

Epiphany #5

2-7-2021

J.V. Trautwein
Vicar Karen Pugatch

Celebrate (Introduction)

“In Isaiah the one God who sits above the earth and numbers the stars also strengthens the powerless. So in Jesus’ healing work we see the hand of the creator God, lifting up the sick woman to health and service. Like Simon’s mother-in-law, we are lifted up and healed to serve. Following Jesus, we strengthen the powerless; like Jesus, we seek to renew our own strength in quiet times of prayer.”

We come together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Opening Hymn: [“O Day of Rest and Gladness”](#)

Psalm: Psalm 147:1-11

“Praise the Lord!

For it is good to sing praises to our God;
for he is gracious, and a song of praise is seemly.

²The Lord builds up Jerusalem;
he gathers the outcasts of Israel.

³He heals the brokenhearted,
and binds up their wounds.

⁴He determines the number of the stars,
he gives to all of them their names.

⁵Great is our Lord, and abundant in power;
his understanding is beyond measure.

⁶The Lord lifts up the downtrodden,
he casts the wicked to the ground.

⁷Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving;
make melody to our God upon the lyre!

⁸He covers the heavens with clouds,
he prepares rain for the earth,
he makes grass grow upon the hills.

⁹He gives to the beasts their food,
and to the young ravens which cry.

¹⁰His delight is not in the strength of the horse,
nor his pleasure in the legs of a man;

¹¹but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him,
in those who hope in his steadfast love.”

Hymn of Praise: [“Rejoice Ye Pure In Heart”](#)

Prayer of the Day

“Everlasting God, you give strength to the weak and power to the faint. Make us agents of your healing and wholeness, that your good news may be made known to the ends of your creation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.”

1st Reading: [Isaiah 40:21-31](#)

2nd Reading: [1 Corinthians 9:16-23](#)

The Gospel: [Mark 1:29-39](#)

Hymn of the Day: [“Blessed Assurance”](#)

The Message: ([Video Link](#))

At one time or another many have had the desire to have the fame and glory of being a noted public personality. The lives of people in the media, sports, entertainment, politics, academia and so on are often the object of one’s dreams. It is felt that such prominence is the ultimate fulfillment of the ego. The glamour, the glitz, and even the economic fortune seem to be ever so attractive and alluring. The result is pushing oneself to achieve that pinnacle of success and glory no matter the cost. Children and young people are pushed by their parents to reach that pinnacle. In some instances they do this to vicariously to enhance their own ego.

The price to pay is not only in the struggle to reach prominence or to be that public personality, but in living that prominence. All of a sudden that sought after life presents its downside. Even though the ego is enhanced and money is no object, life is not your own. It is restricted and there is no longer the freedom of anonymity. Everything you do and everything you say is under the scrutiny of the public. You live in a fish bowl existence. Even the slightest error can be witnessed, photographed, and recorded. You have to live in your own secluded world isolated without the freedom to roam and to be yourself. You are enslaved by your own success. It becomes a life of trying to disguise and hide your identity in order not to be hounded by those who seek a part of you.

Yes, the price of it all is great even though from the outside the rewards are looked upon with envy and as being the pinnacle of life. To lose the freedom to be oneself is a heavy price to pay. Often it also means losing a family life and past friends. I have witnessed such devastation. In truth, fame is not what it’s cracked up to be. The sacrifices made to gain prominence are small compared to the inherent sacrifices realized upon reaching it.

This is vividly apparent in our Gospel lesson this morning. Jesus had been teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum. While teaching there he healed a man possessed by demons. Those in attendance were amazed at the authority of Jesus’ words and his power to heal. It must be

noted that there were many who practiced healing during that time. These healers employed rituals and magical procedures, all of which were seen as a process of time in order to receive results. But, Jesus' healings were different. For the most part they lacked ritual and were immediate. This amazed those who witnessed his healings and the immediacy of results.

Leaving the synagogue they went to Simon's home wherein Simon's mother was down with the fever. Again, instead of the normal rituals, Jesus simply took her by the hand, lifted her up, and she was healed. Immediately she went about her normal activity and served them. It was amazing, so amazing that Jesus' notoriety quickly spread. His popularity was immediate – a story of instant success.

As soon as the Sabbath was over upon sunset, people began showing up with those who were sick and possessed. The whole city we are told gathered outside of the house expecting to see this new kind of miracle worker, the new kind of healer whose healing was instantaneous. People did not come to hear His teachings about the new Kingdom of God, they were not asked to become disciples. They just were not interested in any of that. They were only interested in receiving the gift of being healed and then went on their way. On the other hand, Jesus didn't seem to require anything in return but just did this out of pure love.

His popularity grew leaving him vulnerable to always being surrounded by the demanding public. He was not free to roam by himself. In order to find solitude he had to find it in the darkness of the morning hours in isolated, deserted locations. There he could pray. Even then he would be searched out and the demands would come pressing down on him.

Evidently his disciples had yet to discover this need to be alone. They were bitten by fame. Simon and his companion were caught up in this whole scenario of fame and glory for they diligently search for him to tell him "Everyone is searching for you." You can almost read their minds, "Come and meet you fans, your following, they are awaiting you. Bask in your glory. Your popularity demands you to pay attention to the crowds." These disciples' egos must have been enhanced by just being closely associated with this great public figure, Jesus.

Even though the demands were already exhausting and the need for solitude and prayer was great, Jesus knew he had to sacrifice self in order to fulfill his mission. He could have remained in Capernaum for the demands upon him would eventually die down when their needs were satisfied. That was not what the incarnation was all about. He had to go to all of the people with his message and not just be seen as some miracle worker or some hero figure. He had to proclaim the revelation of God, the news about His kingdom of love and forgiveness. This message reached into the very core, the very soul of one's life. He had to get beyond the popularity of just meeting the physical needs of people so that God's eternal love would be known. It is true that healing was a vital part of what he did, but that was only the beginning. He needed to get beyond just the physical needs but to mankind's eternal needs of the soul.

He had to get beyond this one small city to other towns and villages, to other people. "Let us go on to the neighboring towns so that I may proclaim the message there also, for, that is what I

came out to do.” Instead of taking the easy route of limited popularity and limited access to him, he had to take the more difficult and self-sacrificing route of reaching as many people as he could. The revelation of God, His love, is not just for a few select people but for all to witness and hear. The demands would be great and his life would not be his.

In a very real sense that is what love is all about. The deeper we are involved in loving, the more we give of ourselves and the less self-glory and ego there is. Therefore, if our popularity and notoriety is the result of love, there is no loss of personal freedom nor is there any sense of regret for being in demand. There is no price to pay for love knows no price but only knows fulfillment. What may appear from the outside to be sacrifice is in reality the fruits and very nature of love. The needs of self become absorbed into the act of loving. One definition of love is the desire to become one with the object of love forming a new identity.

This was exactly the story of Jesus. The incarnation is just that. God loved us so much that he became one with us taking on the form of mankind. There is no greater love than this. When we enter the life of this love then we set ourselves apart from society’s notoriety and its definition of fame, fortune and glory. The life of love has as its fame and glory the fulfillment of being a living, integral part of God’s creation. This life cannot be lived in isolation but must be lived with others no matter the demands placed upon us. Instead of a burden, these demands become a joy for that is the very nature of love. In a very real sense those who give of themselves in voluntary service can begin to understand this. Life finds meaning when it gives of itself in love.

Therefore the notoriety which comes with a life of love, a life living God’s love, is not restrictive but is as free and fulfilling as love itself. To have notoriety as a result of living God’s love is the ultimate fulfillment in life for it is eternal. Such a notoriety is desperately needed in our nation at this moment.

Anthem: [“Jesu Joy of Man’s Desiring”](#), J.S. Bach sung by Agne G.

Offering*: ([On-Line Giving Link](#))

We give thee but thine own, what e’er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

The Prayer

Creator God, although we live within the wonders of your creation, we often are blinded to the fact that each new day brings new awareness to the evolving life around us. You have provided that each new day brings forth new life even during the harshest times of winter. Open our eyes and minds so we may witness the joy which comes with new life and be able be thankful and celebrate your creative process. May we experience this new life that gives us hope even during these troubled and dark times.

We are thankful that you have given the scientists and researcher the ability and tenacity to quickly develop vaccines in order to stop the spread of the dreaded and deadly pandemic. During these coming months of our population being vaccinated give us the wisdom and commitment to still follow the guidelines set forth. Continue to give the medical community the wisdom and strength to care for those who have been overcome by this life threatening virus.

We pray for all who need your comforting and healing presence especially Bob and Pat Allen, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Cronin family, the Elshafei family, Betty Fultz, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Donna Mayhew, Bev and Jim Mertz, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, David Otto, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Linda Rigby, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Linda Stephens, Della Mae Strobel, Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Linda Williamson, Wyatt Lee Wolf, Pastor Jack, the families of Kathy Williams Brown, Donnie Malcuit, Fern Wolboldt upon the death of their loved ones, and all those who are suffering pain, and sorrow as a result of this pandemic.

We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord make His face shine upon you;

The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters

Live on knowing God's love,

The joy of living this life of love,

And the peace which only comes through the power of His presence within you.

So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

Closing Hymn: ["Spread, Oh Spread, Almighty Word"](#)

We are discontinuing in person worship services on Sundays until further notice. The online worship experiences will continue as well as the Midweek Thought.

*Offering to be sent to:

Bob Brackbill

10274 Raleigh Tavern Road

Ellicott City, MD 21042

Epiphany Lutheran Church

9122 Sybert Drive

Columbia Hills

Ellicott City, MD 21043

<https://www.epiphanylutherancolumbia.org>

Please note that you now have the opportunity of online giving with the link found after the offering designation or here: https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithe/give-one-time/2627291