**SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

**July 12, 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:**

**Almighty God, we thank you for planting in us the seed of your word. By your Holy Spirit help us to receive it with joy, live according to it, and grow in faith and hope and love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.**

**Amen.**

**Gathering Hymn**: **“Here I Am, Lord”** (ELW 574 (WOV 752))

The refrain is such a wonderful statement of faith. We hear Christ’s call, and out of the darkness we respond, “Here I am, Lord.” That is a bold and also scary response. What will the Lord have for us to do? Will we be able to follow through with His desire of us?

The answer comes with the last part of the refrain, “I will go, Lord, if you lead me.” That is the trust we have to have to live through our mortal ability to do the Lord’s work. The Lord will lead us as He has called us to do His work here on earth. This work asks of us to do the last sentence of the refrain, which ultimately speaks of what Christ wishes to do for all, “I will hold your people in my heart.” We can do all things for Christ if our minds are of Christ. May all people feel the love we can offer in Christ as we graciously hold all people in our hearts.

(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: Isaiah 55:10-13** (Read it to yourself or out loud, a couple times)

The title my Bible gives for the 55th chapter of Isaiah is, “The Compassion of the Lord.” It is an interesting chapter. The people have been in exile in Babylon and God has provided hope for them with a new Exodus. They are going to get to go home to Jerusalem if they seek out His largesse of compassion and seek not any other false diversions.

God wants them to not seek false teachings and its trappings but listen to His Word. Their only hope is in what He desires to offer to them. They need to take heed of His goodness and step away from those sinful ways of their past which got them where they are. “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me,” (Isa. 55:1-2a)

The opening leads so nicely to how the chapter concludes. God is using the calling in the marketplace, “Come”, as His plea for His people to return in faith to Him. He is their only true provider. No matter what they could do for themselves with their inner wants (money) would not match nor suffice for their needs the way following God’s call to His care could provide. Once they could get to that realization, the return to Jerusalem would be one of rejoicing in the presence of their loving eternal God.

So, these last verses reflect this joy and excitement upon the return, like a second Exodus to a promised land with God. And not only do they rejoice, but God and that He has created rejoice.

**Psalm 65:(1-8) 9-13 (**read it to yourself or out loud)

This is a song of praise. God’s grace is magnificent and to His glory. We are a people who realize the significance of His mercy to look beyond our sin and invites us to be at one with Him. Without God we really are a lesser being. In God, by our faith, we are made holy. He hears our prayers (v. 2) and He atones our

iniquities (v. 3). We also rejoice in the fact that our God chooses peace for our world and wants all the creation to prosper.

**Second Lesson: Romans 8:1-11 (**Read it to yourself or out loud, a couple times)

Paul is working very diligently to help the young Christian community understand that as we live here on earth, we can either live in our sinfulness (flesh) or live in the Holy Spirit. If we choose to live in the Spirit, we are empowered to seek goodness and have values which typify the ways and thoughts of the Resurrected Lord.

We are not able to please God by our own contemplations or desires, they are always tainted by the flesh. We would truly like to follow the Law (OT directives) but we fall short. Thereby, being overwhelmed by guilt and feeling we have disappointed our Lord. The Lord knows our plight, He has lived in our sinfulness even though He was without sin. So He calls us to seek His Spirit, having forgiving us sinfulness, and sanctifying us through His Spirit.

This gift of grace by God through His Son opens for us a whole new way of living. We are not enslaved by sinful temptation and its consequence death, but freed to live according to the promise of Christ’s atonement and the guidance of His Spirit. We struggle because we are thinking and purposeful people to so easily accept this gift. We aim to please but fall short. Paul tells us not to look at our relationship with our Lord through our earthly mind but through one of a Spirit filled acceptance. “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.” (v. 5)

**Gospel Acclamation s 205**

**Gospel: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23** (Read it to yourself or out loud, a couple times)

“As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.” (v. 23) In this parable of “The Sower” the climax of Jesus’ point is readily visible here. It seems obvious that seed in good soil would provide the best harvest, so Jesus wants His disciples to make available the best listening “soil” for the gospel message. So, should we today.

It probably seems to go without saying that if hostile “ears” are hearing the goodness of the gospel message of salvation through Christ, it will not be readily accepted. This parable is a good presentation of how people take the message of Christ gift of new life. I probably do not have to expand too deeply on it, seeing Christ explains the parable in verses 18-23.

One aspect to assist in presenting anything, especially the gospel, we have to do so in a way that can be grasped easily and in a way that the hearer is ready to hear. I remember wanting to explain something to my children that was important. Or if I wanted to provide my thoughts to helped them through something that was causing them trouble. First, I would have to listen to what and where they were at that moment in time. I would not discount their frustration or hurt or challenge. Then when we could get things slowed down and in neutral, I would offer (while still listening to their protestations) my thoughts. The conversation may not at that moment lead to an equitable resolve, but the soil was being set for more conversation, hopefully fruitful and positive later. I could not come to my children the same way in a discussion because they looked at solving problems in their lives differently. I loved them and only wanted the best for them, so it is with doing evangelism in the name of Christ. He wants only the best for us.

**Hymn of the Day: “Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling”** (ELW 608 (WOV 734))

 This is a beautiful hymn and a comforting one for those who hear Jesus’ affirmation that He wants all people to be in His arms. It fits nicely with the Matthew text of evangelism. What better way to live life knowing that Jesus is always calling you. No matter how distant you think you are from Christ, He knows where you are and graciously invites you to be at His home. This hymn so clearly reminds us that though we are of sin, Christ is of forgiveness. “Oh, for the wonderful love he has promised, promised for you and for me! Though we have sinned, he has mercy and pardon, pardon for you and for me.” (Verse 3)

(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.