



62A PENTECOST 21A LITURGY

So deeply do we care

Abstract

Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, & so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.

1 Thessalonians 2.7-8

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62A Pentecost 21A Liturgy

So deeply do we care

Sunday, October 25, 2020 | After Pentecost | Proper 25 | Year A

Old Testament & Psalm, Option I

Old Testament Deuteronomy 34:1–12

Psalm Psalm 90:1–6, 13–17

or

Old Testament & Psalm, Option II

Old Testament Leviticus 19:1–2, 15–18

Psalm Psalm 1

New Testament 1 Thessalonians 2:1–8

Gospel Matthew 22:34–46¹

1 Thessalonians 2.1-8

Paul recalls the confidence in God required to preach in the challenging circumstances facing them in Thessalonica. They focused not on their own needs but on God's good news, and their authority as apostles was expressed not in self-promoting demands but in self-giving tender care.

This week's resources explore: having the strength to be gentle.

	<p>Pre-Service</p> <p>Be God's Rose</p>
	<p>Greeting</p> <p>May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ The Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all</p> <p>and also with us</p>
	<p>We Gather</p> <p>Come. Love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind.</p> <p>Let us Pray Let us thank God for each other as we share in worship, as we come to pray and praise. Let us thank God for the witness of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit</p>

	<p>to inspire and move us. Amen.</p>
	<p>Hymn/song They'll know we are Christians by our love Scholtes</p>
	<p>Welcome</p> <p>Let us Pray We bring ourselves to a moment of quiet, to a place of peace, to a place of safety and welcome.</p> <p>We bring ourselves to cast off the cares of the world and for a time to reflect on you, Lord God, that our batteries may be recharged, our direction be refocused and our energy renewed; that we may let go of things that hamper us and be free to care gently for those we share time with.</p> <p>O God, we pray, renew us that we may renew others. Amen.</p>
	<p>Readings <i>1 Thessalonians 2:1–8</i></p> <p>2 You know, brothers and sisters, that our visit to you was not without results. ²We had previously suffered and been treated outrageously in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in the face of strong opposition. ³For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. ⁴On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts. ⁵You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness. ⁶We were not looking for praise from people, not from you or anyone else, even though as apostles of Christ we could have asserted our authority. ⁷Instead, we were like young children among you.</p> <p>Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, ⁸so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.</p> <p><i>respond</i> For the word of the Lord Thanks be to God</p>
	<p>Hymn/song Community of Christ</p>

We say Sorry

Holy Spirit of God,
 may our confessions and grief for what we have done wrong,
 or what we have left undone,
 be taken from us.

May our burdens be lifted
 and our inner souls released to share afresh
 the love we have known in you.

Holy Spirit of God,
 forgive us and assure us that our sins are forgiven,
 that our lives are renewed,
 that we are loved, cherished and cared for.
 Amen.

Hymn/Song

We will take what we offer Bell

Response

So deeply do we care
 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16

We have been in a version of lockdown here in Victoria since before Palm Sunday.

We live in fear of an invisible opponent

In fear of the pain those around us may be living through.

In a search for normality

We watch our football teams, our car racers, our artistic idols

Instil a sense of normality, a sense of normality in a world that is not.

But deep in our consciousness has been the knowledge that

Despite the fear, despite the risk

The angels in our lives have been in the frontline workers

that have kept our community safe.

These have been the victorious angels of our lives.

THIS IS ULTIMATELY THE STORY OF HUMANITY ON THIS EARTH?

Even though things can look dark and dismal in this world,

ultimately God will prevail--good will triumph over evil,

love will triumph over hate,

light will overcome darkness.

When the final chapter of humanity's life on earth is told,

it will be a victory for the angels.

This is the basic assumption underlying Paul's words to the Thessalonians.

Paul writes: "And we also thank God continually because,

when you received the word of God, which you heard from us,

you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is,

the word of God, which is at work in you who believe." (NIV)

THE WORD OF GOD IS AT WORK IN THE WORLD.

The scriptures are full of references to the power of the word of God.

Consider the two references in Genesis 1, and John 1, chapter one.

In Genesis, one, God spoke and the world was created.

In John, one, the writer says that the word of God has come into the world.

"The word became flesh and dwelt among us."
 And it is clear that the word is Jesus,
 Just as importantly, we have that same word available to us through the Holy Spirit.
 The word of God is at work in the world.

Now it should be noted that this is a sorry world at times.
 The spectre of war and terrorism continues to hang heavily upon us.
 This past week Armenia and Azerbaijan accuse each other of violating the Nagorno-Karabakh truce
 With devastating consequences for the population.
 Nine people were arrested in France over beheading of teacher
 denounced locally as a terrorist attack.
 These are tragedies for all sides.

And in Amman, Jordan, the U. S. ambassador was gunned down as our relations with the Muslim world continue to deteriorate.

But this is a sorry world if you think this is the worst possible time in human history.
 When Paul was writing to the Thessalonians,
 it was a much more difficult time than our own.
 The life-span of the average person was somewhere in the late thirties.
 The poor lived in grinding poverty--a poverty that we cannot even imagine today.

Governments were oppressive. Human slavery was endemic.
 Subsequent generations did not live much better.
 Actually, if you and I were given the choice of living at some other time in history
 we would probably choose our present circumstances.
 In spite of the sometimes-awful things that go on in this world,
 there are many ways in which this is the best time ever to live.
 Why? Because the word of God is at work in the world.
 It's amazing how we as Christians have difficulty accepting that,
 but God is truly at work in the world.

The scriptures are adamant on this one point:
 history is moving toward this one goal:
 God's victory over sin and death and pain and oppression.
 God is at work in the world.

NOW, HOW IS GOD WORKING?
 One way God works is through people of faith.
 I say "one way" because we cannot limit God.
 The scriptures tell us that God can even use God's enemies to affect God's plan.

God can take agnostic frontline workers and bring an end to suffering of our pandemic situation. God can take atheistic technicians and create wonders of communication,
 To allow this service to reach around our community.
 We limit God if we contend that God can only work through believers.
 Sometimes God has to work IN SPITE of believers.
 Still, the most potent way God works is through the community of faith
 which the scripture describes as the body of Christ.
 Followers of Christ have made many mistakes over the generations.

Sometimes we have been used by persons with evil intentions.
And we have often been blinded by such forces as racism, nationalism, sexism
and many other "isms" that bring out the worst in people.

But, on the whole,
the world has been made a much more civilized place,
because there once lived a man named Jesus.

It's like the old story of a professor who visited the Fiji Islands.

He critically remarked to an elderly chief,
"You're a great leader, but it's a pity you've been taken in by foreign
missionaries.

The old chief's eyes flashed as he answered,
"See that great rock over there? On it we smashed the heads of our victims.
Notice the furnace next to it? In that oven we formerly roasted our enemies.
If it hadn't been for those good missionaries and the love of Jesus that
changed us,

you'd never leave this place alive!

You'd better thank the Lord for the Gospel; otherwise,
if it weren't for the Bible, you'd now be our supper!"ⁱⁱ

The word of God is at work in the world,
and one way it is working is through Christ's church.

We are Christ's change agents.

It is we who are entrusted with the good news of unconditional love,
never ending grace and ultimate peace.

It is we who are to show Christ's love to our neighbours in such a powerful way
that the kingdoms of this world are brought closer to the kingdom of our God.

And so we keep contact with neighbours in a pandemic and keep the wheels of our church
turning,

not out of pride,

but out of the assurance that we are involved in something greater than
ourselves.

God is at work in the world

and one of the chief ways God is at work is through Christ's body.

AND THAT MEANS, OF COURSE, THAT THERE IS SOMETHING FOR EVERY ONE OF US TO DO.

I don't have to convince you that God is at work in the world,

and I don't even have to convince you that God is at work in the church,

but what many followers of Christ do not seem to get

is the natural implication of both these truths:

This means that each of us is to have a ministry in the world.

Let me put it this way: How is God at work through you?

If the ultimate victory of God in this world depended on your service,
would your contribution make the difference?

The question is not as intimidating as it sounds.

There are many ways the scales may be tipped.

We are part of the victory of God when we are the best parents we can be.

When our children see the quality of our lives

and the intensity of our faith and commitment,

<p>then they carry on the word and the work of God in their lives.</p> <p>When our neighbours see us serving Christ and hear how naturally we talk about our faith, then we are part of the victory of God.</p> <p>When we contribute to the service of Christ in this church through our gifts of money and our time, then we are part of the victory of God.</p> <p>The critical point is that each of us has many ways in which we can be a part of God's victory. The only person who is left out is the person who does nothing, stands for nothing, is nothing.</p> <p>That's what you and I can do as we contemplate the direction God is taking our world we can taste the ending.</p> <p>Pain and suffering will be no more, war and hatred will be no more, and the humble carpenter of Nazareth will bring his kingdom of love and compassion to rule over all the world.</p> <p>Can't you see it? Can't you taste it? A final victory for the angels.</p>
<p>Prayers for all people <i>Find pictures, images, words that show vulnerable people and those who are gentle. Which are harder to find, and which resonate with us the most?</i></p> <p>Lord God, we pray for those who have brought us to faith, who have shown us your love, who have tended to our needs, physical, emotional and spiritual.</p> <p>We pray for those who have put themselves in harm's way for us and others. We pray for those whose lives have been made harder because they have sought to serve you and help their fellow human beings. We pray for those whose selfless acts have caused them distress. We pray for those who have at any cost shared the gospel of Christ. We pray for those imprisoned and tortured for their faith and witness. May they be blessed in abundance with your love and care. Amen.</p>
<p>Hymn/song</p> <p>TIS 607/SOF 381 Make me a channel of your peace Temple</p>
<p>Invitation</p> <p>Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled. (Matthew 5: 6)ⁱⁱⁱ</p>
<p>Great Prayer of Thanksgiving The Lord be with you. And also with you.</p>

Lift up your hearts.
 We lift them to the Lord.
 Let us give thanks to God.
 It is right to give God our thanks and praise.

It is right that we give you our thanks and praise, O God,
 creator of heaven and earth.
 You brought our world into being
 and formed male and female in your image,
 breathing into them the breath of life.
 You blessed them with descendants as numerous as the stars.

When they became slaves in Egypt,
 you rescued them and led them to a land of promise,
 where you challenged them to serve you alone.

When they failed to keep their covenant promises
 you spoke through the prophets
 and the call to serve you alone in word and deed
 resounded again throughout the land.

When their words went unheeded,
 you broke into our history in the person of Jesus Christ
 who showed that serving you meant serving others
 with love, humility, and compassion.

Through his death and resurrection
 we have been empowered
 to serve as he served
 and to love as he loved.

And so, with all the company of heaven and earth we praise
 your holy name saying:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
 heaven and earth are full of your glory.
 Hosanna in the highest.
 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
 Hosanna in the highest.

Holy are you O God, and blessed is your Son, Jesus Christ
 who revealed the true meaning of servanthood,
 when he washed his disciples' feet
 before sitting down at a table to share the meal with them.

On that night - the night of his betrayal - he took a loaf of bread,
 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said,
 "This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying,
 "This is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for everyone.
 Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."
 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup,
 you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

	<p>Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us, O God, and upon these gifts of bread and wine, that they may be for us the life of Christ and that we may make that life visible through the way we live expectantly, ready and prepared to love and serve you and one another. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen</p>
	<p>Lord's Prayer Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. AMEN^{iv}</p>
	<p>Bread-breaking prayer The bread we break and the cup we now take are a sharing in the life of Christ. The gifts of God for the people of God.</p>
	<p>Lamb of God Lamb of God, you find us in our blindness Lift us up. Lamb of God, you lead us to your fold. Hold us close. Lamb of God, you conquer all injustice. We cry for peace.</p>
	<p>Distribution Receive this holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, and feed on him in your hearts by faith with thanksgiving.</p> <p><i>Words such as the following are said before or during the distribution.</i> The body of Christ, given for you. Amen.</p> <p>The blood of Christ, given for you. Amen.</p>
	<p>PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION Gracious God, we give you thanks for satisfying our hungry hearts with this holy meal shared in the Spirit with Jesus, your Son, our Lord.</p>

<p>Strengthened and refreshed, we go from here prepared to continue his work in the world through our faithful witness and loving service. This we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen</p>
<p>Hymn/song Jesus put this song into our hearts Kendrick</p>
<p>We are sent out</p> <p>From the security of this place, with friends and family and our faith community, be with us, eternal God, as we step into the world of ‘mixed-up all-sorts’.</p> <p>May we be kind and caring to all people, no matter how they treat us. May we be true to ourselves and hold our heads high, sharing your love and your care with all those we encounter. Amen.</p> <p>May the Lord bless us and keep us May His face shine upon us and be gracious to us May he lift up His countenance upon us and give us peace</p>
<p>Benediction</p>
<p>Thank you</p>

ⁱ Revised Common Lectionary. (2009). Bellingham, WA: Faithlife.

ⁱⁱ Biblical Illustrator.

ⁱⁱⁱ Moira Laidlaw

^{iv} English Language Liturgical Consultation, 1988