

WORSHIP ON THE LORD'S DAY

THE FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI
JUNE 14, 2020



LYONS-MUIR CHURCH
...transforming community

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ORDER OF WORSHIP

Call to Worship

Blessed be God: Creator, Spirit, Living Word.
And blessed be God's reign of justice and love,
now and forever. Amen.

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desire known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Opening Song

"Rock of Ages"
LMC Praise Band

There is no rock
There is no god like our God
No other name worthy of all our praise
The Rock of Salvation that cannot be moved
He's proven Himself to be faithful and true
There is no rock
There is no god like ours

Rock of Ages
Jesus is the Rock
There is no rock
There is no god like ours

Songwriter: Tena Clark

Greeting & Announcements

- For those watching online or following at home, I would encourage you to get some bread and grape juice ready for Holy Communion and participate in the Sacrament wherever and however you are. The Holy Spirit is able to overcome time and space and make us one.
- If you have not already done so, deposit your tithes and offerings in the box provided in the entryway.

A Time for Children

One sabbath he was going through the grain fields; and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain.

The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?"

And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food? He entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions."

Then he said to them, "The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath."

The Word of the Lord
Reveals the Grace of God.

"Into Mystery"

First of all, how do the Pharisees find out that the disciples are plucking grain on the Sabbath? Aren't they supposed to be chilling out at home, eating the cold chicken sandwiches they prepared the day before? Aren't they supposed to be engaged in a time of self-reflection and contemplation, recalling the glories of a faithful God? Nope... they're following Jesus around. And Jesus can't really avoid it, because the crowds, and therefore the Pharisees, follow him everywhere: to his home, to the seashore, to the house of Levi the tax collector. People are watching his every move, scrutinizing everything he says and does. So that's how the Pharisees know that Philip, Nathaniel, and James and the others are picking grain on the Sabbath.

But secondly, why is this such a big deal? Why are the Pharisees so critical? I think it's because the power of the Pharisees has entirely to do with religious rules. But Jesus isn't peddling a set of moral guidelines, he's freely offering the kingdom of God in which love prevails over every prejudice. So the Pharisees care a whole about finding ways to criticize Jesus because he offers grace and healing instead of spiritual debt and physical hardship. In other words, the Pharisees are jealous. As we saw last week in our discussion of the Holy Trinity, no religious system - however well-intentioned - will ever measure up to the divine grace which makes real, live human beings the object of its care. In their jealousy, the Pharisees wrongly internalize the notion that they're not able to offer their communities what Jesus does. Feeling this supposed inadequacy in a way that leads to prejudice and fear, they attack him by any means possible. The Pharisees offer the people an assumed identity as they meet their religious obligations; Jesus offers the people unconditional welcome and embrace.

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, you know what we need before we ask, and you have mercy on our ignorance by giving us the things that we need no matter what we pray for. Help us, Lord, to take what you offer and be content that what you give us what we need will be enough for today. And in all things, dear Savior, continue to give us yourself, without which heavenly food and drink we shall surely stumble and fall. Amen.

Today, Roman Catholic congregations around the world will celebrate the Feast of Corpus Christi. Now the immediate question has to be: "Why does this matter to us; we're Protestants." Good point... And... Just because the Protestant Reformation left a good deal of Roman Catholicism behind, doesn't mean that the Medieval Church got everything wrong. And one of the things they got right was the idea that the grace of Holy Communion with Jesus, which comes to us in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is meant for everyone.

Now most of us will not know the significance of the words *Corpus Christi* as they pertain to the life of the Church. I did not, until I took hold of a dictionary. The main entry describes a city in Texas, famous mostly for its Gulf Coast beaches...so you have to keep reading a bit. The second entry describes a very curious liturgical celebration of the Church in Western Europe in the Middle Ages. Beginning in the late 1200s, a group of nuns in Belgium began observing an intentional celebration of Christ's presence in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper has been at the center of the worshipping life of Christian since the very beginning, but for these women the recognition that they were able to meet with God face to face took on particular significance. The idea that Jesus had made himself accessible in this way, wherever and whenever the Church was gathered, became a source of profound joy. In a very particular way, this joy of being face to face with Jesus changed and intensified their devotional lives. And whatever happened to those nuns caught on, because by the late 1300s, the Feast of Corpus Christi was being celebrated throughout the Roman Catholic Church.¹

One of the things that brought this about was the way it changed the celebration of Sunday worship in general. There developed a sense of the fellowship of Christ that felt very much like being with another living, breathing Human Being, and for a largely illiterate general public the ritual of the Eucharist meant a great deal more than the reading of scripture or the incomprehensible words of the Latin liturgy. The Feast of Corpus Christi made clear that, while the Priests administered the Sacrament, they did so for the benefit of everyone. In the Catholic imagination of the 13th and 14th Centuries, to look upon the consecrated Host of Holy Communion was to see God. This filled the lives of everyday people with a sense of awe and wonder and hope, which in the dark ugliness of the Middle Ages was the most profound means of grace.

Could it have the same effect on us? We need awe and wonder and hope in our times, don't we? And our world is filled with dark ugliness too, isn't it? What would it mean to you to experience God face to face? To know Christ's love? To know the closeness and power of the Spirit of Life?

Returning once more to the homily on Trinity Sunday, when the going gets rough, it's not a handy set of religious ideas or a set of rules that tells us what we're supposed to feel that is going to get us through. Rather, through the ups and downs of life, it's the nourishment and healing and

forgiveness of Jesus himself that will keep our hearts and minds. Are your challenges too many and too difficult? In the Bread of Heaven there is strength and peace in which to stand. Do your sins and wounds run too deep to endure? In the Cup of Salvation there is a healing forgiveness that goes deeper still. Have you always wondered why other people seem to have big, shiny, life-changing religious experiences, but you haven't? In the Body and Blood of Christ, the Spirit makes a way for you to be face to face with Jesus, and through him with the Creator who loves you. For Christ is really present here, and this bread, this juice are the natural, material sign of that supernatural reality.

And let us cry out together: O Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!

We celebrate the Feast of Corpus Christi today because – after celebrating the Ascension of Jesus, the outpouring of the Spirit, and the revelation of the Divine Being as Trinity – we need to understand how this pertains to us individually. And as we intentionally open ourselves to the real presence of Jesus in this Sacrament of his Body and Blood, we experience the inward witness of God saying to each one of us: I love *you*, I choose *you*, I call *you*, I forgive *you*.... Through the celebration of the Lord's Supper because Jesus says "Come to me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Christians in all times and places believe that the Lord will do what he has promised through the means that he has given. So as we let go of religious rules and ideas... as we let go of our modern need to explain everything and enter into mystery...

May the Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Open your communion elements.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away and our love failed, your love remained steadfast. You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, and spoke to us through your prophets. Therefore with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your Name and join their unending hymn:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Holy are you and blessed is your Son, Jesus Christ. Your Spirit anointed him to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captive and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to announce that the time had come when you would save your people.

He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners; and by the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection you gave birth to your church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit. When the Lord Jesus ascended, to reclaim the glory that was eternally his, he promised to be with us always in the power of your Word and Holy Spirit. Putting our whole trust in his grace, we offer our prayers to you, O God, remembering especially:

The prayers of the people are lifted, aloud or silently.

These and all our prayers we ask in Jesus' name, who lived our life, who knew our hope and grief, and who, on the night in which he gave himself for us, took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Take, eat; this is my Body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." Likewise, when the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Drink from this, all of you. This is the cup of the new covenant in my Blood, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Therefore, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves, our souls and bodies, in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

All stand and lift up the elements as they are able.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the Body and Blood of Christ, that we might be for the world the Body of Christ redeemed by his Blood. By your Spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your Holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, Almighty God, now and forever. **Amen.**

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

Brothers and Sisters, at the invitation of Christ we have come to His Table; and by the power of the Holy Spirit we may experience ordinary food and drink as the Bread of Heaven and the Cup of Salvation. Let us therefore pray with all humility as we handle Holy Things:

**We do not presume to come to this your Table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your Table,
but you are the same Lord whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to receive of this Sacrament of your Body and Blood,
that we may walk in newness of life,
may grow into your likeness,
and may evermore live in communion with you. Amen.**

*All commune together, taking the elements in place
and joining in a time of silent meditation.*

Deposit cups & wrapper in waste basket as you exit the sanctuary.

Closing Song

“How Can I Keep From Singing”

LMC Praise Band

There is an endless song, echoes in my soul
I hear the music ring
And though the storms may come
I am holding on, to the rock I cling...

How can I keep from singing Your praise
How can I ever say enough
How amazing is Your love
How can I keep from shouting Your name
I know I am loved by the King
And it makes my heart want to sing

I will lift my eyes in the darkest night
For I know my Savior lives
And I will walk with You,
Knowing You'll see me through
And sing the songs You give

[Chorus]

I can sing in the troubled times
Sing when I win
I can sing when I lose my step
And fall down again
I can sing 'cause You pick me up
Sing 'cause You're there
I can sing 'cause You hear me, Lord
When I call to You in prayer
I can sing with my last breath
Sing for I know
That I'll sing with the angels
And the saints around the throne

[Chorus]

Songwriters: Eithne Ni Bhraonain, Nicky Ryan & Roma Shane Ryan

Closing Prayer & Benediction

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the Cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and joy of your grace; that God may be all in all. Amen.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen.

¹ Source on the history of Corpus Christi: The Oxford History of Christian Worship, Wainwright & Tucker, eds. (2006), pgs. 247-249.