



Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

October 3, 2021

*Call to Worship

Adapted from Psalm 103

Come! Come praise the eternal God!

Let all that is within us—

body, emotions, mind, and will—

praise God's holy name!

Despite our failures, He forgives and releases us.

More than any doctor, He heals our diseases.

When we are famished and weak,

He fills us with good and beautiful things.

He satisfies our needs and restores our strength.

So come! Come, praise the eternal God!

Sing songs from a grateful heart,

and remember all that He has done for us.

*Hymn of Praise

"Come Thou Almighty King"

UMH 61

*Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, we rejoice that we can come into Your house today and to Your table and worship You with those who love You, too. We pray that all who worship here might experience Your love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness. May everyone who trusts in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior find and experience peace with God, others, and themselves. Amen.

Share How You Can Present Your Offering to God

Make your offering personal...through a donation or an act of service...bring to God an offering of praise and gratitude!

Sing the Doxology Together

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below; praise him above, ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

We Bow Our Hearts with Prayers of Confession

Merciful God, we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart. We have failed to be an obedient church. We have not done your will, we have broken your law, we have rebelled against your love, we have not loved our neighbors, and we have not heard the cry of the needy. Forgive us, we pray. Free us for joyful obedience, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

God of healing, God of wholeness, we bring our brokenness, our sinfulness, our fears and despair, and lay them at your feet. God of healing, God of wholeness, we hold out hearts and hands, minds and souls to feel your touch, experience your forgiveness, and know the peace that only you can bring. God of healing, God of wholeness, this precious moment in your presence and power grant us faith and confidence that here broken lives are made whole. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

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 and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

God's Word

Matthew 5:1-2

The Word of God for the people of God...Thanks be to God!

Message

“When Jesus Saw the Crowds”

Clark Hess

*Hymn of Faith

“Take Our Bread”

UMH 640

The Lord’s Supper

Blessing

*May the God of peace—
who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus,
the great Shepherd of the sheep,
and ratified an eternal covenant with his blood—
may he equip you with all you need
for doing his will.*

*May he produce in you,
through the power of Jesus Christ,
every good thing that is pleasing to him.
All glory to him forever and ever! Amen.*





- *Jan Yapple is back in MCE...was to have had a heart catheterization on Friday*
- *Jewell Edwards' grandson, Connor, has been diagnosed with a brain lesion.*
- *Marsha Waibel, cancer has returned; surgery upcoming*
- *Debbie Fields dealing with significant heart arrhythmia issues*
- *Dan Matthew, recovering from successful aneurysm surgery*
- *Jan Smith from Faith Church continuing treatments*
- *Sarah Cory and Guy Cory now both in Bickford Senior Living*
- *Earl Kantner, declining with a variety of health issues*
- *For doctors, nurses, medical staff, EMS personnel as hospitals are overrun with COVID patients*
- *Community Focus: Rebuilding a sense of community in our COVID era*
- *National Focus: Police and fire departments in the face of mounting danger*
- *World Focus: Small band of Christians still residing in Afghanistan*

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Charlotte McCrory would like to thank everyone for the cards and phone calls in response to the passing of her brother. These were appreciated very much and brought her comfort.

“When Jesus Saw the Crowds”

Matthew 5:1-2; 9:35-36

“One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, and he began to teach them.”

“Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages of that area, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”

Introduction

Pastor Kyle Idleman, in his book ***The End of Me***, shared about the afternoon when he had some calls to return. The first one was to a man named Brian. The note given to Pastor Kyle mentioned that his eighteen-month-old son had died a few weeks earlier. Brian answered the call with a monotone *“Hello.”* Kyle knew there wasn’t much he could say. So after expressing his heartbreak for Brian’s loss, he let silence settle into our conversation. After a few moments, Brian spoke four words that Kyle was not prepared to hear: *“I backed over him.”*

More silence ensued as his words sank in.

Kyle mentioned that he hadn’t been informed about that and asked Brian if he wanted to tell him what happened that he invited Brian to do so. He went on to explain that he didn’t know their son had walked outside...that they didn’t even know he was capable of opening the door to go outside.

Listening Kyle found himself wondering how parents survive such tragedy. Kyle asked Brian how he was doing on the inside. Didn’t seem like the right question to ask, but Brian had called the church seeking help. Then Brian startled Kyle. After describing his horrific experience, he began to convey to Kyle how he had discovered Jesus in a way he never had before. His faith had gone from attending church once in a while to running into God’s arms in complete desperation. Here are Brian’s exact words:

“I feel like I reached this point in my life when I had absolutely nothing left, and as it turns out that for the first time in my life, Jesus has become real. Do you know what I mean? Is that unusual?”

Kyle assured Brian he knew and that, no, it was not unusual. Due to those circumstances, Brian had reached the end of himself, and when he did so he discovered Jesus. They prayed and arranged to meet in person and they hung up.

Kyle pondered how many other people would say they experienced this same kind of beautiful irony. He posted a question online and within hours received a flood of answers.

Finish this sentence: ***“Jesus became real to me when...”***

- *I could no longer pretend that I was in control.*
- *I had to admit that I couldn't fix things.*
- *I knew I wasn't strong enough.*
- *I had no one else to turn to.*
- *I had disappointed everyone who loved me.*

Jesus became real to Brian when he knew Jesus **saw him** in his brokenness and pain. Not only saw him but responded with compassion...

We hope that during this series Jesus will become real to you. Along the way that you'll catch a glimpse of how Jesus would like things to run here on earth like they are in heaven. As we explore Jesus' beatitudes, we will see ourselves in a new light which will stir some new desires in your heart and soul.

Today we look at the set up to the Beatitudes. Normally, we tend to skip over this scene-setting stuff to jump to the juicier parts. Let's not do that today. Let's look a little deeper at these opening verses.

Jesus Saw the Crowds

What Jesus sees and what we see are totally different. Jesus has eyes attuned to the Kingdom. Jesus sees spiritual realities of which we are blind.

Later on Jesus not only "saw" the crowds, He also traveled among them and announced the Good News about the Kingdom, healed every kind of illness. Compassion stirred Him as Jesus saw they were confused and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.

Jesus sees us as well! I experienced this on Thursday afternoon in a visit to Jan Yapple at MCE. She had just returned from dialysis...began to tear up...to relay to me that she had been in so much pain (I believe in reference to her experiences the previous day) that she cried out to God...and that God had come to hold her hand! Jesus saw Jan and responded to her cry for help, her prayer of desperation.

Jesus sees you too! Where do you long for Jesus to see you? What causes you to cry out to God in heartfelt prayer? It might just be that very moment when Jesus becomes real to you as never before!

Jesus Went Up on the Mountainside

Next we see that Jesus went up on the mountainside. This is not quite what we might expect Jesus to do in such occasions. We would likely expect Jesus to go into the midst of the crowd to heal their hurts.

Max Lucado reminds us: *"No, this time before Jesus went to the masses, He went up the mountain. As a result, before the disciples encountered the crowds, they encountered Christ. Before they faced the people, they were reminded of the sacred."*

He no doubt went up the mountainside to pray...pray for the crowds and even more likely to pray for His followers...to prepare their hearts for what was ahead.

Before we confront the realities of this broken world and even the evil of the world around us, we must first encounter Jesus. Only Jesus can prepare and protect us from spiritual enemies the reside in the world around us.

In one of my mission trips to Vietnam, I experienced this very reality. One day we had the humbling privilege to worship with a gathering of over a hundred Vietnamese seekers many of whom had walked several days just for this gathering. We had the heart stirring privilege of baptizing over a hundred of these dear people seeking Jesus in their lives with great fervor! We truly had an encounter with the living Christ...interestingly also set in a mountainside village.

When we left, touched deep to our core by the miraculous nature of that afternoon on the mountainside, we drove into Da Nang for lodging. When we awoke and went to the lobby of our accommodations, we were confronted with a contingent of Communist government officials and policemen serving notice to us that we would no longer engage in such activities, that we would no longer be able to meet with house churches in our travels throughout Vietnam. He had an official decree which named our leader Joseph and myself and one other from our team. The decree: if we did not desist from these activities the three of us would be arrested, fined, and jailed and charged with sedition. In all my mission trips over the world, I had never felt danger like that morning!

I am so glad we had that encounter with the living Christ on that mountainside with those dear, hungry and thirsty believers. I felt the boldness of Christ well up within me, almost as if I was living the pages of the book of Acts! While the decree did indeed strike a sobering reality of the darkness of our world, our previous encounter with the living Christ on that mountainside prepared our hearts!

Jesus Sat Down and Began to Teach His Disciples

Before Jesus encountered the crowds, Jesus chose to devote some unhurried time to shaping the perspective of his followers. He began to teach them, to instruct them on how things operate in the Kingdom realm.

The details here are quite important. His disciples came to Him. Jesus sat down. He opened His mouth and taught them. This portrayal of Jesus as seated with disciples around Him casts Him in the role of a rabbinic teacher. Sitting was the posture for authoritative teaching. His audience was first His followers...but a wider audience may have listened in on their conversation...

When have you ever sat at Jesus' feet to listen to his teaching? What happened in your heart as He taught?

Later in Matthew's gospel Jesus traveled to the people...

“Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages of that area, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”

Jesus knows that left to ourselves, we are confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus knows we need teaching and direction and leading. Jesus knows that each and every one of us has the unfortunate capacity to lose our way if it weren't for Jesus' teaching.

How deeply do you recognize your need for Jesus' teaching? Are you playing church as a therapeutic pick-me-up on your way to a contented and comfortable life, or are you seeking to orient and align your heart around the teaching of Jesus? Much of the church across America has commandeered Jesus to serve their agenda; not to seek to be servants in partnership with Jesus in His mission in this broken world. Where do you stand?

Do you need to find your kneeling spot at Jesus' feet to find Jesus for real—more real than ever before in your life?

Prayer time: is anyone here who wants to encounter Jesus for real this morning? Anyone here who wants me to pray over them? I am going to stop preaching and come down here to meet and pray for anyone who wishes to come forward...or I will come to you if you cannot make it down here.

Conclusion

We need a new generation of people of any age who are not settled with doing church for their own agendas and who long to discover Jesus for real: ***“for the first time in my life Jesus has become real!”***

A Service of Home Communion

Greeting

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

Call to Worship

God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Lord's Prayer

Let us pray together as Jesus taught us to pray: *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 and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*

Lifeline of Scripture

Hear these portions of scripture: Jesus invites us: *"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls."* **Matthew 11:28-29**

Jesus declares: *"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. Everything that the Father gives me will come to me and anyone who comes to me, I will never drive away."* **John 6:35, 37**

Invitation to the Lord's Supper

We invite you now to spiritually unite with all the members of Faith and Hope United Methodist Churches, and partake of the Lord's Supper.

According to Luke, when our risen Lord was at table with his disciples, he took bread and blessed it and broke it and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him.

Sharing the Bread This is the body of Christ, the bread of life—given for you. Amen.

Sharing the Cup This is the blood of Christ, the cup of salvation—shed for you. Amen.

Prayer after Communion Let us pray: *"We thank you, O God, that through Word and Sacrament you have given us your Son, who is the true bread from heaven and food of eternal life. We lift up to you, this day, these joys and concerns of our hearts: So strengthen us in your service that our daily living may show our thanks, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."*

Parting Blessing May the Lord bless and keep you. Amen.

