**FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

**July 5, 2020**

We find ourselves in new territory these past weeks and also ventured forward even unto more unknowns, as we deal with COVID19. In some regards, we can only imagine what the early Christians and the post-resurrection Christian assemblies went through in the first centuries of their faithful journey. They were trying to follow Christ and His directives toward loving one another and keeping the Christian faith, struggling through adverse and even hostile situations. But in the midst of it all, they knew they had Christ and the Holy Spirit to get them through, and so do and will we.

Through these upcoming weeks when we are not able to gather in our beloved worship center, I will do my best to provide for you each week a worship flow you can do at home. You will need to have your favorite Bible handy and be ready to prayerfully set aside time to let the Holy Spirit fill you with grace from His Word and peace from the prayers. **(If you have access to ZOOM, we are doing our Sunday Services using that tool live at our 9:30 am worship time. We have started having in Sanctuary Worship, following appropriate precautions on Sunday morning, as well. Love to see you at worship, either way.)**

**Let us begin, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!**

**Let us pray:**

**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.**

**Gathering Hymn**: **“Great Is Thy Faithfulness”** (ELW 733)

The tune for this hymn is so aptly entitled, “Faithfulness” This hymn is a reflection and promise by and for a person of the Christian faith. We probably first think before we sing the words that it is a support of our faith, and it is. But even more so it is about the true author of faith, the one who is great because He is always faithful. The refrain so aptly states, “Morning by morning new mercies I see; all I have needed thy hand hath provided; great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.”

What a faith statement and truism for the Christian. We need to always remember that God is great and faithful. His faithfulness is dedicated through His love for all of His creation. Through all the seasons of nature and life, God provides mercy, care and love. This hymn gives credence to our Lord’s ultimate providence.

(Sing or say it through as many times as you wish, letting the words fill your hearts)

Now, let us hear and draw near to us the Word of God as preserved for us through our Holy Scriptures. Get you Bible ready and your thoughts prepared to allow God to enter into your souls.

**First Reading: Zechariah 9:9-12** (Read it to yourself or out loud, a couple times)

If we want peace, we have to quit our sinful ways of trying to dominate others of the world, only for our own gain. True peace according to Zechariah is based on listening to God’s Word and following as people of His covenant with them. God wants peace, His peace, to cover the whole creation and every nation.

The people to whom Zechariah writes have been a people in exile. Cyrus, after defeating the Babylonians, made a declaration to the scattered people of Zion (Hebrew faithful) that they could return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. Zechariah and Haggai speak of what this entailed as a re-gathered people of Yahweh (God). Zechariah dreams with His words from Yahweh of a new age of faithfulness and peace to those repentant upon return. There was to be war and its misery no longer, but for all nations Yahweh would provide a quiet time.

This where we hear in Zech 9:12 that the people could be “prisoners of hope.” The Lord would invite those returning sinners a chance to reshape their lives in a healthy relationship with God. The double blessing would be a safe stronghold back home and no more harm from potential enemies. This divine redemption would flow and be supported by the love of God.

The explanation of the Chapter Nine from the “Lutheran Study Bible, Concordia Publishing House,” page 1536, goes like this, “The Lord’s saving work on behalf of His people is foretold using illustrations based on OT history. God’s enemies suffer defeat for breaking His Holy Law. They will learn that “the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23). But those who repent and cling in faith to the Messiah will be covered with His righteousness and enjoy His rule of peace.” This summary ties in Zechariah’s vision with that which we have the benefit of enjoying by the coming of Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Psalm 145:8-14 (**read it to yourself or out loud)

What a beautiful collection of verses in the 145th Psalm. How could a person of faith not hear these words and not be lifted up? It is full of hope and reassurance of our standing before the divine source of all creation. As we feel the blessing of God’s love and compassion for us, it is a natural flowing from our hearts to want to give thanks and praise His name. We are not alone in this world, but watched over by the faithful care of God.

**Second Lesson: Romans 7:15-25a (**Read it to yourself or out loud, a couple times)

Boy, does this lesson speak to me, as it did Paul. Paul knew that as we live in this world sin will always be a constant tempter. It also reminds me of why Christ had to come into our world and die to our sins. We are not able, in our best efforts, to consistently keep sin at bay. We say or do dumb things we would never really want to do, but we do it anyway. Like Paul says in verse 15, “For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.”

He speaks of the sin which lives within us. We are mortal, people of the flesh. He makes a good point concerning the sin’s penetration into our faith life. Look at verse 18, “...For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.” We, like Paul, struggle disappointingly against our sinful nature. We know that said sinful desires are wrong, yet, they sometimes seem to prevail over our inner protestation of what we know is right.

We would like to think that our mind and all its intellectual components would be able to rule over the temptations of sinfulness. But we are not able to do so by our own volition. We need a source of power, a divine power, to work in our heart (inner faith being) to challenge and overcome them. Also, as Paul knew, as we do fall short God does not abandon us to our disappointment or consequence. He has shown His great forbearance by having His Son destroy the ultimate power of sin by His victory of the Cross and Resurrection, and provide for us divine forgiveness, mercy and grace.

**Gospel Acclamation s 205**

**Gospel: Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30** (Read it to yourself or out loud, a couple times)

Take on Jesus and “you will find rest for your souls.” (v. 29b) Ah, what comforting words. In a world which can be unkind, full of chaos and evil happenings, we have this invitation from the Son of God. Our plights in life do not go un-noticed by our most Holy One. Read the first six verses at the beginning of this chapter. Jesus gives an answer to the disciples of John, spoken in words but illustrated by action. Jesus does not only watch and talk about what can be done in the name of God, but He follows through with compassion and concern to make a difference in the lives of those in need.

Our opening section of these selected verses today for our lesson, we hear Jesus

challenging those who should be excited by His ministry and John the Baptist’s. They should be emotionally and actively involved in what His Father was doing in their time and place for time eternal. They cannot make compute against their set ways and principles which have kind of worked for them for years. Jesus takes to task their inability to see beyond themselves to the divine activity right before them. In fact, the point flowing out of this section is that intelligence and wisdom are not necessary to receive what Jesus wants to offer to and for them on behalf of His Father.

“...yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All 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. Come to me, ...” (vs. 26b-28a) Let your trust in Christ keep you close to Him always and His care for you.

**Hymn of the Day: “For the Fruit of All Creation”** (ELW 679)

(LBW 563, different tune))

I do not know this hymn as well as I know many of them in our hymnal. This hymn really softens the heart with God’s glory over all the days of life, His “endless days”.

God does bestow on us life, now unto eternity. Whether it is during the busy times of our day to our resting time at night, God does watch over all.

I truly like the beginning of the third verse and pray that all of us can hold these words dear and raise our voice as suggested, “In all life’s brilliant, timeless moments, let faithful voices sing your praise,”

(Sing or recite out loud this hymn, contemplating its peaceful grace.)

**Apostles' Creed**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,**

**creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,**

**the holy catholic church,**

**the communion of saints,**

**the forgiveness of sins,**

**the resurrection of the body,**

**and the life everlasting.**

**Amen.**

**Prayers of Intercession**

**The Lord’s Prayer (Traditional)**

**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**

**Benediction**: May the God of hope fill you with joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.