



St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church
Wilton, WI
September 20, 2020
**Inviting People to Journey with Christ's
Family in Spreading God's Love and Mercy**

In Isaiah we are given a vision of the great feast to come, when God will wipe away death forever. In Jesus' parable about a great banquet, those invited do not come, so the invitation is extended to others. In our liturgy God spreads a table before us. Even amid anxiety and hardship we rejoice in the peace of God which surpasses all understanding. With great joy we feast at the table of the Lord, and we go forth to share the wonderful invitation with others hungering and thirsting for the abundant life of God.

Gathering

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

Hymn

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty!

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee.
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, Blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,
Casting down their golden crowns
Around the glassy sea;
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
Which wert and art, and evermore shalt be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,
Though the eye of sinful man
Thy glory may not see,
Only thou art holy; there is none beside thee,
Perfect in pow'r, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy name,
In earth and sky and sea.
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, Blessed Trinity!

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 a hymn of praise acknowledging God as a shelter for the poor, the prophet portrays a wonderful victory banquet at which death—which in ancient Canaan was depicted as a monster swallowing up everyone—will be swallowed up forever. The prophet urges celebration of this victory of salvation.

Isaiah 25:1-9

- ¹O LORD, you are my God;
I will exalt you, I will praise your name;
for you have done wonderful things,
plans formed of old, faithful and sure.
- ²For you have made the city a heap,
the fortified city a ruin;
the palace of aliens is a city no more,
it will never be rebuilt.
- ³Therefore strong peoples will glorify you;
cities of ruthless nations will fear you.
- ⁴For you have been a refuge to the poor,
a refuge to the needy in their distress,
a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from the heat.
When the blast of the ruthless was like a winter rainstorm,
- ⁵the noise of aliens like heat in a dry place,
you subdued the heat with the shade of clouds;
the song of the ruthless was stilled.
- ⁶On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.
- ⁷And he will destroy on this mountain
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,
the sheet that is spread over all nations;

⁸he will swallow up death forever.

Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces,
and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth,
for the LORD has spoken.

⁹It will be said on that day,

Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.
This is the LORD for whom we have waited;
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

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

Psalm 23

¹The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not be in want.

²The LORD makes me lie down in green pastures
and leads me beside still waters.

³You restore my soul, O LORD,
and guide me along right pathways for your name's sake.

⁴Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil;
for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil, and my cup is running over.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

SECOND READING

Though writing from prison and facing an uncertain future, Paul calls on the Philippians to rejoice and give thanks to God no matter what the circumstance. God's peace is with us and binds together our hearts and minds in Jesus Christ, especially when things around us do not seem peaceful.

Philippians 4:1-9

¹My brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved. ²I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. ³Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life. ⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

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

Gospel

Jesus tells a parable indicating that the blessings of God's kingdom are available to all, but the invitation is not to be taken lightly.

The gospel according to Matthew 22:1-14

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: ²“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. ³He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. ⁴Again he sent other slaves, saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.’ ⁵But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, ⁶while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. ⁷The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. ⁸Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. ⁹Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.’ ¹⁰Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

¹¹“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, ¹²and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless. ¹³Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ ¹⁴For many are called, but few are chosen.”

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

Sermon

Most likely, I really don't need to tell you about the challenges that we are facing these days: a global Coronavirus pandemic, unrest related to racial injustice and police brutality, divisiveness, wildfires in the west,

hurricanes and flooding in the south, and so on. Perhaps you have heard all you want to hear about these things! Yet, thinking of them now gives us a direct connection to our sermon for today. Thinking of them reminds us that our day-to-day lives are not perfect, but they would be far worse if we were estranged from God. For "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1, NRSV).

At the heart of our challenges is the Coronavirus pandemic, a health crisis like none that we in the United States have experienced in the past 100 years. Not since the Spanish Flu of 1918, and certainly not during our lifetimes, has there been such a crisis. We have adjusted our lives to stay safe by wearing masks, social distancing, and washing our hands multiple times a day. We have stopped, or drastically cut back on, our going to businesses, restaurants, indoor sports venues, on trips, etc... All of these things have changed how we live. As such, they offer an important connection for us with our second scripture reading, as we hear the words of the apostle Paul in Philippians 4:1-9. These words are important, in part, because they provide us with guidance and give us comfort. They are words that help us to remember that we will not live with this pandemic forever, nor will we live with any other challenges, forever. For we live with God. Paul's words remind us that in living with God, we rejoice, pray, offer thanksgiving, and seek peace! We do these things in our own lives, but also for the lives of our neighbors who live near us, and our neighbors who live far away.

No doubt many of us are wondering how we can cope with all the challenges in the world, today. We wonder when we will be able to get back to a more normal existence. Perhaps the apostle Paul was wondering these things, too. For Paul is writing his letter to the church in Philippi, while he is in prison. He is believed to have been imprisoned in Rome or Ephesus around 61 or 62 AD. His words communicate that he has a special appreciation, a special affection for the people of Philippi. His words tell them, and us, that he is not going to let his time in prison keep him from doing what God has called him to do! And for all of us facing challenges today, we should not let those challenges keep us from serving God.

In the Bible, we read about the ways in which Jesus prepared the disciples for their work of spreading the gospel. In turn, the disciples taught others about how they too could spread the good news. Jesus did not hand them a written manuscript with his teachings, he did not limit them, because he knew that they would need

to adjust how they shared this message within their specific context. He knew that how the message was spread would vary from person to person. The apostles had the writings from the Old Testament, and Jesus encouraged his disciples, as he encourages us, to use his teachings. Jesus' words directed Paul and other apostles, to spread the good news through their missionary efforts. For Paul, this began with his spending time with the people of the church in Philippi. But later, Paul used his writings, his letters to them, to do God's work in the world. We call this missio Dei: God's mission, which was Paul's mission, and Paul's service to God. It is our mission, too, as Christian believers who are connected to the mission of St. Paul's Lutheran Church.

Paul states in his letter, "Rejoice, in the Lord always, again I say rejoice" (Philippians 4:4, NRSV). Paul is in prison. He is in a place where most of us cannot imagine living with joy, and yet Paul's words speak of joy! Like Paul, the Philippians are encouraged to rejoice, to be glad, to sing praises to God! Are these not words for us too, as we live in our current situation? When was the last time that you said a Psalm outloud? When was the last time you sang a Christian song or hymn that expressed joy? While singing has been said to spread the reach of the Coronavirus, we can sing in our cars at the Drive-In Worship services, and in our homes and solitary outdoor spaces. Perhaps when you sing, you choose a song that you learned in Sunday School, such as "Jesus Loves Me." Perhaps our children sing the song that they learned in Vacation Bible School last year, "Be not Afraid," complete with movements and dance steps. Perhaps when you sing, you sing a cherished hymn like, "Blessed Be the Tie that Binds." This hymn reminds us that we are not alone, but rather joined together with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Perhaps you sing, "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms" or "Standing on the Promises." Perhaps you sing another Christian song or hymn from the Lutheran Book of Worship or Evangelical Lutheran Worship. There are many songs that remind us of the joy that we have in Christ. Singing them, is one way that we can, "Rejoice, in the Lord."

Prayer, is another example found in our scripture passage, today. Paul states, "The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:5b-6, NRSV). Prayer is a direct line to God. When we have doubts, when we are afraid, when we are worried, Paul reminds us to pray, for God is near us! God is with us wherever we may be.

God will not leave us, for there is no place where we may be where God is not! We can pray whenever and wherever we wish, knowing that God hears our prayers! Jesus taught the disciples and us to pray, but he did not limit when, or where, we could pray. Prayer is not limited to 5-minutes in the morning when we awake, before meals, or 5-minutes in the evening before we go to bed. Prayer can occur at anytime, anywhere. Yes, we can pray for ourselves and our family members and friends, but prayer is not even limited to those we know. Like love, there is no restriction on the number of persons for whom we can pray! We can pray for persons who are homeless, those who are struggling to pay their bills, those who have contracted the Coronavirus, and those whom we see passing by on the street, in buses, on sidewalks, in parking lots, anywhere. We can pray for persons we do not even know! This is the power of prayer. It too, is unlimited. It is as expansive as we choose it to be as we pray for creation, for the church, for our leaders, and for others in God's church, community, county, state, country and world.

Giving thanks is another thing that we would not expect a person to be doing in prison. Thanks, for what, might be our first thought? But, giving thanks is exactly what Paul encourages the Christians in the church in Philippi, and us, to do. When God is in the forefront of our lives, we always have something to be thankful for! All of us (to my knowledge) have plenty of food to eat every day. We have homes or apartments to protect us from the cold and elements. We have money in bank accounts. We have jobs, or monthly Social Security checks. We have family and/or friends who live with us, or call us to see how we are doing. We have so much in comparison to so many others throughout the world! Most of us do not know material suffering, because our basic needs are met. For this reason alone, we have many reasons to give God thanks and praise!

Peace, too, is a part of this scripture passage. Paul states, "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7) God's peace. God's peace which is beyond anything that we can know or comprehend. God's peace poured out for us. God's peace that offers protection for our hearts and minds. God's peace which God calls us to share freely with others. How do we share God's peace at this time, in this hurting world? We begin with ourselves. We do a self-check by

asking, "Are we communicating peace in our daily interactions with others?" or, "Are we part of the solution or part of the problem?"

Paul reminds us that no matter what our circumstances, no matter what challenges swirl around us, no matter what we may think holds us back from doing God's work, God is always near us. God is always with us. God is present with us even in the most challenging times. Therefore, we are not to give up! Rather, we are to rejoice, pray, give thanks, and seek peace. All of these things are possible, for with God, all things are possible. God sent his only son to earth for the sake of the world, so that all who believe in him might have eternal life. Jesus bore the sins of all humanity on the cross, so that we might have forgiveness of sins and new life with him. This is God's grace and love. We, too, are to share God's love and peace in this world, and for the sake of the world. We do this as individuals, but also, as members of the body of Christ. Paul's words to the church in Philippi, remind us as well, to rejoice, pray, give thanks, and seek peace. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

With confidence in God's grace and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

Gracious host, fill your church with a spirit of joyous hospitality. We pray for bishops, teachers, church leaders, and all children of God as they invite others to your table of boundless grace. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Gracious host, as creation waits with eager longing for redemption, protect your creatures that are mistreated. Restore valleys, mountains, pastures, areas affected by wildfires and hurricanes, and still and running waters. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Gracious host, as you set a table in the presence of enemies, so bless the efforts of diplomats, international peace workers, and world leaders who navigate conflict. May they proceed with effective dialogue and understanding, so that justice and peace prevails. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Gracious host, let your gentleness be known among those who are weary or ill, especially Katie, Dakota, Carla, Ruth, Judy, Alrita, Dick, Lisa, Pam, Curt, Deb, Lois, Tessa, Doug, Chris, and all those we name aloud and in our hearts. Strengthen doctors, medical care workers, and caretakers and all who see to their needs. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Gracious host, when we are quick to judge outward appearance, remind us how you clothe all in your mercy. We pray for ministries that provide needed clothing and other personal care assistance in this community including The Wilton Food Pantry, Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Gracious host, as we remember those who have died and are gathered at the heavenly banquet, comfort us with your presence. Assure us of your peace at all times. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Listen as we call on you, O God, and enfold in your loving arms all for whom we pray, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

SENDING

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

Blessing

Hymn

O God, Our Help in Ages Past

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home:

Before the hills in order stood
Or earth received her frame,
From everlasting thou art God,
To endless years the same.

A thousand ages in your sight
Are like an evening gone,
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be our guard while life shall last
And our eternal home.

P: Go in peace. Remember the poor.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

IN OUR PRAYERS

Katie Wallace, Bill Collar, Dakota Holiday, 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

CHICKEN DINNER FUNDRAISER

Thank you to everyone who helped in making the fundraiser such a success. As this bulletin is being prepared, we are looking at a profit of around \$4,000.00.

WELCA GENERAL MEETING

The W-ELCA quilting ladies will meet on Thursday, September 24, at 9:00. The group packed 35 quilts this past week for shipment to Lutheran World Relief.

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 every where, that you would keep them in your care.

In Jesus name I pray. Amen

ELCA WORLD HUNGER

ELCA World Hunger, like many organizations that work to end hunger, has experienced a decline in donations because churches are not operating in their normal capacity. Yet, due to the pandemic, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of people that are experiencing food insecurity and acute hunger. **To help support ELCA World Hunger, a virtual benefit for ELCA World Hunger entitled "Hunger in the Time of Covid-19; Life for Today & Hope for Tomorrow" will be held on September 24th at 7 pm.** This will be led by ELCA Presiding Bishop Eaton, Rick Steves, and Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee. We encourage you to participate in this event.. Register at: <https://community.elca.org/online-registration/sept-24-rick-steves-virtual-hunger-event>

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:

Pastor Cathleen: cathleenmorris@go.mccormick.edu

Justin Arndt: arndt.now@gmail.com

Church: wiltonchurch@gmail.com

Nalani Bever: nalanib@gmail.com

Website: <https://www.stpaulswilton.com/>

FACEBOOK!! Home page: St. Paul's Lutheran Church Wilton WI

*The Sunday Assembly, Lorraine S. Brugh, Gordon W. Lathrop, Augsburg Fortress, 2008

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Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The first day of fall is Tuesday, September 22. Perhaps you, like I, are wondering what happened to spring and summer! The past few months have just flown by, and now we are entering a new season. As we draw closer to its start, I have noticed mums appearing in neighbor's yards as I have gone on walks. Some leaves are changing colors, from green to yellow, especially. Temperatures are dropping in the evenings (and sometimes, from day-to-day, too). I have enjoyed eating new varieties of apples, freshly picked and harvested. I have also found myself thinking more about making a mug of hot chocolate, rather than a cold glass of lemonade.

Perhaps you have noticed other examples of fall and sought out activities for you and/or your family to enjoy. Here are a few ideas--Gather some leaves of different colors, along with pumpkins, squash, other gourds, dried corn, corn stalks (even shocks) and other fall foliage, and decorate your front stoop or porch. Hunt for acorns and pinecones. Make a beautiful wreath out of them that you can display on your front door. Go for a walk or hike, and look for animals such as squirrels, blue jays, and others collecting food for the upcoming winter. Look at the sky, too, for geese migrating south for the winter. Keep watch for deer and other animals as you drive, scanning the sides of the roads and proceeding with caution as you come near to them.

If you are still looking for more activities, you can head to one of the area corn mazes and wind your way through it. You can talk to friends who live on farms, to see if any of them might take you on a hay ride. If you have a fire ring, or another appropriate space, you can make a bonfire on a cool evening. (Please be safe!) These and other activities can be done while social distancing outdoors. All of these activities can provide a special time for you and/or your family.

Our sermon today highlights the importance of having joy in our lives. All of these things can bring us joy. But, our greatest joy as Christians, is the joy we have as followers of Jesus and as members of the body of Christ. Our Drive-In Worship services, are an important part of the fall season, and an important part of life. While you attend in the safety of your own car, you worship together with your brothers and sisters in Christ. Many of you are already attending our weekly services, but if you haven't yet attended, please join us! We would love to see you, and celebrate with you, as we "Rejoice in the Lord always"!

Peace,

Pastor Cathy