

Sunday, September 20, 2020

From Pastor Stephen, Zion Lutheran Church, Pembroke, ON

We sing our **Gathering Song:** ELW 733 Great is Thy Faithfulness

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: Almighty and eternal God, you show perpetual lovingkindness to us your servants. Because we cannot rely on our own abilities, grant us your merciful judgment, and train us to embody the generosity of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

First Reading: Jonah 3:10 – 4:11

A reading from Jonah.

When God saw what the people of Nineveh did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. He prayed to the Lord and said, “O Lord! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. And now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.”

And the Lord said, “Is it right for you to be angry?” Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city.

The Lord God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his

discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush. But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?" And he said, "Yes, angry enough to die". Then the Lord said, "You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labour and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?"

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

Psalm 130: Remember Your Love

Second Reading: Philippians 1:21 - 30

A reading from Philippians.

For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me; and I do not know which I prefer. I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving

side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, and are in no way intimidated by your opponents.

For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well – since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

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

Gospel Acclamation: “Alleluia...Open our hearts, O Lord to give heed to what is said by your Son. Alleluia.”

Gospel: Matthew 20: 1 - 16

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

Jesus said to the disciples:

“The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the labourers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went.

“When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, ‘Why are you standing here idle all day?’ They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard.’

“When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, ‘Call the labourers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.’ When those hired about

five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.'

But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?' "So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

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

Homily: Today's readings have a common theme:

God's ways are not our ways and we often do not like God's ways. Jonah was incredibly upset when God forgave the Ninevites – the ancient enemies of his people, who he greatly despised. He sat down and pouted like a spoiled child.

Nothing would have made Jonah happier than if God had wiped the Ninevites off of the face of the earth. Instead, God had a change of mind and chose to forgive the penitent Ninevites, saving them from destruction.

Of course, Jonah knew, deep in his heart, that God was very likely to do this, and that he had a hand in making it happen. "I know you are slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love," Jonah told God. God's way, that day, was definitely not Jonah's way ...and Jonah was having a lot of trouble accepting that. He thought God should really be on his side in this.

But God is not on anybody's side because God is on everybody's side – wanting the best for all the children of God...even the difficult, naughty and disobedient children. No matter who you are and what we do, we are still a child of God...even when we are not behaving like God's children.

The story of Jonah is actually a teaching story that was told during a time when Israel had very little love for any of their neighbours...and especially those who were enemies in times past. Israel was to see itself as Jonah in the story. It is actually surprising that this story ever made it in the Bible, because it really was brutally honest about prejudices and attitudes that do not come from God, and yet we embrace with far too much zeal. Scripture is like that sometimes ... it makes us hear things that we do not want to hear. We should never be surprised when scripture challenges us, because that is how growth and maturity happens, as our perceptions and our own ways of living and thinking are called into question by God, who is not afraid to ask us tough questions.

In the book of Jonah, we learn to be surprised by God's grace and mercy and to live in awe of such great kindness.

Today's gospel picks up on that theme as people who worked all day in the vineyard got the same pay as those who worked for one hour. Do not over-interpret this parable. It is a parable, after all – a teaching story, not a guide to labour relations. At the heart of the parable is the idea that God does not love us for what we accomplish. God loves us simply because God loves us, and holds us in great mercy; not because of what we do but because of what we are – the precious children of God.

What we do in the Church, what we do for and in the name of Christ our Lord, comes from the joy of responding to God's tender-hearted loving kindness towards us. Some do more in the Church, others do less. God is not keeping track; neither should we. I have always thought that being involved in the life and the holy work of the church brings its own rewards: community, fellowship, love, belonging to something we value and cherish. It will not earn us anything; but its results are priceless in our own lives and in the lives of others around us.

You can never earn something that comes as a gift, no matter how hard you strive to do so in this life. The best response is simply to be thankful for the amazing grace of God and celebrate it with joy. When we live that way, do not be surprised if you find more joy on earth and even more joy in heaven. **Amen.**

Hymn: ELW 588 There's a Wideness in God's Mercy

Prayers of the Faithful: Gracious and tender-hearted God; Your ways of compassion and mercy amaze us. When our ways are not your ways, guide us on the path that leads to you. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Sun and wind, bushes and words, cattle and great cities – nothing in creation is outside your concern, mighty God. In your mercy, tend to it all. Give us a spirit of generosity toward all you have made. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Reveal yourself to all in need as you are gracious and merciful. Give fruitful labour and a livelihood to those seeking work. 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.**

We pray for all who are recovering from surgery or a time of illness: Erin Dupuis, Florence Felske, Edith Gorr, Richard Hubert, Alison Kellough, Hilda Klawitter, Jean Kuehl, Joan Lehman, Kris Purdy, Joyce Scheuneman, Gerry Vandersleen, and all in need of healing. Hold them in your mercy. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the Weisenberg family as they mourn for Donna. May she rest in peace, welcomed into paradise, and into the presence of the Risen One. 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.**

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 537 On Our Way Rejoicing

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

News and Announcements:

Please Pray for Those Who are III, in Hospital, or Requested

Special Prayers: Erin Dupuis, Florence Felske, Edith Gorr, Richard Hubert, Allison Kellough, Hilda Klawitter, Jean Kuehl, Joan Lehman, Kris Purdy, Joyce Scheuneman, and Gerry Vandersleen.

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, or sign up to have your offering automatically withdrawn from your account each month. Susan Dupuis, Counting Co-ordinator

IPAD/TABLET COURSE - Tuesday, September 22. IPad/ tablet course is continuing. Topic is Features of Facebook. For registration, please contact Jan Scheidt at (613) 631-0658

NOTE FROM WORSHIP & MUSIC – As we are following recommendations from the Renfrew County Health Unit and synod, we are not singing our hymns as a congregation. At our planning meetings for the resumption of our services it was felt that if the words to the hymns were projected, we would all be tempted to start singing. For that reason, the words are not being projected.

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

The Confirmation Schedule for September and October:

September 20th, Group A (*Grade 8*)

September 27th, Group B (*Confirmands - last class*)

October 4th, Group A

October 11th, Thanksgiving Sunday, no class

October 18th, Group A

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

GARAGE SALE –We are planning to proceed with our annual garage sale Saturday September 26th from 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. We will be needing volunteers to help us set up the week before. If you can help any or all of the days your help would be greatly appreciated. Please call Ellen Vandersleen @ (613) 732 - 7649. If you wish to donate items for the sale please phone the church office to set up a time when Kevin or Jean will be here. We have been collecting items for months now, thank you for all your donations. It will be wonderful to start seeing everyone again, even if we are behind a mask, as we will be required to wear masks. Proceeds will be directed towards the video equipment upgrade and the Robbie Dean Family Counselling Centre.

WE CARE KITS –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 in

November. The kits will be assembled and shipped to CLWR at the beginning of December. Here is the list of kit items:

- 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 1,437 Learning and Living Kits to CLWR. You can read more about the "We Care" program at www.clwr.org.

BABY BOTTLE CAMPAIGN – First Steps Options – Pregnancy Resource Centre – will be hosting their annual Baby Bottle Fundraising Campaign from September 14th – October 4th. Baby bottles can be picked up at the church this morning at the entrance. Please make cheques payable to First Step Options, and either drop off at the centre or return to Zion by October 4th.

ETERNITY FOR TODAY - Just a quick reminder that the office needs to know who would like to renew or begin their subscription for our devotional booklet “Eternity for Today”. Parasource(*church supply company*) needs to have any changes to our current subscriptions by the end of September. Please call the church office at (613) 732-8792 if you would like to continue to

receive, or begin receiving this daily devotional. **The deadline for placing your order is September 24, 2020.** Cost for this devotional is \$9.00 for the year. Subscription payments are due when you receive/pick up your first issue for 2021 in December 2020. The last issue for the year is currently in the church office. Please arrange to pick up your copy.

Today's Scheduled Worship Leaders

Counters: Murray & Sandra Sell, Mervyn Bimm

Guides: Fred & Cindy Thrasher

Sexton: Don Boldt

Worship Assistant: Ellen Vandersleen

This Week at Zion – September 21 – 27

Tues **10am** Ipad/Tablet Course

Wed BULLETIN DEADLINE

Sat **8am** Garage Sale

Sun 10am Holy Communion

11:30am Confirmation Class (*Group B – Last Class*)