

Faith Lutheran Church

Sunday, August 9, 2020
10th 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

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love You and worthily magnify Your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. May we take a moment to go before God in open and honest confession.

Prayer of Confession (please join in confessing our sins)

Most merciful God,

we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. 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; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways, to the glory of Your holy name. Amen

Declaration of Forgiveness

In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for His sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ, and by His authority alone, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Opening Prayer

Please join me in prayer:

O God our defender, storms rage around and within us and cause us to be afraid. Rescue Your people from despair, deliver Your sons and daughters from fear, and preserve us in the faith of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Readings and Psalm

- **1 Kings 19:9-18** *The Lord speaks to Elijah on Mount Horeb*
- **Psalm 85:8-13** *I will listen to what the Lord God is saying. (Ps. 85:8)*
- **Romans 10:5-15** *Hearing and confessing the word of faith*

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew 14:22-33

Matthew's gospel typically portrays Jesus' disciples as people of "little faith," who fail despite their best intentions. In this story, Matthew shows how Jesus comes to the disciples when they are in trouble and sustains them in their time of fear and doubt.

²²[Jesus] made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side [of the Sea of Galilee], while He dismissed the crowds.²³ And after He had dismissed the crowds, He went up the mountain by Himself to pray. When evening came, He was there alone,²⁴ but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them.²⁵ And early in the morning He came walking toward them on the sea.²⁶ But when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear.²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

²⁸Peter answered Him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."²⁹ He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus.³⁰ But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!"³¹ Jesus immediately reached out His hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"³² When they got into the boat, the wind ceased.³³ And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

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 watched one of those shows that comes out towards the end of the year that features news-worthy stories that have occurred throughout that year? Something like "a year in review" where a broadcast journalist like Barbara Walters or a news outlet like Time or CNN hosts a show that includes highlighted stories and deaths of celebrities or prominent individuals. I think Dick Clark or Casey Kasem would host a show like this for the music industry. How's that for dating me? Dick Clark or Casey Kasem. I believe there is a broadcast network that does a review show for the sports industry.

Can you imagine what the shows for the end of this year, 2020, will be like? Can you imagine how long these shows will be? I mean, this is only the second week in August and we still have four-and-a-half months yet to go in this year!

It seems *so* long ago that the news was filled with the Australian bushfire. The fire began in June of 2019 but it was only contained and extinguished during December 2019 and January 2020. I read an article the other day about the Australian bushfire that said, "Over 1 billion animals are believed to be dead and an estimated 2,000 homes were lost, the overall damage and economic losses would reach US\$ 100 billion." (<https://feedpulp.com>)

It was also back in January when NBA star Kobe Bryant, his 13-year-old daughter Gianna, and seven other passengers were killed in a helicopter crash in California. THAT seems like such a long time ago – until you are a part of the family of those who was killed.

On January 7, 2020, shortly after the New Year began, the World Health Organization's Chinese branch was officially informed of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19. The deadly virus, which triggers a respiratory disease, has killed more than 160,000 in the United States, over 700,000 worldwide, and has been traced back to a market in Wuhan, China.

The Summer Olympics were postponed early on due to the coronavirus pandemic as athletes were rigorously training and making their final placement and travel plans.

Heads of State, Prime Ministers, and Presidents declared a national lockdown for their respective country and closed their borders, as much as possible, due to the pandemic. Some borders remain closed except for necessary travel.

Schools closed immediately, leaving lockers filled with student's belongings and teachers scrambling to produce online learning materials. Businesses closed, people were laid off – some still are – or, worse yet, let go. Factories that used to make automobiles and other products were tooled to make ventilators and other life-saving equipment. Hospitals, filled with COVID-19 patients, relied on military services to set up makeshift ICU's and tent hospitals. Churches suspended worship services; many still not holding in-person services as of this date for fear of a coronavirus outbreak among their most vulnerable members.

There was, of all things, a toilet paper shortage due to people stockpiling the precious commodity. If you've ever had to rely on a Sears catalog or even rough paper towels, you may understand why.

And a name we won't soon forget, George Floyd, was killed by a Minneapolis police officer which sparked outrage, racial divide, protests, rioting, looting, and calls to defund the police.

And even after George's death, videos of law enforcement officers using excessive force were broadcast on social media and the evening news. Though some may think the country has settled down, protests and rioting still occur nationwide; they just don't receive as much national news attention as they used to.

Not to mention the political division in our country that has pitted spouse against spouse, parents and children in heated debates, neighbors angry with neighbors, and communities are torn in two.

Throw in there the murder hornets, the coin shortage, the deaths of many famous people seemingly one right after another including Jerry Stiller, Little Richard, Kelly Preston, Kenny Rogers, Kirk Douglas, and most recently, Wilford Brimley, and you have a year in review show that could take a week to broadcast! On the flip side, any year in review shows involving sports may be very short!

Whether it's because of the coronavirus or accidents or Mother Earth, whether it's due to intentional actions or unavoidable conditions, we may often hear that little voice in our head or feel that painful tug in our heart that asks, "Where was God's presence in all of this?"

We seem to easily recognize God in our lives when things are going well. When we've received a job

promotion or raise. Our family seems healthy and happy. When the sun is shining, the birds are chirping, there are a warm breeze and no rain – or snow – in the forecast. It is easy to recognize God in our lives when there is no disruption to our schedule.

But why, then, is it so difficult to realize God is with us all the time, in the good times *and* in the not-so-good times? God doesn't decide, "Oh, I'm going to make it a good day for Melinda" or "I'm going to make it a not-so-good day for Melinda." God doesn't separate those times for us and we shouldn't separate those times from God.

Even during this pandemic, when we feel angry or hopeless, afraid or distraught, we should look for the good.

Whenever I pray, whether it's in the morning, evening, meal-time, or just seems like time for a prayer, I always begin with these words, "Thank you, God, for the blessings of this day." It doesn't matter if it's the best day of my life. It doesn't matter if it's the worse day of my life. I can always find at least one blessing of the day that I should be thankful for and praise God for.

In our gospel reading for last week, Jesus wanted to be left alone so that He could grieve the death of John the Baptist. Not able to find a quiet place for Himself, He went ashore where He was surrounded by people whom He cured. He then fed five thousand men, besides women and children, with five loaves and two fish. And even afterward, there were twelve baskets filled with leftovers. It was easy to find God's presence in this.

In today's gospel, we hear Jesus trying *again* to be alone. He made the disciples get into a boat so that they were distanced from Him. He dismissed the crowd He had just fed and went up the mountain by Himself to pray.

He just wanted a time to be alone and that is exactly what He got. He was alone there all evening until the next morning. It was then that He saw the battered boat full of disciples who'd had a pretty rough night on the wind-driven waves.

They didn't recognize Jesus as He walked on the sea towards them. They were terrified! Sensing their fear, He spoke to them saying, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

Peter wanted reassurance that it was Jesus so he asked Him to let him also walk on water – toward Jesus. "Come," Jesus said. So, Peter got out of the boat and started walking on the water. Confident at first given his Lord's beckoning, Peter soon remembers the height of the waves and depth of the sea and loses heart. Scared, he called out to Jesus who immediately reached out His hand and caught Peter.

Once Jesus and Peter got into the boat, the wind calmed down and the disciples worshiped Jesus, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God."

Isn't it interesting that, even though the disciples were with Jesus when *He fed five thousand plus* with five loaves and two fish, it wasn't until they were in a life-threatening situation that they recognized

who Jesus is? When the disciples were in distress and fear overtook them that they finally recognized Jesus as the Son of God?

I think that's what happens to us as well; at least, for me anyway. When things are going well and I'm just skating by day by day, it's easy to think that God is fine just sitting there on the sideline. And it's not that I don't need God when things are going well. I just might not think about God as much. Yet let something happen, something that causes stress or pain or worry, and who do we turn to? God. Because that's what God is for, right? To listen to our prayers and fulfill our needs. To comfort us and give us strength. And while yes, God IS with us during those difficult times, we must remember God is with us during the not-so-difficult times. We should continue to praise and thank God when things are going well for us. Again, God doesn't separate those times for us and we shouldn't separate those times from God. Thank you, God, for the blessings of this day.

So perhaps this week, we might intentionally invite God into our lives through prayers when things are going well. When you feel blessed this week from receiving good news or positive results or just being happy for no particular reason other than being blessed, thank God. Praise God. Worship God.

In Isaiah 41, we hear, "Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand." Thanks *be* to God! **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.*

For Your whole church throughout the world. Give courage in the midst of storms, so that we see and hear Jesus calling: "Take heart, it is I: do not be afraid." May we follow Christ wherever He leads.

For the well-being of Your creation. Protect waterways, forests, lands, and wildlife from exploitation and abuse. Help the human family endeavor to sustain and be sustained by the resources of Your hand.

For the nations and their leaders. In You, steadfast love and faithfulness meet, and righteousness and peace kiss. May nations in conflict know the peace that is the fruit of justice, and the justice that is the path to peace.

For those in need. Everyone who calls upon Your name will be saved. Accompany all who are lonely, hear the voices of those who cry out in anguish, and support those who are frustrated in their search for an affordable place to live. We pray for those suffering this day, especially those we name in our hearts, our minds, and with our voices at this time.....(please name your prayer concerns).

For our congregation. You have gathered us here today as Your people and we thank You for this gift. We pray for those who are new to this community, for students and teachers preparing for a new school year in unique and difficult ways, and for those struggling with unexpected hardship. Supply us generously with Your grace for our life together.

We give you thanks, O God, for the saints of the whole church from all times and places, and for the

saints in our lives and in our community whom You have gathered to Yourself. 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 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 *(please join in prayer)*

Blessed are you,
O Lord our God, maker of all things. Through Your goodness You have blessed us with these gifts. With them we offer ourselves to Your service and dedicate our lives to the care and redemption of all that You have made, for the sake of Him who gave 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!

Sources:

www.presbyterianmission.org

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