

Faith Lutheran Church

Sunday, July 5, 2020
5th Sunday after Pentecost



***Portions of this service were provided by The Synod of the Covenant which includes Presbyteries in Michigan and most of Ohio. First Presbyterian Church of Newberry is a congregation of the Presbytery of Mackinac. This wonderful gesture was offered to provide pastors, musicians, and worship leaders a Sabbath from worship preparation and leadership in recognition of (their) faithful ministry.*

Call to Worship

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

Call to Confession

It is a lot easier to praise the Lord in song, than it is to praise God with everything we say, and with everything we do. The truth is that we fall short of what God hopes for us. We sin. We need God's forgiveness. Thanks be to God that we know that forgiveness is ours every time we ask. Let us ask for this forgiveness now.

(<https://synodofthecovenant.org/a-sabbath-sunday-from-the-synod-for-pastors-and-worship-planners/>)

Prayer of Confession (please join in confessing our sins)

O God, Holy Spirit, we confess that we do not turn ourselves over to You, that You would craft us more and more into Jesus' likeness. Instead of living lives of gratitude for the grace You show us, we turn inward and drift away from the paths of righteousness. We battle or ignore You, rather than surrendering to You. We repent from our sin, and we commit ourselves again to be slaves of your righteousness. In Jesus' name and by His grace. Amen.

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Declaration of Forgiveness

The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Instead of condemning us, Jesus died for us, He rose for us, He reigns for us and He prays for us. In the name of Jesus Christ, our sin is forgiven. Thanks be to God! **Amen.**

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Opening Prayer

Please join me in prayer:

You are great, O God, and greatly to be praised. You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You. Grant that we may believe in You, call upon You, know You, and serve You, through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

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Readings and Psalm

- **Zechariah 9:9-12** *The king will come in humility and peace*
- **Psalm 145:8-14** *The LORD is gracious and full of compassion. (Ps. 145:8)*
- **Romans 7:15-25a** *The struggle within the self*

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

Jesus chides people who find fault with both his ministry and that of John the Baptist. He thanks God that wisdom and intelligence are not needed to receive what God has to offer.

[Jesus spoke to the crowd saying:] ¹⁶“To what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,

¹⁷“We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.”

¹⁸For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; ¹⁹the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”

²⁵At that time Jesus said, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; ²⁶yes, Father, for such was Your gracious will. ²⁷All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.

²⁸“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from Me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.”

(<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.

How are you doing? I'd like you to take just a moment and answer that question. Whether you are reading this sermon on Facebook or in a mailing or email. Whether you are listening to this on the radio. I'm going to pause for a moment and ask you to answer the question: How are you doing?

I've had many people over the past three-plus months ask me that. My answer is typically the same: I'm doing ok. If I want to elaborate, I'll say that the first six weeks of this pandemic were tough. I might use different terminology, depending on the company I'm with. But then I'll add that after things settled down a little, I got into a bit of a routine. I know that I have to have my sermon and congregational letters done by Wednesday evenings. I record my services on Thursday. Friday, I study the readings for the following Sunday so I can start formulating a sermon in my head. Oddly enough, I've usually been able to take Saturdays and Sundays off.

I think I've shared before that it is nice to have my sermon finished so early in the week and that it would be nice to keep this same schedule once the pandemic is over.

Once the pandemic is over.

Will it ever truly be “over”? If so, when will that be? As more and more states have relaxed their restrictions that were put in place for the health and safety of their residents, it seems like a lot of people think the pandemic is over.

People are out and about without masks. Some never wore masks to begin with. Those who go to crowded beaches and bars and restaurants and even some churches ignore the six-foot social distancing recommendation.

Though the number of confirmed cases in Luce County hasn't changed lately, the numbers in Chippewa County have increased. As I type this on Tuesday afternoon (earlier this week because of a holiday weekend coming up), the Executive Council of the Bay Mills Indian Community located in Chippewa County has moved the Tribe back from Level 4 to Level 3 Restrictions on their COVID-19 response plan.

Some say COVID-19 is a hoax. I don't believe that. I believe, no, I know, it isn't a hoax. The daily, sometimes several times a day, reporting isn't fear-mongering. The coronavirus is not a political disease. It doesn't choose to infect Democrats or Republicans or Independents. It doesn't decide to strike only those 70 years of age and older or those between 40 and 60. It doesn't care if you're white, black, or brown. It doesn't matter who you are.

What DOES matter is what you do to protect others and yourself; wear a facemask, social distance, wash your hands, don't gather in large groups. Yes, I realize as I'm typing this that I've typed these recommendations many times before. I've said these things many times before. Yet, I don't feel like a broken record. I feel like we constantly need to be reminded of this. Because, no matter how often we hear about the numbers updated on the news, many of those who went to crowded beaches and bars and restaurants and even some churches are now exposed and infected with the coronavirus.

Right now, I'm feeling a bit stressed. Again. Or still. Stressed wondering if I've been around someone who has COVID-19. Stressed that, while I feel fine, I may be asymptomatic. Stressed that any one of the members of my four congregations may become infected. Stressed because there isn't a cure for it. Stressed because of the fear that I have for all these and many other reasons.

And so, it was a perfect time to hear the gospel reading for today from Matthew 11. Jesus says, “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.”

Jesus wants us to lay all our concerns and worries and fears at His feet. Let Him lift that burden of stress off of us that has been weighing so heavily on our shoulders. The stresses of the past, the stresses of the present, and the stresses of the future.

Too often, when people go through difficult times or are stressed out or feel like the world is closing in on them, they turn to unhealthy “remedies”, which are not remedies at all; just a temporary fix that may have lasting consequences.

Some people turn to food as a way to cope with stress. Others turn to the use of drugs. Some turn to alcohol. Still, others light up a cigarette. These certainly are not healthy ways to deal with our stress.

So just what can we do?

Pray. And read scripture. Throughout the Bible, we are encouraged to find peace and rest. In Psalm 55:22, we hear, “Cast your burden on the Lord, and He will sustain you; He will never permit the righteous to be moved.”

And in John 14:27, Jesus says, “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”

Jesus knew life would be a struggle sometimes. Whether it’s the day-to-day frustrations we face. Whether it’s the occasional bump in the road. Whether it’s a long-term illness we are facing or a worldwide pandemic. Life isn’t always stress-free.

In Mark 6, we hear, “The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told Him all that they had done and taught. ³¹ He said to them, ‘Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.’ For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. ³² And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves.”

Jesus knows what it’s like to be stressed and He encouraged His disciples to take a break. “Come away....and rest a while.”

Christ also knows that as a disciple we also face persecution and ridicule for following Him. The rest He gives us now also prepares us for life eternal with Him. “I will give you rest,” He says. I will release the anxieties and apprehensions you have carried far too long.

You know, it’s almost as if I feel a weight lifted off of my shoulders when I read this.

“Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Jesus truly lightens our load.

So now, let me ask the question to you again: how are you doing?

May your remedy be found in Philippians 4:6-7, which says, “Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

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

We pray for the church. Sustain us as we share Your word. Embrace us as we struggle to find our common ground. Lift up leaders with powerful and prophetic voices. Free us from stagnant faith.

We pray for the well-being of creation. Protect the air, water, and land from abuse and pollution. Free us from apathy in our care of creation and direct us toward sustainable living.

We pray for the nations (*especially the United States and Canada, celebrating their nationhood*). Guide leaders in developing just policies and guide difficult conversations. Free us from patriotism that hinders relationship-building. Lead us to expansive love for our neighbor.

We pray for all in need. For all who are tired, feeling despair, sick, or oppressed. Take their yoke upon You and ease their burdens. Give Your consolation and free us from all that keeps us bound. 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).

We pray for all congregations. Bless pastors, deacons, and congregational leaders. Energize children's ministry volunteers, church administrators, and those who maintain our building. Shine in this place that we might notice the ways Your love transforms our lives.

We give thanks for those who have died in faith. Welcome them into Your eternal rest and comfort us in our grief until we are joined with them in new life.

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

(prayers from 5th 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. 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!