

WORSHIP NOTES

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost • September 18, 2011

The Season

God's amazing grace and love to all of us continue to be expressed as we journey through the autumn portion of Ordinary Time, focusing on life in community and what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

Today we commemorate Dag Hammarskjöld, a Swedish diplomat and humanitarian, who was killed in a plane crash on this day in 1961. He was posthumously awarded the Nobel Peace Prize that year for his efforts "to create peace and goodwill among nations and men." The depth of his Christian faith was revealed in the personal journal he kept which he described as "a sort of white book concerning my negotiations with myself — and with God." This book was later published with the title *Markings*, and it revealed his life as a combination of diplomatic service and personal spirituality, and of contemplation on the meaning of Christ in his life and action in the world.

In Word . . .

Jonah could be described as a reluctant prophet. Prior to today's reading, Jonah has attempted to run from God, been swallowed up and spit out by a great fish, and gone to Nineveh to preach. As our reading begins, the people of Nineveh have repented. God sees this and forgives them, and Jonah is not happy about any of it. God uses a shade bush to point out to Jonah that he is perfectly happy when God meets his needs, but he resents God's desire to do the same for others, particularly those he considers undeserving. In a similar vein, our Gospel includes the challenging parable of the laborers in the vineyard. It tests our idea of 'fair play' and points to a feeling we have probably all experienced – that others have gotten more than their due and we have not received what we deserve. God's mercy and goodness challenge us, as they did the workers in the parable, to move beyond these ideas. If we see things as God does, we will want everyone to be blessed. "The first will be last" because those closest to God's way of thinking will be eager for others to receive this blessing. It is a lesson in generosity and grace and a wonderful reminder that with God it is never too late. God loves and God gives, and we don't get what we deserve; we get, all of us, far more . . . Perhaps the journey begins with us being as surprisingly generous to others as God is with us . . .

And Song . . .

9:00 (Traditional)

"Salvation Unto Us Has Come" was written by Paul Speratus, a contemporary of Martin Luther and a priest that shared Luther's hope that reform could be accomplished from within the church. The hymn we sing today includes six of the original ten verses written while he was imprisoned and sentenced to death by burning for his beliefs. It is an eloquent text teaching salvation by faith alone and demonstrating the distinction between Law and Gospel. Speratus used a 15th century chorale melody for his text, ES IST DAS HEIL, and it first appeared in print in 1523 in a collection of hymns/chorales/spiritual songs compiled by Luther known as the *Achtliederbuch* and entitled "Etlich Christlich lider."

10:30 (Contemporary)

Our opening song and distribution song are two texts by Sylvia Dunstan, a gifted writer of scripturally based texts, published in *In Search of Hope and Grace*. Dunstan was ordained in 1980 and during her career served as a minister, a prison chaplain, and editor of a Canadian worship resource journal, *Gathering*. Dunstan's concern for others and love of liturgy are evident in her texts that have been set to traditional hymn tunes as well as music by contemporary composers. The settings we are using today are by Bob Moore, and Dunstan enjoyed hearing these settings before her untimely death in 1993, at the age of 38.