

**February 2 Worship
Communion Sunday**
Greeters- Judy Kierce, Keri Battersby
Readers- Keri & Molly Battersby

Announcements/Joys-

Time Of Quiet Meditation- *“Know that the Lord is God! It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.”* Psalm 100:3

Opening Scripture- Malachi 3:1-4(page 830)

Opening Chorus- 506- Open Our Eyes Lord

Responsive Call To Worship-

Leader: Glory to God in the highest!

People: And hope to every discouraged heart.

Leader: Glory to God in the highest!

People: And peace to every conflicted soul.

Leader: Glory to God in the highest!

People: And joy to every downcast spirit.

Leader: Glory to God in the highest!

People: And love to everyone.

All: Let us sing praises to our God. Let us offer this light against the darkness.

Hymn- 380- Take My Life And Let It Be

Unison Prayer- Holy God of Love, there is light in our lives because of the abundance of your steadfast love. A love so vast, so deep, so real, that you became one of us. May we live within the power of this love. And may we share its light with a world where too many dwell in darkness. We pray as Jesus taught, saying....*Lord's Prayer...*

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.

Old Testament Scripture- Psalm 24:7-10(page 476)

Special Music-

Gospel Scripture- Luke 2:22-40(page 889-890)

Children's Time/Echo Prayer/Passing of the Peace

Hymn- 646- Lord, Speak To Me

Message

“Let Me Introduce To You....”

I am sure that we all have found ourselves in a conversation with someone who may be either a stranger, someone we know about, someone familiar, or perhaps someone we know quite well. It doesn't really matter how well we know them, we have all experienced the following scenario. During the conversation, somehow the talk turns to the topic of faith or church, anything to do with religion. You immediately get the feeling that someone turned on the air conditioner or opened the door to a freezer. There is a feeling of coldness in the air and the conversation quickly comes to an end. What did you say that was so wrong? To be honest, there was nothing really wrong with what you said, it was that some people, actually a lot of people, seem to have a trigger when it comes to the topic of church. Bringing up the idea of God around many people is enough to make them turn away and shut down.

If you really think about it, church, faith or religion are things that many people just don't want to talk about. Why? Perhaps they have had a less than good experience when it comes to these things. Maybe they just don't think that it is something that should be discussed in any way shape or form. More than likely, they just have a preconceived notion about the issue. Whatever it is, they turn off and walk away when someone starts speaking about their faith. I will admit that there was a time when the topic made me want to disappear when someone brought it up. I thought that whatever they were trying to sell, I was not interested. What I believed was private, my own business, not anyone else's. The absolute worst thing someone could ask me was; “Are you born again?” or “Do you Know Jesus?” That is nobody's business but my own. How dare you ask me that? Simply talking about faith made me want to leave the room. To be honest with you, those two questions still bother me but I have found a way to respond to the one about knowing Jesus. Ever since I did accept Christ, I can now answer; “Yes, I know Jesus. Do you want me to introduce you to Him?”

For those people who have tough time talking about faith, we need to have compassion and patience so that we don't try to force something on them. For whatever reason that they turn away, we need to find a reason to show them how great it is to have Christ in our lives. So, how do we go about introducing Jesus to other people? Jesus' earthly parents took Him to the Temple to introduce Him to their faith leaders, as was the proper procedure of the day. When they brought Jesus to Simeon, he immediately knew who Jesus was and what He would be. It was the same way when I truly met Jesus myself. I knew, at that moment, just who He was and how important it was for me to build a relationship. There are ways to introduce people and there are ways to not introduce people to Jesus. Most of those who find faith off putting have probably had more than their share of the wrong way. Being pushed or shamed into faith is not productive. The aim is not for us to convert people, it is to get them to allow Jesus to convert them.

At the risk of stating the obvious, we cannot share something we don't have ourselves. Romans 10:6-10 puts it this way; “But the righteousness based on faith says, Do not say in your heart, “Who will ascend into heaven?” (that is, to bring Christ down) or “Who will descend into the abyss?” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach); because, if you

confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved.” Before we can even think of introducing Jesus to someone, we must know Him, trust Him and run as hard as we can to follow Him. If you don't have it, you cannot share it.

I am sure you have heard the saying; “Preaching to the choir.” Attempting to convince people who already believe is a colossal waste of time and energy. Jesus Himself was known to go to places and seek out people who did not believe as He did. Confining ourselves to speaking the gospel to those who already know the gospel does nothing to spread the gospel. We need not be hesitant to speak out around those who do not have access to the Word. Now I am not saying that we should just go out and push our beliefs on those who don't want to hear, but if we are presented with an opportunity, speak out. Let others know what you think and who you are. Follow Jesus' example and don't try to educate those who already know.

When, and if, we are given the chance to let people know about our faith, don't judge. One of the problems that people have with churches is that they have been told they must make themselves “good enough for God” before they can even consider attending. It is the tendency of all of us to think that once we clean up our act, we can be welcome in church. I think we need to change our way of thinking and make church the place where someone goes to learn how to be “good enough for God.” We say we believe that God loves us despite our sins and failures, but we live and act like it is being perfect that matters. Were you perfect on the day that you accepted Christ or did you ask Christ to cleanse you from your sin?

Don't go out of your way to try to convert or coerce people into believing. As Christians, we cannot drag them into faith. It is up to Jesus and the Holy Spirit to save and redeem. We are called to show people how to be Christians, not make them into Christians. Jesus never got up and spoke through a bullhorn telling us to repent, I'm coming back soon and you better be ready. God gave us free will and we have a natural tendency to back away when we are pushed into things we don't understand. Jesus got into a bit of trouble when He spent time with those who the church deemed as outsiders or unfit to associate with. Jesus made it known that He was not after the righteous, He wanted the unrighteous to see what it meant to follow God. We know that people need Jesus, we cannot make them want Him. The best we can do is show them what a life with Jesus looks like and spend a lot of time praying to God for help in teaching.

It is my humble opinion that if we want to help others find Jesus, we need to make sure that we don't push them away. We also don't want to make the mistake of keeping our faith to ourselves. We have been given a great gift, God gave us His Son and then the Holy Spirit. We weren't given them just to keep for ourselves. We are called to share the gospel, the good news of Christ's life, death and resurrection so that all of God's children have a chance to know what we know. Praise Be to God. Amen.

Prayers of People/Prayer- God of secret purposes and extravagant blessings, we come to praise you. We come because we want to, we sing our songs because we are glad to, we pray for your grace because we need to, and we ask for the love of Christ in our hearts because without it we are a dead loss. Please lift every shutter within our mind, and open every door within our soul, that you, the Lord of glory, the God of countless hosts, may come in. We rejoice, O God, that the earth and all who live in it are yours. We who live in the world count this a privilege

beyond all other. We therefore ponder the question, who can stand before you, for we know that we do not always have clean hands and pure hearts. Yet we also know that you have reached out to us in Jesus and have reconciled us to you and to one another in him. So we lift up our heads and praise you for coming into our hearts through the risen Christ and the power of your Spirit. May this time of worship here today leave no doubt that you are the King of glory not only in our hearts and lives but also in our witness to those around us in this part of the world in which we live. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Communion Hymn- 374- Here, O My Lord, I See Thee Face To Face

Thanksgiving Prayer- Lord Jesus, thank You for being with us today! You have been our guide and guard in all our days and we pray that will continue to be so. Thank You for always keeping us safe and warm, for keeping us away from harm. Thank You for giving us the gift of living another day and for our families who are never away. Bless those who are in need of Your loving protection. Let them be under Your wing and they will never be astray. Amen.

Closing Hymn- 206- Jesus Lover Of My Soul

Benediction- Depart now in peace, for your eyes have seen the salvation which God has prepared for all people. Grow in strength and wisdom and bring forth a harvest of righteousness and praise. And may God smile upon you and make you strong and wise; May Christ Jesus share his inheritance with you freely; And may the Holy Spirit open your eyes to the presence of God's Messiah. We go in peace to love and serve the Lord, In the name of Christ. Amen.