



St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church
Wilton, WI
October 11, 2020
19th Sunday after Pentecost
**Inviting People to Journey with Christ's
Family in Spreading God's Love and Mercy**

Gathering

*The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God**

CALL TO WORSHIP

Come, worship the God of all Creation.

We gather to praise the Creator, the continuous source of all living things.

Come, worship our God who breathes life into being.

We praise the Creator who fashions the forests, whose trees clean the air of this world.

Come, worship our God who forms life out of soil.

We praise the Creator whose land brings nourishment.

Come, worship our God who receives our lament in the wilderness.

We praise the Creator whose Son brings healing to all Creation.

Come, worship our God who sends waters flowing with life.

We praise the Creator whose baptism unites us to be one in the Body of Christ with all Creation.

Hymn

THIS IS MY FATHER'S WORLD



1 This is my Fa-ther's world, and to my lis-t'ning ears all
2 This is my Fa-ther's world; the birds their car-ols raise; the
3 This is my Fa-ther's world; oh, let me not for-get that,



na-ture sings, and round me rings the mu-sic of the spheres.
morn-ing light, the lil-y white, de-clare their mak-er's praise.
though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the rul-er yet.



This is my Fa-ther's world; I rest me in the thought of
This is my Fa-ther's world; he shines in all that's fair. In the
This is my Fa-ther's world; why should my heart be sad? The



rocks and trees, of skies and seas; his hand the won-ders wrought.
rus-tling grass I hear him pass; he speaks to me ev-'ry-where.
Lord is king, let heav-en ring; God reigns, let earth be glad!

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord of the feast, you have prepared a table before all peoples and poured out your life with abundance. Call us again to your banquet. Strengthen us by what is honorable, just, and pure, and transform us into a people of righteousness and peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Word

*God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.**

FIRST READING

After Jonah's short sermon in 3:4, the Ninevites all repented and God decided to spare the city. Jonah objected to this and became even more angry when God ordered a worm to destroy a plant that was providing shade. The book ends with a question that challenges any who are not ready to forgive: You, Jonah, are all worked up about a bush, but shouldn't I be concerned about a hundred and twenty thousand Ninevites?

Jonah 3:10-4:11

When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it. But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. He prayed to the Lord and said, "O Lord! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. And now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." And the Lord said, "Is it right for you to be angry?" Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city.

The Lord God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush. But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, "It is better for me to die than to live." But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?" And he said, "Yes, angry enough to die." Then the Lord said, "You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?"

L: The word of the Lord. C: **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 145:1-8

- ¹I will extol you, my God and King,
and bless your name forever and ever.
- ²Every day I will bless you,
and praise your name forever and ever.
- ³Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
his greatness is unsearchable.
- ⁴One generation shall laud your works to another,
and shall declare your mighty acts.
- ⁵On the glorious splendor of your majesty,
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.
- ⁶The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed,
and I will declare your greatness.
- ⁷They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness,
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.
- ⁸The LORD is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

SECOND READING

Paul writes to the Philippians from prison. Though he is uncertain about the outcome of his imprisonment, he is committed to the ministry of the gospel and calls on the Philippians to live lives that reflect and enhance the gospel mission.

Philippians 1:21-30

For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again. Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well—since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

L: The word of the Lord. **C: Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Acclamation



Jesus tells a parable about God's generosity, challenging the common assumption that God rewards people according to what they have earned or deserve.

The gospel according to Matthew 20:1-16

Glory to you, O Lord.

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.' When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.' When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?' So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

L: The gospel of the Lord. C: **Praise to You, O Christ.**

Sermon

Rev. Dr. Barbara Rossing

Dear friends in Christ grace to you and peace from God and from our savior Jesus the Christ. Amen.

So I'm preaching about the prophet Jonah and about the good news for us in this moment of environmental crisis. First question is who are we in the story of Jonah?

As a seminary professor and preacher I've typically seen myself in the role of Jonah, the reluctant prophet, called to preach to Nineveh the evil city. And I've seen myself as needing to be taught a lesson by that plant that God sends to teach Jonah that God's grace is bigger than he imagines.

But what if instead of seeing ourselves in the role of Jonah the prophet called to preach repentance to the great city that needs to turn. What if we see ourselves as that great city, that great city that needs to turn and repent. What if we see ourselves as Nineveh?

Just to review Nineveh was the capital city of the Assyrian Empire. You can read all about its sins in the prophet Nahum. Ah city of bloodshed, utterly deceitful, full of plunder, who enslaves nations and peoples, your merchants multiply like the stars of the earth.

So Nineveh is bad. Full of brutal violence, economic injustice, slave labor, greed. And now Nineveh this toxic killing system just comes to God's attention. Nineveh is coming under judgement. But God doesn't want Nineveh to be destroyed. God wants to save Nineveh. God wants Nineveh to turn and repent.

There is so much good news in the Book of Jonah for our times that can help us today, in our time of multiple crises. The fact is that we too live in a time when God wants the greatest powers on earth to turn. We see imperial systems exposed, laid bare today, by multiple crises. God wants us to turn, to change course. That's the Biblical word *shuv* in the Hebrew or in Greek *metanoia*, to turn around so that we and our beloved world will not be destroyed.

We face multiple crises today that are killing people. You know them: interconnected systems of violence, structures of violence that are destroying lives unequally, especially Black and Brown people's lives. The Coronavirus pandemic, the sin of white supremacy, racial injustice and violence, the sin of economic injustice, economic inequality causing suffering. And at the same time the sin of environmental injustice.

In slow moving, looming climate crisis manifested in droughts, hurricanes, and floods in Puerto Rico, Iowa, in India. Heat waves and wildfires in California— last year in Australia— terrible fires. This is the crisis that carries the most perilous, long term consequences for hundreds of millions of refugees around the world. People fleeing crop loss in their homelands, crossing borders to find food because their land can no longer support farms anymore.

Like the people in the Bible Naomi and Ruth, Jesus crossed borders for safety from violence. This is the global climate change crisis, overheating our planet, the result of burning of fossil fuels. The world is ill. We are ill. We need turning, like the song The Canticle of the Turning. The world is about to turn and we pray that it will turn in time to be saved.

I've met Central American farmers who are no longer able to raise their crops because the rains don't come when they should anymore. I've met Tanzanian Lutherans from mountain villages who never had malaria and mosquitoes before global warming and now they're losing children to malaria death. I've met Lutheran families from Alaskan villages whose houses are falling into the ocean because of melting permafrost and loss of sea ice. And this is the great injustice of climate change. People in communities who have done nothing to cause the problems are the ones who are being hardest hit with the greatest suffering. That is not fair.

Jonah finally got the message. He was turned back in the correct direction. Jonah reluctantly then went to Nineveh preaching in just 40 days this great City will be destroyed. But prophecy doesn't mean prediction— that's the mistake Jonah made— prophecy means warning. It's a wake up call, there is still time to repent and turn. In just 40 days he said. In just 10 years our best scientists are saying that's the intergovernmental panel on climate change. And I believe the scientists. I believe their wake-up call. I hope you believe them too.

So we face a kairos moment, that's the biblical word that Greek Orthodox patriarch Archbishop Bartholomew uses to describe our moment in time. So he founded the season of creation, that's what we're observing now, the season of creation, joining with all our churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Council of Churches, Roman Catholic churches, Pope Francis, Lutherans Restoring Creation, your congregation, all of us.

Kairos is a Biblical word that means "an urgent moment in time" that is now. Time to turn is now. If we want to hope to keep global temperature rise under a 3.6 degree increase, a safe level, avert disastrous consequences, to protect the oceans, to protect these beautiful forests that are the lungs our planet. The time is now to clean up our air and water so our children and grandchildren inherit a livable planet.

We must follow the path that our best policy leaders say is possible, we must turn away from burning fossil fuels, electrify everything, make a just transition to clean renewable energy, protect the most vulnerable communities, provide for those who lose their livelihood as a result. We've got to flatten the curve of carbon emissions urgent and we can do it.

The Book of Jonah has so much good news for us in this moment of crisis. That's why I'm preaching on Jonah.

Three things: the first good news, God loves Nineveh, this hated foreign city, God loves it. God's heart is moved to compassion by the more than 120 thousand people who live there plus the many animals. This is good news for us. God does not want Nineveh to be destroyed. God wants people there to listen, to change, to avert the catastrophe. God is gracious. God loves Nineveh and us and the whole creation passionately.

Second good news and perhaps the most amazing: change happens. Much to Jonah's amazement, even chagrin, Nineveh does repent, they turn, a great turning, they turn around, they put on sackcloth and ashes they repent, even the animals put on sackcloth and ashes and I don't know if you've ever put clothes on animals but that's pretty funny. The model of Nineveh as a huge imperial city turning away from its path of violence and injustice, and its unsustainable path to a different path in just 40 days, this can serve as an inspiration to us as a model of how our economies can change. And if the Coronavirus pandemic has taught us anything good, it's that we have the ability to make drastic changes really fast. That's hopeful. We can do it. Nineveh, the giant ship of state, all the people, all the animals, they changed their course they turned around, they changed policy really fast.

That's what repentance means. How do they do it? How did change happen? Well it was a people's movement like what Congressman John Lewis called "good trouble." The change began with people who listened to God, took to the streets, organizing good trouble to pressure their leaders to change. In response then to grassroots pressure, the king listened, he repented, he got on board, he embarked on a fast-track campaign to change the empire away from injustice. All shall turn away from their evil way and from violence, he said, perhaps we are in time to avert the disaster. He made the case so we won't be destroyed. He even enlisted the animals to join the turning and so can we. Everyone participates.

The third piece of good news here is that that disaster was averted. This is what makes Jonah mad in that hilarious pouting scene with the bush. I knew you were a God slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and ready to relent from

punishing. What an amazing profession of faith. I knew you were a God of steadfast love.

Time is short. It was only 40 Days for Nineveh, it's 10 years or so for us but the good news we can learn from Jonah is that there is still time to avert disaster. Now to be sure: global warming, Coronavirus, these are not punishments from God and we need to say that. That's a big difference from us and the Jonah story. God doesn't send sicknesses or catastrophes as punishment. That would be terrible theology. But global warming does follow a logic of consequences, laws of physics and chemistry. We live on this beautiful, finely calibrated planet with the perfect amount of carbon in the atmosphere. Most of our carbon isn't in the atmosphere, in fact, it is safely sequestered underground, under our feet in the rocks layers. I used to be a geology major so I love this geology. Most of the carbon is underground.

And in this wonderfully calibrated system certain actions cause other actions so you can't keep digging up the fossil carbon that's sequester underground and burning it into the air without terrible consequences, without burning up the planet. For now, oceans are absorbing most of the carbon but that too has consequences and we have to stop.

The good news is that God has made this amazing planet with powers for healing healing and resilience. Scientist tell us there still time to change, that nature can help us heal. We can draw down carbon. This is one of my favorite books, the drawdown project: 100 Ways To draw down carbon below these levels. We're at now a 440 parts per million and increasing. All of us can be a part of the turning. All of us can be a part of the drawdown, supporting a transition to renewable energy, regenerative agriculture, battery storage technology, advocating for putting a real price on carbon that reflects its externalities, it's true cost. Ee can pay farmers to sequester carbon in the soil and forests as carbon storers, we can build resilient communities, green teams in our congregations and synod, we can share a vision of turning, what abundant life for all creation looks like, Jesus' vision for abundant life.

That's what we're working on with Lutherans Restoring Creation with the congregational green team program, the green shepherd's program, that's what we're working on with the ELCA sustainability table, with advocacy— how to

love God's world, how to trouble the waters with good trouble, for justice for God's people and for all creation.

The prophet Jonah can serve as a parable for us, for our church, for all of us. Nineveh, that huge world trading empire that God did not give up on, can be an inspiration for us today. For system change, for urgent repentance, for turning our economy away from injustice and injustice. This is a kairos moment for us in these next crucial years and we can do it.

So there is unbelievable good news for Nineveh in this story, good news that we can all take to heart. Surely we can do as well as Nineveh. We can do better. The prophet Jonah is still speaking today, God still loves us so much that God pleads with us to turn. It's not too late. God is a god of generosity, full of compassion. God is still teaching us lessons through the plants, the bushes, the animals, the ecosystems, through nature that can heal us. Turn us, O God of great compassion. Turn us. Turn us to you in Jesus' name. Amen.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

We believe in the debonaire God who clothes the wild flowers dressing them so superbly that they outdo Solomon in all his glory; who is the true Friend of all creatures great and small, who feeds magpies and laughing kookaburras, and even doleful ravens and drongos.

We believe in the God of Christ Jesus the Source of abundance, full of grace and truth.

We believe in the extravagant God who turns the other cheek, goes the second mile, turns water into the best wine, brings healing with his every touch, and who welcomes a woman's love as she fills the house with unforgettable fragrance.

We believe in the faith-full God of Jesus Christ, who sweated blood in an Olive Grove, and kept the faith to the very end.

We believe in the redeeming God who spared no cost, forgave even his brutal crucifiers, had time for a dying thief at his side, and who on the third day did a thing so prodigious that even his friends were dismayed with joy.

We believe in the God of Jesus Christ, the Source of abundance wherever we turn and no matter what we do.

Amen.

INTERCESSORY PRAYERS

O God, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen: Your great love has placed us in your creation, and you commanded us to care for it. Your works declare glory and strength, and you call us to praise and reverence. Where we have degraded or destroyed earth's bounty, forgive us. Where we have taken beauty and majesty for granted, have mercy upon us. Where we have become estranged from the creatures with whom we share this planet, grant us your peace.

Creator God, hear our prayer.

As we reflect upon our relationship with your creation, we know that there are many things that thwart our efforts and our responsibilities to all that you have made. For the openness to learn about environmental issues and concerns, and the courage to advocate for and protect all that has been entrusted to us, we pray:

Creator God, hear our prayer.

In such a great and complex world, we often feel so small and helpless, as if what we do has no impact on the rest of your creation. Yet we know that because we are created in your image, we are connected with the entirety of creation, just as you are. For an awareness of how our own lifestyles can be modified to help protect the environment, we pray:

Creator God, hear our prayer.

In an environmental catastrophe, the people who suffer first and greatest are often the poorest of the poor. Yet we rarely hear their voices, silenced as they are by the realities of global life. For those who live in poverty and suffer the devastating effects of flooding, drought, and other environmental issues, we pray:

Creator God, hear our prayer.

In recent days, even the ground under our feet has begun to tremble, reminding us that we live together in a fragile community of life. For our own community, our city and state, and for those who suffer from sickness and death, especially Katie, Carla, Ruth, Judy, Alrita, Dick, Lisa, Pam, Curt, Deb, Lois, Tessa, Doug, Chris, Karl, those affected by the Coronavirus, and those we name aloud and in our hearts, we pray:

Creator God, hear our prayer.

God of the sun and the moon of the mountains, deserts and plains; God of the mighty oceans, of rivers, lakes and streams; God of all creatures that live in the seas and fly in the air; Of every living thing that grows and moves on this sacred Earth. Help us to love and respect all that you have made. Help us to care for what you have made good and holy. Give us the wisdom and the passion to change our minds and hearts and our ways. Let us be the change we pray for, bringing about ecological conversion which grows and spreads to every corner of the Earth. For our sake now and for every generation which is to come.

Amen.

L: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.*

Hymn

There's a Wideness in God's Mercy



- 1 There's a wide-ness
- 2 There is wel-come
- 3 For the love of
- 4 'Tis not all we



in God's mer - cy, like the wide - ness of the sea;
for the sin - ner, and a prom - ised grace made good;
God is broad - er than the mea - sures of our mind;
owe to Je - sus; it is some - thing more than all:



there's a kind - ness in God's jus - tice which is more than
there is mer - cy with the Sav - ior; there is heal - ing
and the heart of the E - ter - nal is most won - der -
great - er good be - cause of e - vil, larg - er mer - cy



lib - er - ty. There is no place where earth's sor - rows
in his blood. There is grace e - nough for thou - sands
ful - ly kind. But we make this love too nar - row
through the fall. Make our love, O God, more faith - ful;



are more felt than up in heav'n. There is no place
of new worlds as great as this; there is room for
by false lim - its of our own; and we mag - ni -
let us take you at your word, and our lives will



where earth's fail - ings have such kind - ly judg - ment giv'n.
fresh cre - a - tions in that up - per home of bliss.
fy its strict - ness with a zeal God will not own.
be thanks-giv - ing for the good - ness of the Lord.

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L: Go in peace. Remember the poor.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

IN OUR PRAYERS

Katie Wallace, Bill Collar, Carla Von Haden, Ruth Johnson, Judy Bever, Alrita Ornes, Dick Krause, Lisa Rhodes, Pam Liefke, Curt Brueggen, Deb Paeth, Lois Reineke, Tessa Klipstein.

IN THE MILITARY

Jacob Picha, Todd Nofsinger, Dylan Dougherty, Danelle Dougherty, Seth Tormoen, Robert Cale.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Thank you to Tom and Nancy Larson for delivering the quilts and school kits to the LWR boxcar in La Crosse yesterday.

The shoeboxes will be available next Sunday and will need to be returned no later than November 23, 2020. If you are shopping, don't buy crayons, pencils, pencil sharpener, scissors, or erasers. We have plenty of them left over from the school kits. We do have pens, but not as many.

PRAY FOR THE CHILDREN

We urge you to remember the children of our church, as well as children throughout the world, in your prayers.

Lord, Jesus Christ, I bring to you:

Jada, Myles, & Conner Garske; Britain Hahn, Gracie & Kaden Brandau; Katie Pagel, Amara Brandau; Chase Brandau; Avery Brueggen; Riley Brueggen; Nolan & Logan Buchholz; Thadyn & Ayawyn Conner; Vanessa & Elliott Ornes; Lailah Eckes; Lena Ornes; Porter Sorenson; Kennedy & Josie Ornes; Brooklyn, Madelyn, Kaylin, Emma, Bryce, Marah, Bria, Ava, Katie, & Benjamin Gruen; Brady Zimmerman; Braylee Zimmerman; MaKenzie & Cooper Powell; Wesson Mayne; Vanessa, Mia, & Brek Anderson; Tyler & Jaden Bever; Carlee, Collin, & Camden Neidfeldt; Morgan Speicher; Avery & August Arndt; Krista & Sierra Cook; Tyler Brandau; Franklin & Douglas Wildes; Sophia, Derek & Deacon Erdman; Kody Tormoen; Angel Brueggen; Robert Cale; Callie Fleming; Miranda, Daphne & Linus Arndt; Natalie, Brodie & Fynlie Stanek; Emma Elder; Bryson Lamb; Alaina & Braxton Holthaus; Jada Leis; David, Sam & Zachary Ross; Gannon Tormoen; Jase & Margo Picha.

That your spirit will dwell with them according to your will. That they will grow in the knowledge of you and know that they are dearly loved by you. I pray that you will protect them from deception by the evil one and all his darts that would lead them astray. May they do well in school, learning and discerning what direction you have in mind for them. I also pray for all children everywhere, that you would keep them in your care.

In Jesus' name I pray.

Amen

NINE MONTH FINANCIAL

As a result of the fundraiser, we were able to complete the nine months ending 9/30/2020 with our income exceeding our expenses by \$2,295.67.

CONTACTS DURING CORONAVIRUS CLOSURE

In case of emergency, contact Pastor Cathleen, via text, 608-865-1074, Justin Arndt (608-435-6336) (414-587-6642) or Nalani Bever (608-387-2311).

To activate the prayer chain, please contact Nalani or Louise Buchholz (608-435-6435).

Additional Contact Information:

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