Worship Service for Easter Sunday

April 19, 2020

Glendive and Wibaux UMC

Welcome again to worship with Glendive United Methodist Church. I am Pastor Carol Rhan. I read that this Sunday is often called Low Sunday, the Sunday after Easter. No one knows exactly why. Could be because attendance goes way back down after Easter. Could be folks are feeling low after the great revelation of Christ’s resurrection, and, asking what that means for them. Could be just a time for us to take a break.

The Bishop and Cabinet of the Mountain Sky Annual Conference intended this past week to be some downtime for the nearly 300 pastors in the conference. And yes, I took some time off. They prepared videos for us to use during worship today. Best laid plans. Friday I was reminded that we don’t live in a one size fits all world. Not in technology, economics, faith or health, you name it. I couldn’t make the technology work for me and this Facebook Live context.

We’re in similar boats regarding the pandemic. We’re facing similar challenges in our communities. And twelve videos produced through Denver from across four states looked familiar, but I couldn’t figure out. Communities will not get well at the same time and economies won’t recover in the same ways. So here I am, back with you. You can watch all the videos on the conference website, just IM me for instructions.

Let us begin our Low Sunday worship with a prayer.

Eternal One, may we feel your presence and sanctuary in our daily living like a well-worn but comfortable sweater we put on when we need to feel safe and loved. And may the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to you, this day and always. Amen

**Acts 2:14a, 22-32** This is Peter’s Sermon

That’s when Peter stood up and, backed by the other eleven, spoke out with bold urgency: “Fellow Jews, all of you who are visiting Jerusalem, listen carefully and get this story straight.

“Fellow Israelites, listen carefully to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man thoroughly accredited by God to you—the miracles and wonders and signs that God did through him are common knowledge—this Jesus, following the deliberate and well-thought-out plan of God, was betrayed by men who took the law into their own hands, and was handed over to you. And you pinned him to a cross and killed him. But God untied the death ropes and raised him up. Death was no match for him. David said it all:

“*I saw God before me for all time.  
    Nothing can shake me; he’s right by my side.  
I’m glad from the inside out, ecstatic;  
    I’ve pitched my tent in the land of hope.  
I know you’ll never dump me in Hades;  
    I’ll never even smell the stench of death.  
You’ve got my feet on the life-path*,”

“Dear friends, let me be completely frank with you. Our ancestor David is dead and buried—his tomb is in plain sight today. But being also a prophet and knowing that God had solemnly sworn that a descendant of his would rule his kingdom, seeing far ahead, he talked of the resurrection of the Messiah—‘no trip to Hades, no stench of death.’ This Jesus, God raised up. And every one of us here is a witness to it.”

**Psalm 16** The Hope of the Faithful

**1-2**Keep me safe, O God, I’ve run for dear life to you.  
I say to God, “Be my Lord!” Without you, nothing makes sense.

**3**And these God-chosen lives all around—what splendid friends they make!

**4**Don’t just go shopping for a god. Gods are not for sale.  
I swear I’ll never treat god-names like brand-names.

**5-6**My choice is you, God, first and only. And now I find I’m *your* choice!  
You set me up with a house and yard. And then you made me your heir!

**7-8**The wise counsel God gives when I’m awake is confirmed by my sleeping heart.  
Day and night I’ll stick with God; I’ve got a good thing going and I’m not letting go.

**9-10**I’m happy from the inside out, and from the outside in, I’m firmly formed.  
You canceled my ticket to hell—that’s not my destination!

**11**Now you’ve got my feet on the life path, all radiant from the shining of your face.  
Ever since you took my hand, I’m on the right way.

**1 Peter 1:3-9** A New Life

What a God we have! And how fortunate we are to have him, this Father of our Master Jesus! Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we’ve been given a brand-new life and have everything to live for, including a future in heaven—and the future starts now! God is keeping careful watch over us and the future. The Day is coming when you’ll have it all—life healed and whole.

**6-7**I know how great this makes you feel, even though you have to put up with every kind of aggravation in the meantime. Pure gold put in the fire comes out of it *proved* pure; genuine faith put through this suffering comes out *proved* genuine. When Jesus wraps this all up, it’s your faith, not your gold, that God will have on display as evidence of his victory.

**8-9**You never saw him, yet you love him. You still don’t see him, yet you trust him—with laughter and singing. Because you kept on believing, you’ll get what you’re looking forward to: total salvation.

**John 20:19-31** The Commissioning of the Apostles

Later on that day, the disciples had gathered together, but, fearful of the Jews, had locked all the doors in the house. Jesus entered, stood among them, and said, “Peace to you.” Then he showed them his hands and side.

**20-21**The disciples, seeing the Master with their own eyes, were exuberant. Jesus repeated his greeting: “Peace to you. Just as the Father sent me, I send you.”

**22-23**Then he took a deep breath and breathed into them. “Receive the Holy Spirit,” he said. “If you forgive someone’s sins, they’re gone for good. If you don’t forgive sins, what are you going to do with them?”

**24-25**But Thomas, sometimes called the Twin, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples told him, “We saw the Master.”

But he said, “Unless I see the nail holes in his hands, put my finger in the nail holes, and stick my hand in his side, I won’t believe it.”

**26**Eight days later, his disciples were again in the room. This time Thomas was with them. Jesus came through the locked doors, stood among them, and said, “Peace to you.”

**27**Then he focused his attention on Thomas. “Take your finger and examine my hands. Take your hand and stick it in my side. Don’t be unbelieving. Believe.”

**28**Thomas said, “My Master! My God!”

**29**Jesus said, “So, you believe because you’ve seen with your own eyes. Even better blessings are in store for those who believe without seeing.”

**30-31**Jesus provided far more God-revealing signs than are written down in this book. These are written down so you will believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and in the act of believing, have real and eternal life in the way he personally revealed it.

**Doxology** Glory be to the father

**Message**

We’ve all been setting aside best plans. It’s a tough time for people throughout God’s kingdom on earth. Just the anticipation of something bad happening can bring lives to a standstill. I had planned to sit and listen to other Methodists bring the Word this morning. And while I can figure out how to update my personal avatar and search for emoji and funny videos for emails, but I just wasn’t ready to tackle new technology. I think we can all sympathize and with and praise our teachers who are moving into a new thing. This is a fact of life for us today and was for Peter and the disciples long ago.

As much as they had been prepared to live and walk and learn from Jesus, they weren’t ready for his death and certainly not for his Resurrection. We must look at our lives, our faith lives too, through new lenses as we move into the future. What would knowing ibn February what you know now, have changed the way you acted even a month ago? If Peter and doubting Thomas knew ahead of time what was to come, could they and more importantly, would they, have prepared for it or acted differently?

I’ve heard there are many doomsday preppers in the world who spend lots of money on, by some estimates $7 billion globally (<https://thehustle.co/coronavirus-prepping-doomsday-business/> 04172020), preparing for some cataclysmic event. Lots of money, time and energy is devoted to this endeavor and by the businesses that cater to this group. But even those businesses weren’t prepared for the surge in a pandemic. And gun sales have sadly gone through the roof. People prepare for worst-case scenarios. People fear the unknown and try to outrun what they fear. I’m not saying we shouldn’t take reasonable steps to prepare. Why else buy insurance, try to have a savings account or even have children.

But if we knew what lay ahead, would we do the same things? If we knew how a pandemic of this magnitude would affect our lives, would we have better funded mental health and school budgets to help people? Would we have made medical insurance available for everyone and budgeted for each student to have a home computer and internet? Would we have already increased minimum wages in this country?

But here is the Christian question. If you knew Jesus would walk right in tomorrow, breathe on you, and give you peace, what would you change today? When we are physical social distancing, we shouldn’t be social distancing from God’s call on our hearts.. What you need to do, or I need to do, is different. But there is only one thing we all are equally commanded, whatever our circumstances: love God with all your heart and mind and soul and love your neighbor as yourself. How that works in your life or your partner’s or your kid’s or neighbors will be different. We do not all in the same boat. But Jesus, Jesus is the same for all of us, yesterday, today, and tomorrow. We all fit equally in God’s kingdom. That, we can count on. That, we can plan for.

When you begin to worry, doubt, fear the future, close and lock your doors like the disciples did, bear in mind and in your heart that you don’t have to act and react the way everyone else is doing. You can rise above it. You can and should plan reasonably, although I still working on my plan for seeing Christ walk in on us right now. But if you live as if the possibility of Christ’s return is imminent, like early churches did, you will be transformed. Truthfully, I don’t recommend preparing for His return with guns and hoarding, you above all others, your kin over others, but in a Christian way, the right life path. And when you feel fear and doubt arising, do as Jesus did. Take a deep breath and breath out. The do it again and again. Allow the Holy Spirit to wash over you and give you peace. This is my prayer

Amen and Selah

Listeners, it would be great to have church activities going on for announcements, mention birthdays and anniversaries and end of school year achievements. But as it is, they aren’t happening. So be sure to call and wish someone a good day. Reach out and have your children reach out to their friends. We appreciate those of you who continue to send in your tithes and offering and the great support for the United Methodist Committee on Relief this year. As a pastor, I have heard many joys and some sad news throughout the week. I ask you to hold unspoken concerns in your prayers.

As you venture into the world this week, I ask you to give right-of-way to people who need more space, physically and emotionally. Right- of-way on a sidewalk, in the grocery aisle. Give right-of-way to the scarce things for folks who must rely on WIC, food stamps or have lost their jobs and this is not the time to judge others on their food choices. Give right-of-way to elderly who shop early in the day. Right-of-way on the roads and in outdoor spaces. It’s the right life path.

Please join me in the Lord’s Prayer.

**If you have the United Methodist Hymnal or online, let’s join in How Firm a Foundation, # 529.**

I will send you out with this quote from a colleague attributed to Etienne de Grellet, a Quaker Missionary

“I shall pass this way but once; any good that I can do or any kindness I can show to any human being; let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.”

Go in peace.