**NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

**August 2, 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:**

**Glorious God, your generosity waters the world with goodness, and you cover creation with abundance. Awaken in us a hunger for the food that satisfies both body and spirit, and with this food fill all the starving world; through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.**

**Amen.**

**Gathering Hymn**: **“Praise to the Lord, the Almighty”** (ELW 858 (LBW 543))

This hymn reinforces God’s providence in our world, our lives and our faith. There are many phrases which draw our minds to the Psalms, and to other Old Testament books like Isaiah. We are lifted by God’s strength and protected by His promised love. Upon hearing these words our lives are enlivened by God’s presence, and praise should flow from our lips. There is only one Almighty God, and He is our God. Alleluia.

Isaiah 40:31 goes like this, “but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings of eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.” And even subtly as we sing the words through the second line of the second verse, another hymn comes to mind. It reassures us that we are sheltered by our Lord and lifted up with His mighty wings, “You Who Dwell in the Shelter of the Lord (On Eagle’s Wings).” Read Psalm 91, especially verse 4.

The third verse, especially the first two lines, brings to mind the twenty-third Psalm. “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” (Ps 23:6) A praise of faith erupts from my heart with joy as I consider what the Almighty has done and will do. And not just for me, but for all who take to heart His greatness and presence.

(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 55:1-5** (Read it to yourself or out loud, a couple times)

The people of Israel were to take heart on a very special word for these people in exile, far from their home, in the midst of people unknown previously to them and their God. The word comes to them four times in the first verse: “come.” Who is calling them to come in their captivity? Where to and how are they to follow up on that call? It is a beautiful call for a suffering people.

It was a call from the one and only God (Yahweh). The one their fore bearers had discounted in significance and drifted away from following their own iniquity. God of the holy covenant wanted them back in his arms and care. He wanted to be their God in all their faithfulness and assure them that they were His people. They were not forgotten. There was hope in what appeared to them in a hopeless and tragic situation.

Imagine their inner joy as the One to whom they thought had forsaken them. Their former generations had made the mess they were in and now they have a fresh opportunity to be where they should be with their most holy One. And that “I am” is calling out to them with a call to restore their covenant relationship. Isaiah speaks to them of a glorious time of King David and how they would live in glory, again. And not just for themselves but for all to whom Yahweh called them to meet.

In fact, verse 5 we get reference back to the original covenant Yahweh made with Abram (Abraham) and how all people would be blessed by the covenant blessing to the generations of Abram. (Gen 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14) This call by Yahweh to be His people and through this call to “come” and be within us, all nations will be blessed by your existence.

**Psalm 145:8-9, 14-21 (**read it to yourself or out loud)

The first two verses, especially verse eight, speak of God’s greatness and faithfulness, cherished by the people of the faith filled Israelites. It not only gave comfort but also encouragement in the midst of all that they would know in their living through God’s power in the earthly world. Look at other verses where in the Old Testament where these words would support the faith lives of the Hebrews:

Ex.34:6; Nu.14:18; Ne.9:17; Ps.86:15; 103:8.

The second selection of verses speak of Yahweh’s providence and just apportioning of His activity in His creation and with His people. The ultimate faith statement of such an understanding of the presence of their God each day, in all ways, comes

forth in verse 21, “My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord, and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.”

**Second Lesson: Romans 9:1-5 (**Read it to yourself or out loud, a couple times)

Paul is politely ruing for the people of Israel who challenge his message of Christ as the longed-for Messiah. He posits a thought about what will become of them if they do not take the Word of God to heart and search how Christ is the ultimate divine power for their salvation. The message is out there for them to believe, it should fulfill for them the promise made to them for generations and now they should gladly take hold of what Christ, as God, wishes to do for them.

Paul starts out this section in his letter with the phrase, “I am not lying.” This statement by Paul in this opening of a new section is not one of defense of what he has been preaching but an affirmation of the truth of it. It is subtly also an invitation for those in conflict with him or just not paying attention to what the gospel message offers a chance to have a change of heart and faith focus. It is with a clear conscience that propels to speak boldly and on behalf of Christ. In fact, if his own death would make it possible for all to believe as Christ as their Lord and Savior, he would give it up.

In verse 5, Paul speaks of the “patriarchs” (lit. “fathers”). The people of Israel, especially those feeling a sense of chosen people, claimed their salvation was granted to them by being people of patriarchs. The “patriarchs” were to their tradition were the hallowed first-generation fathers of the covenant made by God to Abraham and his descendants. You have probably heard the phrase from the Israelites, we are a people of “Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” This profession and confession designated to them that those not of the “patriarchs”, the “Gentiles”, could not be part of salvation promised by God to His people. Paul’s preaching challenged them and pressed to them that Christ is the Slavonic divine source of salvation to all people, not just those of the “patriarchs”.

**Gospel Acclamation s 205**

**Gospel: Matthew 14:13-21** (Read it to yourself or out loud, a couple times)

There is a very interesting transition here in Matthew. John the Baptist has just been executed by Herod the Tetrarch and his head was handed on a platter to the daughter of Herodias. Following this we have verse 12, “And his (John the Baptist) disciples came and took the body and buried it, and they went and told Jesus.” Imagine how the news hit Jesus.

“Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself, but...” (v.13) The word “but” emphasizes the transition. Jesus wanted to be alone to grieve, to further mull over in His mind what was in store for Him. It would seem natural to us to sense how Jesus felt. Most of us would probably just like to be left alone to deal with our feelings of loss and concern. No surprise Jesus loaded himself into a boat and tried to be alone. We would probably just say to the world, leave me alone for just a bit.

But this word “but” in verse 13, tells us a couple of things. One, the world was not going to leave Him to a time of inner peace. The crowds came from all over once they learned where Jesus had gone. They needed to be in His presence. Two, the word “but” revealed to them and to us the extra-special nature of our Lord. He moved on with compassion. In the midst of the initial protestations by His disciples because of their limited supply of food, Jesus takes the matter into His own hands. He tells them, “Bring them (five loaves of bread and two fish) to me.”

It is good for us to focus on the great miracle here, but we must not forget the compassion. All the people ate, “and we satisfied.” There was even food left over, “twelve baskets full.” (v. 20) We tend to get caught up with “how” the miracle could possibly happen and let slide the “why.”

The “how” gets our attention but it is the “why “which strengthens one’s faith foundation. That is why I emphasized the “but” in the opening verse. Jesus did not get to satisfy His own inner morose truly understandable by what was happening. The crowds which found Him and hearkened for His attention, gracefully were to be satisfied. Jesus had come into our world, hearkened by the agony of a world filled with the emptiness of sin, to fully feed it with His saving activity, here, other places and through the Cross and Resurrection. The “why” was we need Jesus. Without the love and compassion of Jesus we are empty vessels. But with Christ in our lives we are sated beyond overflowing. The people of Jesus day would remember the words from the twenty-third Psalm coming to life in this overwhelming event. Simply put, Christ is never distracted from hearing our pleas. Christ is amazingly able to fill our lives with His love and compassion beyond overflowing. Through His Spirit all of Christ’s grace is available. We need to believe and enjoy.

**Hymn of the Day: “Be Thou My Vision”** (ELW 793)

I want you in your devotion time to consider the last phrase from each of the four verses: “...thy presence my light.”; “...O Pow’r of my pow’r.”; “...my treasure thou art.”; and “...O Ruler of all.”

What a vision we would behold if we could have in our faith the complete dedication to realize each day those phrases and consider as we go about our daily activities God’s vision. Imagine if we could by the power of the Holy Spirit to fully profess line three of the third verse, “...thou and thou only, the first in my heart.” That is a challenge because we do see the world, our intentions, our ambitions quite often as our first and sometimes foremost thought of how we want it to be. We leave God out of our vision process sadly sometimes. Sin works hard to blind us to God’s view and see only our view. I am not saying we have only bad vision when dealing with things from day to day, but it is a challenge to say the least to push them aside.

This hymn is a request to God to help us see as He sees. It asks that God help us see with His eyes of compassion and hope, reflection and repentance. It asks that we take the shades of our own self from our eyes which refract the good that God wants us to see. But if we can start with devotion and dedication to those four phrases, God will help the sinful shingles fall from our eyes. We just have to trust in our Lord and follow in His guidance.

(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**

Confident of your care and helped by the Holy Spirit, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

You take resources that appear to be meager, bless them, and there is enough. May your church trust that what you bless and ask us to share with the world is abundantly sufficient. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Your bountiful creation offers sustenance and life for all creatures. Protect this abundance for the well-being of all. Reverse the damage we have caused your creation (*local needs may be named*). Replenish ground water supplies, provide needed rains in places of drought, and protect forests from wildfires. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

You offer yourself to all the nations and peoples of the earth, inviting everyone to abundant life. Bring the prophetic vision to fullness, that all nations will run to you and that nations who do not know you will find their joy in you. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. Hear the anguish of tender hearts who cry to you in suffering and satisfy their deepest needs. Bring wholeness and healing to those who suffer in body, heart, soul, and mind (*especially*). Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

You offer freely the fullness of salvation. Give our congregation (*name*) such a welcoming heart, that our words and actions may extend your free and abundant hospitality to all whom we encounter. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

*(Here other intercessions may be offered.)*

You gather your saints as one, united in the body of Jesus. Bring us with all your saints to the heavenly banquet. We remember with love and thanksgiving the saints we have known (*especially*). Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

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

**Amen.**

**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.