**SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

**July 19, 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:**

**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.**

**Gathering Hymn**: **“God of Grace and God of Glory”** (ELW 705 (LBW 415))

The first verse of this hymn ties in nicely with our Gospel lesson from Matthew this Sunday. It is about what God will be doing for the faithful and the eternal Kingdom of God harvest of glory. God is a god of grace. He has been since there was a beginning and will bring all things to Himself when there is an ending.

It is through the power God gives to us that we will be able to avail as people of faith at that end. The Church throughout the ages has declared that there is only one power that divinely has complete attention focused on the needs and salvation of His people. Again, like the parable of the weeds we need to be a people filled with Christ’s ability to be patient. A patience which has faith in goodness prevailing in the end. We may have fears about the day and its future, but Christ will in us, “bring its bud to glorious flower.” Christ through the people of the Church will gleam like a bright flower in the noon day sun to be a herald to all people to live in His glory.

(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 44:65-8** (Read it to yourself or out loud, a couple times)

The Lutheran Bible I use for study entitles this section in Isaiah, “Besides Me There is No God.” He is telling the wayward Hebrews that they were to refocus their faith attentions and intentions. All the things and other foreign gods they had fallen for to help them for divine intervention were to be for them of no consequence. Only Yahweh (God) is the one true divine power over all aspects of the universe.

“I am the first and the last; besides me there is no god.” (v. 6b) The beginning of verse 6 provides earthly titles to Yahweh as He acts and oversees the happenings of their world. “King of Israel” denotes a fact to His people a special relationship in which all people are under His supervision. No other deity watches over them, can provide for them and makes possibilities of hope available. His governance is just and forthright, no other deity can even hold a candle to Him. “Redeemer” adds to this point by His actions of deliverance which only He could provide. Other idols for which the people had been devoting their intentions and affections fall way short and were truly impotent. “Lord of hosts” paints the picture that He is all there is and they should know that He is a jealous god. He is not one of many gods but the only true and faithful God.

Yahweh even lays down the gauntlet to all interlopers in verse seven. “Who is like me? Let him proclaim it.” Yahweh then tells His people to not fear the loss of those useless idols because only He has the power over all the creation. All they can do is stand up pretty in likenesses and dreams while the true divine source rules ultimately and completely. They were to trust totally in Him and declare their faithfulness fully to Him before all other people.

**Psalm 86:11-17 (**read it to yourself or out loud)

Verse eleven is quite a faith statement in just a few words. “Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to your name.” This idea set forth by the Psalmist is one that cleanses all our thoughts out that are in conflict with God and seeks to be at one with God. If we could fully free our mind to consider only God’s way, our way would be less troubled and more at peace. “Unite my heart” literally means in the Hebrew, “make my heart one.” If we can do this prayerful request, we would no longer live divided between completing interests and loyalties.

The Psalmist did not want himself or the other people of Israel to be like “insolent men.” David saw these people as those who in denying his authority as king also to be un-relying on Yahweh as their God. There were always those groups of people who thought of their own interests first and did not like the way of either David or Yahweh. They saw his reign as an inconvenience to their own wants and would plot to do him harm and denounce the providence of God.

Yet in the midst of the threats, David knew of God’s hand in his life. Yahweh was gracious and merciful, steadfast and faithful. The Psalmist had all trust in the goodness and love of Yahweh and thanked Him for His “strength to your servant.” This verse fifteen should sound familiar to the LBW (green hymnal days) as it is pretty close to the gospel verse, we used for the Lenten season. (See page 63)

**Second Lesson: Romans 8:12-25 (**Read it to yourself or out loud, a couple times)

These verses today really reinforce our faith. These verses follow last week’s discussion by Paul if we live by the flesh or by the Spirit. Here he says by living in the Spirit we gain the power and insight of the divine to help us look past our flesh. In the flesh we can be despondent and filled with doubts, not only about what is to come from our mortal effort’s day to day, but also in the providence of God which permeates the whole creation.

Paul wants us to trust in the Holy Spirit and not measure the activity of the day by our own comprehension but trust the we have been given a special gift and purpose won for us by Christ. If we are in the Spirit, we look beyond the world and through the vision of a God’s appointed. We become heirs to the promise of His saving power in our world; thus, bringing all things unto Himself. There is no power greater in all the universe than He and we through the power of the Spirit are given by faith the possibility to realize that truth.

It is in this relationship of faith in Christ, posited by Paul’s understanding of the work of the Spirit, that we find and live in hope beyond anything we have to be able to understand. We are to just enjoy and cherish. As Paul sees us as children of God, cared for lovingly in the work of the Spirit, that we see beyond sin and death into a hope of new life in and with the most holy one, our Lord.

**Gospel Acclamation s 205**

**Gospel: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43** (Read it to yourself or out loud, a couple times)

We have in these sections from Matthew “The Parable of the Weeds” and its explanation. Jesus has the farmer by this parable reflecting on the fact that there is evil and good in the world, simultaneously. Even more so, we are not to become frustrated by the evil which would cause harm in the midst of the good we wish to have prevail. He tells us to be patient and see to the harvest and then He would separate the evil from the good. The ultimate point he wants to make out of this harvest parable is the evil will be exterminated in the end (“Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned...” (v. 30b).

Then cherish the good which is what the farmer wanted. A great harvest of wheat (...but gather the wheat into my barn.” (v. 30c) Notice He says put the wheat in “my” barn.” The whole harvest is what is gained of goodness by serving the Christ. We are not to judge prematurely thinking we can tell the weeds from the crop. Many weeds are able to imitate the crop or get entangled in the crop. It is at the harvest the true nature, evil or good, will prevail. The farmer (God) would easily be able to direct which was no good for the harvest and what would be the true crop.

“The Lutheran Study Bible” has as its explanation of this parable (vv. 26-43) the following quotation. “At the close of this present age, the Son of Man will send His angels to gather all people. The law-breakers will suffer eternal punishment, and the righteous will enjoy the Father’s heavenly glory. Since all people are law-breakers, all deserve to be cast into the fiery furnace. Only those who have faith in Christ will escape this fate. They are declared righteous (Rom. 3:21-26).” (Page 1610)

This commentary’s use of “law-breakers” is more to be understood than people who commit earthly crimes as they are prescribed, but those who live with evil in their hearts. They do not hear Christ’s call to come unto Him and live fully in their iniquities against all that God holds dear, and do so with no repentance. The righteous are more than just “good” people, but people who by faith desire to live beyond their iniquities and live in the glory of Christ’s forgiveness, mercy and grace. They are not people of perfect behavior, which none of can attain, but trust in Christ’s understanding of our hearts. Our righteousness is based not on our own volition but of Christ’s desire to have all who live in His name to seek the best they can be, and pray for being gathered into the harvest of the Kingdom of God as a cherished child of faith. A great crop of Christ’s saving activity.

**Hymn of the Day: “Jesus, Priceless Treasure”** (ELW 775 (LBW 457))

There are some great phrases in this hymn which help bolster our faith in the midst of what seems to be trying about us. “Jesus calms my fear” and “God, who dearly loves us, from all trial saves us, gives sweet peace within...” This is our God. The one who out of His love had our Lord Jesus “enter in” and though the world causes us great troubles beyond my control, “[Jesus} still in thee lies purest pleasure: Jesus, priceless treasure.”

That last phrase is from the end of this hymn. It also starts the hymn. Christ is with us from the beginning of our life, through our life and brings us unto Himself at our end. What a cherished thought knowing that Christ has been, is and will be with us through all the events of our lives. He is not distant and uncaring. Christ came to be present and fulfill for us a victory in our stead which defeats all that can eternally harm us. His presence walks with us each and every moment of our life. This is a priceless and never-failing treasure to behold and trust.

(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.