



*This service is designed for use by a small gathering of God's people outside of the assembly of the full community. It draws from the Eucharistic tradition, but it is not a sacramental meal. All Christians are called to bless, and this includes blessings of food and drink shared and the people gathered. The people assemble with greetings and conversation. Candles are lit by individuals as they arrive, accompanied by a moment of silent prayer. One person acts as the leader to keep the flow of the worship moving. Prayers and readings are divided among the rest of the group.*

*The leader opens with Call to Worship*

### **Call to Worship**

*One* All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall bow before him. – Psalm 22:26

### **Opening Prayer**

*An appropriate prayer is offered to set the tone for worship. Collects from The Book of Common Prayer, especially the collect appointed for the day, are always appropriate.*

### **Music Offering**

*Please feel free to hum along! Singing in a mask is discouraged by health officials due to concerns for higher CO2 rebreathing when singing.*

### **The First Reading:**

#### **Romans 4:13-25**

*One* For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”) — in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become “the father of many nations,” according to what was said, “So numerous shall your descendants be.” He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. Therefore his faith “was reckoned to him as righteousness.” Now the words, “it was reckoned to him,” were written not for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed

over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

### **The Second Reading:**

#### **Mark 8:31-38**

*One* Jesus began to teach his disciples that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

## Teaching

*In small groups of approximately three, remaining at appropriate physical distance, choose **three** questions to discuss for approximately twenty minutes.*

- In our culture, the nature of God has often been described as “above” or “looking down” upon us, rather than with us – especially in our pain, our fallenness, our desperation. Describe how you see God being with and for us in hard times.
- How have I seen God do the seemingly impossible in my life or the lives of others?
- It’s easy to think that we must follow a lot of rules and do good things in order to be accepted by God, rather than trusting in his grace. How would you explain faith in God’s grace and promises to someone struggling with this concept?
- Recall a time in your life when you were on the receiving end of good intentions and loving advice that held you back from doing what you knew you had to do. Or a time when you’ve been compelled to advise someone away from doing something costly and painful that they felt called to do. Do you sense the tension between human and divine things in this recollection? What might it mean for you to “deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus,” in the present circumstances of your life?
- This passage prompts questions about what we value and what we’re willing to give up for those values. When have I been called to give up the pleasures of the moment for lasting things? The popular choice for the more principled one? Profit for honor? What areas of my life might God be inviting me to let go of in order to deepen and strengthen my interior life?
- As I reflect on the relevance of this message today, what conversations are creating divisions in the Church and in the world, and how might I, like the apostle Paul, be messengers of unity?

## Prayer of Blessing

*Before leaving your small groups, standing and remaining at appropriate physical distance, spend approximately five minutes praying for one another in turn. Begin by asking what each person would like prayers for and then have the other members of the group lift them to God.*

## Prayers of the People

*The whole group gathers for prayer. Prayers may be formal and prepared ahead of time, or come forth from the group at the time of worship.*

*Prayers are always offered for:*

- *The Universal Church, its members, and its mission*
- *The Nation and all in authority*
- *The welfare of the world*
- *The concerns of the local community*
- *Those who suffer and those in any trouble*
- *Those who have died*

*This prayer from Praying the Scriptures, by Jeremiah D. Williamson, can be used if desired.*

*One* Give praise all you who fear the Lord: proclaim God's greatness! With thankful hearts, let us pray, "O Righteous God, *increase our faith.*"

Lord Jesus, you invite us to follow you: Give your Church the courage and will to risk any and everything for the sake of the gospel. May we be bold in witness and resolute in discipleship.

*Silence.*

O Righteous God,

*All* **Increase our faith.**

*One* God the King, you rule over the nations: hear the cries of those living in poverty. Give the leaders of nations a heart for the poor. *Silence.*

O Righteous God,

*All* **Increase our faith.**

*One* God of Sarah, you bring life out of barren places: renew the creation. Forgive us for our misuse and neglect of your gifts. Help us to live as good stewards. *Silence.*

O Righteous God,

*All* **Increase our faith.**

*One* O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy: be gracious to the Church in this city. Strengthen your parishes as we make our Lenten journey. May we faithfully make known your saving deeds. *The people are invited to add their thanksgivings, followed by silence.*

O Righteous God,

*All* **Increase our faith.**

*One* Gracious Lord, you hide not your face from those in need: we trust in your faithfulness. Hear our prayers for those in pain and distress: *The people are invited to add their petitions, followed by silence.*

O Righteous God,

*All* **Increase our faith.**

*One* Everlasting God, you give life to the dead and call into existence the things that do not exist: hoping against hope, we trust in your eternal promises and look for the day of resurrection.

*Silence.*

O Righteous God,

*All* **Increase our faith.**

## **Confession**

*One* Let us confess our sins against God and one another.

*All* **Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in**

**your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.**

*One* Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life. **Amen.**

## **The Lord's Prayer**

*All* **Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.**

## **Blessing of the Meal**

*This portion of the service follows the shape of the Last Supper, and therefore may sound familiar and much like the Eucharist. However the elements are not consecrated, they are blessed, something all Christians are called to do. In times of pandemic, each person brings their own bread and wine. It is the time of prayer together that is shared, not the food.*

*Begin by having the person who will lead the prayer over the bread to invite each person to make ready the food they brought. When all are ready, the prayers are offered.*

*One* On the last night that Jesus gathered with his friends he took bread and he blessed it and shared it with his friends, for God who loves us, feeds us. As God's people ate manna in the wilderness and were satisfied, so we share this bread with Christ, and with one another. May it be for us bread from heaven, strength for our bodies, balm for our souls, and may it empower us to be Christ's body in this world. *Silence.*

*One* On the last night that Jesus gathered with his friends, he took wine and he blessed it and shared it with them. God who made us delights in us, and gives us good gifts to delight our tongues, and give joy to our souls. As Jesus offered the Samaritan woman water that would not fail, so Jesus offers us the same. May this wine be for us the holy drink of heaven, and may quench the thirst of our souls.

*All* **Holy and life-giving God, we thank you for the bounty of your Creation laid before us. We ask you to bless it, that it may be to us a holy**

**meal. We give thanks for all those who labored so that it might sustain us. Through it may you give us the strength to be your good stewards; to care and tend your creation, and to care especially for our siblings – all the people of this world. We ask these things by the grace of Jesus Christ and in power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

*The gathered join in eating. As this requires removing mask, care must be taken to ensure proper physical distancing continues. Music may be appropriate.*

### **Music Offering During the Meal**

*Please feel free to hum along!*

### **Sending Blessing**

*One person offers a blessing on the group gathered as they are sent into the world to do the work God has given each to do.*

*All* **Amen.**

*One* Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

*All* **Amen.**

*This service includes the work of The Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, The Rev. Josephine Robertson, All Saints Episcopal Church, Bellevue, WA and Renew Community House Church.*