

Sunday, June 14, 2020

From Pastor Stephen, Zion Lutheran Church, Pembroke, ON

Welcome:

A warm welcome to all who join us as we worship even as we must be apart from each other. Our Lord still calls us to hear his voice and to let his words dwell richly in our hearts and minds, flowing out from us to all we meet with the grace and mercy of God.

We sing our **Gathering Song:** ELW 787 On Eagle's Wings

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:

God of compassion, you have opened the way for us and brought us to yourself. Pour your love into our hearts, that, overflowing with joy, we may freely share the blessings of your realm and faithfully proclaim the good news of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: Exodus 19: 2 – 8a

A reading from Exodus.

The Israelites had journeyed from Rephidim, entered the wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness; Israel camped there in front of the mountain. Then Moses went up to God; the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying,

“Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured

possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites.”

So Moses came, summoned the elders of the people, and set before them all these words that the Lord had commanded him. The people all answered as one: “Everything that the Lord has spoken we will do.”

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

Hymn: ELW 844 Praise to the Lord (based on Psalm 113)

Second Reading: Romans 5: 1 – 8

A reading from Romans.

Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.

And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person – though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we were sinners Christ died for us.

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

Song to Welcome the Gospel: ELW 574 Here I Am Lord (v. 1 & 2)

Gospel: Matthew 9: 35 – 10:1,10:5 - 7

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

Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness.

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’”

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

Homily:

Perhaps you have noticed that there is a common thread running through all three of our readings today. God is calling us to be who we were made to be as the beloved ones.

“I have lifted you up on eagles’ wings”, the Hebrews are told, “I have brought you out of slavery.” All God asks is that the beloved live with steadfast love ...to love God with all our heart and mind and being...and to live as those loved and cared for by God. That

would bring great joy to the heart of God and it would be treasured greatly.

It does not seem to be much to ask; to love the God who loves us and to live as those loved and treasured by God. Of course, the problem sometimes is seeing ourselves as the beloved and graciously living that out in the world where people are often hard to love.

As Lucy said to Linus in a Charlie Brown cartoon, “What do you mean, I hate humanity! I love humanity...it is people I cant’ stand.” People can be notoriously hard to care about, sometimes, and even more difficult to love. So much can get in the way of our being who God called us to be in this world. If we are honest, it probably takes more humility and forbearance than most of us can muster, and way more tolerance than we can tolerate.

The Church sometimes looks like the culture around it, especially when we cannot find ways to live together in peace as a community of faith. We can have trouble remembering what really matters to us ...that we have life simply because God loves us with an everlasting love...and we create enemies when we should be creating brothers and sisters and friends in Christ and building up the family of God.

Keep in mind, we are told in the letter to the Romans, that God loves you even when you are weak and sinful. That does not apply to only us...that applies to everyone we live with on the face of the earth. Saint Paul leaves absolutely no room for righteous indignation. We are all completely dependent on God’s grace - on God’s steadfast, everlasting promise of love for us in Christ.

As Luther said in his dying days, “We are all beggars, it is true!” When we look at each other, what we should see is someone also dearly and deeply loved by Christ, and nothing less than a fellow

child of God. That will make a huge difference in how we treat and approach each other and all those we share our life with as our neighbours in our world.

I find it interesting that Jesus told his disciples to start out small; just go out and be with your neighbours for now. Go out to those around you struggling, sometimes in silence, often on the fringes...people feeling lost, and lonely and isolated...and bring healing and peace. You do not have to travel very far to do what I have called you to do, Jesus tells his disciples, because there is more than enough for you to do in your own backyard.

There is indeed much to do in our own backyard. There are decades of hurt and injustice with First Nations people in a culture that favours the greedy, the powerful and the very white. As Christians, we can very easily spend all our time working in our own backyard, especially when we actually see the harassed and helpless in our midst and realize we sometimes had a role in making some people harassed and helpless.

The tricky part about discipleship is not to be overwhelmed by everything we are called to do; but to simply make it a way of life and a way of living. Instead of embarking on great missionary journeys and endeavours with misplaced evangelical fervour, consider being a blessing where you are planted, revealing Christ's face to all you meet, being his heart and hands to all you encounter. Then you will be surprised at how very little you need for your journey as you find yourself blooming in God's Garden of Delight, giving others a glimpse of a Paradise yet to come.

Amen

Hymn: ELW 798 Will You Come and Follow Me

Prayers of the Faithful:

God of abundant generosity, we thank you for the soil, for sun and water, and the growth of our gardens and fields of grain. We thank you for H & H Construction and their contribution of top soil for Zion's community garden and for the Vandersleen family – Gerry, Ellen and Heather – for preparing and planting Zion's community garden with beans and potatoes, and for a neighbour's gift of herbs. May our garden be a sign of your grace among us. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of justice, we pray for an end to racism. Open hearts to love people of all colours as fellow children of God and banish hatred from our lives. 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.**

God of healing, we pray for the ill and for all fearful of illness. Grant us your healing presence and watch over those who care for the sick. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of comfort and peace, we pray for all who mourn, who cannot say farewell to those they love, or celebrate their lives, in ways they wish they could. Help us commend our beloved ones to your care, always trusting that you will welcome them into paradise. 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 669 Rise Up, O Saints of God

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