

*Faith Lutheran Church*

Sunday, July 19, 2020  
*7<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.**

Call to Confession

Let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for the One who has promised is faithful. (Heb. 10:22-23)

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.**

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**

Opening Prayer

Please join me in prayer:

**Faithful God, most merciful judge, You care for Your children with firmness and compassion. By Your Spirit nurture us who live in Your kingdom, that we may be rooted in the way of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

Readings and Psalm

- **Isaiah 44:6-8** *There is no other God than the LORD*
- **Psalm 86:11-17** *Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth. (Ps. 86:11)*
- **Romans 8:12-25** *The revealing of the children of God*

***The Holy Gospel according to Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43***

*Jesus tells a parable about the coexistence of good and evil in this world. God's judgment will remove all evildoers and causes of sin, but not until the end of human history.*

<sup>24</sup>[Jesus] put before [the crowds] another parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field;<sup>25</sup> but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds

among the wheat, and then went away. <sup>26</sup>So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. <sup>27</sup>And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?’ <sup>28</sup>He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The slaves said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ <sup>29</sup>But he replied, ‘No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. <sup>30</sup>Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, ‘Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”

<sup>36</sup>Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples approached Him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.” <sup>37</sup>He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; <sup>38</sup>the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, <sup>39</sup>and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. <sup>40</sup>Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. <sup>41</sup>The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, <sup>42</sup>and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. <sup>43</sup>Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!”

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.**

Have you ever felt a particular scripture speaks directly to you on any given day? That’s exactly how I felt when I read today’s gospel earlier this week. I thought, boy, Jesus, you picked this one just for me, didn’t you? Well, truth is, Jesus didn’t pick this particular gospel for today; a group of theologians did. But, obviously, without Jesus, it wouldn’t be a part of the gospel in the Bible.

This past weekend my husband, Doug, and I were out at the cabin. I’ve mentioned before that it’s been different having a flexible weekend schedule. I know that that is probably coming to an end pretty soon and I’m ok with that. I’m anxious to see our members back in the pews, as long as they feel precautions are in place for their health and safety.

Saturday was such a beautiful day! First, I vacuumed the inside of the cabin. My kids left last Wednesday morning and I didn’t take time to do any cleaning or laundry after they left because I went to work at the office. While I vacuumed the cabin, I did a couple of loads of laundry and picked up a few things lying around. Nothing was really too out of place.

By mid-afternoon I went outside to soak up some sunshine and do a little weeding. There are eight flower boxes along the front of the cabin where I’ve planted various breeds of marigolds. I love marigolds. It’s the only kind of flower I can grow. They take very little work and that’s what I like about them. Other than watering and occasionally weeding, you can let them go and grow. Deer leave the smelly flowers alone. When you plant marigolds around a garden, rabbits tend to leave the garden alone as well.

Just a helpful hint because they are such a beautiful and vibrant flower: if you want to cut some marigolds

and take them inside to put on your kitchen table, add a little sugar to the water. The sugar absorbs the flower's strong pungent smell. The stunning variations of the marigolds in a vase on the table add brilliant color to a room.

Well, it didn't take too long and I finished weeding the marigolds. My husband had mentioned that there were some weeds around the few garden plants we have; some tomatoes, pole beans, some cabbage and kale and radishes. So, I took a weeding fork out to the garden and started cultivating around the plants. That project didn't take very long either because there are only about eight to ten plants.

The next job was to move the chicken fence. It's time the smaller chickens were moved out of the shed but we had to move the fence for the larger chickens first. Doug needed to mow where the fence was going to go and so I decided to do a little bit more weeding. In the hundreds of daylilies he has planted.

I don't mind weeding. And I especially love to pull the tall weeds. I love pulling the ones that require a bit of "umph" to get them out of the ground. Well, I got a bit more "umph" than what was needed and I tugged on a couple of weeds that didn't want to come out of the ground. So, I pulled a little harder. Yep. You guessed it. Along with a couple of weeds came a couple of daylily plants. Not good. Doug has them identified by a specific numbering system and a couple of tags came out of the ground with the weeds and the flower plants.

Thank goodness I have a patient husband! I hollered out towards where he was working and he told me to stop weeding. No problem there. I wasn't going any further. He came and looked at the weeds and looked at the plants and looked at the tags. The weeds. The plants. The tags. And all over again. And then he had to figure out which tag went with which plant while delicately separating the flower from the weed.

Needless to say, he got it figured out and "we" decided I didn't need to be so proactive in weeding the daylilies. In fact, he said he never really weeded the flowers because he didn't want to damage the plants. Doug said he is just fine with letting the weeds and flowers grow together.

I know Doug didn't plant weeds with the daylilies. The weeds appeared, just as they did among the garden plants and in the marigolds and in about everything that ever gets planted on this earth. It's pretty easy to tell the flowers and the weeds apart. It's pretty easy to pluck out the ones that we don't want growing there. I think I would have been better off leaving the weeds and the daylilies alone.

In our gospel reading for today, Jesus tells the parable of the sower who sowed good seed in his field and yet weeds grew among the wheat. The slaves asked if they should pluck up the weeds and the master said, no. In doing so, you may damage the good wheat. Leave them alone and I will have the reapers collect the weeds first to be bundled and burned, and then gather the wheat for my barn. Good advice. I guess I should have read the gospel before weeding!

Jesus continues by explaining who in the parable is the sower, who is the good seed, the weeds, and the enemy who sowed the seed. In all reality, we have probably already chosen which one we are and the meaning of the parable may seem very clear to us. It may seem cut-and-dried. But is it always that cut-and-dried in life? Are we able to determine who among us are the seeds and who are the weeds? Who are the good and who are the evil?

Well, of course we are! Really? Without being judgmental? By whose standards is someone declared evil? Your standards? My standards? Our standards may be a bit different from one another.

If we have learned anything about one another - our family members, friends and neighbors - during this time of the pandemic, it is that we all have a difference of opinion. We don't all agree if masks are necessary. We don't all agree if wearing masks constitutes law. We don't all agree if social distancing helps. We don't all agree if businesses should have been shut down and whether the re-opening plan worked.

We don't all agree if it's safe to let our children go back to school this fall. I don't envy any parent that has school-age children. Raising kids is hard enough sometimes, but having to decide what is best for the mental and physical health of your child in this time is downright scary.

Let's face it. Most children learn much better when they are in a classroom setting. They learn from having a physically-present teacher who is readily available to explain things in more detail and answer questions. Children learn better social skills by being around classmates. They learn how to share and how to have healthy disagreements. Children need structure in their lives.

Many children struggle with virtual learning. It is difficult for them to concentrate on what they see and what they hear from a computer screen. This is especially true if you live in a location where the internet connection is spotty, at best.

And yet, there is a strong possibility of contracting the coronavirus by holding classes in-person in another month or so. Even if there is a 99% chance of survival rate, is it worth the risk that your child may fall into that 1% category? And yes, what about the teachers and staff?

I don't have the answers and, ultimately, I think it will have to be left up to each parent to decide what is best for their child.

The amount of anxiety, frustration, confusion and divisiveness this *evil* disease has caused is unbelievable. And it is sometimes hard to determine what information in the news and on social media is truth and what is not. What information is good and what information is evil. What is meant to bring us together and what is meant to divide us.

And frankly, it revolves around the question: what is evil?

As a Christian, we know God is the only one who can judge what is good and what is evil. Thank goodness, right?!?! A colleague shared this in an article: "When we start going down the road of making our lot in life electing what is good and evil, we may very well discover that others will make similar conclusions about us."

Ultimately, the parable in our gospel today promises that God's job is not ours. We don't get to decide what is good and what is evil. And we should be very happy that is not our decision to make.

For guidance, we turn to Romans 12:9-21, which says, "Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to

what is good; <sup>10</sup>love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. <sup>11</sup>Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. <sup>13</sup>Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. <sup>14</sup>Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. <sup>15</sup>Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup>Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. <sup>17</sup>Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup>If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. <sup>19</sup>Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." <sup>20</sup>No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." <sup>21</sup>Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." And let God handle the rest. **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**

Confident of Your care and helped by the Holy Spirit, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need. *A brief silence.*

God of the harvest, You sow the good seed of the gospel of Jesus Christ into Your field. Help Your church throughout the world to be both diligent and patient, full of resolve and gentleness, that our witness may be faithful to Your intentions.

God of all space and time, Your whole creation groans in labor pains, awaiting the gift of new birth. Renew the earth, sky, and sea, so that all Your creation experiences freedom from the bondage of decay.

God of the nations, teach us Your ways, that we may walk in Your truth. Mend the fabric of the human family, now torn apart by our fearful and warring ways. Guide us by Your mercy, grace, and steadfast love.

God of hope, You accompany those who suffer and are near to the brokenhearted. Open our hearts to Your children who are lonely and abandoned, who feel trapped by despair, and all who suffer in any way.

God of healing, bring comfort and ease of pain to those who are hurting. We especially pray today for those we name in our hearts, our minds, and with our voices....(please name your prayer concerns).

God of the seasons, in the midst of summer, give us refreshment, renewal, and new opportunities. We pray for the safety of those who travel. We pray for those who cannot take the rest they need.

God of life, those who have died in You shine like the sun in your endless kingdom. We remember with thanksgiving the saints of all times and places and saints close to us. Gather us with them on the day of salvation.

In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from Your love, we offer these prayers to You; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **Our Lord's Prayer**

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

**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** *(please join in prayer)*

Every good thing is a gift from God — the food we eat, the things we have, the time we spend, our whole lives. We give our lives back to God as a way of saying thank you — sharing money with those who are in need, giving food to those who are hungry, and spending our time to help others; all in the name of 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**

God blesses us so that we can be a blessing to others.

**We go out to follow Jesus in the world — to show and tell the good news of God to everyone. Thanks be to God!**

**Sources:**

[www.presbyterianmission.org](http://www.presbyterianmission.org)

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