

7/25/21 WORSHIP SERVICE

INTRODUCTION

Brent Rauh – Mary thought he was going to go to an inpatient rehab, but yesterday they sent him home with plans to do outpatient rehab.

Delton Voth – was trimming hedge trees yesterday and cut his leg badly. He's all right, but he had surgery last night to clean the wound very well, hoping to avoid infection. He was scheduled to be released from the hospital first thing this morning.

MORNING PRAYER – PASTOR LOIS

O Lord, you are a great God, creative and loving in all your ways. We are gathered here this morning to worship you, to be reminded that we are your people and that in you we live and move and have our being. We take our strength from you and not from our own human power; we are weak and unwise and without direction until we take our wisdom and direction from you.

God, we bring to you our requests, humbly and boldly. We ask you to hear our prayers. Be with Delton as he heals from this accident that happened yesterday. Lord, we realize his injuries could have been so much worse and we're grateful that he'll be all right. We thank you for good medical care and for the healing power you've given us in our bodies. Help Delton to heal fully and quickly.

We pray for Brent also as he heals. Give him the needed perseverance and determination, patience and courage. Be also with Mary and the children as they try to help Brent with this process. Be with us as we also come around them with your love. Help us to reach out in ways that are helpful and supportive.

Loving God, we pray for Mary Ann's family as they grieve her loss and reminisce and celebrate her long life of faithfulness to you. Give them your comfort and assurance that Mary Ann is fully in your presence now and at peace.

We pray for Glen as he makes the needed adjustments to life at Bethesda. Grant him also your comfort and peace of mind as he makes this huge change. Thank you for friends that are already there and be with them as they reacquaint – with Milt Duerksen and Irvin Goertzen and others.

Lord, we pray especially for those going to camp this week – as campers and as counselors. May your Spirit surround them and make your presence known to them. Be with Lizzie, with Eddie, with Noah, with Peter and with Erin. Bless them and all the others at camp this week. May it be a special, blessed time for them.

We pray, God, for Brooke as she makes preparations to go to Albuquerque for this school year. We also ask for blessed time for her – a time for growth and learning, for her faith to blossom and expand. We pray for Dawson Duerksen and the other participants in the unit as they also prepare.

God, we ask for your presence and blessing on those who may be travelling this week. We ask for their safe arrival to their destinations and safety as they travel back home again. Give them rest and fun and rejuvenation.

Be with us now as we continue in this worship service. May your Spirit be felt mightily as we worship you and remember what it means to be your faithful and sometimes fearful disciples. Help us to trust you, Jesus and to follow you each day and with each decision in our lives. We pray in your name. Amen

SERMON -

2 Kings 4:42-44; John 6:1-21
2021-07-25

Lois Harder

Enough for All

Some would say that at this point in time, in 2021, we have too much knowledge. Some might say that technology has gotten the best of us and maybe even that it's gotten away from us – that humans almost serve the technology in some cases rather than the other way 'round. Did anyone else have a time-warp flashback this week when Jeff Bezos and his billionaire crew blasted off toward space? I was reminded of the classic 1968 movie, *2001: A Space Odyssey* – remember? When the computer HAL began to call the shots rather than his astronaut programmers? It all kind of went south from there, if I recall. HAL gently but firmly denied Dave the astronaut's request and in his creepily calm computer voice, made it clear that he (HAL) was now in charge – not Dave. It made me wonder what would have happened if Jeff Bezos' space ship would have talked back to him like HAL did... "I'm sorry Jeff, we're not going to return to earth. You'll need to hang around up here in space for awhile – til you figure out a few things about compassion and creation and conceit."

Collectively, we have SO much knowledge in this day and age. Knowledge, after all, is power. Well... along with money. We've gone from giant, room-sized computers to tiny, hand-held, pocket-sized computers and even tinier ones that you can wear on your wrist. They can give us worlds of instant information and knowledge. Physicians have the knowledge to replace old, worn-out bones and organs in our bodies. Between medicine and science, there's enough knowledge to change our mood, to change our personality, to change our gender, to change the world. We have enough knowledge to be able to destroy the earth many times over.

But as we all know, there's a lot we don't know. We don't know exactly how certain birds and butterflies and other critters know when and where and how to migrate. We don't know exactly what happens in the moments when we move from life into death. We don't know how to completely eradicate the Corona viruses. And we don't know how Jesus fed so many people with so little food or how he walked on the sea. *That* is knowledge that we just don't have.

It seems that sometimes having so much of a certain *kind* of knowledge can be detrimental to our faith. Or maybe it's not actually having the knowledge – maybe it's what we do with it. Maybe some of you can relate to this experience. When I begin to feel sleepy and start winding down for the day, I often spend some time scrolling on my phone. I read articles or sometimes listen to podcasts, I look at items of interest that others have sent me and, of course, I look at facebook sometimes. All the while I'm gaining a certain kind of knowledge. I'm learning about

other people's experiences. I'm reading about places where there is drought and famine and fire, where there are wars that have been going on for decades. I'm learning about things that are happening on the other side of the world – different cultures and languages. And about things that are happening right here – conflicts and misunderstandings, people being hurt and hurting one another. And pretty soon, I feel like I have so much in my head that I can't sleep or pray or think through it all carefully or take any meaningful actions. Because I have so much knowledge of what's going on in the world, I can feel sort of numb and disempowered.

But, as one commentator wrote, "The Gospel of John is all about knowledge as power. Not the sort of knowledge that entertains or distracts or discourages, but the sort of knowledge that is relational, passionate and genuine. It's the sort of knowledge that leads to the truth of Jesus – not just Jesus as a concept that 'works' or explains, but the Jesus who lives and takes action among and through us.

These stories about the prophets feeding the multitudes (first Elisha in the Hebrew Bible, along with others – and then Jesus), bring with them the kind of knowledge that gives us power. Because it addresses the temptation to simply shake our heads, shrug our shoulders, wring our hands, and do nothing. The disciples were bringing the same sort of "reality check" that we do! "Six months' wages wouldn't buy enough to feed all these people. I mean... we have a little, but not enough!" These are the hard, cold facts of human knowledge. We *know* there is not enough. Not enough money, not enough time, not enough people, not enough commitment... and pretty soon we're immobilized again, unable to respond at all, because we know there is not enough.

But we also know that when we come together to make the MCC Relief Sales happen tens of thousands of dollars are raised for relief. We know that when neighbors help each other through difficult times, crops get harvested, houses and barns get rebuilt, meals are brought, people are nurtured and cared for. We know that when a group of people work together to provide affordable housing, our community is better for it and people are valued. We know that when we read and study and discuss together, the Spirit moves among us, encourages and inspires us, plants seeds of ideas for us. We know that when we hurt with one another's pain and when we share one another's joy we are strengthened, built up together, given what we need – with some left over.

This sort of action doesn't just happen because human beings decide they want to pool their goodwill and make the world a better place – I mean, that can be a part of it! But it happens when the people involved are focused on Jesus and on following his actions and instructions. Survey the need, take what you have and give thanks, be grateful for it. And then, with God's help and blessing, give it away. Pay attention to the leftovers – both food and people. They're both gifts from God, to be gathered and valued.

In the story in the gospel of John, when it looks as if the people are going to try to catch Jesus and try to harness his power to make him the kind of king they want him to be – a sort of

omnipresent social worker, he retreats. He returns to a deserted, quiet place to rest, to pray, to reconnect with God, the source of his power – the source of all power.

Even after such a miraculous experience with Jesus, the disciples are quickly back in a situation where they're fearful and uncertain. It got dark and the sea became stormy. In the gospel of John, darkness and the stormy sea are always symbolic of a sense of fear and chaos. And again – Jesus comes to them when they most need him. And again – they don't recognize him at first because he is (again) surprising them with a kind of powerful knowledge that we humans often don't understand and can't explain. But they need him and he comes to them. He reassures them and comforts them, reminds them not to be afraid. And again – they received him into their boat, into their presence.

At the end of all of our knowledge, and in the midst of overwhelming need, darkness and storms, there is Jesus coming to us with his love. When we recognize him, and invite him into our boat, he calms our fears, gives us his peace and shows us over and over again that there is enough. Thanks be to God!