

Sunday 14th June 2020

Call to worship

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray:

Gracious God, we come together in your name. As we open our hearts to you, we are ready to be reformed to the people you have created us to be. Help us to understand your word today. Enter our hearts and souls so that we may see the shining light of your grace and turn to you. Only in you, with you and through you we can find true and meaningful life and the joy to live it. So, Lord, we pray, come to us as light, and scatter the darkness that we hold in our hearts. Amen

Confession

Merciful God, you made us in your image, with a mind to know you, a heart to love you and a will to serve you. But our knowledge is imperfect, our love is inconstant and our obedience is incomplete. Day by day we fail to grow in your likeness; yet you are slow to be angry with your children. For the sake of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Saviour, do not hold our sins against us, but in your tender love, forgive us.

(Silence)

Assurance of Pardon

The almighty and merciful Lord grant you pardon and remission of all your sins.

God of love, your Son gave us a new commandment, that we should love one another, even as you love us, the unworthy and the wandering. Give us a mind to forget the wrongs we suffered and a heart to love one another; through the same Jesus Christ, your Son, our Saviour.

Amen

The Lord's prayer

At the Saviour's command and formed by His divine teaching we pray together:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be 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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen

New Testament Reading:

The Gospel of Matthew 5:10-16

¹⁰ 'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ 'Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

¹³ 'You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled underfoot.

¹⁴ 'You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

Reflection

Blessed are you indeed when Jesus calls you to be His disciple. You have been chosen for a special way of life, an alternative way that goes against the proud claims of the world we live in.

In the beatitudes, Jesus addressed all the crowds that came to listen to Him. But in this final part of it, Jesus is turning to his disciples to make a specific statement for those who chose to follow Him closely. The discipleship community is an alternative

society running parallel to the one appearing to us every day. The discipleship community is the city on the hill that becomes visible because of their way of life which is so different from the sinful, arrogant and boastful ways of the broken world. Western individualism makes us think that the light of the world here is made of us making many little lights in our individual spaces, but Jesus means it as a collective light from the whole community of Christ which draws the attention of the watching world.

Our individual effort is poured into the effort of the whole Church that becomes a force that can change lives, can mend relationships, can heal the broken hearts. But we cannot sit and watch what others do. In Judaism, Jesus' words would be seen as a call to act, to do what we are able to do in order to make the world a better place. It's a call to be and act for God's glory because we have been set apart for this task. When we as Christians fail to live as the light for those in darkness, the world suffers, we actually contribute to the suffering of the world because we have been given the power to stop the suffering but fail to use that power. But when we bring the love, the mercy, the generosity of Christ in the world, people will see our good deeds and glorify our God. Although we live in a dark evil world, we should always think of what actions we can take to serve the Kingdom of God and its coming into this world.

So, Jesus is making two very important points that I would like you to take with you today. The first one is, as we have just seen, that we are called to let our faith shine like a light and give strength to the light of the Church as a whole. Actions speak louder than words, but actions on their own do not give glory to God. Both word and action are needed to make our faith shine and for people to see that we do this in the name of Jesus Christ because we believe in His love for us and for all.

But such a bright light of faith will attract the attention of both the good and the bad. And the second point that I would like you to bring home with you is this: as your faith becomes visible and your love tangible, some people will utter all kinds of evil against you falsely. All those saints of the past that brought love were persecuted, reviled and slandered. Someone tried to poison Saint Benedict because of his devotion to Christ and his discipline in work and pray. Mother Teresa was slandered because she helped the poor in Calcutta. And if you dig deeper, you will find so many Christians that suffered persecution and slander for their faith and their actions driven by their faith in Christ our Lord.

So, here Jesus Christ says to us: Rejoice, you are blessed. The world may hate you but my people will love you; I love you and you are precious in my eyes. Therefore, stay with me, (would say Jesus) I will be your joy and your life. Amen

Hymn: [I, the Lord of sea and sky](#) (Click on the words underlined to access this online version of the hymn)

Prayers of Intercession

Let us pray:

Dear Jesus, help us to spread your fragrance everywhere we go. Flood our souls with your life-giving Spirit. Take over our whole lives so that others can only see the radiance of your love. Be in us so that every time we come into contact with someone, they may feel your presence in their lives. Stay with us so that we may shine with your light. Help us to preach with words, for those who need words; and by example for those who need practical action in their lives.

Lord, we pray, give us strength to keep on walking the way with you so that by being true to You, we are able drive away the darkness from the souls of those who are lost, desperate, in pain and sorrow. Help us, Lord, to bring them grace and love in your name.

Amen

Benediction:

The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with you always. Amen

Rev. Bruno Boldrini