



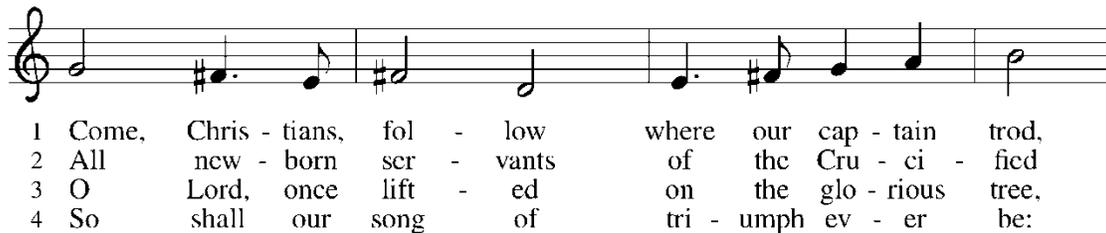
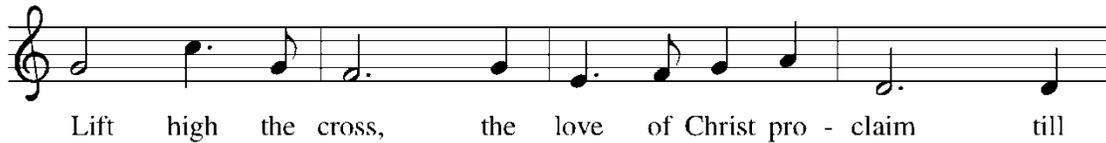
St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church
Wilton, WI
3rd Sunday after Pentecost
June 21, 2020
**Inviting People to Journey with Christ's
Family in Spreading God's Love and Mercy**

God does not promise that the path of the disciple will be easy. Jeremiah feels the pain of rejection from those who do not want to hear what he has to say. Jesus declares that his words may bring stark division. Even so, we need not be afraid for God accounts for each hair on our heads. Though we may experience rejection, frustration, division, and death, God's grace and love make us a new creation each day. We are sent from worship to witness to Christ in the world.

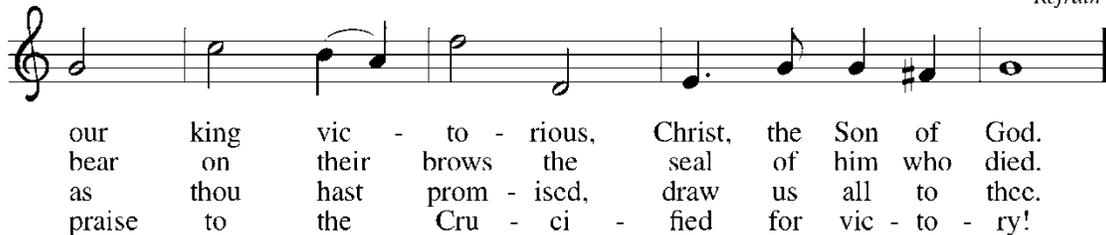
Gathering

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

Lift High the Cross



Refrain



PRAYER OF THE DAY

Teach us, good Lord God, to serve you as you deserve, to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labor and not to ask for reward, except that of knowing that we do your will, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.

Word

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

FIRST READING

Jeremiah accuses God of forcing him into a ministry that brings him only contempt and persecution. Yet Jeremiah is confident that God will be a strong protector against his enemies and commits his life into God's hands.

Jeremiah 20:7-13

- ⁷O LORD, you have enticed me,
and I was enticed;
you have overpowered me,
and you have prevailed.
I have become a laughingstock all day long;
everyone mocks me.
- ⁸For whenever I speak, I must cry out,
I must shout, "Violence and destruction!"
For the word of the LORD has become for me
a reproach and derision all day long.
- ⁹If I say, "I will not mention him,
or speak any more in his name,"
then within me there is something like a burning fire
shut up in my bones;
I am weary with holding it in,
and I cannot.
- ¹⁰For I hear many whispering:
"Terror is all around!
Denounce him! Let us denounce him!"
All my close friends
are watching for me to stumble.
"Perhaps he can be enticed,
and we can prevail against him,
and take our revenge on him."
- ¹¹But the LORD is with me like a dread warrior;
therefore my persecutors will stumble,
and they will not prevail.
They will be greatly shamed,
for they will not succeed.
Their eternal dishonor
will never be forgotten.

¹²O LORD of hosts, you test the righteous,
you see the heart and the mind;
let me see your retribution upon them,
for to you I have committed my cause.
¹³Sing to the LORD;
praise the LORD!
For he has delivered the life of the needy
from the hands of evildoers.

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Psalm 69:7-10, 16-18

⁷Surely, for your sake I have suffered reproach,
and shame has covered my face.
⁸**I have become a stranger to my own kindred,
an alien to my mother's children.**
⁹Zeal for your house has eaten me up;
the scorn of those who scorn you has fallen upon me.
¹⁰**I humbled myself with fasting,
but that was turned to my reproach.**
¹⁶**Answer me, O LORD, for your love is kind;
in your great compassion, turn to me.**
¹⁷Hide not your face from your servant;
be swift and answer me, for I am in distress.
¹⁸**Draw near to me and redeem me;
because of my enemies deliver me.**

SECOND READING

In baptism we were incorporated into the reality of Christ's death and resurrection. We have been made new in Christ through his death and resurrection to live freed from sin.

Romans 6:1b-11

^{1b}Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? ²By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? ³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.
⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷For whoever has died is freed from sin. ⁸But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia.

Jesus warns his disciples that their ministry in his name will meet with opposition. However, he assures them that they need not fear for the truth will come to light. Life is found in Christ.

The gospel according to Matthew 10:24-39

Glory to you, O Lord.

[Jesus said to the twelve:] ²⁴“A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; ²⁵it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

²⁶“So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. ²⁷What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. ²⁸Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰And even the hairs of your head are all counted. ³¹So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

³²“Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; ³³but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

³⁴“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

³⁵For I have come to set a man against his father,
and a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;

³⁶and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household.

³⁷Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ.

Sermon

Who and/or what defines us? As I reflected on our gospel passage for this week, several realities of our present day came to mind. First is the fact, that we are still living in the midst of the Coronavirus Pandemic. That has not changed, even though "Safer-at-Home" and other restrictions have been lifted. We still need to be cautious, social distance, and wear masks to protect ourselves and our family members from this invisible virus. Second is the fact, that we have been witnessing a ground swell of protests in support of racial justice since the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Rayshard Brooks, and other persons of color. Third is the fact, that this past week there were several days/events of significance--June 17 was a day of commemoration in the ELCA for the martyrdom of the Emanuel 9. June 19 (Juneteenth) was a day to mark the end of slavery in the United States. June 21 (today) is the secular Father's Day celebration to honor all fathers.

These present day realities brought me back to my initial question-- Who and/or what defines us? The recent events reminded me of a discussion that took place in one of my classes at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago about 4 years ago. McCormick has a large population of students of color, especially African-Americans, but some Asians, and Latin@s (a collective spelling for the words Latino and Latina). On that day, we had a discussion regarding oppression and racism. As we started our discussion, my naive assumption was that there would be stories of hope; stories of the progress that has been made or is currently being made. However, I was surprised. I was surprised to hear many of my classmates who are African-American state that they live with and experience oppression and racism on a regular basis. I had thought that there had been some improvement for black persons in the United States, but that is not what they told us. Some shared stories from their own lives of their oppression. Some spoke of family members' struggles. Almost all agreed that they still feel the oppression of 200-300 years ago!

I wondered how this could be. They explained that the history of their ancestors is still very much a part of them. Growing up in an African-American household includes learning the collective stories of one's ancestors. Many of the stories are about the oppression that their ancestors faced; whether as slaves, as "free" persons living in the early years after the Emancipation Proclamation, during the Jim Crow Era, during the Civil

Rights Era of the 1950's and 1960's, or even today. Their ancestors' history is their history, and the oppression, inequity, racist attacks, and violence that their ancestors experienced continues to live on and resonate in them.

Who and/or what defines us? The students' speaking in my class were all seminary students. They were college-educated, many of them taking Master of Divinity classes part-time while they worked full-time jobs. Some grew up in Chicago, and some grew up in other states, including southern states. Yet, the sting of racism, prejudice, oppression and injustice in their families lives on in them even today, and most likely will continue to live on in them for the rest of their earthly lives.

Who and/or what defines us? As a white person, I cannot say that the actions of my ancestors 200-300 years ago have much bearing on my life today. I do not know many stories of my ancestors. I am not aware that those who were immigrants in the late 1800's experienced oppression, inequity, racist attacks, or violence like my African-American classmates described. I and my family members have most likely never experienced these things, in large part, because we are white and have had many privileges because of our color. Who and/or what defines us?

Our gospel passage for today is a continuation of the pericope from last week. Matthew 10:1-23, spoke of the commissioning of the disciples, Jesus' teaching and modeling, Jesus' instructions regarding the disciples' mission, and some of their potential challenges. Today's passage focuses more directly on the disciples themselves; the influences from other persons and forces, their commitment to following God, and additional challenges that they will face. It speaks of the disciples, and us, being called to do Christ's work in the world. It speaks of who and/or what defines us.

As human beings, we are faced with challenges and opportunities on a daily basis. We are faced with choices: positive, negative or neutral. Who we are depends in part on our family of upbringing, our religion, our job, our lifestyle, our community, our memberships, etc... It also depends on our race, our cultural heritage, our gender, and other characteristics. These things can be influenced by societal norms and values. They can be influenced by persons who choose to oppress, belittle, and harm others. What defines us depends on all of these things to a greater or lesser extent. For some of these things, we have a personal element of control and free will. For some things such as our race, gender, and appearance, we have little control. For the actions of others,

we have no direct control.

Who can define (or influence) us? Our passage speaks of teachers, masters, the evil one, as well as fathers, mothers, and other family members. It speaks of those with power, authority, and/or influence over us. Who and/or what defines us depends in large part on who we follow.

Jesus said, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and one's foes will be members of one's own household." (Matthew 10:34-36)

Although we may be born into the same biological family, all members need not hold the same views. God gives us minds to think and ears to hear, yet what we think and hear may be different from that of our mother, father, brother, sister or other relative. The choices we make and the power, authority, and influence that others have on us, are different for each person. Discord and strife occurs within families. Some family members may choose to place God first and foremost in their lives, while others may not. Even those in the same family who hear God's word, may go astray.

As I mentioned in last week's sermon, there are persons who take the Bible out of context and use scripture for their own purposes. Some use the Bible to justify their own human power and their authority over other persons. Some use scripture to build themselves up and tear others down. Some harden their minds and hearts to hearing what God has to say. Some refuse to follow Jesus' teaching and modeling. It is to these family members that Jesus is referring; the family members that one may need to challenge for the sake of the gospel and for the sake of their lives.

As I watched the ELCA prayer service for the commemoration of the martyrdom of the Emanuel 9 on Wednesday morning, I heard something that I did not know. It was about the Bible Study at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church on June 17, 2015. Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, mentioned that the Bible Study attended by 9 persons and the person who killed them (who was raised in the ELCA), was about the parable of the sower. She referenced the seed that fell on rocky ground in her sermon.

Jesus said,

Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them quickly. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen! (Matthew 13:3b-9, NRSV)

Jesus' interpretation helps us to understand what this parable means.

When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty. (Matthew 13:19-23, NRSV)

Who and/or what defines you? While we are all part of the human family, and our own biological family, we do not have control over them. We can strive to be seed sown in good soil, even though the world presents us with many challenges. Are there people who play a significant role in your life for the better? Are they persons, perhaps, like those sown on the path. Are they persons, perhaps, like those sown among the thorns, whose influence in your life leads you astray? Are they persons who bear fruit, who are sown in good soil, who help you in your daily walk with God?

In our present time, we do not talk much about the evil one and his actions in the world. Yet, we know that evil exists and it affects us all. While we may keep the sinful things that affect us and our family members to ourselves, God encourages us not to be afraid. We can share our stories, and our ancestors' stories, so that others will learn from them. It is through the stories of our ancestors that we vicariously experience the challenges in our world. It is through hearing other's stories, that we vicariously begin to understand what life is like for those of other races, cultures, gender identities, heritages, etc... It is through hearing scripture and not hardening our minds and hearts to the Holy Spirit's work within us, that we grow and bear fruit. When we share the stories of others who have been oppressed, mistreated, and otherwise hurt, we can learn from their stories

and use them to make different, better choices in the future. The stories of our ancestors hold meaning for us, but they do not have to define who or what we will be if we place our trust in God!

Through the sadness of my classmates' stories, a ray of hope shone through. It is a ray of hope for their personal futures. It is a ray of hope for my story (and a ray of hope for many of your stories, too). One constant in the lives of many of my African-American classmates, and in my family, has been faith. Faith was important to my ancestors, and faith was important to the ancestors of many of my seminary classmates of color. Faith in God: God's power, God's forgiveness, God's grace, and God's love.

Our gospel passage for today reminds us that we are to place our hope, our faith, our trust in God by putting God first and foremost in our lives. Human beings may have other desires for us. Human beings may press us to strive for other things. Human beings may have their own power and glory in mind. But God is for us! God, who wants the best for us. God who places our worth above that of the sparrows. God who knows us intimately, even counting the hairs on our heads. God the Father, who invites us and encourages us to know him as our heavenly Father. God the Son, who died for all humanity on the cross, and who calls us to take up his cross and follow him. God the Holy Spirit, who speaks to us in our innermost being and directs our paths. The one, Triune God, our refuge and our strength, our hope in times of trouble.

Who and/or what defines us? Jesus said, "Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it." (Matthew 10:39). When God is number one in our lives, we desire to share the good news of the gospel with others. We share our stories, we carry their burdens with them, and we seek justice and righteousness for all that God has created. We move away from acts of oppression, injustice, racism, and intolerance. When God is number one in our lives, we move away from what others tell us our lives will be, and we move closer to what God calls us and wants us to be. If we are Christians seeking to do God's will, placing God first and foremost in our lives, we experience new life in God. We can live each day mindful of the past, but not defined by the past. We can live each day moving in faith toward the future; a future filled with hope, trust, and the love of God. Amen.

Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus



1 Let us ev - er walk with Je - sus, fol - low his ex - am - ple pure,
2 Let us suf - fer here with Je - sus, and with pa - ti - ence bear our cross.
3 Let us glad - ly die with Je - sus. Since by death he con - quered death,
4 Let us al - so live with Je - sus. He has ris - en from the dead



through a world that would de - ceive us and to sin our spir - its lure.
Joy will fol - low all our sad - ness; where he is there is no loss.
he will free us from de - struc - tion, give to us im - mor - tal breath.
that to life we may a - wak - en. Je - sus, you are now our head,



On - ward in his foot - steps tread - ing, trav - 'lers here, our home a - bove,
Though to - day we sow no laugh - ter, we shall reap ce - les - tial joy:
Let us mor - ti - fy all pas - sion that would lead us in - to sin;
we are your own liv - ing mem - bers; where you live, there we shall be



full of faith and hope and love, let us do our Sav - ior's bid - ding.
all dis - com - forts that an - noy shall give way to mirth here - af - ter.
and the grave that shuts us in shall but prove the gate of heav - en.
in your pres - ence con - stant - ly, liv - ing there with you for - ev - er.



Faith - ful Lord, with me a - bide; I shall fol - low where you guide.
Je - sus, here I share your woe; help me there your joy to know.
Je - sus, here with you I die, there to live with you on high.
Je - sus, let me faith - ful be; life e - ter - nal grant to me.

Text: Sigmund von Birken. 1626–1681; tr. *Lutheran Book of Worship*, alt.
Music: LASSET UNS MIT JESU ZIEHEN, Georg G. Boltze, 18th cent.
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PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Called into unity with one another and the whole creation, let us pray for our shared world.

Expansive God, you bring diverse voices together to form your church. Open our hearts and unstop our ears to learn from one another, that differences might not overshadow our baptismal unity. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Providing God, your creation shows us that life comes from death. Renew the places where our land, air, and waterways have been ill for too long. Direct the work of all who care for birds and their habitats. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Protecting God, sustain and keep safe all who work to defend others across the world. Revive and strengthen organizations dedicated to caring for refugees and migrants while their homelands struggle for peace. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Loving God, you promise to be with all who are persecuted for your sake. Guide all who speak your word of justice and console any who are tormented or targeted for being who they are. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Compassionate God, you are with us and we are never alone. We pray for all who are suffering, or otherwise in need of your loving, healing care. We remember Katie, Bill, Dakota, Carla, Ruth, Judy, Alrita, Dick, Donna, Brad, Fred, and all those we name aloud and in our heart.

Your mercy is great.

Reigning God, you bless us with guides and caretakers in the faith. Bless all fathers and father figures who strive to love and nurture as you do. Comfort all who long to be fathers and all for whom this day is difficult. As we give thanks for fathers, mothers, and others who have died, increase our care for one another until we walk with them in newness of life. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Receive these prayers, O God, and those too deep for words; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

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.

Take My Life, That I May Be



- 1 Take my life, that I may be con - se - crat - ed, Lord, to thee;
- 2 Take my hands and let them move at the im - pulse of thy love;
- 3 Take my voice and let me sing al - ways, on - ly, for my King;
- 4 Take my sil - ver and my gold, not a mite would I with - hold;



take my mo - ments and my days; let them flow in cease - less praise.
take my feet and let them be swift and beau - ti - ful for thee.
take my lips and let them be filled with mes - sag - es from thee.
take my in - tel - lect, and use ev - 'ry pow'r as thou shalt choose.

- 5 Take my will and make it thine; it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is thine own; it shall be thy royal throne.
- 6 Take my love; my Lord, I pour at thy feet its treasure store;
take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for thee.

Text: Frances R. Havergal, 1836–1879, alt.
Music: *PAIMOS*, William H. Havergal, 1793–1870

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Go in peace. Christ is with you.
Thanks be to God.

IN OUR PRAYERS

Katie Wallace, Bill Collar, Dakota Holiday, Carla Von Haden, Ruth Johnson, Judy Bever, Alrita Ornes, Dick Krause, Donna Welch, Brad Bever, Fred Baldwin

IN THE MILITARY

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



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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).

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