**Saginaw First Free Methodist Church**

**Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost**

**September 26, 2021**



*“For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward."*

 *(Mark 9:41)*

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**Proper 21 (26)**

**September 26, 2021**

**Prelude**

**\*\*Greeting/Announcements**

**\*Call to Worship** (*spoken responsively*)

L: Are any among you suffering?

**P: Then let us pray**

L: Are any cheerful?

**P: Then let us sing songs of praise**

L: Are any among you sick?

**P: Then let us turn to each other for God's healing touch**

L: The prayer of faith will save us

**P: And God will lift us up**

**\*Opening Hymn:** “Sweet, Sweet Spirit” #304

**There's a sweet, sweet Spirit in this place**

**And I know that it's the Spirit of the Lord**

**There are sweet expressions on each face**

**And I know they feel the presence of the Lord**

**Sweet Holy Spirit, Sweet heavenly Dove**

**Stay right here with us, filling us with Your love**

**And for these blessings we lift our hearts in praise**

**Without a doubt we'll know that we have been revived**

**When we shall leave this place**

**\*Invocation and Lord’s Prayer**

L: God of the beginning, God of now, and God of what will be; in your claiming us as your own, you have given us the most gracious and powerful invitation; to pray and lift all that weighs on our hearts, with the confidence that you will hear. You who created us and called us to ministry, pour out your Holy Spirit on us today so that we may be a wise steward of this precious gift. Then remind us that we are not done until we have offered to you the prayers of our hearts, as we pray the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples…

**P: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come; your will be done in 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 Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

**\*Gloria Patri**

**Glory be to the Father​**

**And to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.​**

**As it was in the beginning​**

**Is now and ever shall be.​**

**World without end. ​**

**Amen. Amen.​**

**First Scripture Lesson:** Esther 7:1-6, 9-10; 9:20-22

 So the king and Haman went in to feast with Queen Esther. On the second day, as they were drinking wine, the king again said to Esther, “What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled.”

 Then Queen Esther answered, “If I have won your favor, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me -- that is my petition -- and the lives of my people -- that is my request. For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. If we had been sold merely as slaves, men and women, I would have held my peace; but no enemy can compensate for this damage to the king.”

 Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, “Who is he, and where is he, who has presumed to do this?”

 Esther said, “A foe and enemy, this wicked Haman!” Then Haman was terrified before the king and the queen.

 Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs in attendance on the king, said, “Look, the very gallows that Haman has prepared for Mordecai, whose word saved the king, stands at Haman's house, fifty cubits high.” And the king said, “Hang him on that.”

 So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the anger of the king abated.

 Mordecai recorded these things, and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far, enjoining them that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar and also the fifteenth day of the same month, year by year, as the days on which the Jews gained relief from their enemies, and as the month that had been turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, days for sending gifts of food to one another and presents to the poor.

**Prayer of Confession**

L: We have been entrusted with the way of life; God’s Word has dwelt among us. Yet we lose our sense of mission and cease to be all God has called us to be. We confess so our spirits may grow calm, our vision be clear, and our purpose be unified…

**P:** **O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Sometimes my knowledge of you is only self-righteousness. It hides the abyss between my insight and my actions. Remind me to keep faithful, even when I think I have finished the race. What else can I do but keep praying to you, even when I feel dark; keep writing about you, even when I feel numb. Keep me speaking in your name, even when I feel I’ve accomplished my mission. May I not be satisfied by my insight until I have walked with others through to the Promise Land. Come, Lord Jesus, come. Have mercy on me, a sinner. Amen.**

**Affirmation of Faith:** Psalm 124

**P: If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when our enemies attacked us, then they would have swallowed us up alive, when their anger was kindled against us; then the flood would have swept us away, the torrent would have gone over us; then over us would have gone the raging waters. Blessed be the LORD, who has not given us as prey to their teeth. We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we have escaped. Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.**

**Hymn of Affirmation:** “Give Thanks” #770

**Give thanks with a grateful heart**

**Give thanks to the Holy One**

**Give thanks because He's given**

**Jesus Christ, His Son**

**Give thanks with a grateful heart**

**Give thanks to the Holy One**

**Give thanks because He's given**

**Jesus Christ, His Son**

**And now let the weak say, I am strong**

**Let the poor say, I am rich**

**Because of what the Lord has done for us**

**And now let the weak say, I am strong**

**Let the poor say, I am rich**

**Because of what the Lord has done for us**

**Give thanks**

 **Second Scripture Lesson****:** James 5:13-20

 Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven.

 Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth yielded its harvest.

 My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and is brought back by another, you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner’s soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

**Passing of the Peace**

**Prayers of the People**

L: Lord in Your Mercy…

**P: Hear our prayer.**

**Gospel Lesson**: Mark 9:38-50

 John said to him, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.”

 But Jesus said, “Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. Whoever is not against us is for us. For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward.

 “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell.

 And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell, where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched.

 “For everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

**Sermon**

**Prayer of Response**

**Hymn of Response:** “Make Me a Blessing” #533 (vv.1-3)

**Out in the highways and byways of life**

**Many are weary and sad**

**Carry the sunshine where darkness is rife**

**Making the sorrowing glad**

**Make me a blessing, make me a blessing**

**Out of my life, May Jesus shine**

**Make me a blessing, O savior I pray**

**Make me a blessing to someone today**

**Tell the sweet story of Christ and His love**

**Tell of His pow'r to forgive**

**Others will trust Him if only you prove**

**True ev'ry moment you live**

**Make me a blessing, make me a blessing**

**Out of my life, May Jesus shine**

**Make me a blessing, O savior I pray**

**Make me a blessing to someone today**

**Give as 'twas given to you in your need**

**Love as the Master loved you**

**Be to the helpless a helper indeed**

**Unto your mission be true**

**Make me a blessing, make me a blessing**

**Out of my life, May Jesus shine**

**Make me a blessing, O savior I pray**

**Make me a blessing to someone today**

**Invitation of Offering**

L:Blessed are you, O Lord our God, who has rescued us from those who would destroy us. Your power and might are great, and your mercy is poured out on us whom you love. May we bless your Name, as we collect this morning’s tithes and offerings.

**\*Doxology**

**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.**

**\*Prayer**

**\*Closing Hymn**: “Jesus Loves Me” #738 (vv.1-4)

**Jesus loves me, this I know**

**For the Bible tells me so**

**Little ones to him belong**

**They are weak, but he is strong**

**Yes, Jesus loves me Yes, Jesus loves me**

**Yes, Jesus loves me The Bible tells me so**

**Jesus loves me, this I know,**

**As he loved so long ago,**

**Taking children on his knee,**

**Saying, Let them come to me**

**Yes, Jesus loves me Yes, Jesus loves me**

**Yes, Jesus loves me The Bible tells me so**

**Jesus loves me he who died**

**Heaven's gate to open wide**

**He will wash away my sin**

**Let his little child come in**

**Yes, Jesus loves me Yes, Jesus loves me**

**Yes, Jesus loves me The Bible tells me so**

**Jesus loves me still today**

**Walking with me all the way**

**He’s prepared a home for me**

**And someday his face I’ll see**

**Yes, Jesus loves me Yes, Jesus loves me**

**Yes, Jesus loves me The Bible tells me so**

**\*Benediction**

L: Go forth now as God’s servants. Remember God’s presence often and draw strength from the knowledge that the One who calls and sends you, also sustains you. Teach and live salvation’s song, as you go in peace to love and serve. Amen.