

February 8, 2015, THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY

Introduction to the Day (Assisting Minister, worship leader)

In today's readings we celebrate the God who gives energy to the weary and restores wholeness and health to the sick. In Isaiah it is the one God who sits above the earth and numbers the stars—it is that God who strengthens the powerless. In the gospel reading from Mark, we see the hand of the creator God as Jesus lifts up the sick woman to health and service. Like Simon's mother-in-law, we too are lifted up to health and service. Following Jesus, we strengthen the powerless; like Jesus, we seek to renew our own strength in quiet times of prayer.

Call to Confession & Reconciliation (Pastor)

We walk through life, confident, strong, boasting of all our achievements.
But God sees the hurts we have inflicted on others,
the weariness in our bones from chasing after bad choices,
and all the foolishness we trip over in the busyness of life.

Let us come to God, for the One who listens to our faltering words
is the One who gives us the Word filled with grace and mercy.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Called to know, love, and follow you, O God, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

Everlasting God, deepen your church's commitment to proclaiming the gospel, that many will hear, respond, and share in its blessings.

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Creator of earth's foundations, restore lands, forests, and oceans recovering from natural disasters. We pray for rain and snow to ease the parched land.

Protect and preserve all animals and humans who live in these places.

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Everlasting God, rule over the nations and guide their paths toward the fulfillment of your purpose, nurturing the common good, protecting the weak, providing justice, and caring for the needy.

We pray for peace and safety in places of violence and unrest.

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Strength of the powerless, lift up the weary and wounded, give endurance to those whose

struggle is unrelenting, heal the sick, and relieve the pain of those who suffer, especially those we name before you now.

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Searching God, expand the welcome and witness of this congregation's outreach ministries, especially for the Food and Resource Support Center and for hunger relief ministries.

We pray for all those served by these ministries, and for all visiting with us today.

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Unsearchable God, you are always more than we can understand or imagine. Guide us to follow in faith where the saints have led until we join them at your throne.

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Trusting your love and healing, O God, we commend to you all for whom we pray, knowing you will hear and answer, through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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.

Gospel Reading - *This reading continues the story we read last week of Jesus healing the man in the synagogue possessed with an unclean spirit.*

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.