

Faith Lutheran Church

Sunday, June 14, 2020
2nd Sunday after Pentecost

Enter His gates
with *Thanksgiving*
and His courts
with *Praise...*
-Psalm 100:4

Call to Worship

We gather together in the name of the Father, and of the Son+, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Prayer of Confession (please join in confessing our sins)

Reconciling God, we confess that we do not trust Your abundance, and we deny Your presence in our lives. We place our hope in ourselves and rely on our own efforts. We fail to believe that You provide enough for all. We abuse Your good creation for our own benefit. We fear difference and do not welcome others as You have welcomed us. We sin in thought, word, and deed. By Your grace, forgive us; through Your love, renew us; and in Your Spirit, lead us; so that we may live and serve You in newness of life. Amen. (<https://members.sundaysandseasons.com>)

Declaration of Forgiveness

Beloved of God, by the radical abundance of divine mercy we have peace with God through † Christ Jesus, through whom we have obtained grace upon grace. Our sins are forgiven. Let us live now in hope. For hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. **Amen.** (<https://members.sundaysandseasons.com>)

Opening Prayer

Please join me in prayer:

God of compassion, You have opened the way for us and brought us to Yourself. Pour Your love into our hearts, that, overflowing with joy, we may freely share the blessings of Your realm and faithfully proclaim the good news of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

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Readings and Psalm

- **Exodus 19:2-8a** *The covenant with Israel at Sinai*
- **Psalm 100** *We are God's people and the sheep of God's pasture. (Ps. 100:3)*
- **Romans 5:1-8** *While we were sinners, Christ died for us*
- **Matthew 9:35--10:8-23** *The sending of the Twelve*

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew 9:35 – 10:23

The mission of Jesus' followers is to continue the mission of Jesus Himself. Here, He instructs His first disciples as to how they might proclaim the gospel through their words and deeds.

³⁵Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. ³⁶When He saw the crowds, He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”

^{10:1}Then Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. ²These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; ³Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him.

⁵These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ ⁸Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. ⁹Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, ¹⁰no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food. ¹¹Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. ¹²As you enter the house, greet it. ¹³If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. ¹⁵Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

¹⁶“See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues; ¹⁸and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of Me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles. ¹⁹When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; ²⁰for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. ²¹Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; ²²and you will be hated by all because of My name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ²³When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.”]

(<https://members.sundaysandseasons.com/Home/TextsAndResources#texts>)

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to You, O Christ.

Sermon

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

There are things in life where I really need to follow instructions. So much of how things turn out depends on if I do or don't follow instructions.

Take baking, for instance. Some people can whip up a storm in the kitchen using a concoction of ingredients dreamed up in their heads. Their creation of just the right combination of ingredients creates a beautiful and delicious-tasting treat out of the oven.

I, on the other hand, must follow a recipe. I need to know exactly how many cups of flour or sugar or teaspoons of vanilla are required.

I know through experience that if I add an extra egg to a brownie mix that the brownies will be more cake-like. I know if I use my mom's advice for making chocolate chip cookies and add a package of fat free-sugar free vanilla instant pudding to the mix, the cookies will turn out delicious and fluffy, not flat and crispy around the edges. But beyond that, I must follow a recipe. Even then I read and re-read a recipe several times before I even get the ingredients out of the pantry.

And then some recipes include a statement that says, "baking times may vary". That is not helpful to me at all and I've found that out many times the hard way. Baking times often vary if one is using a gas oven versus an electric oven. Sometimes an oven has a hot spot and the food bakes quicker in one area of the pan than another area. Sometimes it comes down to trial and error. My son used to say he knew dinner was ready when the smoke alarm would go off!

GPS instructions were typically something I would follow as well. Though I've heard horror stories about people who followed their GPS instructions and ended up on a deserted two-track only to find themselves stranded for days or weeks. Or they followed GPS instructions and drove into a lake. I never understood how one could intentionally drive into a lake just because that was the GPS instructions.

"My daughter and I were visiting a college in Bangor, Maine," wrote Alan Willett from New York. "After a nice trip, we had our GPS take us back to the car rental agency. Except ... it just didn't seem like it was taking us the right way. We were in the middle of nowhere and pulled up to a graveyard and the GPS said, 'You have arrived at your destination.' We did end up having a pleasant walk around a beautiful cemetery, however."

I don't use a GPS anymore. I got tired of it saying to me, "turn around, dummy!" That was a joke. Of course, when I do get lost now, I typically say I took the scenic route!

Using a GPS can be difficult if it hasn't been updated to the latest software program so it doesn't warn you about road construction or other obstacles in your path.

For me, instructions are critical. I don't have the talent or patience to experiment with ingredients while baking. And I used to follow GPS instructions using common sense because rarely am I adventurous and have all the time in the world to get someplace.

In our gospel reading for today from Matthew, Jesus is giving instructions to His disciples. These are very important instructions. He is giving them the authority to do His work, the works that have defined His ministry from the beginning.

Earlier in Matthew's gospel, chapter 4:23-25, we heard, "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people. So, His fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought to Him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and He cured them. And great crowds followed Him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan."

And in today's gospel from Matthew 9, we hear this reiterated, "Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness."

These are Jesus' works. The works He had been doing. The works God sent Him to do in this world.

And now, in Matthew 10:1, we hear Jesus give His twelve disciples instructions to do the same as He sends them out. He "gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness."

Yes, Jesus gave His disciples the instructions *and* the authority to further His ministry by doing what He had been doing.

Jesus gives them further instructions by saying which towns to avoid, how to enter a house, and what to do if you are not welcome; "shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town."

But don't worry about what to say because the Spirit of your Father will speak through you.

Disciples, receive these instructions, and go forth!

Yet, know that this won't always be easy. Your words will inflame some, creating hot spots. You won't be welcomed with open arms every place you go. Jesus told them, "I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves." You will be handed over to councils and flogged in their synagogues. Dragged before governors and kings because of Me.

Jesus' instructions didn't cover everything that the disciples were supposed to do. His instructions didn't cover everything that the disciples would encounter. Jesus knew this was impossible. But He assured them that the Spirit was with them. The Spirit would give them the voice and the actions to accomplish Christ's work among the people.

We know we don't have the power Jesus gave to His disciples to do exactly as He instructed. We may not feel in this day and age that we can follow Jesus' instructions so why does it really matter? After all, we don't have the ability to cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, or cast out demons. Correct?

Yet time and time again we pray for those who are sick, even on the brink of death, and they are healed. Or we pray for someone's healing and they walk on anyway - not because of lack of prayer or lack of medicine - but because Jesus beckoned them to come to Him.

Maybe the demons are the negative attitudes, the hurtful behaviors, the racism and social injustices that Jesus instructs us to cast out from ourselves and one another.

Don't sell yourself short. You have much to offer. You see, we all have the power of the Spirit behind us. We all have the power of the Spirit in us. And we all have the power of the Spirit speaking through us.

You know the saying, "What would Jesus do?" I would hope we wouldn't have to think long and hard what Jesus would do about eliminating racism in society. I would hope we wouldn't have to think long and hard

what Jesus would do to stand up for our sisters and brothers who are shouting BLACK LIVES MATTER. I would hope we wouldn't have to think long and hard what Jesus would do to feed our hungry neighbors, provide shelter for the homeless, or promote peace among our communities.

We know what Jesus would do. We don't need to ask.

As sisters and brothers in Christ, we receive the same instructions Jesus gave to His disciples. We are called to go out and make this a better world, not only for ourselves but for the millions of other people who are depending on us to make it a better world. To stand up, speak out, and do something.

As Jesus was preparing His disciples to leave Him, He said, "As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.'" God's kingdom is here and now. God's rule on here is here and now. This is the good news to be shouted and shared among all people. Not just the ones sitting in our pews. Not just the ones standing outside our doors or the neighbors down the street.

The work we are called to do is more important now than ever. And that work is the work Jesus instructs us to do. More than anything, right now, it means to love your neighbor as yourself. By doing this, the ultimate healing will occur. Healing from every sickness and illness. Healing from hunger and thirst. Healing from homelessness and economical divisions. Healing from racism and prejudice. Healing from life and healing from death.

If we follow Christ's instructions, we don't need to ask, "What would Jesus do?" We already know that answer. **Amen.**

Blessing

And now, may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. (*Philippians 4:7*)

Prayers of Intercession

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

Holy One, You bring us together and call us Your own. Bless theologians, teachers, and preachers who help us grow in faith. Guide Your church, that we might be a holy people.

Holy One, the whole earth is Yours. Where there is fire, bring cool air and new growth. Where there is flooding, bring abatement. Where there is drought, bring rain. Inspire us to care for what You have provided.

Holy One, we have created divisions You will not own. In places of conflict, raise up leaders who work to develop lasting peace and reconciliation. Encourage organizations and individuals who care for all forced to leave their homes.

Holy One, You care for those who are harassed and helpless. Protect and defend those who are abused. Heal those who are sick. Feed all who hunger. Empower all whose voices go unheard, and help us respond to the pressing needs of our neighbors. We lift up those we ask special blessings upon, naming them in our hearts, our minds, and with our voices....(please name your prayer concerns).

Holy One, You provide a plentiful harvest of gifts and resources. Prepare us to labor and gather the fruits of this congregation, that we might discover new ways of living. Minister to us in our work, that we do not lose heart.

Holy One, You bring all people to Yourself. We give thanks for the holy people who have gone before us. Sustain us in Your mission until the day You bear us up to join the saints in light. Receive these prayers, O God, and those too deep for words; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

(prayers from 2nd Sunday after Pentecost, © sundaysandseasons 2020)

Our Lord's Prayer

I invite you to join in praying the prayer our Lord Jesus taught us to pray...

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors;

and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory forever. Amen

Offering

It is generally at this time during the service that worshipers are invited to share their gifts for the Mission and Ministry of the church. Whether you choose to pause at this time or make your contribution following this service, we encourage you to continue your support of the ministry.

Offertory Prayer

God of goodness and growth, all creation is Yours, and Your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens. Water and word, wine and bread: these are signs of Your abundant grace. As we continue our fast from these precious gifts, spiritually nourish us that we might proclaim Your steadfast love in our communities and in the world, through Jesus Christ, our strength and our song. **Amen.**

Benediction

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord's face shine on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord look upon you with favor and grant you peace; in the name of God the Father, God the Son+, and God the Spirit that makes us one. **Amen.**

Dismissal

Go in peace. Christ is with you!

Thanks be to God!