

August 9 Worship
Reader- Gayanne Boyer

Announcements/Joys

Time Of Quiet Meditation- *"I sought the Lord, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears."* Psalm 34:4

Opening Scripture- Psalm 85:8-18(page 512-513)

Opening Chorus- 87- We Are So Blessed

Responsive Call To Worship-

Leader: When we long for the special effects we think life should offer:

People: It is enough, for us, that God comes in a soft, summer shower.

Leader: When we our hearts are cracked by the drought of doubt:

People: It is enough, for us, that God opens up the fountains of faith for us.

Leader: When our senses are deadened by the sales pitches of our culture:

People: It is enough, for us, that God wraps us in the silence of grace.

Hymn of Praise- 42- Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

Unison Prayer/Lord's Prayer- Gracious God, we gather once again to offer You praise and thanksgiving for Your unfailing love and faithfulness, shown most clearly through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Grant us grace to worship You in spirit and in truth. Through the power of Your Holy Spirit, open our eyes to recognize You here among us. Give us courage to step out in faith to meet You, and confidence to follow where You lead. For You are our God, and we are Your people, called by Your name. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord who taught us to pray, saying...*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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine 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.

Old Testament Scripture- 1 Kings 19:9-18(page 313-314)

Special Music- *“All Things Bright And Beautiful”*- Hopkins Family&Jonah Hall

Gospel Scripture- Matthew 14:22-33(page 849)

Children's Time/Echo Prayer/Passing of the Peace- Creative Dance- Cassie Hopkins, Madie Hopkins, Emma Hall- *“Our God Is An Awesome God”*

Hymn- 650- I Love To Tell The Story

New Testament Scripture- Romans 10:5-15(page 985)

Message

“Do We Dare?”

Way back, many, many years ago, when I was much younger, the easiest way to get me to do something stupid was to say to me; I dare you. Now I cannot speak for girls, I can only speak to a boys perspective, but those 3 words, I dare you, were all that it took for most boys to stop thinking and just do whatever it was they were dared to do. I know that I have done some really foolish and even dangerous things because someone dared me. Driving through Willard Brook State Forest at night with no headlights pushing 80 MPH is one of the dumber things I have done but not the only one.

I think that there is something in a boys DNA that requires him to do a certain number of stupid things before he finally grows up, if he ever does. Psychologists call it “peer orientation,” which is slightly different from “peer pressure” since most of us, as boys, were more interested in doing things to show what we had than in waiting to be teased into it. Trust me when I tell you that the majority of the things I did were to show how stupid I could be rather than having to be coaxed into it.

There are very many verses in scripture where we are being dared, by God, to do certain things. The Bible does not specifically use the word dare but the implication is there. One thing we need to understand before anything else is that there is a difference in doing and being. Perhaps I should be asking “what is God daring us to be” rather than “God daring us to do”? We were not created to be human doings, we were created to be human beings. We were created in God’s image as human beings to communicate and walk in harmony with Him. Doing is the result of being. Birds sing because they are birds; they do not sing in order to become birds. They sing, fly, and feather their nests because of who they are. So, what God really wants is for all our doings to emanate from our being. He has no interest in grudging actions

that have no connection with our hearts. Whatever we do for God must come from a place of overflowing love, worship, and surrender.

I am going to refer, from now on, to what God *dares* us to be, or do, not what God *wants* us to be or do. From my readings of scripture, I believe that the first and foremost thing that God dares us to be is saved. He dares us to receive His gift of salvation freely and willingly by acknowledging Jesus as our Lord and Savior. God dares us to be disciples which requires us to study and learn from His Word. He dares us to love others, even those who have done wrong to us, as we love ourselves. God dares us to place heavenly things above earthly things and prioritize what is really important.

Take some time and think about how many times God has dared us to be faithful to His desires above our own. To place someone's welfare above ours is contrary to our base instincts but is imperative in what God wants of us. God has given us His Holy Word to instruct us, to dare us to follow. God is daring us to be the messenger of the gospel, the “good news” of Jesus Christ. We are dared to be, as close as we can, to what Jesus showed us how to be. Now that is a very large dare and may be tough to accomplish but, with God's help, it can be done.

It would be so much easier if God simply said to us just do it and we obeyed without question. God did not create us in that way, He gave us free will which is a major hindrance if what God wants is for us to do it His way. God does not want us to simply obey, He wants us to want to obey. In order to do this, we must be able to choose otherwise everything is just a one way street. God wants our love not just our obedience. For love to be real, it must not be coerced. If we did not have the ability to reject God, then neither would we have the ability to truly love Him. Our free will is what puts us above all the rest of God's creation. This may seem like arrogance on our part but we were the only part of creation that was “In God's image.” We read in the book of Genesis, Chapter 1, verses 26-27; “Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

Having created us, now He wants us to love Him and do His will, so He dares us to be what He knows we can be and shows us that He loves us so much that He is willing to take the chance that we might fail. We all know, or should know, that we are all imperfect and we will fall short. So, what does God do about that? He sends us His Son, Jesus, and then dares us to accept His sacrifice and make Him our Savior. Jesus, himself, has challenged us by daring us to believe that He is the Son of God. Jesus dared His disciple every day to follow Him and take up their cross,

their burden, to show that they had faith.

In the gospel message we read this morning, Jesus was seen walking on the water towards the disciples in the boat. The disciples thought that it was a ghost but when they recognized Jesus, Peter, when he recognized Jesus, said; “Lord, if it is you, bid me come to you on the water. He said come.” I would like to think that Jesus said; “I dare you.” The challenge was to find out if Peter had enough faith in Jesus to accept the dare. When Peter got out of the boat and began to walk, all of a sudden he turned his eyes away and became afraid. It was only then that he began to sink and Jesus reached out and took his hand.

Is that not the story of all of us. We take the dare that God has given us and just when we think we might make it, we look away and become afraid. Afraid of what? We all know in our hearts that God will not abandon us and yet we make that one moment of doubt stop us. Instead of trusting Jesus, we turn towards our own insecurities and misgivings, allowing them to distract us from what we know deep in our hearts is right. We become so tied up in our worldly ideas that we find it difficult to see what is right in front of us.

A very large part of what causes us to dare to do things is another aspect of God's gifts to us. God gave us a brain that is constantly learning, we hope, and is able to compare experiences so we can learn how to choose what is good and what is not. When I took that dare to drive down Willard Brook Road at such a high rate of speed, I had no real concept of what could go wrong. I knew that it was probably dangerous, but, I didn't know just how dangerous. After seeing the results of accidents that some of my friends had, I slowly began to understand how reckless I had been. It took some time, but I learned to slow down and not take those chances.

God is not the only one daring us. There is that part of life, we may call it Satan or the Devil, that tries to move us away from God and places temptations in front of us and dares us to dive in. This is where we need to exercise our gifts of choosing. While these temptations seem to look good at first, what will be the results if we go along? What will be the results if we choose God over these temptations? We know the answer deep in our minds or spirits, but sometimes the “feel good” part of us succumbs and we slip. God has given us the answer for that. He dares us to stop and take Jesus at His word; “For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”(Matthew 26:28)

When we dare to ask Christ for forgiveness, we are granted forgiveness for our sins, past, present, and future and if we should dare to slip up and do it again, He will forgive. Just don't make the mistake of thinking that we can continue to repeat the same mistakes over and over. Dare to Believe. Praise Be to God. Amen.

Prayers of the People- We hear the call to trust in God always, but honestly, some days our stresses and doubts are even more real to us than God, and trust is elusive. We remember how Abram dared to believe in God's promises, But belief like that is hard to come by. We are often inclined to think, "God helps those who help themselves," instead of daring to rely on the word of our Creator. When the world seems filled with dangers, we can be quick to protect ourselves, and we forget the wisdom of scripture, which reminds us that we find traces of evil both outside and inside of ourselves. With God's help, we confront our fears and struggles, and we call upon a power greater than our own to resist their pull. Hear us, Holy One, as we confess our frailty and failings. Though fear should beset us; though danger cause us to close up our doors; though troubles assail and lead us away from the ways of grace; only one thing is necessary: just turn back to God's promise of grace. Remember that God is reaching out with loving arms, and let yourself be held. Only ask for forgiveness, and it is ours: know that in this moment we have asked and in Christ Jesus, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God! Amen.

Closing Hymn- 433- My faith Looks Up To Thee,

Benediction- Jesus said: "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I am now sending you". The help of the saving Christ, the wisdom of the Living God, and the support of the loving Spirit, will be with you every step of the way, now and always. Amen!