**Worship Plan for Sunday, October 3, 2021** \* 19th Sunday after Pentecost

**Introduction to the day:** Today’s gospel combines a saying that makes many of us uncomfortable with a story we find comforting. Jesus’ saying on divorce is another of his rejections of human legislation in favor of the original intent of God’s law. Jesus’ rebuke of the disciples who are fending off the children should challenge us as well. What does it mean to receive the kingdom of God as a child does?

**Gathering:** The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

**Greeting:** Welcome to worship today, we are glad to have you with our Faith Lutheran Church community. I'm Pr. John Barton and I will be leading our service today. This is the day that the Lord has made! Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

**ASSISTING MINISTER: Announcements**

PLEASE NOTE: Because of the recent continued dramatic increase in positive COVID case rates in the city and county, it is necessary that everyone must wear a mask, regardless of vaccination status, during worship and all other in-person gatherings at Faith Lutheran Church. This policy is necessary for us to continue having in-person gatherings and we appreciate your participation and understanding. If you have forgotten your mask, please raise your hand and the ushers will provide one.

Wednesday: Bible Study leaders meeting at 9:30

Thursday: Mutual Ministry meets in person at 10:00; Call to Prayer & Worship meets by phone or Zoom at 4:00

Friday: Al-Anon meets in the Fellowship Hall at 10:30

For more information and a complete monthly calendar, contact the church office.

**Gathering Song:*For All the Faithful Women* (ELW 419)**

**Confession and Forgiveness:** Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, who forgives all our sin, whose mercy endures forever. **Amen.**

God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Most merciful God, **we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

**Prayer of the Day:** Let us pray. Sovereign God, you have created us to live in loving community with one another. O God of justice and love, you light our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, and awaken us to the needs of others. Form us for life that is faithful and steadfast, and teach us to trust like little children, that we may reflect the image of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

**Word:** God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

**First Reading:** A reading from Genesis.

18The Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.” 19So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. 20The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. 21So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.” 24Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

**Psalm:**

1O Lord our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

2**you whose glory is chanted above the heavens out of the mouths of infants and children; you have set up a fortress against your enemies, to silence the foe and avenger.**

3When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars you have set in their courses,

4**what are mere mortals that you should be mindful of them, human beings that you should care for them?**

5Yet you have made them little less than divine; with glory and honor you crown them.

6**You have made them rule over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet:**

7all flocks and cattle, even the wild beasts of the field,

8**the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, and whatever passes along the paths of the sea.**

9O Lord our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

**Second Reading:** A reading from Hebrews.

1Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, 2but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. 3He is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. 2:5Now God did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels. 6But someone has testified somewhere, “What are human beings that you are mindful of them, or mortals, that you care for them? 7You have made them for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned them with glory and honor, 8subjecting all things under their feet.” Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them,9but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. 10It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. 11For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, 12saying, “I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.”

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

**Gospel:** The holy gospel according to Mark. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

2Some Pharisees came, and to test [Jesus] they asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” 3He answered them, “What did Moses command you?” 4They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.” 5But Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. 6But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ 7‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, 8and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” 10Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. 11He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; 12and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.” 13People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. 14But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. 15Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” 16And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

**Sermon:** Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our risen Lord Jesus Christ.

Just like last week, we once again find ourselves facing a multipart gospel text, and like last week they don't necessarily seem like the 2 parts connect with each other or with us as the audience and consumers of the text.

As one commentator puts it, "Mark 10:9 has often been interpreted as the indissolubility of marriage in a way that has led different theological traditions to ban the possibility of divorce. And yet, it is undeniable that many believers feel at odds, hurt, targeted, even traumatized by how preaching tackles this text. For many Christians, particularly women, the way this text has informed their respective theological traditions has meant that they have felt forced to stay in abusive relationships or kept in a marital contract that eventually becomes the major obstacle to their personal fulfillment, a deterrent to embodying a more comprehensive Christian belonging."

Marriage is a wonderful thing for some people and that does not mean that divorce is a terrible thing, particularly in the case of abusive relationships. To put that into perspective, 1 in 10 men and 1 in 4 women experience abuse from an intimate partner in their lifetime. To take this text, coupled with that knowledge of human experience, and say that Jesus only cares about whether a marriage tradition is upheld and disregards the people involved would be folly, not to mention dangerously theologically unethical. Yet this is how this text is often used, only looking at marriage itself as a concept but leaving out the individual or individuals involved in the marriage who have come to a place where they cannot find joy in the partnership anymore and perhaps even are only experiencing pain or suffering. This is, of course not all marriages, but the ones that this is true for have to be considered. The ones who have found that separation or divorce are what's best for themselves, their partners, and their families must have the same care and consideration as those who have complete joy in their marriage. Throughout his ministry Jesus regularly showed that his focus and emphasis and placement of importance and value lay with the people, God's children, as opposed to traditions or perceived theological actions. The good news is that God created marriage and traditions for people, not the other way around. They are there to strengthen relationships and grow faith in God and one another; when they don’t complete that purpose there has to be a different look at them.

What the marriage conversation in the text is saying is for the individuals entering into the commitment of marriage, there are expectations. Expectations that they honor the other partner and commit to them fully with love and respect. And in the case Jesus is talking about it was actually bringing gender equality to that conversation, something ahead of its time. Men and women were expected to give the same honor, respect, and love as the other person, not more or less based on their gender. What this text is not saying is to stay in a situation where those feelings of honor, respect, and love are being taken advantage of, not reciprocated, and/or being abused.

Honor, respect, and love are three key foundations of healthy relationships, romantic or platonic. Jesus shows his disciples these foundations in the second part of the gospel text, and sets an example for us all. When people were bringing children to Jesus and the disciples tried to stop them from bothering their teacher, Jesus spoke up saying: “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. I'm sure this was shocking too many including the disciples, that the rabbi would explicitly command to have the children have their time with him, and they were given priority over the adults. In doing so, Jesus expressed that he cared for the children and wanted them to know that they were loved by God. He did not throw around words without actions going on with this last part of the Gospel: "And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them."

It is a wonderful part of this text which is a big part of why our denomination has chosen to take children and the care of them seriously, changing the old tradition of keeping children away from communion to how we do it now where children are recognized as invited and necessary participants in Holy Communion. This honor, respect, and love, which Jesus showed, rippled out through history. An interesting example of the involvement and care for young ones is the story of Soichi Sakamoto. Soichi was "a man from Hawaii who became an Olympic swim coach when he didn’t even know how to swim himself." It goes on to describe he started the Three Year Swim Club, promising his students that they would be world-class swimmers within three years. His swim club was made up of impoverished children, many of whom did not have bathing suits or enough food to sustain them through practice. As well, because he didn’t have access to a pool, Soichi resorted to teaching his first students in the water-filled ditches of Hawaiian sugar plantations. Despite the many challenges, Soichi did whatever it took to raise up Olympic athletes - from feeding them his own meals to inventing new ways to train his swimmers."

Soichi had an inspiration, had a dream for himself and for others, namely the little ones who had nothing and who to society thought of as next to nothing, but he saw their humanity and their potential to lift themselves up. He gave them honor, respect, and love without question and taught them to give it in return. He encountered roadblocks of many kinds, such as only having irrigation ditches to train in, racial, economic, and ethnic discrimination against him and his diverse pupils, oh and the fact that they trained for the 1940 and 1944 Olympics. Though his swimmers were sweeping regional, national, and international competitions, they didn't get a chance to try for the Olympics in those years because of a little thing called WW II which cancelled both of those games. And one more thing, remember through all of this, he didn't know how to swim. That's the thing though, Coach Soichi Sakamoto never let obstacles great or small stop him or his incredible band of swimmers from getting to their goal. He turned the irrigation ditch into an exercise machine, having his swimmers swim against the current and then get up on land to do strength training. He and his wife shared their food and volunteered time because it was the right thing to do. As the podcast concluded: “Mainland athletes began to move to Hawaii just to be trained by Soichi, and he went on to serve as the University of Hawaii head swim coach for several decades. In 1948, Soichi was the United States assistant swim coach in the Olympics, and he got to see one of his students, Bill Smith, take home a medal. Soichi was 91 years old when he passed away and is still revered as one of the greatest swim coaches of all time.”

Essentially, Jesus calls us in all different ways to put in the time and effort and care, do the work and see the humanity of others. It seems like this would be an obvious, straight forward, simple thing for us to figure out and remember, but then again even the smartest and most faithful of us humans seem to forget those kinds of things at the most inopportune times for our fellow humans. But if a swim coach who can’t swim can do it while defying societal expectation and the odds stacked against him and his students, so can we.

We give our thanks to God every day, for giving us our fellow human beings. We give our offerings to help people, not for traditions or even buildings but in the service of people who use them. This Thankoffering Sunday, let us give our offerings, our honor, respect, and love to our fellow children of God, known or unknown to us, and all known to God. Amen.

**Hymn of the Day:*Blest Be the Tie That Binds* (ELW 656)**

**ASSISTING MINISTER**

We continue as we confess our faith using the words of the Apostle's Creed.

**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.**

**Pastor and Assisting Minister: Prayers of Intercession**

Called together in the Spirit’s embrace, let us pray for the renewal of the church, for those in need, and for all of God’s creation. We pray, holy God, for the unity of the church universal: Draw your people together into one great company of disciples, together following our teacher Jesus Christ to carry out his holy mission, together sharing the good news of your justice and love wherever we are sent.

Christ, be our light.

**Shine in your church gathered today.**

We pray, omnipotent God, for the well-being of creation: We give you thanks for transforming the chaotic waters of creation into the saving waters that nourish and sustain all the earth. Renew us every day by your water and your word.

Christ, be our light.

**Shine in your church gathered today.**

We pray, righteous God, for peace and justice in the world: Lead the nations of the world away from the stony wilderness of sin, and toward the holy light of love, justice, and peace.

Christ, be our light.

**Shine in your church gathered today.**

We pray, compassionate God, for all in need: For those who hunger and thirst for peace, for belonging, for love, for righteousness, shine your light of justice. For those who mourn or suffer in any way, shine your light of comfort.

Christ, be our light.

**Shine in your church gathered today.**

We pray, faithful God, for the renewal of all life: Refresh us with your living water and anoint us with your Holy Spirit. Embolden us with your promise and your presence.

Christ, be our light.

**Shine in your church gathered today.**

Receive our thanksgiving, eternal God, for all who have died in the faith. May we know the fullness of the new life that you prepare for us in your kingdom.

Christ, be our light.

**Shine in your church gathered today.**

All these things, and whatever else you see that we need, we entrust to your care through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

**Prayer List:** Boss Anderson; Gloria Anderson; Julie Chevraux; Daniel Conner; Vicki Crow; Sally Duncan; Joni Gray; Kally Homchick; Marlon Jay; Francis Key; Patsy Loughboro; Sandra Miller; Carol Morris; Pat Myers; Sheila Neal; Ron Neumen; Tina Peteroski & family; Andrew Quinn; Edy Rose; Dee Seel; Jan Simon; Earlean Wagner; Diana Ward; Bernie Weston; Mary Yturralde; the homebound; the Emergency responders; and those grieving and anticipating surgery/tests.

We especially pray for those affected by COVID-19 and those who have lost loved ones. At this time we also pray for those we name aloud or silently in our hearts.

If you would like your name added to our prayer list, please contact the church office.

**Peace:** The peace of the Lord be with you always. **And also with you.**

**Offering:** At this time, we remember that the giving of our offering is an authentic part of worship.

**THANKOFFERING:** *As we make our Thankofferings today, we share in a tradition that goes back to the 1800s or even earlier. Then, when it seemed that there was not enough money to carry out the work of the church, the women would act together as “cent” or “mite” societies. Each woman would set aside offerings at home throughout the year in thanksgiving for blessings received. And on occasion, the women would come together as we do today, joining their offerings together to support ministries of many kinds. When Women of the ELCA (WELCA) was formed in 1987, WELCA committed to continue this tradition of giving in gratitude for blessings. Each year, in thousands of congregations, Thankofferings are given to support the life-changing ministries of Women of the ELCA. Together, we do more than we could ever do apart. In gratitude for all God has given to us, and with hope for all that is to come, we gather in the thankoffering today.*

This month we are highlighting the ministry of Stewardship, especially this year’s emphasis. "Let your light shine – to the glory of God!" It is as Jesus said, “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)

This month, we will hear during worship from 3 Faith members about how God has worked and continues to work in their lives, and how they respond to God’s generosity through their gifts of time and energy, talents and skills, and monetary giving.

Thank you so much for all the ways you give and help to make the ministries of this church possible!

**ASSISTING MINISTER: Offering Prayer**

Let us pray. God of grace, you have showered us with gifts of grace and abundance, entrusting to us the ministries of Women of the ELCA. Help us to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world. Accept these gifts and our prayer that, nurtured by your Word, filled with your Spirit, and fed at your table, we may share with gladness all that you have shared with us, until all creation is satisfied. Amen.

**Meal:** God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

**Great Thanksgiving:** The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ; who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, Lord God of pow’r and might: Heav’n and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

**INSTRUCTION FOR COMMUNION:** Now, I invite you to gather bread and drink for communion and share with anyone in your household. Gathering at Christ's table, we trust in God's all-reaching power and grace to provide each one of us the complete and total sacrament in these extraordinary times.

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.

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**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.**

**Invitation to Communion:** Taste and see that the Lord is good.

**Communion:** The body of Christ, given for you. The blood of Christ, shed for you. Amen.

**Prayer after Communion:** Let us pray. We thank you, gracious God, for loving all your family with a mother’s care, and feeding us in a way our hearts and souls can understand, with the saving body and blood of Jesus Christ. Renew and enliven us by your presence in this meal, that we may be your presence in the world, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

**Sending Song:*Go, My Children, with My Blessing* (ELW 543)**

**Blessing:** The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord’s face shine on you with grace and mercy. The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace. **Amen.**

**ASSISTING MINISTER: Dismissal**

Go in peace. Serve the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

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