

Sunday, September 27, 2020

From Pastor Stephen, Zion Lutheran Church, Pembroke, ON

Welcome: A warm welcome to all who worship with us this week.

We sing our **Gathering Song:** ELW 520 Dearest Jesus, at Your Word

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 and tender-hearted God, giver of life, you know our frailties and failings. Give us your grace to overcome them, keep us from those things that harm us, and guide us on the path of life through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: Ezekiel 18: 1 – 4, 25 - 32

A reading from Ezekiel.

The word of the Lord came to me: What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, “The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge”? As I live, says the Lord God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. Know that all lives are mine; the life of the parent as well as the life of the child is mine: it is only the person who sins that shall die.

Yet you say, “The way of the Lord is unfair.” Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair? When the righteous turn away from their righteousness and commit iniquity, they shall die for it; for the iniquity that they have committed they shall die.

Again, when the wicked turn away from the wickedness they have committed and do what is lawful and right, they shall save their life. Because they considered and turned away from all the

transgressions that they had committed, they shall surely live; they shall not die. Yet the house of Israel says, “The way of the Lord is unfair.” O house of Israel, are my ways unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair?

Therefore, I will judge you, O house of Israel, all of you according to your ways, says the Lord God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity will be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord God. Turn, then, and live.

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

Psalm 25: To You, O Lord I Lift My Soul (sung by Pastor and Cantor)

Second Reading: Philippians 2: 1 - 13

A reading from Philippians.

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

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

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia. My sheep hear my voice, says the Lord; I know them and they follow me. **Alleluia.** (sung by Pastor and Cantor)

Gospel: Matthew 21: 23 - 32

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

When Jesus entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?"

And they argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet." So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."

“What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ He answered, ‘I will not’; but later changed his mind and went. The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, ‘I go, sir’; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.”

Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.”

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

Homily: I was listening to CBC radio one day on a rather long car ride, when I heard something that belonged to the “now I have heard everything category.” The interviewer was speaking to someone who had started a Church for people who did not want to worship.

“We just gather for good coffee and conversation on Sunday morning. Sometimes it is spiritual, but we try not to talk about God or use any God language,” they said.

At first, I thought that meant they did not speak German...silly me. Everyone knows God’s first recorded words were in German - God’s favourite language: “Adam, Wo bist du?” I learned that in Confirmation class. Who said no one ever remembers anything from confirmation class...especially things you should probably not remember...like getting kicked out of class for misbehaving, which was a fairly common occurrence in this parish in times past and one of my accomplishments as well. Actually, I got kicked out

of confirmation class for unappreciated sarcasm and for ruthlessly teasing my sister.

My first thought was that this would have made a really great Monty Python sketch...a Church that only gathers for coffee. I guess that if the coffee had been bad, and the congregation poor conversationalists, there would have been no reason to gather.

While a good cup of coffee is very close to a religious experience for me, this was a little more than my Lutheran brain could handle in one afternoon and the writer of Philippians would have had a meltdown if he had heard what was being said that day.

It is easy to laugh about a Church where no one believes in God and Jesus is just a very nice man that you would like for a neighbour...a place where you can get a really good cup of coffee and catch up on the gossip. What can I say...it's probably cheaper than Starbucks and there is probably less politics and hockey talk than Tim Hortons.

In our reading from Philippians today, the writer proclaims that every knee shall bow and every tongue proclaim that Jesus is Lord. Worship and adoration of God in Jesus the Christ is not an option for us, nor should we ever want it to be an option. The only acceptable reaction to the tender-hearted loving-kindness of God, seen in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, is worship...and it is the only thing we can offer for all that God has done for us ...our joyful sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, our eucharist. Love and adoration of Christ our Lord should be as important to us as breathing and as necessary as breathing. We all know what happens to us when we stop breathing. The same thing can be said about us when we stop worshipping God in thanksgiving for the life of Christ.

Think about what happens every Sunday when we gather. God comes and puts our Lord into our hands as a gift. In receiving him we become what we receive, the very Body of Christ – filled with his endless life, joined with him in a journey from death to life. We eat the very bread of heaven, the bread of life, and we receive all the strength we shall need for our journey on the Path of Life as a wonderful gift we could never earn.

So we gather together on Sunday, which is the first day of the week, the day of our Lord's resurrection – each Sunday a little Easter. Sunday is not the Sabbath, because it is way more important to us as Christians than the Sabbath, which starts Friday evening and ends on Saturday evening. Sunday, our little Easter, is a reminder that we live by gospel and not by law, so celebrating resurrection is even more important to us than observing the Sabbath. Christianity is not about observing Laws and even Holy Commandments, it is about living in God's grace and sharing the life of the Risen One.

We gather in humble and joyful adoration on Sundays to hear God's living Word speak to our hearts and minds and we are gathered around Christ's holy table, where we receive nothing less than the very life of God. Here, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord and here we join all heaven and earth in praise of the Risen One, in whom we place all our trust and hope and who does not disappoint us.

We mirror that love for us in our lives, sometimes with astounding success and sometimes with resounding failure. Without God's great love for us we would have no reason to exist as the church and nothing much to celebrate. But because God has shown such great love for us in Jesus the Christ we can gather with joy on Sunday, with praise and adoration, rejoicing in the life that is

ours, rejoicing in Christ's victory over death that we have come to share, forever rejoicing in the Amazing Grace of God.

May this be always be our way of life as the church. **Amen.**

Hymn: ELW 842 O Worship the King

Prayers of the Faithful: Gracious God, join our voices to the songs of all who praise you for your generous gifts, and especially for the gift of your son who leads us from death to life. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Patient God, guide us when we are apt to stray, and strengthen us when we are feeble. Help us place our trust in you and calm our fears. 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, Edith Gorr, Richard Hubert, Alison Kellough, Hilda Klawitter, Jean Kuehl, Joan Lehman, Kris Purdy, Joyce Scheuneman, and all who seek peace and wholeness. 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 have 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, we entrust to your mercy through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

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.

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 720 We Are Called

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

Parish News and Announcements:

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

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

A DONATION has been made towards the upgrading of our video equipment by Edith Brumm & family in loving memory of a dear husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather, Don Brumm, who passed away one year ago on September 21, 2019. *“We’ve shared our lives these many years. You’ve held my hand; you’ve held my heart. So many blessings, so few tears – yet for a moment, we must part.” - Unknown.*

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 11:30A.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

IPAD/TABLET COURSE - Tuesday, September 29. Ipad/ tablet course is continuing. Topic is Features of Facebook. For registration, please contact Jan Scheidt at (613) 631-0658

ZLW – Our Zion Lutheran Women will resume meeting in October. Please join them for a presentation by Jan Scheidt entitled “Thanks Living”. They will meet on Wednesday, October 7th at 2 p.m. (new time). Covid-19 guidelines are in place. Please wear a mask and social distance.

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 arrangements 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 your 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

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.

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.

Today's Scheduled Worship Leaders

Counters: Kathy Godin, Kathy Hoffman, Christine Booth

Guides: Cheryl Sack, Allen Rose

Projector Operator: Ellen Vandersleen

Sexton: Diane Hammel

Worship Assistant: Susan Dupuis

This Week at Zion – September 28 – October 4

Tues	10am	Ipad/Tablet Course
Wed		BULLETIN DEADLINE
Sat	4pm	Holy Baptism
Sun	10am	Holy Communion
	11:30am	Confirmation Class (<i>Group A</i>)