

A Liturgy for Seminary Sunday

March 2, 2014

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Call to Worship

One: God says, "Come up to me on the mountain so that I can give you instruction."

Many: We gather today to celebrate all the instruction God gives to us through Moses, Elijah, Jesus, and the men and women teaching at Memphis Theological Seminary.

One: Jesus says, "Get up and do not be afraid."

Many: We gather today in thanksgiving for the Christ who teaches us and calms our fears.

One: The Holy Spirit says, "This is the beloved Son. Listen to him."

Many: We gather today to listen. We gather today to learn. We gather today to worship God.

Call to Confession

Like Peter on the mountain of the transfiguration, we too often want to settle in, to stop moving, to stop learning, to stop growing. We allow our pride to build walls around us that keep us from fulfilling all that God longs for us. These are the ways in which we sin and these are things we must confess. Together, let us come to God to confess those sins which keep us from being who God created us to be.

Prayer of Confession

Begin with a time for silent confession.

One: And, now we confess together

All: Holy and loving God, we come before you to break down the walls of sin that we build up because we believe it keeps us safe. We have sinned against you and our neighbor when we are unwilling to learn and grow. We have sinned against you and our neighbor when we have acted as if our education makes us better than others. We have sinned against you and our neighbor when we have failed to support all the men and women you have called to serve you in ordained ministry. Holy God, clear the clouds that blind us. Heal the pride that stagnates us. Open our hearts to the ways in which you provide tablets of instruction for us. We confess. We ask you to forgive us. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

God is a lover of justice who establishes equity. God executes justice and righteousness. God has promised us that through Jesus Christ we are forgiven. Thanks be to God! Amen. *(based on Psalm 99)*

Prayer for Illumination

Holy Spirit, as we read words written long ago and far away, we seek your light to shine on and through them so we can best understand the message that you have for us today. We pause to thank you for scholars of all types who provide us with translations and commentary so we can hear your Word most clearly. Enable us to take all that we know and all that we need to learn and meet you in the living word today. Amen.

Scripture Possibilities for the Sermon

- These worship elements are written with the lectionary texts for March 2, 2014 (Transfiguration of the Lord) in mind. Those texts are:
 - Exodus 24:12-18
 - Psalm 2 or Psalm 99
 - 2 Peter 1:16-21
 - Matthew 17:1-9

- Other possible texts for Seminary Sunday include:
 - Proverbs 4:10-13
 - 2 Timothy 3:14-16
 - John 1:1-5
 - Luke 1:16-17

Prayers of the People

As prayers of intercession are offered, there will be moments of silence during which you are invited to pray silently for those who have been lifted up.

Together, let us pray for God's children in the church and throughout the world.

May our search for education make us able to recognize the needs of the world so that we work for peace, justice, and righteousness. God, we pray for the world.

Silence

May we learn what it means to be your church in the world. We pray for the universal church and all its leaders. We pray for our denomination, our moderator, team leaders, and presbyteries. Help us to be the light of Christ for everyone seeking to know you better. God, we pray for the church.

Silence

May we realize that our nation has a long way to go to be all you dream for us. Help us to grow as neighbors and seek what is best for all rather than only a few. God, we pray for the nation.

Silence

May our community be one where every voice is heard and every need is met. Enable us to be a community of equality and acceptance. God, we pray for our community.

Silence

May Memphis Theological Seminary be strengthened through the next few years so that this ministry of our denomination can grow in teaching women and men to be ministers for the real world. God, we pray for MTS.

Silence

May our friends and family be well, joyful, and good. Bless those who grieve. Bless those who suffer from illness. Bless those who struggle financially, spiritually, or emotionally. Empower us to share the peace that passes all understanding with them. God, we pray for our family and friends.

Silence

May we never forget all those who have taught us in the faith, who have now found their home with you in eternity. We thank you for the cloud of witnesses which include some of the giants of MTS history – Colvin Baird, Hubert Morrow, Joe Ben Irby, Bill Ingram, Thomas H. Campbell, among others. We celebrate their lives, their love for education, and their witness to the resurrection through Jesus Christ. God, we remember all those who have died in the faith.

Silence

For these we pray, Eternal God, as Jesus taught us to pray.

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.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and power and the glory forever. Amen.

Invitation to the Offering

Today is Seminary Sunday. Our denomination provides us the opportunity once a year to stop and remember that pastors and teachers don't just fall out of the sky ready to enlighten us. We are a denomination that values education and longs to provide the best education possible for men and women who are called to be in full-time ministry in the

real world. As we bring our gifts to God today, may we thank God for those pastors, preachers, chaplains, teachers, and missionaries who are educated through Memphis Theological Seminary.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

God of wisdom, we bring these gifts to you today to support the ministry of this local congregation as well as Memphis Theological Seminary. We do not do this lightly for we realize what an impact our gifts can have in working alongside you to bring women and men to follow your call into the varied ministries you educate them for through our seminary. We ask you to bless these gifts now, that they be used wisely and well, that they touch the lives of local congregations by providing well-educated and good pastors and teachers, and they bless your kingdom on earth in a very real way. Amen.

Charge and Benediction

Go, now, down from the mountain and into the “real world.” Share what you know to be true. Seek what you do not know. And, follow Jesus each step of the way. As you do, may God bless you with tablets of instruction and may the light of the Christ guide you all the days of your life. Amen.