



St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church
Wilton, WI
14th Sunday after Pentecost
September 6, 2020
**Inviting People to Journey with Christ's
Family in Spreading God's Love and Mercy**

Conflict is a part of relationships and life in community. Jesus' words in today's gospel are often used in situations having to do with church discipline. The prophet Ezekiel tells of warning the wicked to turn from their ways, and Paul reminds us that love is the fulfilling of the law. We gather in the name of Christ, assured that he is present among us with gifts of peace and reconciliation.

Gathering

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

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

O Lord God, enliven and preserve your church with your perpetual mercy. Without your help, we mortals will fail; remove far from us everything that is harmful, and lead us toward all that gives life and salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Word

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

FIRST READING

God appointed Ezekiel as a sentinel for the house of Israel. Ezekiel must faithfully convey God's warnings to the people. Remarkably, God—who is about to attack Jerusalem—gives a warning with the hope that repentance will make the attack unnecessary.

Ezekiel 33:7-11

⁷So you, mortal, I have made a sentinel for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. ⁸If I say to the wicked, "O wicked ones, you shall surely die," and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but their blood I will require at your hand. ⁹But if you warn the wicked to turn from their ways, and they do not turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but you will have saved your life.

¹⁰Now you, mortal, say to the house of Israel, Thus you have said: "Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?" ¹¹Say to them, As I live, says the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?

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

Psalms 119:33-40

³³Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes,
and I shall keep it to the end.

³⁴**Give me understanding, and I shall keep your teaching;
I shall keep it with all my heart.**

³⁵Lead me in the path of your commandments,
for that is my desire.

³⁶**Incline my heart to your decrees
and not to unjust gain.**

³⁷Turn my eyes from beholding falsehood;
give me life in your way.

³⁸**Fulfill your promise to your servant,
which is for those who fear you.**

³⁹Turn away the reproach that I dread,
because your judgments are good.

⁴⁰**Behold, I long for your commandments;
by your righteousness enliven me.**

SECOND READING

The obligation of Christians is to love one another and so fulfill the heart and goal of the law. Clothes make the person as we “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” and live today in light of the future God has in store for us

Romans 13:8-24

⁸Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet”; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

¹¹Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; ¹²the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; ¹³let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

P: The word of the Lord. **C: 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 offers practical advice to his disciples on how individuals—and the church as a whole—should go about restoring relationships when one member has sinned against another.

The gospel according to Matthew 18:15-20

Glory to you, O Lord.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹⁵“If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. ¹⁶But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

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

Sermon

At the beginning of each new school year, I often think about my years of working at colleges/universities. One of my first professional positions was as a Residence Hall Director. I worked with 7 Resident Assistants (or R.A.'s), and 250 students who lived in the residence hall I oversaw. While the position had many different responsibilities, one of them was serving as a mediator. Usually, a mediation was between two roommates, but it could be between floormates, or any persons under my care. The intent was typically to encourage the two persons to talk with each other and to work through their misunderstandings, disagreements, and/or conflicts.

For many incoming freshmen, living in a residence hall is the first time they will share a room with someone else. When they applied for housing, they completed a form in which they answered questions to help them be placed with a roommate. Some of the questions included: What time do you get up in the morning? What time do you go to bed? Do you smoke? Do you drink alcohol? Do you have a religious affiliation? And so on. These questions did help in placing them with a roommate. But, their responses to the questions did not guarantee that the two roommates would get along! In like fashion, just because we are all ELCA Lutherans, does not mean that we will all get along!

There were different types of conflict that required mediation (or in other words, a neutral party(ies) assisting two or more persons to resolve a problem). Their Resident Assistant would try to help them first. If they wouldn't meet or couldn't talk through their differences, I, or their R.A. and I, would step-in. This was part of the process. When the two could not work through their differences alone, we listened, and tried in non-judgmental ways to help them.

For example, Person "A" was upset with Person "B." But, instead of talking to each other, as our gospel passage for today encourages, "A" would talk to other people! "A" would complain about all kinds of things to other persons, while "B" often had little or no idea that there was a problem! Instead of "A" talking directly to "B," gossiping with others became the medium for dealing with the problem. This was not helpful. It did very

little, but to share the problem with persons who were not directly involved. It typically came to a head, when "B" saw others giving "B" strange looks, avoiding "B," or making snide comments to "B". The problem became even worse, when "B" heard about the problem from a person other than "A." "B" wondered how many other persons knew about this when "A" had never talked to "B" about it! "B" felt betrayed, hurt, and sometimes, very angry. "B" also wondered if "B" would ever be able to trust "A," or the other persons "A" had confided in, again.

Another type of conflict was what I called, "Incremental Frustrations." Person "A" was doing little things that irritated "B" on a regular basis. "B" said nothing to "A," because there was no big crisis. There was no big event to complain about. So, "B" said nothing to "A," until "B" got to a breaking point. It was like the adage, "The straw that broke the camel's back." Then, things fell apart. "B" would lash out verbally, and sometimes, physically, against "A." Instead of talking to each other early on, when both were calm, "B" waited until "B" lost control to really let "A" know what "A" had done that "B" disliked.

These examples are not unlike the conflicts that can occur in church assemblies. Rather than to talk with a person early on to try to resolve a misunderstanding, disagreement, or conflict, one person complains to other persons in the congregation or lets things fester. Rather than to follow the approach in our gospel passage, gossiping may ensue. When the person being talked about hears of it, they are hurt and may even decide to retaliate. As such, they too may start talking to other persons in the assembly, perhaps calling the other person names, mud-slinging, or using other negative behaviors to get church members to be "on their side." And the result is that the conflict does not get addressed in an appropriate way. The two parties do not talk to each other rationally and work through their differences. They do not follow the process in our gospel passage today. They do not bring trusted persons in to mediate, if needed. Rather, they become more divided, and the assembly becomes more divided as members take sides. The sinful behavior of one or two persons, becomes the sinful behavior of many persons!

As we consider our gospel passage for today, it is very important to place it in context. Prior to today's pericope in Matthew 18:10-14, is the story of the lost sheep. We recall Jesus telling the parable about the one sheep out of the 100 sheep in the fold, that went astray. Rather than forgetting about that sheep and leaving it behind, the shepherd goes searching for the sheep. The shepherd leaves the 99 others, and goes looking for the one sheep. The shepherd searches until he finds the lost sheep, and when he does, he rejoices! Scripture states, "So it is not the will of your father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost" (vs. 14)

The parable speaks of the one sheep, the person who has sinned and gone astray being returned to the fold. It encourages us to remember that we might be the sheep who has gone astray! We are human beings. We are different one from another. We do not always do what God wants us to do. And we may wonder, "How will God respond to us when we sin and go astray? From this passage, we know that God will seek to bring us back to the fold, and God wants us as a church, to do the same. As we hear today in Matthew 18:15-16, "If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one!" (emphasis added).

Following our passage for today in Matthew 18:21-22, is another story of forgiveness and reconciliation. Peter asks Jesus, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times." The number "seventy-seven" is not to be taken literally, but rather, speaks of one forgiving another an infinite number of times! This is the forgiveness that Jesus modeled for us. Jesus bore the sins of all humanity on the cross, so that we who believe in him would have forgiveness of sins and new life in him! Jesus encourages us to seek reconciliation one with another. We are to forgive not once, or even 7 times, but 77+ times!

Our gospel passage for today in Matthew 18:18 states, "Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." What are we binding or loosening here on earth? Our pericope gives us a step-by-step approach for dealing with misunderstandings, disputes, and conflicts between two persons. But those involved need to be open and honest. The approach

begins for those with differences, to first talk to each other, alone. No one else needs to be brought into the situation at that time. And yet, God is present with them! God is present whether those with differences meet one-to-one, with two or more neutral mediators, or with the whole church as God's process directs. We are reminded through each step, that God knows the truth about our interactions with each other. God wants us to deal fairly with each other. God wants all of us, the two persons, the mediators, and/or those in the assembly, to do helpful things to bring healing, forgiveness, and wholeness to the situation that is broken. When two persons work through their differences, reconciliation, forgiveness, and all of the other positive and helpful things that God desires for us, can happen.

May we bind our hearts together, as we seek to bring all the sheep that have gone astray back to the fold. May we remember that God is present with us wherever we may be, including when two or more are gathered in God's name. May we seek to encourage discussion one with another, and discourage divisiveness. May we ask God for forgiveness and seek reconciliation with those we have hurt. May we demonstrate God's love, grace, and peace, by lifting up all in our assembly. May we be God's faithful people, serving God and furthering God's kingdom here and throughout the world. With God's help, all these things are possible. 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

Drawn together in the compassion of God, we pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

Unite your church, O God. Grant us the gifts of repentance and reconciliation. Bless the cooperative work of churches in our area, especially Peace Lutheran in Tomah and the Methodist Churches in Norwalk, with whom we have worshipped and programmed together. Strengthen ecumenical partnerships; guide the work of the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Protect your creation, O God. Teach us ways that do not harm what you have entrusted to our care. Renew and enliven places suffering from drought, flood, storms, or pollution, especially communities affected by the recent hurricanes, excessive heat, heavy rains, winds and firestorms.. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Turn nations and leaders from ways that lead to death. Shape new paths toward peace and cooperation, teaching us to recognize one another as neighbors. Guide legislators, civil servants, judges, and police toward laws that protect the well-being of all. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Tend to all in need of your compassion. Hear the cries of those awaiting justice and those yearning for forgiveness. Give community to the lonely and neighbors to the outcast. Shelter all who are vulnerable in body, mind, or spirit, especially Katie, Dakota, Carla, Ruth, Judy, Alrita, Dick, Lisa, Pam, Curt, Deb, Lois, Karl, Kurt, Kari, Tessa, Doug, Chris, and all those we name aloud and in our hearts. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Sustain us in our work, O God, and give work to those who need it. Shape societies to ensure fair treatment for all who labor. Help us to love our neighbors in and through our work. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

We remember with thanksgiving those who have died in faith. As you equipped them, equip us with your protection and power, until with them we see your salvation. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

All these things and whatever else you see that we need, we entrust to your mercy; through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

SENDING

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

Blessing

Hymn

O Master, Let Me Walk with You



1 O Mas - ter, let me walk with you in low - ly
2 Help me the slow of heart to move by some clear,
3 Teach me your pa - tience; share with me a clos - er,
4 In hope that sends a shin - ing ray far down the



paths of ser - vice true; tell me your se - cret;
win - ning word of love; teach me the way - ward
dear - er com - pa - ny, in work that keeps faith
fu - ture's broad - 'ning way, in peace that on - ly



help me bear the strain of toil, the fret of care.
fect to stay, and guide them in the home - ward way.
sweet and strong, in trust that tri - umphs o - ver wrong,
you can give; with you, O Mas - ter, let me live.

Text: Washington Gladden, 1836–1918. alt.
Music: MARYTON. H. Percy Smith, 1825–1898

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, Kurt, Kari & Karl Radke.

IN THE MILITARY

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHICKEN DINNER

Next Sunday is our chicken dinner fundraiser. We will be contacting folks this week to complete our work assignment sheets. We ended up selling 532 tickets so we will be very busy all of Sunday morning. Plus the Packers and Vikings play at noon, so you know many of the folks will want to be sitting in front of their TV by noon, enjoying the game.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

We'll be packing school supplies again this year in support of Lutheran World Relief. The following are items for the school kits:

- ONE 30-centimeter ruler, or a ruler with centimeters on one side and inches on the other
- ONE pencil sharpener
- ONE pair of blunt scissors (safety scissors with embedded steel blades work well)
- ONE box of 16 or 24 crayons
- ONE 2 ½" eraser
- FOUR 70-sheet notebooks of wide- or college-ruled paper, approximately 8" x 10 ½"; no loose leaf paper
- FIVE unsharpened #2 pencils with erasers; secure together with a rubber band
- FIVE black or blue ballpoint pens (no gel ink); secure together with a rubber band

Please bring the items with you to drive-in church or call Nalani (608-387-2311) and she will make arrangements to get them from you. Thank you.

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>

WELCA GENERAL MEETING

Mark your calendar and plan to attend the general meeting on Tuesday, September 15, at 10:00 AM.

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

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Nalani Bever: nalanib@gmail.com

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

September 6, 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

At this the beginning of another school year, I would like to use this letter to highlight some of the information in our September/October 2020 church newsletter. There are two items in particular that relate to our children, that I would like to bring to your attention.

1) We will not be having in-person Sunday school during the month of September. But, that does not mean that our children will be without opportunities to learn. Nalani has delivered, or will deliver, a Story Bible to each of the preschool and elementary school age Sunday school children at St. Paul's. These are their very own Story Bibles to keep and to use whenever they wish! Also included is a letter from me with some suggested readings for the month of September. Several of the readings coincide with, or augment, the Revised Common Lectionary readings for the Sundays this month.

The Story Bible is entitled, Growing in God's Love (Elizabeth Caldwell and Carol Wehrheim, ed's.). It includes stories from both the Old and New Testaments. It includes stories about women and men who did some amazing things! Like us, they too were learning how to be God's faithful people. With their own copy of this book, each of our children can hear and/or read the stories, see the pictures, and learn more about God and the people in the Bible.

2) We have included the W-ELCA prayer in the newsletter. The prayer has been updated to include the names of all of the children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren (g-g-grandchildren?) connected to St. Paul's Lutheran Church. Please join our W-ELCA members as we lift up our children and all children, in prayer.

These are challenging times, especially for our children and other children returning to in-person classes. Let us pray for their well-being, for their safety, and for their diligence in wearing their masks, social distancing and washing their hands. We certainly do not want any children, teachers, other school employees, or family members to be infected with the Coronavirus. Therefore, let us also pray for the well-being of all persons who assist children.

May God bless all our children as they begin a new school year and Sunday school year. May they learn and grow in God's love. May they be faithful followers of God today, and in all the days to come.

Peace,

Pastor Cathy

