

Service of Prayer and Preaching

September 6, 2020 - the Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Welcome and Announcements

Opening Responsory

P: This is the day which the Lord has made;

C: **Let us rejoice and be glad in it!**

P: From the rising of the sun to its setting,

C: **the name of the Lord is to be praised.**

P: Better is one day in Your courts than a thousand elsewhere;

C: **I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.**

P: Make me to know Your ways, O Lord.

C: **Teach me Your paths.**

P: Sanctify us in Your truth.

C: **Your Word is truth.**

P: From the rising of the sun to its setting,

C: **the name of the Lord is to be praised.**

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;

As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Old Testament Canticle *Isaiah 12:2-6 (LSB p. 261-262)*

Refrain

The Lord God is my strength and my song, and
He has be - come my sal - va - tion.
With joy will you draw wa - ter from the
wells of sal - va - tion. And you will say in that
day: "Give thanks to the Lord, call up - on His name,
make known His deeds a - mong the peo - ples, pro -
claim that His name is ex - alt - ed."

Refrain

The Lord God is my strength and my song, and
He has be - come my sal - va - tion.
Sing prais - es to the Lord, for He has done
glo - rious - ly; let this be made known in all the
earth. Shout, and sing for joy, O in -
hab - i - tants of Zi - on, for great in your midst is the
Ho - ly One of Is - ra - el.

Refrain

The Lord God is my strength and my song, and
He has be - come my sal - va - tion.
Glo - ry be to the Fa - ther and to the Son
and to the Ho - ly Spir - it;
as it was in the be - gin - ning, is now, and will
be for - ev - er. A - men.

Readings from Holy Scripture

Ezekiel 33:7-9

“So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.

P: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God!**

Psalm 32:1-7; antiphon v. 1

Blessèd is the one whose transgression is for- | given,*
whose sin is | covered.



**Blessèd is the man against whom the Lord counts no in- | iquity,*
and in whose spirit there is | no deceit.**

For when I kept silent, my bones wast- | ed away*
through my groaning | all day long.

**For day and night your hand was heavy up- | on me;*
my strength was dried up as by the heat of | summer.**

I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not cover my in- | iquity;*

I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,”
and you forgave the iniquity | of my sin.

**Therefore let everyone who is godly
offer prayer to you at a time when you | may be found;***

**surely in the rush of great waters,
they shall not | reach him.**

You are a hiding place for me;
you preserve me from | trouble;*
you surround me with shouts of de- | liverance.*

**Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*
and to the Holy | Spirit;**

**as it was in the be- | ginning,*
is now, and will be forever. | Amen.**

Blessèd is the one whose transgression is for- | given,*
whose sin is | covered.

Romans 13:1-10

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is

the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

P: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God!**

Matthew 18:1-20

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

"Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes! And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.

"See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be

done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

P: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God!**

Responsory

P: Forever, O Lord, Your Word is firmly set in the heavens.

C: **Lord, I love the habitation of Your house and the place where Your glory dwells.**

P: Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it.

C: **Lord, I love the habitation of Your house and the place where Your glory dwells.**

P: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

C: **Lord, I love the habitation of Your house and the place where Your glory dwells.**

Catechism: Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, His 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 into hell.
The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
And sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Catechism: Lord's Prayer

**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.

Hymn: *LSB 966, Before You, Lord, We Bow*



God's ways are peace and harmony, not chaos: in Creation itself, at the beginning the picture is chaos, and God speaks into that chaos to bring order, to put things in their proper places. He is also very much a God of justice, and the desire in us to see justice done when a crime is committed is a basic and correct human instinct. We do not want to live by the law of the jungle; we want to live as human beings in an orderly, properly functioning society.

That's one of the basic points of this passage. Christians were already regarded with suspicion by Rome: they'd been pushed out and sporadically persecuted already, and the basic principle is one that's good to remember today as well. No good will come to the cause of the Gospel if the followers of Jesus are seen as crazy dissidents who are dangerous to social order; or put it another way, because we already know that it's Jesus who is the true Lord of the whole world, we ought to pick our battles and not get into unnecessary conflict with worldly rulers. As Ephesians 6 reminds us, our true enemies are not other human beings, but spiritual forces of evil who oppose Christ and the Gospel. We are a revolutionary community in many ways, but if we go for the normal type of violent revolt, we start playing the world's game by the world's rules, which is always a losing proposition for the Gospel.

"Rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad." In other words: if you don't want to get pulled over and given an expensive traffic ticket, then guess what? Don't run red lights! Don't speed! If you're speeding and you get a ticket, you're just getting what you deserve. The gist of all this is simply to be a law-abiding citizen -- and not just the laws and regulations we approve of, not just the ones we obey when it's convenient, but all of them that we can obey without sin. Certainly, if the government commands or forbids something that would cause us to sin against God's Law, we must disobey the authorities. But otherwise, we have to pay our taxes even if we believe the taxes are too high. Most people try to push the edge, to see just how much they can get away with, what they can do without getting caught. This passage warns us against that.

There's a couple of other interesting things here, though. First, it's also putting civic leaders in their proper place. The normal way of doing things in the ancient world was for a king or emperor to declare himself to be a god. Nero claimed divinity, as did many other Roman Emperors. The Egyptian Pharaohs declared they were gods. Claims of divinity by a king or emperor have happened in Africa, China, Japan, the Mayans, and others -- basically every corner of the earth has seen this sinful human impulse to elevate ourselves to the level of God.

Paul makes it clear, though, that all earthly rulers hold their authority below God, given to them by God. We believe that civil authorities are there because the true God wants His world to be orderly, not chaotic. This does not validate or approve any particular actions or specific governments or officials. Human beings still make bad decisions, vote for bad officials, who then pass bad laws, which we enforce badly -- in other world, humans are all sinful, and therefore any organization made up of humans will be tainted by that. God is not at fault for our faults; we are merely saying that some form of government is always necessary, because evil thrives when it's left unchecked.

Paul knew very well about the possibility where he does the right thing and finds authorities and rulers doing the wrong thing. A significant chunk of the book of Acts tells some of these events. When those in power are getting it wrong, when they're acting illegally or unjustly towards him, Paul has no hesitation telling them off for it and insisting they do what's right. He used his Roman citizenship and the privileges that came with it to the

advantage of his ministry on multiple occasions. Good government is a good gift from God, and bad or unjust government is likewise accountable to Him for its poor conduct.

Another example of this from history that's always stuck in my mind: back in Medieval England, King Henry II was in conflict with his archbishop, Thomas Becket. One day, the king made a careless comment in the heat of anger: "Who will rid me of this troublesome priest?" A few young, ambitious knights decided to take matters into their own hands, and murdered Archbishop Thomas in the middle of his cathedral. For his part in the deed, even unwitting and unintentional, King Henry was eventually compelled to do public penance: dressed in the rough, humble clothing of a pilgrim, he walked barefoot through the city to the cathedral, where he publicly repented and was punished for the crime. Yes, there were plenty of other political considerations that went into the event -- but for the average man or woman who saw that, it was a powerful message that nobody, not even the king himself, is above God.

Continuing through the passage, perhaps the next part was a little annoying. "Pay your taxes" is hardly something any of us want to hear! Yet again, the point seems to be that Christians will likely get in trouble with Rome (and other secular governments, even today) for far more serious things, so be a good citizen so far as you can for the sake of the Gospel and the kingdom of God. Play by the local rules whenever you can do so without sinning, because you know you are not a permanent citizen here; you are a citizen of the kingdom ruled by Christ, and are just a foreigner here.

This tension between the fact that government is established by God, yet there are also evil governments who commit great atrocities, is in the Old Testament too: at various times, the prophets denounced pagan rulers who were hostile to Israel and Israel's God, who did terrible, cruel things to God's people; yet the same prophets also reminded Israel that God was working through even those pagan nations for Israel's ultimate, long-term benefit. God is equally sovereign over all nations, whether they acknowledge it or not!

Consider what Jesus says to Pilate in John chapter 19. Pilate, apparently trying to scare Jesus into cooperating, reminds him that he's got power to have him released or crucified. Jesus responds, "You would have no power over me at all unless it had been given to you from above." Even the Roman governor about to execute him, a profoundly innocent man, did so by power that had come from God in the first place!

The way we refer to all of this is "two kingdoms." God is the ruler of both, ruler of the whole world in every aspect. But He exercises His authority through human means. On one hand (the left hand) is worldly power and secular government. This side is established to restrain the effects of sin in the world, to keep peace and order, to enforce the law and use force to do so if necessary. The other, the right-hand kingdom, is the heavenly power of God found in the Gospel; this is defined not by law, but by grace; not by restraint, but by freedom. It's simply Law and Gospel applied to society as a whole. It's almost like separation of Church and State, in that each one have distinct roles to carry out in forming a healthy, peaceful society -- except both Church and State are ultimately founded on God and by God.

God works all things for the good of His faithful people. We see His work in the Church as we are called to recognize and repent of our sins, to be redeemed by Christ and strengthened with the Holy Spirit. We also His work when earthly governments conduct themselves in accordance with God's Law, when they are fair and just, when they resist corruption and oppression, when they maintain a society of peace in which the Gospel can be more freely preached. And so, no matter who leaders are, we constantly pray for them: for

wisdom so that they make God-pleasing decisions, for competent and honest government, for peace in our communities, for justice in our courts, and for the welfare of all people in our land.

Offering

At this point in our worship, we would ordinarily collect an offering. We are called to be good stewards of the things God has given to us, which includes helping others and supporting the proclamation of the Gospel; we worship the Lord with our songs, our prayers, and also our offerings. If you would like to make an offering to help support our ministry, you can do that at www.christlutheranchurchms.org/ Scroll down to the bottom of the page, and you will see the link to give via PayPal.

Prayer

P: In peace let us pray to the Lord:

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

P: For the gift of divine peace and of pardon, with all our heart and with all our mind, let us pray to the Lord:

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

P: For the holy Christian Church, here and scattered throughout the world, and for the proclamation of the Gospel and the calling of all to faith, let us pray to the Lord:

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

P: For this nation, for our cities and communities, and for the common welfare of us all, let us pray to the Lord:

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

P: For seasonable weather and for the fruitfulness of the earth, let us pray to the Lord:

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

P: For those who labor, for those whose work is difficult or dangerous, and for all who travel, let us pray to the Lord:

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

P: For all those in need, for the hungry and homeless, for the widowed and orphaned, and for all those in prison, let us pray to the Lord:

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

P: For the sick and dying and for all those who care for them, let us pray to the Lord:

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

P: Finally, for these and for all our needs of body and soul, let us pray to the Lord:

C: **Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.**

Collect of the Day

P: O God, from whom all good proceeds, grant to us, Your humble servants, Your holy inspiration, that we may set our minds on the things that are right and, by Your merciful guiding, accomplish them; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

Collect for the Word

P: Blessed Lord, You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. Grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them that, by the

patience and comfort of Your holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Morning Prayer (from the *Small Catechism*)

All: I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

New Testament Cantic 1 Corinthians 15:20, 5:7; Romans 6:9-11

Refrain



Christ has been raised from the dead! Al - le -



lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.



Christ our Pass - o - ver Lamb has been sac - ri - ficed.



Raised from the dead, He will nev - er die a - gain.



Death has no more do - min - ion o - ver Him.

Refrain



Christ has been raised from the dead! Al - le -



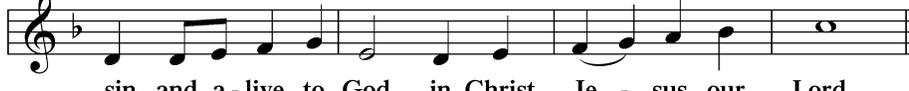
lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.



Dy - ing, Christ dies to sin, once for all. Liv - ing, He



lives to God. Count your - selves as dead to



sin and a - live to God in Christ Je - sus, our Lord.

Refrain

Christ has been raised from the dead! Al - le -
lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

Blessing

P: Let us bless the Lord!

Psalm 103:1

C: **Thanks be to God!**

P: The almighty and merciful Lord, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless and preserve you.

C: **Amen.**