

Saint Paul United Church of Christ
Sixth Sunday after Pentecost
245th Anniversary of Independence Day
July 4, 2021

Welcome and Announcements

Prayer Requests

Prelude (Recording begins)

Call to Worship (*adapted from the Lutheran Book of Worship, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*)

On July 4, 1776, the leaders of the American Revolution declared this nation's independence and sovereignty and affirmed that all its citizens were endowed by our Creator with the inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. As we look back, the doctrine of inalienable human rights for all was not yet put into practice among the Framers themselves, since only men were citizens, people were bought and sold, and the original inhabitants of America were stripped of their rights to their native land. Still, the faith that these rights comprise the birthright of all people is the hope that binds us together in our common destiny. So we celebrate this 245th anniversary of our nation's birth, giving thanks to the Creator for that vision of human rights that has inspired us to strive for fulness of life, freedom and happiness among all the people of the earth.

The earth is the Lord's. **And all who dwell in it.**

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, **For God judges the peoples with equity and guides the nations upon earth.**

O God, be gracious to us and bless us, **And make your face to shine upon us.**

May your ways be known upon the earth, **Your saving power among all peoples.**

Lord of the nations, guide our people by your Spirit to go forward in justice and freedom. Give us what outward prosperity may be your will, but above all things, give us faith in you, that our nation may bring glory to your name and blessings to all peoples. Amen.

***Hymn**

"God of the Ages, Whose Almighty Hand"

#728

***God of the ages, whose almighty hand leads forth in beauty all the starry band
Of shining worlds in splendor through the skies, our grateful songs before your throne arise.***

***Your love divine has led us in the past, in this free land by you our lot is cast;
Be now our ruler, guardian, guide and stay, your word our law, your paths our chosen way.***

***From war's alarms, from deadly pestilence, be your strong arm our ever sure defense;
Your true religion in our hearts increase, your bounteous goodness nourish us in peace.***

***Refresh your people on their toilsome way, lead us from night to never ending day;
Fill all our lives with heaven-born love and grace, and songs of praise we'll lift before your
face!***

Opening Prayer (in unison): The Dakota Hymn, by Joseph R. Renville, 1842

***Many and great, O God, are your works, Maker of earth and sky;
Your hands have set the heavens with stars, your fingers spread the mountains and plains.
Lo, at your word the waters were formed; deep seas obey your voice.
Grant unto us communion with you, O star abiding One;
Come unto us and dwell with us: with you are found the gifts of life.
Bless us with life that has no end, eternal life with you. Amen.***

Lesson from the Hebrew Scriptures: 2 Samuel 5:1-5

Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron, and said, "Look, we are your bone and flesh. For some time, while Saul was king over us, it was you who led out Israel and brought it in. The Lord said to you: It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you who shall be ruler over Israel." So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron; and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel. David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months; and at Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years.

Gospel Lesson: Mark 6:1-13

(Jesus) left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house." And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. And he was amazed at their unbelief.

***Hymn**

"America, the Beautiful"

#727

***O beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties above the fruited plain!
America! America! God shed his grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea!***

***O beautiful for pilgrim feet, whose stern impassioned stress
A thoroughfare from freedom beat across the wilderness!***

***America! America! God mend thine every flaw,
Confirm thy soul in self-control, thy liberty in law!***

***O beautiful for heroes proved in liberating strife,
Who more than self their country loved, and mercy more than life!
America! America! May God thy gold refine,
Till all success be nobleness, and every gain divine!***

***O beautiful for patriot dream that sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam, undimmed by human tears!
America! America! God shed his grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea!***

Sermon: "God Mend Thine Every Flaw"

In our Gospel story for today, Jesus has just returned across the Sea of Galilee from a foreign land where his message brought wide acceptance and healing. He comes back now to his hometown of Nazareth, in Galilee. One might think Jesus' message would be easily received in this place, where people would have known his parents and seen him growing up; but it is not. Perhaps they expected that one of their own would be appreciative and complimentary in his words to them; but Jesus does not bring a gospel of false friendliness. He has come to preach the Word of God, and to help people see how God invites them to become more faithful. Is it easier to preach the truth to strangers? Jesus says that "a prophet is not without honor, except in his own hometown."

Musical interlude

Sacrament of Holy Communion (Those worshipping with us at home may use whatever food and drink you have available for the Communion elements.)

Come, let us gather at the table of God, where the bread of life and the fruit of God's compassion are shared and all are welcome to celebrate as one. Whoever you are and wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

On the same night on which he was betrayed, our Lord took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it, saying, Take and eat. This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way after supper, he took the cup, saying take and drink. This cup is the new covenant in my blood that is poured out for you and for many for the remission of sin.

Eucharistic Prayer and Prayers of the People (using words from the Dakota Hymn, by Joseph R. Renville, 1842, Transl. Sidney H. Byrd, 1993)

*The day you came to dwell on the earth, bringing us all great joy!
The nations scattered over the world, to them you gave the light of life.*

*O Jesus, O Compassionate One, we offer praise to you.
Your sacrament entrusted to us, Jesus, now share with me.
Your bread of life and drink for our souls, which you have offered, purify now.
Sanctify minds and bodies to you; restore us by your love.
"Take now my flesh as food for your soul," these are your words, O Christ.
"Take my shed blood and drink from my cup, that it may serve to strengthen your faith."
Entrance into your door I desire; Jesus, now hear my plea.*

May the elements of this holy meal be to us the body and blood of Jesus Christ our Lord, that we, as we partake of them, may know that we take Christ into ourselves and share Christ with one another in this meal.

Hear our prayers for healing, God, for all who are ill, and all who are in recovery, and all who feel depressed or lonely or unsure.

Hear our prayers for your people throughout the world who suffer from injustice, and from the denial of human rights.

Hear our prayers for those who suffer from heat, and from storm, and from natural disasters.

Encourage us to bring the love of Jesus Christ into the lives of all those we meet today.

Empower our nation with high and holy dreams, so that we may fulfill our destiny in the fellowship of nations, and so that all the world may know the blessings you have bestowed on humankind.

We ask your blessing on the offerings brought to your table today, and on the spirit of commitment that lives within all those who contribute to our common life. We ask your blessing upon the ministries carried out by this congregation in your name, and we pray that your work to magnify our efforts may bring surprising joy and reassurance to those who may be touched by you through what we seek to accomplish here.

Let us pray in the words that Jesus taught us:

**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 debts as we forgive our debtors,
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

Now let us share the Communion meal:

This is the body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that is given for you. Take and eat. Do this in remembrance of him.

This is the new covenant in the blood of Jesus Christ our Savior that is shed for you for the remission of your sin.

May the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ our Lord be and abide with us now and forevermore. Amen.

A Prayer for Independence Day (written by The Rev. James Somerville, Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church of Richmond, Virginia, July 5, 2010)

***Closing Hymn**

**“God Bless Our Native Land”
(sung to the tune of “My Country ‘tis of Thee”)**

*God bless our native land; firm may she ever stand through storm and night;
When the wild tempests rave, Ruler of wind and wave, O God, our country save
By your great might.*

*For her our prayer shall rise to God above the skies; On whom we wait;
Lord, you are never nigh, guarding with watchful eye. To you aloud we cry,
God save the state!*

*Not for this land alone, but be God’s mercies shown from shore to shore;
And may the nations see that all should neighbors be, and form one family
The wide world o’er.*

Benediction

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

Postlude