

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

This week has traditionally been a busy one for my family with 3 family members celebrating birthdays. My aunt's birthday is July 1. My cousin's birthday is July 4. And my mother's birthday was July 5. This year, my aunt turns 92! She is healthy and doing well! She listens to my letters and sermons each week, even before I share them with all of you.

Thinking of our family birthdays reminded me of a few years ago when I had a seminary field experience in the Southeastern Minnesota Synod. The church I was serving was in Glenville, which is south of Albert Lea. During that summer, we celebrated the birthdays of three members of the congregation who were 100 years old! All of them were turning, or had turned 100 during the previous year. Joining them in a special celebration one Sunday, was another woman from a Lutheran church in a neighboring community who also had recently turned 100.

Four, 100 year olds in one place, seemed quite amazing to me. The four centenarians lived in different settings. Three lived with adult children, including one who had her own apartment in her daughter's home. One lived in a care center.

Their lives were varied too, although I think three of them grew up on farms in the area. One shared with me that she had played softball (baseball?) during World War II and the years shortly after the war ended. She played in an all-women's league, and really enjoyed traveling and being a leader in women's sports at that time. One day when I was visiting her, she told me that the Twins were having a double-header that day. (That was a kind, unspoken signal to me, that it was time for me to leave, because she wanted to watch the games on T.V.)

When I asked these women and my aunt about the reasons for their long lives, most mentioned the following: moderation in all things, eating balanced meals, getting enough sleep, keeping busy/active/interested in what is going on in the world, moving/exercising, and staying connected to God. Many of them read the Bible or devotionals, and prayed, daily. Even those who were unable to attend church on a regular basis spoke of the importance of God in their lives.

May God bless all of the seniors in our communities with long life. May we learn from them about faith, hope and love. May we too, stay connected to God, through Bible reading, devotionals and prayer.

Peace,

Pastor Cathy



St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church
Wilton, WI
4th Sunday after Pentecost
June 28, 2020
**Inviting People to Journey with Christ's
Family in Spreading God's Love and Mercy**

The welcome of baptism is for all God's children. This baptismal gift sets us free from the power of sin and death. In today's gospel, Christ promises that the disciple who gives a cup of cold water to those who have less serves Christ himself. From worship we are sent on our baptismal mission: to serve others in this world and to be a sign of God's merciful welcome.

Gathering

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

In Christ Called to Baptize



1 In Christ called to bap - tize, we wit - ness to grace
2 In Christ called to ban - quet, one ta - ble we share,
3 In Christ called to wit - ness, by grace we will preach
4 U - nite us, a - noint us, O Spir - it of love,



and gath - er a peo - ple from each land and race.
a ha - ven of wel - come, a cir - cle of care.
the life - giv - ing gos - pel; God's love we will teach.
for you are with - in us, a - round us, a - bove.



In deep, flow - ing wa - ters, we share in Christ's death,
Al - though we are man - y, we share in one bread.
By grace may our liv - ing give proof to our praise
E - quip us for ser - vice with gifts you be - stow.



then, ris - ing to new life, give thanks with each breath.
One cup of thanks - giv - ing pro - claims Christ, our head.
in cost - ly com - pas - sion re - flect - ing Christ's ways.
In Christ is our call - ing. In Christ may we grow.

Text: Ruth Duck, b. 1947
Music: ST. DENIO, Welsh traditional
Text © 1995 Pilgrim Press

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PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, you direct our lives by your grace, and your words of justice and mercy reshape the world. Mold us into a people who welcome your word and serve one another, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.

Word

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

FIRST READING

Through a symbolic action Jeremiah insisted that Judah and all the surrounding nations should submit to the king of Babylon (Jer. 27). Hananiah contradicted the word of Jeremiah, who in reply insisted that Hananiah's rosy prediction should not be believed until it came true. God confirmed the word of Jeremiah and sentenced the false prophet Hananiah to death (vv. 16-17).

Jeremiah 28:5-9

⁵The prophet Jeremiah spoke to the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the LORD; ⁶and the prophet Jeremiah said, "Amen! May the LORD do so; may the LORD fulfill the words that you have prophesied, and bring back to this place from Babylon the vessels of the house of the LORD, and all the exiles. ⁷But listen now to this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people. ⁸The prophets who preceded you and me from ancient times prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms. ⁹As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes true, then it will be known that the LORD has truly sent the prophet."

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18

¹Your love, O LORD, forever will I sing;
from age to age my mouth will proclaim your faithfulness.

²**For I am persuaded that your steadfast love is established forever;
you have set your faithfulness firmly in the heavens.**

³"I have made a covenant with my chosen one;
I have sworn an oath to David my servant:

⁴**"I will establish your line forever,
and preserve your throne for all generations.'"**

¹⁵Happy are the people who know the festal shout!
They walk, O LORD, in the light of your presence.

¹⁶**They rejoice daily in your name;
they are jubilant in your righteousness.**

¹⁷For you are the glory of their strength,
and by your favor our might is exalted.

¹⁸**Truly, our shield belongs to the LORD;
our king to the Holy One of Israel.**

SECOND READING

Sin is an enslaving power which motivates us to live self-serving, disobedient lives. Sin's final payoff is death. We, however, have been set free from sin's slavery to live obediently under God's grace, whose end is the free gift of eternal life.

Romans 6:12-23

¹²Do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. ¹³No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. ¹⁴For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

¹⁵What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! ¹⁶Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, ¹⁸and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification.

²⁰When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. ²²But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. ²³For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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.

When Jesus sends his disciples out as missionaries, he warns them of persecution and hardships they will face. He also promises to reward any who aid his followers and support their ministry.

The gospel according to Matthew 10:40-42

Glory to you, O Lord.

[Jesus said to the twelve:] ⁴⁰“Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. ⁴¹Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; ⁴²and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ.

Sermon

Two recent events in the news have been on my mind. Perhaps they have been on your minds, too. We have seen several examples in the past few weeks of protests in which statues have been graffitied, spray painted, pulled from their bases, toppled, dumped in rivers, or otherwise damaged/destroyed. Many of the statues are monuments to confederate generals who promoted slavery, oppression, and other injustices against people of color. Some have been of white presidents and union generals standing or sitting above depictions of African-American and/or indigenous persons in subservient positions. Some have been of Christopher Columbus whose "discovery" of the Americas opened the way for the exploitation and persecution of indigenous persons.

While most of us do not condone the desecration of these statues, or any of the sometimes violent protests surrounding them, we can understand why protestors do not want these monuments to take places of prominence in their communities. Many of these statues were not erected during the lifetimes of those they are intended to honor. Many monuments were erected during the 20th century, and they encourage and promote racism, oppression, and injustices against people of color. Their removal gives us pause and encourages us to think more deeply about these and other symbols of racism and white supremacy in our world. Their removal makes us think about what the monuments symbolize and communicate to people of different races and cultures. What they communicate to white persons, may not be the same thing that they communicate to people of color. What is considered welcoming to some persons, is unwelcoming to others.

As I was thinking about the monuments, another image came to my mind. A few years ago, I took a day-vacation and drove to a museum in Minnesota. The museum included displays of local history, including antique wagons, farm implements, cars, a 1930-40's kitchen diorama, etc... When I got to an upper floor, I turned a corner, and what I saw sent a shockwave through me! There, in a closet, was a KKK outfit, complete with robe and hood.

I had never seen an outfit like this in real life. Yes, I had seen them in photos of marches, burning crosses, and lynchings of African-Americans. I was startled and shaken to see this outfit, in large part, because of what it represents. I had hoped that people from the former union states in the northern United States, did not participate in this organization. I had perhaps thought that the organization was only active in the south. But this outfit, owned by a person who had lived in Minnesota, told me that the organization had members here. The outfit is a object that immediately communicates racism, oppression and hatred of persons of color. It is a reminder of lynchings, oftentimes of innocent black persons. It is not welcoming, but rather, unwelcoming to many persons.

Another recent news story in which I drew a similar connection, was that of the noose found in the NASCAR garage of Darrell "Bubba" Wallace, Jr.. Wallace, the only NASCAR driver who is black, found the noose and took it as a racist attack (perhaps even a death threat). A noose is a symbol of lynching and death for most persons. It is often a symbol of mob mentality, in which people gang up on another person(s) for no reason other than the color of their skin. The actions of white persons using nooses (including those in the organization mentioned previously), tells a horrible story of racism, oppression, and injustice against persons of color, especially African-Americans.

I was heartened when the other drivers in the NASCAR race and Richard Petty, walked in solidarity with Wallace. I was somewhat relieved when a few days after finding the noose, the F.B.I. investigation determined that the noose had been in the garage since October of last year. But, I was not entirely relieved, because a noose is still a noose; a symbol of lynching and death. Seeing a noose should upset persons of all colors, just as the outfit I saw in the museum shook me, even though I am white. These things are not a joke. They are not to be taken lightly. They are symbols connected to racism, oppression and injustice of persons that God created.

These examples remind us that some things in our lives are welcoming, and some are not. Some things, like the monuments of persons who promoted racism, the outfit, and the noose, can be/are associated with evil. The symbols we use can be welcoming to all persons, or they can be exclusionary to individuals or groups of people, especially persons of color. Welcoming or unwelcoming of all persons...which of these words describes you and your actions? To whom do you look for guidance? Whom do you follow? Who is your teacher and model?

Our gospel passage for today includes the next verses of the pericope that we began two Sundays ago. It is taken from a time after Jesus' sermon on the mount when Jesus is preparing his disciples to be his missionaries. In the pericope, the disciples are encouraged to be like Jesus, yet

they are warned that being like him will mean that they too will be persecuted and face many trials. But they are not to give up. They are to persist. They are to continue their mission, even if family members turn against them. They are to place God first and foremost in their lives, above all others, and to follow Jesus' teaching and modeling. They are to share the good news of the gospel throughout the world.

Our passage for today speaks of "prophets," "righteous persons," and "little ones." While our thoughts may initially turn to prophets such as Moses, Elijah, and others, Matthew's account may be referring to the disciples as present day "prophets" and "righteous persons," rather than others in the community. The passage also speaks of "little ones." While we may think that Jesus is talking about "little ones" in reference to children, he is actually referring to the disciples who may be "young in faith and particularly vulnerable" (Elizabeth Johnson, *Working Preacher*). This includes disciples who will be oppressed, those who have little money or means, and those who will face injustices, prejudice and/or persecution in Jesus' name. They are the "prophets," "righteous persons," and "little ones" to whom Jesus is referring.

Jesus also speaks to the disciples about those who would offer hospitality saying, "Whoever welcomes you, welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me" (vs. 40).

Per Elizabeth Johnson, "In the ancient world identity was tied to family and community. It was understood that in showing hospitality, one welcomed not just an individual, but implicitly, the community who sent the person and all that they represent. Therefore, welcoming a disciple of Jesus would mean receiving the very presence of Jesus himself and of the one who sent him, God the Father." (*Working Preacher*) In this way, showing hospitality is a sign of respect; respect for the individual's humanity, respect for the community that sent them, respect for the individual's race, culture, gender, and heritage, and respect in the form of openness to hearing what another person has to say. But even moreso in this pericope, it is a sign of respect for the one, Triune God, whom God's missionaries follow.

Jesus said, "... whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple--truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward" (vs. 42) This verse describes a form of hospitality that is available to all persons. It is not necessary that the welcome be expensive. One provides hospitality by simply offering a cup of cold water. This action demonstrates concern for the needs of another person, including one who may be very different from oneself. To extend compassion and mercy to another person is to follow the teachings of Jesus. Jesus, who welcomed

strangers. Jesus who taught his early disciples, as he teaches us, to extend hospitality to others. Jesus who called his early disciples, as he calls us, to welcome others in his name.

Per Johnson, "The statement about giving a cup of cold water to one of these little ones points ahead to the parable of the judgment in Matthew 25. Here the Son of Man says to the righteous, "I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink" (25:35), and "truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (25:40)."

During this time of unrest and change in the world, as many of the symbols of racism, intolerance, and prejudice are coming into the forefront of our daily lives, we reflect on what it means to be a follower of Christ. Jesus continues to teach us through his word about how to be his missionaries even today. We are to follow him into the world. We are to welcome the stranger. We are to share the good news with others. We are not to stay silent about things that represent past or current injustices. We are not to stay silent about those objects, symbols, and other things that encourage and promote hate, not love; oppression, not respect; division, not compassion for others. We are to realize that following the teaching and modeling of Jesus may mean that we too will be persecuted! The journey is not an easy one. The path has twists and turns. There will be challenges. There will be hardships and perils along the way. But, if we truly place God number one in our hearts, this is the price. This is the cost of discipleship.

In our mission for Christ, we have faith that we too may one day be counted among the righteous. Not because we want to be seen as being better than other persons, but because we are called to model Christ. Not because we consider ourselves above other persons, but because we consider ourselves lower; humbled by and through our service to God. Not because we want to be honored and placed on a pedestal, but because we hope to be seen as servants of God doing God's will, and pointing others to God.

We are Christian believers who know that Jesus died on the cross to atone for the sins of all humanity. Jesus personally bore our sins, so that all who believe in him might have forgiveness of sins and new life in him. Jesus calls us, each of every one of us, to share God's love for all that God created. God calls us to spread the good news. God welcomes us with grace, and encourages us to welcome others in God's name through sharing God's love, compassion, and mercy.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Hymn

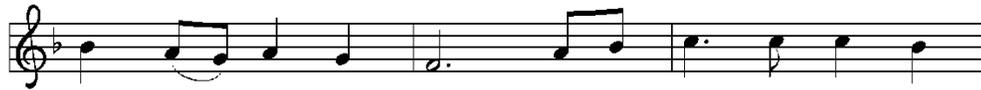
All Are Welcome



1 Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safe - ly
2 Let us build a house where proph-ets speak, and words are strong and
3 Let us build a house where love is found in wa - ter, wine and
4 Let us build a house where hands will reach be - yond the wood and
5 Let us build a house where all are named, their songs and vi - sions



live, a place where saints and chil - dren tell how
true, where all God's chil - dren dare to seek to
wheat: a ban - quet hall on ho - ly ground where
stone to heal and strength - en, serve and teach, and
heard and loved and trea - sured, taught and claimed as



hearts learn to for - give. Built of hopes and dreams and
dream God's reign a - new. Here the cross shall stand as
peace and jus - tice meet. Here the love of God, through
live the Word they've known. Here the out - cast and the
words with - in the Word. Built of tears and cries and



vi - sions, rock of faith and vault of grace; here the love of
wit - ness and as sym - bol of God's grace; here as one we
Je - sus, is re - vealed in time and space; as we share in
strang-er bear the im - age of God's face; let us bring an
laugh-ter, prayers of faith and songs of grace, let this house pro -



Christ shall end di - vi - sions:
claim the faith of Je - sus:
Christ the feast that frees us: All are wel - come,
end to fear and dan - ger:
claim from floor to raf - ter:



all are wel - come, all are wel - come in this place.

Text: Marty Haugen, b. 1950
Music: TWO OAKS, Marty Haugen
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PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

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

God of companionship, encourage our relationships with our siblings in Christ. Bless our conversations, phone communications, and the many ways we connect via computers during this time of the coronavirus. Shape our shared future and give us hearts eager to join in a festal shout of praise. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of abundance, you make your creation thrive and grow to provide all that we need. Inspire us to care for our environment and be attuned to where the earth is crying out. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of mercy, your grace is poured out for all. Inspire authorities, judges, and politicians to act with compassion and concern for the welfare of others. Teach us to overcome fear with hope, meet hate with love, and welcome one another as we would welcome you. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of care, accompany all who are in deepest need. Comfort those who are sick, lonely, or abandoned especially Katie, Bill, Dakota, Carla, Ruth, Judy, Alrita, Dick, Donna, Brad, Fred, and all those we name aloud and in our hearts. Strengthen those who are in prison or awaiting trial. Renew the spirits of all who call upon you. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of community, we give thanks for this congregation. Give us passion to embrace your mission and the vision to recognize where you are leading us. Teach us how to live more faithfully with each other. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of love, you gather in your embrace all who have died. Keep us steadfast in our faith and renew our trust in your promise. 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.*

Give to Our God Immortal Praise!



1 Give to our God im - mor - tal praise! Mer - cy and
2 He sent his Son with pow'r to save from guilt and
3 Give to the Lord of lords re - nown; the King of



truth are all his ways. Won - ders of grace to
dark - ness and the grave. Won - ders of grace to
kings with glo - ry crown. His mer - cies ev - er



God be - long; re - peat his mer - cies in your song.
God be - long; re - peat his mer - cies in your song.
shall en - dure when lords and kings are known no more!

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674-1748
Music: DUKE STREET, attr. John Hatton, d. 1793

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.
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.

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).

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