

***The Lutheran Church of the Covenant***  
***“Reaching Out, Reflecting Christ, Renewing Lives”***



**AS THE FATHER HAS LOVED  
ME, SO HAVE I LOVED YOU.  
ABIDE IN MY LOVE.**

John 15:9 ESV

*Sixth Sunday of Easter*  
*May 9, 2021*



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.



We welcome you to worship here at the Lutheran Church of the Covenant! We continue to do our best in providing the safest environment possible for you to worship our Risen Lord with your whole heart, even during these COVID-19 times. Here are the precautions we are taking on behalf of our whole community of faith, so that we best care for one another and those we are around during the week.

- We ask you wear a mask the entire time you are in the building, unless you have a medical condition preventing you from doing so.
- Bulletins and individual Communion elements are available for you to pick up as you enter from the back of the sanctuary. The Communion elements are available in wine and grape juice form as well as wheat and gluten-free wafers. We will partake of the body and blood of Christ together from our respective seats.
- There will not be a separate time for an offering to be collected for supporting our congregational and wider-church ministry, and so an offering basket is placed beside the bulletins and Communion elements, for those who wish to give this day.
- We are asking you to refrain from singing, as we do our best to minimize the spread of droplets and aerosols around our masks. You may do so in your heart, where we believe God hears just as well as if spoken or sung aloud. We, also, ask that you continue participate throughout the worship by speaking the **bold** print, but doing so in a whisper voice.
- There will not be a time for sharing of the peace, but we encourage you to do so with one another before or after the worship (while maintaining the physical distancing recommendations of six feet).

We thank you for your patience and understanding as we will always err on the side of caution while knowing that we can still transmit the virus even with the full vaccination.

## Sixth Sunday of Easter

*This Sunday's image of the life the risen Christ shares with us is the image of friendship. We are called to serve others as Jesus came to serve; but for John's gospel, the image of servanthood is too hierarchical, too distant, to capture the essence of life with Christ. Friendship captures the love, the joy, the deep mutuality of the relationship into which Christ invites us. The Greeks believed that true friends are willing to die for each other. This is the mutual love of Christian community commanded by Christ and enabled by the Spirit.*

Prelude *Rhosymedre* (HELD)

\*Thanksgiving for Baptism

*All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at our baptism, remembering our everlasting bond with our Risen Lord.*

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

**Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

Refreshed by the resurrection life we share in Christ,  
let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

We thank you, risen Christ,  
for these waters where you make us new,  
leading us from death to life, from tears to joy.  
We praise you, Holy Spirit,  
for coming to us in these grace-filled waters of rebirth,  
like rains to our thirsting earth,  
like streams that revive our souls,  
like cups of cool water shared with strangers.  
Breathe your peace of serenity  
on your whole church when we hide in fear.  
Clothe us with your mercy and forgiveness.  
Send us as loving companions on our journey  
as we share your new life among us.  
Make us one, risen Christ.  
Cleanse our hearts.  
Shower us with life.

To you be given all praise,  
with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God,  
now and forever. **Amen.**

Gathering Hymn *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*

#631

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707-1788

- 1 Love divine, all loves excelling,  
Joy of heav'n, to earth come down!  
Fix in us thy humble dwelling,  
all thy faithful mercies crown.  
Jesus, thou art all compassion,  
pure, unbounded love thou art;  
visit us with thy salvation,  
enter ev'ry trembling heart.
- 2 Breathe, oh, breathe thy loving Spirit  
into ev'ry troubled breast;  
let us all in thee inherit;  
let us find thy promised rest.  
Take away the love of sinning;  
Alpha and Omega be;  
end of faith, as its beginning,  
set our hearts at liberty.
- 3 Come, Almighty, to deliver;  
let us all thy life receive;  
suddenly return, and never,  
nevermore thy temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing,  
serve thee as thy hosts above,  
pray, and praise thee without ceasing,  
glory in thy perfect love.

4 Finish then thy new creation,  
pure and spotless let us be;  
let us see thy great salvation  
perfectly restored in thee!  
Changed from glory into glory,  
till in heav'n we take our place,  
till we cast our crowns before thee,  
lost in wonder, love, and praise!

#### Prayer of the Day

O God, you have prepared for those who love you joys beyond understanding. Pour into our hearts such love for you that, loving you above all things, we may obtain your promises, which exceed all we can desire; through Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

#### First Lesson

Acts 10:44-48

*While Peter shares the good news of Jesus with a Gentile soldier and his family, the Holy Spirit comes upon them. Recognizing that the Spirit works inclusively in the lives of both Jews and Gentiles, Peter commands that these Gentiles also be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.*

<sup>44</sup>While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. <sup>45</sup>The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, <sup>46</sup>for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, <sup>47</sup>“Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” <sup>48</sup>So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

Word of God, word of life.

**Thanks be to God.**

#### Psalm

Psalm 98

<sup>1</sup>Sing a new song to the LORD, who has done marvelous things,  
whose right hand and holy arm have won the victory.

<sup>2</sup>**O LORD, you have made known your victory,  
you have revealed your righteousness in the sight of the nations.**

<sup>3</sup>You remember your steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel;  
all the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.

<sup>4</sup>**Shout with joy to the LORD, all you lands;  
lift up your voice, rejoice, and sing.**

<sup>5</sup>Sing to the LORD with the harp,  
with the harp and the voice of song.

<sup>6</sup>**With trumpets and the sound of the horn  
shout with joy before the king, the LORD.**

<sup>7</sup>Let the sea roar, and all that fills it,  
the world and those who dwell therein.

<sup>8</sup>**Let the rivers clap their hands,  
and let the hills ring out with joy before the LORD, who comes to judge the  
earth.**

<sup>9</sup>The LORD will judge the world with righteousness  
and the peoples with equity.

Second Lesson

1 John 5:1-6

*God's children believe that Jesus is the Messiah and love God by keeping God's commandments. Thus the world is conquered not through military might but through love and faith.*

<sup>1</sup>Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. <sup>2</sup>By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. <sup>3</sup>For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, <sup>4</sup>for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. <sup>5</sup>Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

<sup>6</sup>This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth.

Word of God, word of life.

**Thanks be to God.**

\*Gospel

John 15:9-17

*On the night of his arrest, Jesus delivers a final testimony to his disciples to help them in the days ahead. Here, he repeats the most important of all his commands, that they love one another.*

[Jesus said:] <sup>9</sup>“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup>I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

<sup>12</sup>“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. <sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup>I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. <sup>16</sup>You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. <sup>17</sup>I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.”

This is the holy Gospel of our Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sermon

Hymn of the Day *For All the Faithful Women*

#419

Text: Susan Palo Cherwien, b. 1953

1 For all the faithful women  
who served in days of old,  
to you shall thanks be given;  
to all, their story told.  
They served with strength and gladness  
in tasks your wisdom gave.  
To you their lives bore witness,  
proclaimed your pow’r to save.

2 O God, for saints and servants,  
those named and those unknown,  
in whom through all the ages  
your light of glory shone,  
we offer glad thanksgiving  
and fervent prayer we raise  
that, faithful in your service,  
our lives may sing your praise.

*Last*

All praise to God the Father!  
All praise to Christ the Son!  
All praise to God the Spirit,  
who binds the church as one!  
With saints who went before us,  
with saints who witness still,  
we sing glad alleluias  
and strive to do your will.

\*Prayers of Intercession

We pray on this sixth Sunday of Easter for the whole church, for the baptized around the world, and for all people according to their needs, responding to each petition with the words, “fill us with your love.”

*A brief silence.*

O triune God, we praise you for your wondrous love, for the witness of the wider church, and for the steadfastness of believers throughout this pandemic. Whenever faith communities face hardship or challenge, strengthen us in affection within and between denominations. Hear us, holy God: **fill us with your love.**

We praise you for the beauty of spring. The seas roar and the hills sing for joy. Fill the earth with your love so that by their song, all creatures of land and sea and sky, burrowing and soaring, may call us to join with them in praise. Hear us, creating God: **fill us with your love.**



Faithful Savior, you conquer the world not with weapons but with undying love. Plant your word in the hearts of the nations' leaders and further instill compassion and humility, so that the peoples of the world may live in peace. Hear us, righteous God: **fill us with your love.**

Caring Healer, you forget no one and accompany the lonely. Be present with those who are sick or suffering. Provide for those needing homes or medical care and point us towards life-changing responses to these needs in our own communities. Hear us, hopeful God: **fill us with your love.**

Gracious God, as a mother comforts her child, you comfort us. Bless mothers and mothering people in our lives. Comfort those who miss their mothers, mothers who grieve, those who grieve because they cannot be mothers, and those who have never known a loving mother. Hear us, tender God: **fill us with your love.**

Gentle Redeemer, all who die in you abide in your presence forever. We remember with thanksgiving those who shared your love throughout their lives. Keep us united with them in your lasting love. Hear us, everlasting God: **fill us with your love.**

In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

\*Thanksgiving at the Table

Holy, living, and loving God,  
we praise you for creating the heavens and the earth.  
We bless you for bringing Noah and his family through the waters of the flood,  
for freeing your people Israel from the bonds of slavery,  
and for sending your Son to be our Redeemer.

We give you thanks for Jesus  
who, living among us,  
healed the sick,  
fed the hungry,  
and with a love stronger than death,  
gave his life for others.

In the night in which he was betrayed,  
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;  
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:  
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,  
and gave it for all to drink, saying:  
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,  
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore,  
his life-giving death and glorious resurrection,  
we await your promised life for all this dying world.

Holy Spirit, breathe on us and on this bread and cup:  
carry us in your arms from death to life,  
that we may live as your disciples,  
clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

Through him all glory and honor is yours, Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit,  
both now and forever. **Amen.**

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those  
who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and forever. Amen.**

## Communion

Music Interlude *Give Me Jesus* (LAU)

## Prayer after Communion

Wellspring of joy,  
through this meal you have put gladness in our hearts.  
Satisfy the hunger still around us,  
and send us as joyful witnesses,  
that your love may bring joy to the hearts of all people,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## Blessing

May our glorious God grant you a spirit of wisdom  
to know and to love the risen Lord Jesus.

The God of life,  
Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit,  
bless you now and forever.

**Amen.**

Sending Hymn *Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee*

#836

Text: Henry van Dyke, 1852-1922

1 Joyful, joyful we adore thee,  
God of glory, Lord of love!  
Hearts unfold like flow'rs before thee,  
praising thee, their sun above.  
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness,  
drive the gloom of doubt away.  
Giver of immortal gladness,  
fill us with the light of day.

- 2 All thy works with joy surround thee,  
earth and heav'n reflect thy rays,  
stars and angels sing around thee,  
center of unbroken praise.  
Field and forest, vale and mountain,  
flow'ry meadow, flashing sea,  
chanting bird, and flowing fountain  
call us to rejoice in thee.
- 3 Thou art giving and forgiving,  
ever blessing, ever blest,  
wellspring of the joy of living,  
ocean-depth of happy rest!  
Thou our Father, Christ our brother,  
all who live in love are thine;  
teach us how to love each other,  
lift us to the joy divine!

Dismissal

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

**Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

Go in peace. Share the good news. Alleluia!

**Thanks be to God. Alleluia!**

Postlude *Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee* (TURNER)

### **Praying Together**

**... for those who are homebound, ill, hospitalized or recuperating:** Gayle Agg, Bob Buettner, Alexis Carr, Joan Clarke, John Crawford, Nicole Crawford, Barbara Fossa, Carolyn Frajter, Ken Frajter, Nealie Gage, Barb Gaglione, Michelle Garnett, Rosa Garnett, Jim Gradert, Alex Hohenstein, Judy Jones, Matt Jones, Dylan King, Jason Lanese, Andrea Lanzalaca, Heather Lasher, Sara Mendes, Phyllis Nemeth, Bernice Novak, Don Rusher Jr, Arlene Stoltz, Tom Susaneck, Phyllis Treichel, Phyllis Welker, Linda Wright, Wilma Dancy, Bill Helmick, Nancy Helmick, Robert Lambrecht, Kim (Novak) Leonhardt, Laura Mele, Judy Morgan, Kris Sandor, Bill Wilkens, Eugene Winfrey, the Copeland/Lane Family

### **LAST WEEK**

General Fund receipts for week ending 5/2/2021: \$2369

## *Lectionary Blog: Friendship, Love, and Costly Obedience*



*Image: iStock.com/MSPphotographic*

The good news is blunt this week: Jesus' friendship is based on obedience. He said, "You are my friends if you do what I command" (John 15:14). As the Father loved him, so he loved his disciples (John 15:9). The way that Jesus stayed in his Father's love was to keep God's commands. In the same way, Jesus told his followers that if they want to remain in his love, they must obey his commands (John 15:10). When Jesus promoted his disciples from servants to friends, he wasn't releasing them from obedience but letting them know that they now knew the agenda and what he would be commanding them (John 15:14-15).

This may sound unfamiliar and even upsetting. We frequently imagine Jesus as only wanting to embrace everyone in a hug, but that is an unnuanced and, frankly, non-scriptural image. Jesus approached different types of people differently. To those who were caught in sin and/or cast out by polite society (sex workers, the possessed, those tax collectors complicit in foreign occupation, the hard-partying gluttons and drunkards), Jesus had nothing but warmth and inclusion. But once they had encountered him, Jesus instructed them to go and sin no more, especially when their sins hurt others (John 8:2-11, Matthew 5:27-32, Luke 3:12-14).

On the other hand, for those who were already part of religious, respectable society, Jesus was immediately confrontational. He decried hypocrisy (Matthew 6:1-18), judging others (Matthew 7:1-5) and elitism (Matthew 5:22). He also threatened with expulsion from the presence of God those who didn't clothe the naked, feed the hungry, visit the sick/incarcerated and welcome the foreigner (Matthew 25:31-46).

To be sure, Jesus didn't cut himself off from anyone. He dined with Pharisees, tax collectors, sex workers, disciples, supporters and detractors alike. Jesus regularly debated with those who held different opinions, and he included in his fellowship terrorists (Luke 6:15), collaborators with the empire (Matthew 9:9) and betrayers (John 6:71).

Returning to this week's Gospel reading, what is the command that Jesus demanded that his followers obey in order to remain in his love? That we love one another as Jesus loved us (John 15:12)! This begs the question: how has Jesus loved us that we are to love each other?

Jesus explained this in his next statement: No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friend (John 15:13). Like any good teacher, Jesus modeled love for us first so that we can follow his example. Most of us aren't called to literally die on behalf of others. Certainly, however, Christians are daily laying their bodies and lives on the line to save others in unjust societies across the world and at home. We would do well to remember these saints in our prayers.

But if we aren't called to literally die, how can we love others through dying to ourselves? The first and most obvious way is to love in ways that make us uncomfortable. We can start by loving the people who Jesus specifically identifies with—prisoners and those under arrest, those experiencing homelessness, those experiencing food insecurity, the sick and foreigners (Matthew 25:31-46).

How can we love these folks in ways that cost us, that cause us to die to ourselves, at least a little? Certainly, if we follow Jesus' command to love others as he loved us, it will involve giving up feeling safe, feeling comfortable, feeling provided for, feeling popular, feeling respectable. Probably very few of us will be crucified. But loving like Jesus will lead to us being hurt, I guarantee.

I'm thinking just now of Elle Dowd's new book *Baptized in Tear Gas* and where her quest to love like Jesus has taken her. Tertullian, an early Christian writer, argued that "the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church." Our discomfort, pain and injuries as we love people will help us empathize with Jesus, who stepped out of the throne room of God to be made uncomfortable, experience pain and die from bodily trauma inflicted upon him by the Roman Empire on our behalf. At least for me, I feel like I can identify with Jesus a little more—and be more grateful for his work on my behalf—when I love someone in a way that hurts and makes me uncomfortable.

This week's passage from Acts, in which gentiles received the Spirit of God that had, up to that point, been reserved for the children of Abraham, represents costly love. Peter, no doubt, felt great reservations about sharing love and power with a member of the occupying forces oppressing his people, no matter how gentle and kind the military officer was. And yet, he was called to emulate his master and reach out to those whose embrace would cost him. So he loved in an uncomfortable way, and showed himself to be a friend of Jesus who loved like his lord.

Sacrificial loving is not optional. Jesus was loved by his Father *because* he obeyed God's commands. Jesus said that he will continue to love us if we do the same (John 15:9-10). *Please be very careful*—this must not be a precondition for embrace of outsiders but an absolute requirement for the citizens of the kingdom of heaven. Consider ways in which you can love someone in a way that costs you, especially if that person is a foreigner, a prisoner/arrested-human, someone who is sick, or someone who is poor and hungry. Love that person like the love of Jesus depends on it. Because in the kingdom of heaven here on earth, it does!

*Cory Driver is a minister of word and service, and the director of the Transformational Leadership Academy in the Indiana-Kentucky Synod. He earned his doctorate in Jewish religious cultures from Emory University, Atlanta. Cory lives with his family in Indianapolis.*

***From all of us at the Lutheran Church of the Covenant:***



SOURCE: SHUTTERSTOCK

# Love One another

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. John 15:12 (NIV)

Based on John 15:9-17 (NIV)



G Q R J N I L D R Z G F U R G  
C O M M A N D D I M Y T E Z I  
G F S Y J F W J O K H N Y O J  
Q W F L F R U I T W S C P M I  
C H M E R B W Q J F N R U P O  
T L D R I K O B U S I N E S S  
Q X S X E J U O E R N L A Y R  
O A P R N E N B A I F L I S R  
M J L B D I O E D K R V T E T  
L A F O S A B Y M Z N N T V F  
M D S A V V Y K N R A A U E E  
Z H T T T E P W L V E L S F F  
Y M N P E H H A R R P O I V Q  
F F G P B R E E G Z H L H R I  
R E M A I N S R V C E C D S A

FRIENDS  
DOWN  
LAY  
SERVANTS

OBEY  
BUSINESS  
FATHER  
GREATER

LOVE  
BEAR  
LIFE  
COMMAND

FRUIT  
MASTER  
REMAIN  
CHOSE