

Sunday, August 23, 2020

From Pastor Stephen, Zion Lutheran Church, Pembroke, ON

Welcome: A warm welcome to all who worship with us this week. Through Isaiah's words, our Lord reminds us to cherish the work of those who came before us as we build on the faith of our ancestors. We are told, "remember the rock from which you were carved, the quarry from which you were dug." In our Gospel, our Lord declares that Peter is the rock upon which the Church shall be built, which will weather all storms. Living in the strength of his faith we find great courage and hope in Christ our Lord.

We sing our **Gathering Song:** ELW 647 Glorious Things of You are Spoken

Greeting: 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.**

Prayer of the Day: You are great, O God, and greatly to be praised. You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. Grant that we may believe in you, call upon you, know you, and serve you, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**

Hymn of Praise: ELW 844 Praise to the Lord

First Reading: Isaiah 51: 1 - 4

A reading from Isaiah.

Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek the Lord. Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many.

For the Lord will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song.

Listen to me, my people, and give heed to me, my nation; for a teaching will go out from me, and my justice for a light to the peoples.

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

Psalm 63: I Long For You, O Lord

Second Reading: Romans 12: 3 - 8

A reading from Romans.

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

For as in the body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.

We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

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

Hymn to Welcome the Gospel: ELW 814 Take, Oh Take Me As I Am

Gospel: Matthew 16: 13 – 20

The holy gospel according to Matthew. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

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

Homily: You have to wonder about Jesus choosing Peter to be the rock upon which he built his Church. Peter was the one who would deny Jesus, not once, but three times. He was often impulsive, acting first and thinking later – hardly a good choice for steady, reliable leadership.

But these were not the prime attributes that Jesus was looking for in the person who would be the rock on which he would build the Church. Instead, Jesus is celebrating Peter’s God given faith that carries him through as he bumbles and stumbles through life. He celebrates Peter’s boldness in living his faith, even as Peter struggles to be the faithful disciple he really, sincerely, passionately desires to become.

Peter could not walk on water, it is true – nor was he always that courageous or brave. But he had some truly sparkling moments, like his confession of faith in today’s gospel reading. Peter was above all things very human, undeniably imperfect and flawed. In other words, Peter is someone with whom we can relate. Not a superhero of the Church, just another person struggling to be faithful to our Faithful God.

The Church is called to live by faith – the bold, risky, reckless, mistake-filled faith of Peter. As we live by faith we will be just as clumsy as Peter. We will stumble and fall just as often as we stand and walk. But, like Peter, we will have some bright and shining moments as well, when Christ’s presence will be clearly seen in our words and actions. In the end, it will not be about us, but about what Christ has built on the gift of our faith.

Our reading from Romans this morning gives us a glimpse of how our Lord builds his Church. He starts by making us need each other – making us gloriously, unabashedly co-dependent. Each of us have specific gifts (skill, talents, abilities). Not one of us is complete in themselves and we need each other to be the church – to be the complete Body of Christ in the world.

Part of the holy work of Christians is to help others discern the gifts within us that God has given. That includes giving people the opportunity to use those gifts in the life of the Church and treasuring people for who they are and not what we would like them to be in the Church.

Jesus began to build the Church on Peter knowing full well that Peter had his limitations; but he also knew that Peter had a family of disciples with other gifts and skills who would supply what would be missing in Peter’s discipleship. Together they would be

whole – together they would be nothing less than his Body in the World, the Church.

We do not have heroes in the faith and we have no one we can put up on a pedestal and admire for their perfection: but we do have faithful ancestors who sometimes look a lot like ourselves in their weakness and flaws. Everyone struggles, everyone is sinful, yet we are all God's beloved children...and God gathers us together to build something wonderful. Jesus has a habit of bringing out the best in us, especially when we know our limitations and always seek his guidance and grace.

So we are thankful for Saint Peter, and we love him in all his imperfection, because he lived by faith in the grace of God. He reminds us there is hope for all of us clumsy Christians, imperfect yet faithful, at least some of the time. May others find what Christ builds as a place of tolerance, forgiveness, and above all amazing grace. **Amen.**

Hymn: ELW 791 We Sing to You, O God

Prayers of the Faithful: Gracious God, we thank you for all our ancestors in the faith, your beloved Saints who inspire us in our journey with you. The stories of their faith bring us courage and comfort. Help us walk in their ways of discipleship and devotion to you. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious God, we thank you for the gifts of all creation, and the abundance of the earth's produce in this season of growth and harvest. Bless our efforts to care for all you have given us and those who work on the land so others may be fed and nourished. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of wisdom, grant the leaders of the nations discernment and intelligence during this difficult time. Be with those enduring

political upheaval and unrest. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who are recovering from surgery or a time of illness: Erin Dupuis, Alison Kellough, Hilda Klawitter, Sheila Purdy, Joyce Scheuneman, Joyce Schleen, and Murray Schutt, and all in need of healing. Hold them in your mercy and grant them your healing touch. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of gentleness, we pray for all who struggle with mental illness, made more difficult by this time of isolation and anxiety. Help us care for those who are struggling, grant us patient and understanding hearts and minds. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who are working on vaccines and treatments during the pandemic and for all who care for those struggling with the virus. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Watch over our loved ones who cannot be with us in these days of physical distancing. We long for the times when we can be together again. Until then, bind our hearts together in the love of Christ, and make us one in him. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

All these things, and whatever else you see that we need, grant us, gracious God.

Gathering all our prayers into one, we pray the prayer that you have 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.**

Blessing: May our Gracious God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless us and keep us in the Risen Life of Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Sending Song: ELW 769 If You But Trust in God to Guide You
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

CLWR Kits for Children

Once again members of the Social Ministry Committee will be gathering items for Canadian Lutheran World Relief's "We Care" Children's Learning and Living Kits. The kits are distributed to children in refugee camps and remote villages around the world. Kits, kit items and donations will be collected, as in past years, in November. Many of the items in the kit are school supplies. Here is the list of kit items for members wishing to take advantage of the "Back to School" sales in late summer:

- 3 lined notebooks
- 10 unsharpened pencils with erasers
- 1 metric ruler (30 cm), 1 pencil sharpener and 1 eraser
- 1 pack of crayons (or pencil crayons)
- 1 small and simple toy (new and not requiring batteries, examples: doll, truck, ball, stuffed toy)
- 1 bar of soap and 1 toothbrush (new and wrapped)
- 1 tube of toothpaste (expiration date no earlier than one year)

*** Please wait until November to hand in your kit items.

These kits make a real difference in the lives of children. Last year, thanks to the generosity of Zion members, 119 kits were completed. Since 2002 we have shipped 1437 Learning and Living Kits to CLWR. You can read more about the “We Care” program at www.clwr.org.

**With Canadian Lutheran World Relief, we are
“Celebrating God as We Serve Others”**