

*Faith Lutheran Church, First Presbyterian Church,
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, St. James Lutheran Church*

Sunday, June 21, 2020
3rd Sunday after Pentecost



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)

Merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart and soul and mind and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

In Your mercy, forgive what we have been, help us amend what we are, and direct what we shall be, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways, to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

(<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/worship/service-lords-day/service-lords-day-confession/>)

Declaration of Forgiveness

Hear the good news! Christ died for us, Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us. Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. The old life has gone; a new life has begun. Believe the good news of the gospel: In Jesus Christ+ you are forgiven. Thanks be to God! **Amen.**

(<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/worship/service-lords-day/service-lords-day-confession/>)

Opening Prayer

Please join me in prayer:

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.

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Readings and Psalm

- **Jeremiah 20:7-13** *The prophet must speak despite opposition*
- **Psalm 69:7-18** *Answer me, O Lord, for your love is kind. (Ps. 69:16)*
- **Romans 6:1b-11** *Buried and raised with Christ by baptism*
- **Matthew 10:24-39** *The cost of discipleship*

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew 10:24-39

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.

[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.”

(<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.

Fear. It’s such a powerful word that can often have a tremendous and devastating impact on our life. Fear can shake us to the core and make us question ourselves and our decisions.

My sense of fear certainly has been heightened during this time of the pandemic. With good reason, I’d say, because there is so much unknown about this deadly disease. Have I already had it and didn’t know it? Do I have it? Have I had symptoms that may have warranted getting tested and I just ignored them? Am I asymptomatic? How do I know that, if I stop by to visit my elderly members, I don’t have it and won’t give it to them? How do I know if it’s ok to go to the grocery store or the pharmacy or the gas station or any place because I may not have it but others around me might? Is wearing a mask enough? If I continue to social distance from others, is that even enough? What if a vaccine isn’t developed soon? What is a cure isn’t found soon?

This is probably only a small sampling of what has been rushing through my head as I venture away from home and the office, and out into the public. Does any of this sound familiar? Have you had any of these fears as you also venture out of your home?

Fear often tends to keep a tight grip on us. Fear can be debilitating for some. Some people can’t walk outside of their homes for fear of the unknown.

I have one son, Charlie. I worry about him every day. I sometimes wonder if it is normal for me to have this continuing sense of fear that something may happen to him while I'm still alive. Most parents pray they don't outlive their children.

When Charlie was a baby and slept in his crib, I was constantly checking on him because I had heard about Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. He played football in school and I always feared he would get hit too hard even though he was a pretty big kid and could put fear into his opponent. When he got his driver's license, I was even more fearful that he would get into an accident. And then when he was 18, he became a volunteer firefighter at the local department which caused more fear and anxiety for me!

Now Charlie is 39 years old and works in downtown Detroit for Detroit EMS. Even though he loves his job and is very responsible in his line of work, I still fear for his safety. He has a dangerous job. Add to the situation the protests and riots and looting and destruction. I've had some sleepless nights, I'll tell you.

I've often wondered if Jesus' disciples experienced fear when they gave up everything to follow Him. They left the security of their homes. They left their families and all their loved ones. They left their livelihood to follow Him. How did their families feel? How could they not have some fear of the unknown? Yet, they still left everything behind and followed Him.

The disciples saw Jesus perform miracles. They saw Him heal people with all kinds of diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics, and lepers. They listened to His teachings. They knew those in authority were questioning who He was and what His motives were. To say He was not a popular person with the scribes and Pharisees is an understatement.

In our gospel last week from earlier in Matthew 10, Jesus granted the disciples the same remarkable powers He had: to heal, exorcise demons, cleanse lepers, even to raise the dead. This did not come without cost. He knew they would face being arrested, beaten, hated, and persecuted in His name.

And yet, He also denies them the very things they will need: money, pay, extra clothes, a staff for protection, even sandals. Jesus said, "See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves" (Matthew 10:16). Jesus knows the threats are real. The violence is real. Death is real. Therefore, their fear is real. And so, He knows that He must prepare them to face their fears. If not, Jesus' ministry and mission will fail. His message will not be proclaimed to the world.

Time and time again we hear Jesus say, "Do not be afraid; have no fear." Really? Have *no* fear?

Jesus encourages His disciples as He encourages us. Stand firm in your faith. Hold fast to your convictions. When the world crumbles around you, hold fast to that which is true. No one but God alone can destroy the body and soul. Therefore, God alone is the one we should fear. And yet, we know we serve a loving God who will protect us against every enemy. Our God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. God is love.

We all face fears in our lives. Right now, it may be the fear of the coronavirus or fear of job loss or fear from other effects of COVID-19. It may be fear of the riots or fear of the changes that must come from within us to stop the racism and violence and hatred that is so prevalent in our society.

It may be fears of what our church will experience once we resume in-person services. Will our members return? What will worship even look like?

And it may be fears of what we will do now, without a pastor, without a shepherd to lead us. This can be a real fear; and it's a fear that every church has faced before and, at some point in the future, will face again. That doesn't make it any less fearful when you are experiencing it.

But we must remember that it is God we serve. God loves us and will protect, guide, and comfort us through these difficult times. We are equipped saints called to carry Christ's message and mission into the world. God will never leave us.

In Isaiah 41:10, we hear these words of assurance, "Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God." Our loving God is with us. Have no fear. **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.*

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.

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.

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.

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.

Healing God, You give comfort and peace to those who are afflicted, especially with the coronavirus. We pray for all who are experiencing pain and anguish, anxiety and frustration. 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).

Gracious God, we thank you for the faithful witness of your servant, Pastor Matt. We ask that you continue to wrap your loving arms around him, his wife, Alison, and their family, and the faithful members of St. James in Rudyard. Especially during this difficult time of separation, give them strength and bring them the peace they need to continue their important ministry.

Calming God, we pray for Called-Pastor Rita Chirala and her son, Derrick, patiently waiting until the time they can join the faithful members of Faith Lutheran Church in the Soo. We pray the government expeditiously processes her religious worker visa is processed without more delay.

Compassionate God, You are with us and we are never alone. 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.

Reigning God, You bless us with guides and caretakers in the faith. As we give thanks for those who have died, increase our care for one another until we walk with them in newness of life.

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

(prayers from 3rd 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 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

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

Merciful Father, we offer with joy and thanksgiving what You have first given us-our selves, our time, and our possessions, signs of Your gracious love. Receive them for the sake of Him, who offered Himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. **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!