

Sunday, June 21, 2020 Father's Day

From Pastor Stephen, Zion Lutheran Church, Pembroke, ON

**Welcome:**

A warm welcome to all who join us in worship this week, in ways that are different and unusual for us. May God bless our many efforts at being one, together in Christ, even when we have to be apart from each other. We shall be together once again and then our hearts will be filled with joy, until then we will live with courage and faith. Amen.

We sing our **Gathering Song: ELW 836 Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee**

**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.**

**Let us pray:**

Teach us, good Lord, to serve you as you deserve, to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labour and not to ask for reward, except that of knowing that we do your will, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**

**First Reading: Jeremiah 20: 7 - 13**

A reading from Jeremiah.

O Lord, you have enticed me, and I was enticed; you have overpowered me, and you have prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all day long; everyone mocks me. For whenever I speak, I must cry out, I must shout, "Violence and destruction!"

For the word of the Lord has become for me a reproach and derision all day long.

If I say, “I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,” then within me there is something like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot. For I hear many whispering: “Terror is all around! Denounce him! Let us denounce him!” All my close friends are watching for me to stumble. “Perhaps he can be enticed, and we can prevail against him, and take our revenge on him.”

But the Lord is with me like a dread warrior; therefore my persecutors will stumble, and they will not prevail. They will be greatly shamed, for they will not succeed. Their eternal dishonour will never be forgotten. O Lord of hosts, you test the righteous, you see the heart and the mind; let me see your retribution upon them, for to you I have committed my cause.

Sing to the Lord; praise the Lord! For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hands of evildoers.

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

### **Psalm 33: Let Your Mercy Be On Us**

**Second Reading:** Romans 6: 1b – 11

A reading from Romans.

Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin.

For whoever had died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.

The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God, so you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

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

**Song to Welcome the Gospel: ELW 720 We Are Called**

**Gospel: Matthew 10: 24 - 31**

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

Jesus said to the twelve: "A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!"

"So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even the hairs of

your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.”

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

### **Homily:**

As a child, I had many heroes – but not just ordinary heroes – superheroes. They were invincible and always knew what to do in every situation. My efforts at emulating them occasionally landed me in the hospital, like the time I jumped off the veranda like Superman, or the time I was swinging from the trees branches like Spiderman, or racing down the uneven sidewalk on my tricycle, my Batmobile, both with unpleasant results.

My parents did not always favour my obsession, especially when my sisters were cast as the evil villains, from which I had to protect the world. They also got tired of taking me to the hospital and explaining what had happened to me.

I was surprised to learn that not everyone believed in Superheroes. Especially the Hebrews. You would be hard-pressed to find a superhero in the Hebrew Bible. Even the greatest characters in the Hebrew scriptures had serious flaws in either character or judgments. Moses, Jeremiah and King David, the greatest characters in the Hebrews Bible, had their fair share of trouble with bad judgement, insecurity, and sin. And then there was Jonah, who was everything a Biblical hero should not be.

My superheroes could do no wrong, they were always very sure of themselves and what they were doing. The heroes in Hebrew

scripture always seemed to struggle with the role, and suffered from indecision and angst.

Jeremiah was one of those Hebrew heroes. He was very adept at complaining to God and lamenting the work God had called him to do. What we heard today from Jeremiah was a classic Biblical Lament...and the Hebrew scriptures are filled with laments. It is interesting that all these laments eventually end up praising God, whose ways are beyond our understanding and whose love for us is steadfast and immovable. As our psalm sings today, "Praise is the song of the righteous"... praise is the song of those who place their hope and trust in God even in their moments of greatest fear, anxiety and self-doubt.

There is a tremendous amount of honesty in today's readings. Jeremiah tells God exactly how he is feeling about what God has called him to do. And then Jesus, in the Gospel, tells the disciples that following him will not be a walk in the park or a stroll in a rose-garden. People are going to dislike you just because you come to them in my name, Jesus told them. If they mistreat me, they will also mistreat you, he tells them. Forget about being loved by everyone because you are one of my followers, Jesus tells them.

In our culture there used to be a lot of respect for Christians and being connected to the life of the church once brought you some level of status and respectability. Nowadays, you are just as likely to be called a church-goer by someone with a sneer on their face, or lumped in with all the evangelicals and fundamentalists who

have reduced Christianity to the most stupid and dangerous religion on the face of the earth.

God knows that following in the Way will not be easy and is not surprised by our complaints, our grouching and our dis – ease, though occasionally God has run out of patience with us because we have given God every reason to do so. Nonetheless, God is still with us, for that is God’s promise, and our stories of faith always end well, one way or the other, though maybe not the way we had planned. We have been baptized into both the death and the resurrection of Christ, and so everything for us is a journey from death to life, from despair to hope, from sadness to joy.

In the end everyone, including our heroes and saints, and ourselves, are entirely dependent on the mercy and the steadfast love of God that we call grace, for which we are ever thankful and filled with songs of praise. Living with that knowledge, we learn to put out trust in God alone and not in our own abilities or accomplishments. Then we are free to simply be the people God calls us to be...not religious heroes or superheroes, but simply the beloved children of God. Amen

**Hymn: ELW 808 Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song**

**Prayers of the Faithful:**

Gracious god, we thank you for the beautiful world you have made and the Ottawa Valley, our home on this earth. Help us care for all that you have given us in abundance – the rivers and lakes, the trees, plants and flowers – for they are all your precious gifts. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of wisdom, grant our Church council discernment in these days when difficult decisions need to be made in the life of our parish. Guide our thoughts and lead us through these troubled times. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Compassionate God, you are with us and we are never alone. Bless all fathers and father figures who strive to love and nurture as you do. Comfort all who long to be fathers and all for whom this day is difficult. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Loving God, you promise to be with all who are persecuted for your sake. Guide all who speak your word of justice and console any who are tormented or targeted for being who they are. 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 545 Lord, Dismiss Us With Your Blessing**

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