

Sunday, July 26, 2020

From Pastor Stephen, Zion Lutheran Church, Pembroke, ON

Welcome: A warm welcome to all who are joining us in worship today. We pray to God on this day, and every day in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy Kingdom come." This day, like Solomon, we also pray for wisdom, that we may discern the Kingdom of God in the midst of our world and rejoice in its presence.

We sing our **Gathering Song:** ELW 720 We Are Called

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.**

Let us pray: Gracious God, in Jesus Christ you set your holy reign upon this earth and within your people. So let its coming be like the mustard seed that grows into greatness, and like the leaven that mixes with the grain until the whole becomes greater, to the praise of the Triune God, who lives forevermore. **Amen.**

First Reading: 1 Kings 3: 5 – 12

A reading from First Kings.

At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask what I should give you." And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today.

And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so

numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?”

It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. God said to him, “Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you.”

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

Psalm 16: Path of Life

Second Reading: Romans 8: 26 – 27, 38 – 39

A reading from Romans.

The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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

Song to Welcome the Gospel: WOV 783 Seek Ye First

Gospel: Matthew 13: 31 – 33, 44 - 46

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

Jesus put before the crowds another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.” “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

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

Homily: Many of us with good memories, who can retain much of what we learned in confirmation classes, will remember what Luther taught us in the Small Catechism about the Lord’s Prayer and especially what we are praying for when we pray, “Thy Kingdom Come.”

Luther rather bluntly said that God’s kingdom will come whether we pray for it or not. What we pray for in the Lord’s Prayer is that God’s kingdom would come through us...through our words and by what we do in life. The kingdom comes when we do God’s will, which is why we also pray, “Thy will be done, on earth, as in heaven.”

And the Kingdom of God does come among us as we live what is God’s will, reflecting the compassion, gentleness and forgiveness

of Christ. Then the poor are fed, the oppressed find justice, and the grieving are comforted by all who live in the Kingdom of God.

Matthew's Gospel calls the Kingdom of God the Kingdom of Heaven in today's reading, because Matthew was a Jewish Christian and very concerned that at no time was God's name ever profaned or used in vain. God's name was never to be used to refer to something - even if it is something as wonderful and holy as God's reign in our world - just in case God's name be misused in some manner, or carelessly.

Which is not likely going to happen among us when we cherish the Kingdom of God...the reign of Christ in our lives...more than anything else. It is like the pearl of great price, the treasure hidden in a field that we search for with great eagerness. We long for it. And when we see Christ's reign at work in our world, we are filled with great joy.

The Kingdom of God can grow slowly in our world from very small beginnings. Even the smallest gesture on our part - the simplest word or action, if it reflects God's will - shall grow into the something beyond our comprehension, like the mustard shrub growing from the smallest seed.

Nothing we say or do as Christians is insignificant and all of it has an effect on our world. When we are at our best, we bring forth the Kingdom of God. When we are at our best, we are doing what we sang about in our Gathering Song today: "living in the freedom of the city of God," where grace and healing abound for all.

The Kingdom we belong to is nothing less than the Kingdom of Heaven, and Zion, the city of God, is where we have our citizenship. In Revelation, the New Jerusalem, Zion, city of our God, descends from heaven as God lives among God's people,

where there can be healing, comfort and peace. That really stretches our perception of Heaven. The Garden of Eden is once again in the midst of God's people as a place of healing and peace through the reign of Christ. This is the Kingdom we work to bring about on earth and the kingdom that is our true homeland, even while we live on the face of the earth and life sometimes looks very little like paradise.

The writers of Revelation and Matthew's Gospel both want us to realize that there can be a little bit of heaven on earth as God's will is done and God's kingdom comes among us and through us. They call us to bring forth the reign of God by our lives lived as faithful Christians and to celebrate those moments when we are able to see God's Kingdom come into our world. Some days that is hard to do, like searching for the pearl of great price, or waiting for the tiny mustard seed we planted to grow into something wonderful. God's work among us may not always be obvious; God can be very subtle at times, the still small voice after the earthquake, wind, and fire, who speaks to our hearts and emboldens us to do holy work.

In the end it will be God at work in us and God who makes the Kingdom come, answering our daily prayer if we have eyes to see the Kingdom in our midst. So we will live as those who have tasted paradise, who are filled with Christ's endless life, rejoicing in the hope that is ours as we see God's kingdom come. **Amen.**

Hymn: WOV 753 You Are the Seed

Prayers of the Faithful: Gracious God, grant us wisdom like the wisdom of Solomon and guide us on the path of life. May all we say and do bring forth your Kingdom on earth and reveal your presence among us. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Tender-hearted God, help us care for all who are victims of prejudice, hatred and poverty, and give us a voice to speak for all who suffer at the hands of the greedy and abusive. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who are recovering from surgery or a time of illness: Hilda Klawitter, Joyce Scheuneman, Murray Schutt and Dave Stresman. 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 vaccinations 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 the Spirits' presence which is everywhere, in everyone. 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 793 Be Thou My Vision

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**