

February 5th, 2012 Fifth Sunday of Epiphany, Souper Bowl Sunday

Introduction to the Day

In Isaiah it is the one God who sits above the earth and numbers the stars—it is that God who strengthens the powerless. So in Jesus' healing work we see the hand of the creator God, lifting up the sick woman to health and service (diakonia). Like Simon's mother-in-law, we are lifted up to health and diakonia. Following Jesus, we strengthen the powerless; like Jesus, we seek to renew our own strength in quiet times of prayer.

After a moment of silent meditation to prepare ourselves for worship, we will begin the liturgy.

Prayers of the People

As God's beloved people made radiant by the light of Christ, let us pray for the church, the whole human family, and God's good creation.

A brief silence.

When your church grows weary and weak, give courage to our leaders, and strengthen your people for service, that everyone who searches for you might share in the blessings of the gospel. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Where the earth is exhausted by our demands and the waters are polluted with our waste, bring rest to creation and restore the health of your creatures. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

When war and violence threaten innocent lives and displaced people flee in search of shelter, renew the strength of peacemakers and humanitarian aid workers. Raise up leaders who value justice more than power. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Where the brokenhearted and powerless cry out for relief, lift them to new hope. Comfort all who grieve losses of any kind, and sustain the suffering with your healing power. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

When we are frantic and troubled, lead us into quiet places of prayer, that, restored by your peace, we gladly serve you and our neighbors in our daily lives. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We give thanks for those who trusted in your steadfast love and promises. Give us the same patient hopefulness that sustained the saints before us. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Holy God, we lift our prayers to you in hope, entrusting all for whom we pray to your great goodness and mercy, made known to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen.

Lector: Please read the introduction, then the citation (i.e. "The First Reading is from the.... chapter of ..." - then read the text.)

First Reading – *The Judeans in exile have a good reason to be hopeful: the one who will bring them to freedom is the God who created the world, the God who subdues the rulers of the earth and gives strength to those who are weary.*

Isaiah 40:21–31

Have you not known? Have you not heard?
Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?
It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,
and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;
who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,
and spreads them like a tent to live in;
who brings princes to naught,
and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.
Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown,
scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth,
when he blows upon them, and they wither,
and the tempest carries them off like stubble.
To whom then will you compare me,
or who is my equal? says the Holy One.
Lift up your eyes on high and see:
Who created these?
He who brings out their host and numbers them,
calling them all by name;
because he is great in strength,
mighty in power,
not one is missing.
Why do you say, O Jacob,

and speak, O Israel,
"My way is hidden from the LORD,
and my right is disregarded by my God"?
Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The LORD is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.
He gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.
Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted;
but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM Psalm 147:1–11, 20c
Hallelujah! How good it is to sing praises to our God!
How pleasant it is to honor God with praise!
**The LORD rebuilds Jerusalem,
and gathers the exiles of Israel.**
The LORD heals the brokenhearted
and binds up their wounds.
**The LORD counts the number of the stars
and calls them all by their names.**
Great is our LORD and mighty in power;
there is no limit to God's wisdom.
**The LORD lifts up the lowly,
but casts the wicked to the ground.**
Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving;
make music upon the harp to our God,
**who covers the heavens with clouds
and prepares rain for the earth,
making grass to grow upon the mountains.**
God provides food for the cattle
and for the young ravens when they cry.
**God is not impressed by the might of a horse,
and has no pleasure in the speed of a runner,**
but finds pleasure in those who fear the LORD,
in those who await God's steadfast love. Hallelujah!

Second Reading - *God entrusted Paul with the responsibility of bringing the gospel to diverse people. Hence the focus of Paul's ministry is not his own rights or privileges as an apostle but the privilege of serving God by freely sharing the good news of Christ with others.*

1 Corinthians 9:16–23

If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel! For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission. What then is my reward? Just this: that in my proclamation I may make the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my rights in the gospel.

For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

* **Gospel Reading** - *Everywhere Jesus goes, many people expect him to set them free from oppression. Everywhere he goes, he heals them and sets them free. Disease, devils, and death are running for their lives. The forces that diminish human life are rendered powerless by Jesus.*

Mark 1: 29-39

As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." He answered, "Let us go on to the

neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.