

*Faith Lutheran Church*

Sunday, June 28, 2020  
*4<sup>th</sup> 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)

**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:

**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.**

(from 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost, © sundaysandseasons 2020)

Readings and Psalm

- **Jeremiah 28:5-9** *The test of a true prophet*
- **Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18** *Your love, O Lord, forever will I sing. (Ps. 89:1)*
- **Romans 6:12-23** *No longer under law but under grace*

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew 10:40-42

*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.*

[Jesus said to the twelve:] <sup>40</sup>“Whoever welcomes you welcomes Me, and whoever welcomes Me welcomes the one who sent Me. <sup>41</sup>Whoever 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; <sup>42</sup>and 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.”

(<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.**

I’d like to share with you an article entitled, “Stop Telling Me about the “Lazy” and “Entitled” Poor” written by Jayson D. Bradley that appeared in the January 17, 2018, issue of Patheos, a resource that offers writers of all faith communities an opportunity to share their works. I have cited writers from Patheos articles in the past.

Mr. Bradley writes, “Years ago I led my small-group discussion on Christ’s troubling parable about Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19–30). It’s a harrowing story about a poor man named Lazarus who’s ignored every day by a very wealthy man. When they both die, they experience a biblical Freaky Friday. It’s the rich man who suffers torments while Lazarus is comforted. The message is clear. We can make sacrifices for others today, or have the choice made for us later.

Mr. Bradley continues, “Imagine my disappointment when—instead of wrestling with this extremely troubling story—my small group decided to take the conversation in a different direction. They focused on the urban legend of freeway-off-ramp panhandlers who were secretly pulling in six-figure salaries. Except it wasn’t a story to them—it was an obvious truth. Here were “poor” people cheating good people out of their hard-earned money.

“The point of Lazarus and the rich man is pretty clear, but I would have had an easier time getting a cat to discuss its implications. This group wasn’t interested in the parable’s application. They had a narrative about the poor that exonerated them from responsibility. I remember sitting in my car afterward and quietly crying frustrated tears.

Mr. Bradley shared, “I was reminded of this story a couple of months ago when I shared a (Banksy) quote on Facebook:

*“The human race is an unfair and stupid competition. A lot of the runners don’t get decent sneakers or clean drinking water.*

*Some runners are born with a massive head start, every possible help along the way, and still the referees seem to be on their side.*

*It’s not surprising that a lot of people have given up competing altogether and gone to sit in the grandstand, eat junk food, and shout abuse.”*

“The author of this post (Banksy) is talking about privilege here, but within two comments, someone responded with:

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“Conversely, many have also chosen to stand on a skateboard or sit in a wagon and ask others to push or pull them along because they feel entitled or are too lazy to make an effort themselves.”

“Once again, the point was completely ignored by turning the focus on “bad” poor people. It’s as if invoking these examples is like putting on a pair of sunglasses that block out the UV rays of culpability and conviction. These deflections come in a variety of styles:

- They’re just going to spend my money on drugs or alcohol.
- They’re in this position because of their choices.
- People on welfare all have 60” TVs and iPhones.
- I had to work for what I have. They should, too.
- There are plenty of entitlement programs available.
- People spend their food stamps on steak and lobster.

Continuing with Mr. Bradley’s article, “I’m not suggesting that there’s never any truth to these critiques. Some people will spend what money they receive on booze, and people are receiving SNAP who might occasionally splurge on expensive foods (which I’m not sure I judge them for—Top Ramen shouldn’t be your penance for poverty).

“The point is that Christians shouldn’t use the occasional abuse of charity as an excuse to ignore need and be self-indulgent with their finances. It’s like Jesus saying, “I shouldn’t extend grace to these knuckleheads; someone might abuse it.”

“We *could* look at how infrequently the needy abuse help. We *could* discuss how the system makes it difficult for the hard-working poor to get themselves ahead. We *could* even build a case for why impoverished people deserve our attention and aid. But you know what? It doesn’t matter. If you follow Jesus, the responsibility isn’t on me to prove that poor people deserve assistance.

“In the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:31–46), Jesus points out specific charitable actions that he views as being done (or not done) specifically to him. For instance, he tells the “sheep” that when they give a glass of water to someone who was thirsty, they were doing it to him. Conversely, when a glass of water was withheld from the thirsty, it was being withheld (from) him.

“The specific people (and actions) he mentions are:

- The hungry (they are fed)
- The thirsty (they receive water)
- The stranger (they are welcomed)
- The naked (they are clothed)
- The sick (they are cared for)
- The imprisoned (they are visited)

“The point of this parable rests on what was (or was not) done for the “least of these.” The sheep and goats are separated by what they did (or did not) do.

“What we need to wrap our heads around is this: Jesus never addresses the reasons someone might be hungry, naked, or sick. It doesn’t matter. Jesus doesn’t say, “I was undeservedly a stranger and you

welcomed me.” He doesn’t point out that “I was in prison for a crime I didn’t commit, and you visited me.” There’s no point in this parable where the goats respond, “Some people are hungry because they’re lazy and entitled.”

“As a follower of Jesus, it doesn’t seem like I have the luxury to embrace a narrative where the poor are undeserving of my help. Obviously, I want to be wise with my giving, but I don’t think I’m allowed to try and discern whether the poor have earned my care.

Mr. Bradley wrote, “After the comment about the lazy and entitled poor, there was more discussion. At one point they said, “I’m all about helping those who can’t help themselves for whatever reason that may be.”

“I appreciate that sentiment, but I see big problems with it:

- How do the poor prove their helplessness to us?
- Who ultimately gets to decide whether someone is deserving of help?
- What reasons are acceptable for being unable to help themselves?
  - Sickness?
  - Mental illness?
  - Addiction?
  - An upbringing that screwed them up or modeled terrible behavior and decision making?

“I think the reason that Jesus doesn’t qualify who’s deserving of charity is that the judgment isn’t ours to make. If we’re to leave vengeance to the Lord (Rom. 12:19), I imagine that includes people who abuse our kindness. We’re to be the hands through which he cares for others—deserving or not. I mean, I was an enemy when Christ gave up his *life* for me. I’m going to withhold a money, shelter, or care from someone because I think *they’re* unworthy?!

Mr. Bradley’s article ended with these words, “Most of the time, the people who respond to discussions about charity by pointing out how the poor are gaming the system are the same ones who tell me it isn’t the government’s job to take care of the poor. They say that taking care of poor folk is the church’s responsibility. It makes me thankful for the government’s involvement because a lot of church people I know seem to think the poor are getting exactly what they deserve.” End of quote.

<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/jaysondbradley/2018/01/stop-telling-lazy-entitled-poor/?fbclid=IwAR0hy4wlrXxmDO5w9RvI59dVxtDFV5tLxIgLq8A5WBXLFpvAp0dk8OcTsY>

Our gospel reading from Matthew 10 for today again says this, “[Jesus said to the twelve:] <sup>40</sup>“Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. <sup>41</sup>Whoever 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; <sup>42</sup>and 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.”

These are the words of Christ. Let us go and do likewise. **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.*

God of companionship, encourage our relationships with our siblings in Christ. Bless our conversations. Shape our shared future and give us hearts eager to join in a festal shout of praise

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.

God of mercy, Your grace is poured out for all. Inspire authorities, judges, and politicians to act with compassion. Teach us to overcome fear with hope, meet hate with love, and welcome one another as we would welcome You.

God of care, accompany all who are in deepest need. Comfort those who are sick, lonely, or abandoned. Strengthen those who are in prison or awaiting trial. Renew the spirits of all who call upon You. 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).

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.

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.

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

(prayers from 4<sup>th</sup> 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 those 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**

On my own, what I have to give doesn't amount to much in the light of all You have given to me and in the face of so much need. Put together as a congregation, what we offer You here in love becomes more, not simply added together, but somehow multiplied in its usefulness. We ask You to bless our gifts and with the addition of Your blessing, just as it was with the loaves and fishes, there is enough for all. **Amen**

(<https://www.presbyterian.org.nz/for-ministers/worship-resources/special-services/stewardship/offertory-prayers>)

**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!**