into dark places, hope to displace despair, and love that casts out hate.

L: Our world is hurting and we need the followers of Jesus to follow more closely. So come Holy Spirit--

All: Open our eyes to witness the fantastic love and wondrous joy waiting to be revealed, this day, even in this place. Amen.

***Hymn of Praise: #182** *"We Have Come at Christ's Own Bidding"*

Prayer of Confession: ☩

L: Forgive us, God,

All: when we linger too long by the waters, and on the mountain tops, enthralled with the glory that flows from you.

L: Forgive us God,

All: when we fail to listen to your voice, leading and guiding us,

shake us from our contentment

and send us forward endowed with your power. Amen.

Assurance of God's Grace ☩

L: The God of Elijah, the God of Moses and the God of Jesus desires mercy more than sacrifice and a contrite heart rather than burnt offerings. The scriptures tell us that God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:17)

Through Christ, our sins – all of them – are forgiven. We are free to rise up to new life in Christ.

Extending God's Peace

L: As we rise up to new life in Christ may the peace of Christ be with you all.

P: *And also with you.*

Special Music: by: Carol Scribner *"Onward Christian Soldiers"*

We Engage God's Word

Scripture Readings: 2 Kings 2:1-12 (Page 311)

2 Corinthians 4:3-6 (Page 992)

Mark 9:2-9 (Page 853)

Youth Moment

Lord's Prayer

Reflection: *"Spiritual Double Dose Granted"*

A few weeks back I shared how a former pastor of mine helped encourage me to not give up on my current ministry task as Youth and Christian Education Director by taking the time to pray first and wait for God to reveal an answer to that prayer. And, as I shared with you that day, God did answer that prayer in a way that let me know in no uncertain terms that God was not yet finished with me in that ministry at that time. This pastor was an important mentor in my faith journey. The way I saw and heard God at work through this minister helped me grow closer to God by leaps and bounds and I was grateful for that mentoring; grateful to him for allowing God to work in and through him and grateful to God for sending this faithful servant in my path.

When he announced to the congregation that he was moving on I was initially devastated. I was at a crucial point in my faith journey as was the church. I couldn't imagine how I or the church would continue to grow in faith without this mentor. As time went on I continued to learn and grow from his life and teachings as much as I could absorb before he left.

Though I didn't want to hear of his leaving, I was not burying my head in the sand either. Though he would be gone soon I would continue to allow God to nurture those seeds of faith through him while the opportunity was there. As I journeyed through the last days of this pastor's ministry I realized that what I really wanted for myself and the church was the energy and spirit that I saw present in that faithful servant so that God and God's revelations would continue to be at work in and through us and helping to be a part of God's transforming grace in this world as we opened ourselves to being vessels of God's will. Through this experience I had an epiphany ---

God had planted some seeds of faith deep down in my heart which had taken root and it wasn't up to that minister to keep them alive and growing; if I let those seeds of faith die it was my own fault. God would continue to be at work in me and nurturing those seeds of faith and helping me to continue to grow in Christ as long as I was open to recognize those whom God would send my way who would continue nurture those seeds of faith as well as opening myself to hear that still small voice of God directly.

God would also continue to reveal to me the mantle I was called to pick up in order that others might know God more fully.

In our Old Testament reading today Elisha was met with the reality that the prophet under whom he was learning and adhering to the message that was being proclaimed would be taken from him. Three times he was told to remain where he was and that Elijah would be taken from him that day and three times he replied I will not stay behind, I am sticking with you to the end so don't keep talking about it.

Elisha wasn't in denial of what was coming, rather I believe Elisha didn't want to miss anytime he had left to be with and continue to learn from and be inspired by his mentor no matter how short that time might be. God had given to Elijah the mission to proclaim throughout Judah that the God of Israel was the one true God and that the worship of Baal was leading them away from God and down a path of destruction. In the face of great opposition Elijah remained true to the mission for which God had set him apart, though not without doubt, detour and frustration, even to the point of wanting to give up and be taken from this earth. Yet, even in that deep despair, Elijah sought God's voice and direction and in that seeking once again heard God's voice and was strengthened and empowered to continue that mission.

Now as the two of them cross the river Jordan Elijah asks Elisha what can I do for you to make this easier? Elisha being the primary heir would have been entitled to a double portion of Elijah's worldly goods, but Elisha doesn't ask for things, he asks for a double portion of the spirit that is in Elijah. Elisha truly believed in Elijah's mission and wanted the work of pointing to God to continue, yet in the face of great opposition knew that he would not be able to continue to carry out that mission without that divine power planted within him. Elijah knew that that spirit was not his to give, it was God's and it was up to Elisha to seek it so he told him if he witnessed his being taken from him he would receive what he asked. Though Elisha experienced great despair at the loss of his mentor as indicated by his tearing of his clothes, none the less he picks up Elijah's mantle and continues on with God's mission. The work of pointing others to God that had begun in Elijah would continue through Elisha, not on his own power but through the empowerment of God.

All throughout history God has used and empowered people to reveal God's plan and to carry out God's purposes in this world. When freeing the slaves from Egypt and leading them into the Promise Land, the work that was begun in Moses was continued on through Joshua. The work begun in Jesus was continued on through the apostles, and the work begun in them has continued through the church still to this very day. Rodney Hunter describes that mission in this manner "Jesus' mission was not to make a big deal of himself or to elevate his followers to positions of power, authority, and prestige through identification with him. It was rather to point through and beyond himself to God and God's coming reign on earth, and invites his followers to find their voice in bearing witness to this transforming, redemptive God." Paul's second letter to the Corinthian churches reminds them "⁵ For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness,"¹ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

Are we as individuals and the church continuing that mission? What is it that we seek? What is it that we preach in not only word, but in our deeds? Are we faithful in

pointing to God? Is it evident to others or do our lives say otherwise? Reader's digest had an anecdote many years ago about a driver who was pulled over by a cop. The cop asked for the driver's license and registration. When the driver asked what violation had been committed, upon the officer's verification that the driver was the owner of the car the officer responded nothing. You have a Christian bumper sticker on your car but the way you were cussing up a blue streak at the other drivers I thought for sure the car must be stolen. Are we continuing to pick up the mantle that has been passed down to us? Do we give up or run the other direction when things get tough and discouraging or do we like Elisha, Paul, and the many others who have gone before us, though experiencing great anguish, continue to pick up the mantle that has been passed down to us and participate in God's redeeming work in this world? Are we willing to ask for a double portion of God's spirit to guide and strengthen us for this mission?

In the Gospel of Luke Jesus says,

⁹ "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

¹¹ "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

God of all creation, grant us a double portion of your spirit that we might be transformed, even transfigured to allow your light to guide and shine forth from us in all we say and do in Jesus name we pray. Amen.

We Respond to God's Word

Hymn of Response: #237 "In the Garden"

Sharing Joys, Concerns, and Prayers for the World

Offering Invitation/Offertory/

***Epiphany Doxology:**

Praise God the source of life and breath;

Praise Christ, now born to conquer death;

Praise Holy Spirit's mystery: One God, pure grace, who sets us free. Amen.

***Prayer of Dedication:** 🙏 (In Unison)

With these gifts we proclaim not ourselves but Jesus and commit ourselves to follow a way that leads to love and life. May our sacrifice be witness to our love for each other and the God who loves us all. Amen

We Are Sent Into the World

Sending Hymn: #286 "Spirit of Gentleness"

*** Benediction and Response:**

GO NOW IN PEACE

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