



GPS GUIDE: FEBRUARY 6, 2022

Grow. Pray. Study

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany

Sermon: People of the Table

Mark 14:22-26

While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Luke 22: 14-20

When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

Monday: Read John 6:45-60

This teaching is HARD. Who can accept it? It is hard to accept that our enemies receive the same forgiveness and grace and redemption as we do, but sometimes it's even harder to accept not just that God welcomes all, but that God welcomes ALL of me and ALL of you. Even that within us which we wish to hide: the parts that make us ashamed, the parts that are unhealthy, the parts that feel unlovable, the parts that are vindictive, the parts that can't get it right. ALL the parts of us we wish Jesus had the good sense to not welcome are invited to the table. ALL of who we are is welcomed to see that the gifts of God are free and for ALL. We

bring the most broken pieces of our life. We bring the most broken pieces of this world. We bring the most broken pieces of ourselves. And we receive, with no payment or worthiness on our part, the equally broken body of Jesus Christ. What teachings of Jesus do you find particularly hard? In what ways have you experienced God welcoming “all of you” to the table? How might you extend that welcome to others?

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the grace offered at your holy table. Amen.

Tuesday: Read Psalm 87

This is a Psalm written for the people to sing in celebration of Jerusalem, an outflow of the joy of being in God’s chosen city. It is a commemoration of Zion, as the city is often called in these types of hymns, the location of The Holy Temple, the place in which the presence of God resided in a special way. In verse 4, Rahab is the poetic name for Egypt, where the Israelites were once slaves. Babylon was the empire that once held the Israelites in exile. This a list of Israel’s enemies, and a longing for the day they could be registered among God’s people in Jerusalem. Zion is being declared beautiful because of the way it could one day welcome all people into God’s family. Zion was meant to be a place of reconciliation and love and inclusion and joy, not a different story from that of Christ, but a prequel. The same love, manifested in a different way. Just as these desert people would celebrate the discovery of a spring, the people are jubilant at the thought of how Jerusalem could be an oasis of refreshment for all. This world was, and is, parched in search of a love that pushes beyond barriers. That is the love of our God. How is our church a place of reconciliation and love and inclusion today? In what ways can we be an oasis for those who are dry and parched?

Prayer: Faithful One, you call us to be a “city of God” help us to become a refuge for all. Amen.

Wednesday: Read Genesis 14:17-20

So, here’s the scene: After Abram’s stunning and miraculous victory over the armies of four kings. After successfully rescuing his nephew Lot from these four armies, he’s met in the Valley of Shaveh by the king of Sodom and also Melchizedek the king of Salem and priest of God Most High. Melchizedek brings forth bread and wine and they share a sacred meal. Though Abraham probably had no idea of the significance that no bread and wine would have first in the Passover and then in the Lord’s Supper, there was something about this mysterious priest-king, Melchizedek, that compelled Abraham to partake of the elements offered and receive the blessing given. A meal of peace and fellowship bringing together people of different traditions as a celebration of hospitality of

community and of reconciliation. When and how have you experienced a meal as a practice of reconciliation and peace?

Prayer: God of the Ages, reconcile us to one another and to you through your holy table. Amen.

Thursday: Read Matthew 21:23-32

When Jesus upturns the tables and chairs, it’s like he is also single-handedly changing the seating chart in the temple. Which is to say, the velvet ropes fell to the ground, the doormen were dismissed, and all were welcomed. In came the lame and the lost, the lonely, the last and the least. Jesus gathered to himself all who were unwelcomed, all who had been dominated and kept out, and said this is for you, too. And what was true then is still true today. Jesus still calls the tax collectors and prostitutes and housewives and social workers and Pharisees into the very heart of God. What barriers might exist between you and others? What barriers do we place in worship, service, study, and fellowship, that might exclude? How can we as a community of faith invite all to experience the heart of God?

Prayer: Loving God, help us to remove all barriers between us. Amen.

Friday: Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-32

Meals tell stories of origins and hopes, of identity and sacrifice, of sorrow and joy. We have all kinds of accounts of family meals passed on to us—all amazing gifts of God—laced throughout the Biblical witness. We recall Abraham and Sarah preparing and serving a calf when three strangers came to visit, and the manna provided in the wilderness for God’s people on their way to the Promised Land. We remember the story of the Prodigal Son and how he was welcomed home with a feast. We recall Jesus feeding thousands with a few fish and loaves of bread and, of course, his sharing the Passover Meal with his disciples mere hours before his betrayal and suffering and dying. It is, of course, this meal we remember as we share it each week. The Lord’s Supper. The Eucharist. Holy Communion. We share together these bits of bread and sips of juice which speak to us of our origin and hope, of identity and sacrifice. Our sorrow and utter joy. We share this meal which carries with it the message, “I love you and you’re special to me” as we offer again the very gifts of God with the words, “The body of Christ given for you. The blood of Christ shed for you.” What are your stories of “meals” and how do they tell the story of your life? What are your traditions or habits for preparing to receive communion? In what ways does this holy meal help you connect to the community in which you worship?

Prayer: God of Grace, we give thanks for this meal which forms and shapes us as disciples. Amen.

Saturday: Read Colossians 3:1-11

The letter to the Colossians is written to a community of young Christians discovering their faith. They are trying to “figure it out.” Paul writes this letter to lead these young Christians to a deeper, truer understanding of what it means to be Christian. That is, the Gospel is not essentially about being spiritual but being like Christ, living lives that come from him, exist in him, and move toward him. Paul’s language: “You used to live in these ways, but now...” calls us to a radical change in our relations with God and with others. They are no longer simply obstacles to our self-service, enemies, or objects. They are in Christ as we are in Christ. Jesus remakes how we see others as he remakes us. How are you being remade in Christ? How do you live out this new life in relationship with others?

Prayer: Transform my living in the image of you, God. Amen.