

Sunday, October 18, 2020

From Pastor Stephen, Zion Lutheran Church, Pembroke, ON

Welcome:

We sing our **Gathering Song:** ELW 526 God Is Here

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: Sovereign God, raise your throne in our hearts. Created by you, let us live in your image; created for you, let us act for your glory; redeemed by you, let us give you what is yours, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: Isaiah 45: 1 - 7

A reading from Isaiah.

Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped to subdue nations before him and strip kings of their robes, to open doors before him – and the gates shall not be closed: I will go before you and level the mountains, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, I will give you the treasures of darkness and riches hidden in secret places, so that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who call you by your name.

For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I surname you, though you do not know me. I am the Lord, and there is no other; besides me there is no god. I arm you, though you do not know me, so that they may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is no one besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe; I the Lord do all these things.

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

Psalm Song: ELW 844 Praise to the Lord, All of You, God's Servants

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1: 1 - 10

A reading from First Thessalonians.

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, so that became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. For the people of those regions report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead – Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

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

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia. Shine like stars in the world; holding fast to the word of life. **Alleluia.**

Gospel: Matthew 22: 15 - 22

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

The Pharisees went and plotted to entrap Jesus in what he said. So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. Tell us, then, what you think.

Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?” But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, “Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin used for the tax.” And they brought him a denarius. Then he said to them, “Whose head is this, and whose title?” They answered, “The emperor’s.”

Then he said to them, “Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

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

Homily: The response Jesus gave to the Pharisees' trick question in today's Gospel was brilliant. They thought that they could catch him saying something that was either blasphemous or treasonous - any yes or no answer would have brought one of those charges.

"Whose image is on the coin?", Jesus asks. "The emperors", they respond. "Then give back to the emperor what is his and give to God what is God's."

What belongs to God, of course, is ourselves, for we are created in the image of God. What the Pharisees should be more concerned about is what God really cares about: our lives, our faith, all our words and actions as the children of God.

That is not to say that God cannot use earthly things for a holy purpose: nor does it mean that God cannot make things into holy things, set apart for God's holy work. Our church building is such a holy thing, just as bread and wine or the water of Baptism are ...where God meets us.

In our first reading this morning from Isaiah, we hear how Cyrus, who many would consider pagan, is called to do God's holy work. Cyrus did have many gods, that is true - a god of light and a god of darkness, for instance. Isaiah gently tells him that God, who is leading him, is actually the God of both the darkness and the light.

Cyrus just needs to work on his theology, like most of us. Fortunately, God did not hold that against him. If God can have Cyrus do holy work, there is probably hope for us all, even when we are bit less than orthodox in our faith. Some Lutherans could loosen up a bit in the orthodoxy department, because I seriously doubt that God is overly concerned about our doctrinal correctness. I suspect God is more concerned about the poor being fed and the cold being sheltered than about whether we comprehend the depth of the Trinity or the concept of Atonement...both of which are beyond comprehension anyway.

Cyrus was a benevolent dictator. Countries he conquered were allowed to keep most of their own culture and religion. When God sent him to deliver the Israelites from the Babylonians, it was a gift

indeed, as they regained much of what they had lost under previous oppressors...and something resembling freedom. Cyrus became a holy person, set aside to do God's work, which is how we define "holy."

The coin the Pharisees were showing Jesus could also have become holy, if it had been used to do Christ's holy work, just like what we offer to God in our offering: if it is used for the good of the Kingdom of God, even if it has one of our lesser Caesar's printed on its face. God can make whatever God wants to make holy, no matter what we may call it.

And God chooses to call each of us holy, set apart for a life lived in grace and mercy. God could have made any other choice concerning us, but this is the one God made and it is our delight and our joy. And when we gather to worship on Sundays, to offer Eucharist, our thanksgiving and praise to God, it is for such amazing grace in our lives.

When God looks at us, baptized into the life of Christ and clothed with his risen life, God sees not only us but the face of his Son, whose life we now share. For we have died and risen in Christ, and it is his Risen life we now share and in his life we now live, and God claims us as his own, brothers and sisters of Christ, the beloved ones.

That is how we should view one another, not stamped out by the world, but children of our Heavenly Father, created in God's image, the very body of Christ in the world, the compassionate, healing, merciful presence of Christ in the world. Jesus does come again into our world, not just once, but many times, in the lives of those who bear his name and the mark of Christ upon their forehead, gifted with nothing less than the Spirit of God. So we have great value in God's eyes, simply because God loves us.

Worship for us becomes an expression of love for God, who so deeply loves us. Knowing this, we do our best to make our worship beautiful and bring our best to God in our Eucharists...our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Lately, that is difficult to do, as we are no longer allowed to sing with the angels...though we have not stopped trying. We do this because we are God's treasure and we belong to God. When we are with God we are truly whole and at peace, especially in this holy place, set apart for our life with God.

Rejoice, then, that you are created in the image of God and you bear the likeness of Christ, and that means you belong to God and that you are loved and cherished, a holy being, God's great treasure. In the end, that is all that really matters, in heaven or on earth. **Amen.**

Hymn: ELW 685 Take My Life, That I May Be

Prayers of the Faithful: Creator God, we are made in your image and bear the likeness of your Son. Make us shine with the light of Christ like the stars in the sky. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious God, help us treasure what has value in the Kingdom of Heaven and lead us on the path of life, accompanied by the Risen One. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Gentle God, bring peace to our hearts in these troubled and fearful times. Be with all whose anxiety feels overwhelming and help us be gentle and kind with people struggling to cope. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Healing God, we pray for all who are ill and all who are preparing for, or recovering from surgery: Erin Dupuis, Florence Felske, Richard Hubert, Dorian Verch, and all who seek peace and

wholeness. We thank you for your gifts of healing. 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.**

Whether we live or whether we die, we are yours. We thank you for those who showed us faithfulness, for the knees that taught us how to bow to you and the tongues that taught us to praise you. 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 825 You Servants of God

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

News and Announcements

Please Pray for Those Who are Ill, in Hospital, or Requested Special Prayers: Erin Dupuis, Florence Felske, Richard Hubert, Dorian Verch.

THANK YOU – We extend our gratitude to our vocalists today: Steve Boland, David Lehman, and Cantor, Jan Scheidt. Your gift of music is a blessing to us all.

EMERGENCY CLOSING - With Covid-19 creating so much uncertainty we feel it is necessary to have a plan in place on how we will notify our members if we need to close the church on short notice. Should this be required there will be lots of media attention that should have the members questioning our closing. We will do the following:

- Have the voicemail message at the church office updated indicating our closing date and restrictions.
- A message will be posted on our Facebook account and our church website.
- We will send an email to all members who have an email account on file.
- We will identify people that have been attending our worship services by using the registration sheets completed each week and will call these people.

Susan Dupuis, Council Chair

OFFICE HOURS – The church office has begun to be open again. It is currently open on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday morning from 9am until 12 noon. When coming into the office, please remember to wear your face mask, as this will be mandatory.

OFFERING UPDATE - We are truly blessed to have received your offerings over the past 5 months. We would like to ask you to consider the following which will help to keep us safe: use a cheque in your envelope in place of cash, e-transfer your offering to zionoffice@nrtco.net, sign up to have your offering automatically withdrawn from your account each month.

Susan Dupuis, Counting Co-ordinator

CONFIRMATION GATHERINGS (classes) resumed on September 13th, gathering in the parish hall (to allow for social distancing) at 11:30 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.

The Confirmation Schedule for September and October:

October 4th, Group A

October 11th, Thanksgiving Sunday, no class

October 18th, Group B (*Confirmands - last class*) October 25th, Confirmation for Group B, 11:00 A.M.

No class for new first year confirmation youth will be held this year, with a combined grade 7 and 8 class being offered next Autumn. Pastor Stephen

CLWR LEARNING AND LIVING KITS CANCELLED - We have just heard from our Dean of the Ottawa St. Lawrence Conference Area Bruce Thompson that due to the COVID Pandemic the

learning kits will not be able to be shipped due to excessive cost and difficulty in shipping this year.

If you have already purchased items for the kits, we would still welcome your donations. We have made arrangement to give the school supplies to children in need in our own community. The toothbrushes, toothpaste and soap, etc. will be packaged along with other items for the residents of Carefor at Christmas.

You may bring you donations into the church and we will collect them in the big yellow bag but the supplies will be used locally. We shall keep you updated when we receive more information. Thank you for your understanding.

Ellen Vandersleen, Chair Social Ministry Committee

JAM JAR FUNDRAISER

It is that time of year that your Social Ministry Committee is launching the Jam Jar Fundraiser. This year we have chosen **Gifts From the Heart** Program from CLWR (Canadian Lutheran World Relief). This is an exceptional program that assists families which in turn leads to self sufficiency. It also helps their local economy. Depending on the monies raised will determine how we will help. For example, last year \$75.00 would purchase a pair of goats for a family. These goats would provide milk to help feed their families. The goats would also breed in time to promote long term growth.

A pair of oxen and plough was \$500.00. With a pair of oxen more soil can be tilled more quickly allowing time for other activities such as attending school. Some gifts are matched 3x (the oxen and plough) or 4x (Emergency food) thanks to Canadian

Foodgrains and the Canadian Government. Our money has the potential to go far.

You may pick up a jar at the registration table to fill with change or other. Cheques are always welcome. If you wish to have a tax receipt, we will need your name and address or envelope number if there is cash only in the jar. This campaign will run until the first week of Advent; November 29, 2020. Thank you for your generous support.

Your Social Ministry Committee

Today's Scheduled Worship Leaders

Counters: Gayle & Larry Seegmiller, Des Schrie

Greeter: Denise Schizkoske

Guides: Vince & Emma Rabishaw

Projector Operator: Rick Gerundin

Sexton: Don Boldt

Worship Assistant: Wayne Kirk

This Week at Zion – October 19 - 25

Wed

BULLETIN DEADLINE

Sun

9 a.m.

Holy Communion (*Reformation*)

11 a.m.

Holy Communion (*Confirmation*)