

Order of Worship

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, July 19, 2020

WELCOME

PRELUDE

Siciliano

J. Alcock, Jr.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Psalm 81: 1-3, 10

One: Sing aloud to God our strength; shout for joy to the God of Jacob!

All: Raise a song, sound the tambourine, the sweet lyre with the harp.

One: Blow the trumpet at the new moon, at the full moon, on our feast day.

All: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open wide your mouth, and I will fill it."

HYMN 127

Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

CWM RHONDDA

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

PASTORAL PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

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

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 28: 10-17

HYMN 295

In the Cross of Christ I Glory

RATHBUN

SCRIPTURE

2 Corinthians 4: 1-10

MESSAGE

Cracked Pots

GENEROSITY, INVITATIONS and CELEBRATIONS

HYMN

This Little Light of Mine

LATTIMER

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Voluntary in A Minor

J. Stanley

Cracked Pots 2 Corinthians 4:1-10 July 19, 2020 Pastor Rebecca

There once was a boy who had a job hauling water from a well up a road and into the palace of a king. He used two clay pots tied with ropes on each end of a yoke he put over his shoulders. Every day he would fill both pots with fresh water. One day, one of the pots said to him, “I feel so bad. I have a crack in my side that leaks out half the water by the time you get to the palace. You work so hard, and I leak so much. I wish I was like the other pot, who doesn’t have any cracks and can hold all its water.”

The boy looked at the pot with love, and simply said, “Today, while we’re walking up this road to the king’s palace, I want you to look at the side of the road and tell me what you see.” So the pot did. All along his side of the road there were beautiful flowers, and the boy gathered up a few here and there. After the boy delivered the water and put the flowers in a vase on the dining room table, they walked back down the road and resumed their conversation.

The boy said, “Now that we’re walking back, do you notice flowers underneath?” The pot realized that no, there weren’t any flowers. Strangely, they were all on the other side of the road. The boy explained, “I’ve known you’ve had a crack that leaks water, so several months ago I planted flower seeds on your side of the road as we walk up to the palace. That way, your crack gently watered all those seeds each day, so they grew to be beautiful flowers that I could pick and put on the king’s table.”

It is easy for all of us to be like that cracked pot that feels ashamed of our brokenness. We often compare ourselves to others who look or act like they have it altogether. You may need to hear God tell you, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). You may need to hear the reminder that we have a treasure in the cracked, clay jar that is our life. God redeems the cracks in our lives and “waters flowers” and shines Divine light through those very cracks. Maybe it is remembering the pain of when or how you’ve lost a job and income for even essentials, and letting the Christ’s living water flow through your crack by volunteering at the Personal Needs Closet. Maybe it is honoring your

patient accounting teacher by serving on the Finance team at church. Maybe it looks like showing compassion to those who also struggle with depression, anxiety, or addiction, or caring for someone who feels abandoned, abused, or alone because you know how that feels.

God challenges all of us to look squarely at the cracks in our lives. Come to Jesus with all of your failures and flaws, all your pains and your problems. Whether those cracks are due to your own carelessness, the cruelties of others, or the causes of nature, Jesus heals you by turning the hurt you have experienced into hope for both you and others.

It is difficult but important to comprehend the idea of embracing damage. In Japanese art there is a technique called Kintsugi, which literally means “Golden Joinery”. It is the art of embracing damage, usually in clay pottery, and turning something that is broken into something more beautiful than the original.

In Ernest Hemingway’s A Farewell to Arms he writes, “The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong in the broken places.” I know many of us have felt broken in the midst of this bruising year of world-wide health, racial, and economic crises and cracks. Will we as a local and global church echo the call of clay pots through the broken parts of our lives? *“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies.”* (2 Corinthians 4:7-10)

And that is ultimately the most important thing to remember – our lives as clay pots, even healed, redeemed, transformed, and made beautiful – are ultimately created to carry and reveal the life of Jesus. Perhaps we are like broken and bruised Jacob after sleeping on a rock pillow, having a vision of angels coming and going from heaven, hearing God remind him of his constant care and guidance, and finally realizing, *“Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!”* (Deuteronomy 28:16). Yes - the Lord is in this place! Christ is in the clay pot of your life as an individual, in the clay pot of our life

together as a congregation, and in the clay pot of a broken but redeemable community of Christ in Wausau and the world.

In 2 Corinthians 4:6 Paul writes, “*But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this **extraordinary power** belongs to God and does not come from us.*” You likely already know the two words in the Bible’s original Greek language that describe the treasure God calls us to carry in our cracked pot lives: **extraordinary** is the Greek word *hyperbole*, and **power** is the Greek word *dynamis* (where we get the word “dynamite”). In other words, Christ’s life in us is bigger and more powerful than anything humanly possible. The cracks keep us humble so we and others can be reminded that the glory goes to God and not to us.

In what ways is God spreading life-giving light, water, and hope through your cracks? In what ways is God transforming the brokenness in your life, like an artist fixing and filling cracks with gold? How are you reminded that your value and strength is found in Christ filling, shining, and overflowing through you? We opened this service with Psalm 81 that begins, “*Sing aloud to God our strength; shout for joy to the God of Jacob!*” We will soon be closing with a song that reminds us of God’s strong light shining through the cracks, trials, and troubles in our lives. May the light, power and strength of Christ shine through and redeem all the cracks in your life and our lives together. Amen!

Prayer Corner

Gracious God, we thank you for our brothers and sisters in Christ. We pray for comfort for Vivian Thompson’s family as we grieve our loss and celebrate her life and the eternal glory and peace she entered on July 15. We also pray for the Attoe’s children and grandchildren in Florida who will begin teaching and learning in person soon. Give them and all families, states, and school districts guidance and provision to educate safely. We lift up Nancy and Terry Flath’s son, Brett Thompson, as he recovers from recent heart surgery and prepares to have a stent placed on August 3. Grant him and all people facing and recovering from surgeries your healing power and peace. Show us how to pray for and bless all who are suffering. Amen.

Do you have a prayer request? You may email or call the church office so we can all pray for you!