

St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church, Whiterocks

Dear St. Elizabeth's Family,

September 30, 2021

The author of the Gospel of Mark was not a patient man. The first words he wrote were, "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." He wanted us to know right away this was a big event, not an everyday story. He was eager for us to respond, not someday, but right now.

In Mark, when Jesus called the first two fishermen to become his disciples, "Immediately they left their nets and followed him." (*Mark 1:18*) It was a time of great need in that part of the world; dominated by Roman oppression, ordinary people could barely survive. When Jesus began his healings, crowds gathered everywhere he went. People were searching desperately for release from their suffering.

Jesus had a plan, which even his closest disciples had trouble understanding. He had his sights set on the kingdom of God, a time when God's dreams would come true, "on earth as it is in heaven." (*Lord's Prayer*) In this kingdom, status will be turned upside down: "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." (*Mark 9:35*) In this kingdom, you and I will not be in control. Whatever power we do have is not meant for success or domination, but to help others. In other words, people are not the center of the universe; God is!

Sadly, the coming of the kingdom can be as hard for us to imagine as it was for those original disciples. When Jesus told them he would give up his life for others, they rebuked him. After he taught them how important it is to be good servants, they argued about which of them was the greatest. They were "on the way" to Jerusalem, and time was running out. How could he possibly make his message clear?

People were bringing little children to Jesus to receive his blessing, and one day an inspiration struck. Taking a little one on his lap, he turned to the disciples and said, "Look. This child is showing you how to enter the kingdom of God." Once again, the disciples were baffled. Children were powerless and had no status in their world. What could they do to be worthy of the kingdom of God?

That was exactly the point. Jesus was trying to say that none of us deserve to enter the kingdom—it depends on the grace of God. Following Jesus means trusting in his example of putting the needs of others before himself. If God is truly at the center of our world, even though we're as humble as little children, we will "inherit the kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world." (*Matthew 25:34*)

Michael+

Gathering in Our Hearts

Prayer for Grace

Lord God, Almighty and everlasting Father, you have brought us in safety to this new day: Preserve us with your mighty power, that we may not fall into sin, nor be overcome by adversity; and in all we do, direct us to the fulfilling of your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer for Young People

God our Father, you see your children growing up in an unsteady and confusing world: Show them that your ways give more life than the ways of the world, and that following you is better than chasing after selfish goals. Help them to take failure, not as a measure of their worth, but as a chance for a new start. Give them strength to hold their faith in you, and to keep alive their joy in your creation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture Passage Mark 10:13-16 (*in insert*)

from Psalm 51

Open my lips, O Lord,
and my mouth shall show forth your praise.
Create in me a clean heart, O God, *
and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from your presence *
and take not your holy Spirit from me.
Give me the joy of your saving help again *
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.

Reflection

Persistent faith: there is one answer. If we ask ourselves about what we need to make it through this unsettled time, I would suggest persistent faith. Faith that consciously fixes its determination on a single goal. Whether that objective be mercy or justice or peace or healing: whatever it confronts, this level of faith is willing to go the distance. It is a faith deep and interconnected. It is a mature faith, an experienced faith. And it will hold on, keep going, and find its hope no matter what, no matter how long. It is centered in a love that is as sure as granite, a strength on which you can always build. Which is why you are entrusted with a persistent faith that will never let you down.

Episcopal Bishop Steven Charleston, Choctaw nation

Remember those among us who are in need of prayer. We pray for rain, for safety from wildfires, and for the firefighters who protect us. In our church family, we remember Paul, Matthew, Kathy, Amanda, Julia, Tiarance, Chris, Tony, Leanna, Judy, Connie, Lyn, Sterling, Kaysen, Christopher, Eve, Logan, LeeRoy, Arick, Leo, Hudson, SueAnn, Redrock, Dave & Nora, Tyler, Rodricka, Ina Jane, Peggy and Reuban, and for those who have died, especially Jose Solis. We pray for first responders and medical workers, those from our reservation serving in the Armed Forces and for all veterans. We say the **Lord's Prayer** out loud.

Prayer for Knowledge of God's Creation

Almighty and everlasting God, you made the universe with all its marvelous order, its atoms, worlds, and galaxies, and the infinite complexity of living creatures: Grant that, as we probe the mysteries of your creation, we may come to know you more truly, and more surely fulfill our role in your eternal purpose; in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Blessing

The Peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

***If you can, join us for in-person worship at St. Elizabeth's on Sundays at 10:00 am.
You can also look for prayers and a spiritual message on Michael Carney's Facebook page.
These short services are recorded every Sunday morning and can be viewed at any time.***