**modified easter 2 wirship service, april 19, 2020**

**zion lutheran church, philipsburg**

Welcome to all on this Second Sunday of Easter. We give thanks that we can worship together in spirit today. Please remember that Zion relies on your weekly contributions to keep up with our expenses. Thanks to all who have remembered Zion with your offering and prayers.

**THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM**

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

**Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism,

we are raised with him to new life.

Let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

We give you thanks, O God,

For in the beginning you created us in your image

and planted us in a well watered garden.

In the desert you promised pools of water for the parched,

and you gave us water from the rock.

When we did not know the way,

you sent the good Shepherd to lead us to still waters.

At the cross you watered us from Jesus’ wounded side,

And on this day you shower us again with the water of life.

We praise you for your salvation through water,

for the water in this vessel, and for all water everywhere.

Bathe us in your forgiveness, grace, and love,

Satisfy the thirsty and give us the life only you can give.

**Amen.**

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray.

Almighty and eternal God, the strength of those who believe and the hope of those who doubt, may we, who have not seen, have faith in you and receive the fullness of Christ’s blessing, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

**PSALM 16**

1Protect me, O God, for I take refuge in you;  
  I have said to the Lord, “You are my Lord, my good above all other.”  
 2All my delight is in the godly that are in the land,  
  upon those who are noble among the people.  
 3But those who run after other gods  
  shall have their troubles multiplied.  
 4I will not pour out drink offerings to such gods,  
  never take their names upon my lips.   
 5O Lord, you are my portion  and my cup;  
  it is you who uphold my lot.  
 6My boundaries enclose a pleasant land;  
  indeed, I have a rich inheritance.  
 7I will bless the Lord who gives me counsel;  
  my heart teaches me night after night.  
 8I have set the Lord always before me;  
  because God is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.   
 9My heart, therefore, is glad, and my spirit rejoices;  
  my body also shall rest in hope.  
 10For you will not abandon me to the grave,  
  nor let your holy one see the pit.  
 11You will show me the path of life;  
  in your presence there is fullness of joy, and in your right hand are pleasures for-evermore.

For an uplifting video of Psalm 16, please check out The Corner Room <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apLjJIfLq-o>

**SECOND READING: 1 Peter 1:3-9**

A reading from 1 Peter.

3Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, 7so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 8Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, 9for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

**GOSPEL: John 20:19-31**

The holy gospel according to John.

19When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” 20After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” 22When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 23If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”  
  24But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”  
  26A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” 27Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” 28Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” 29Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”  
  30Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. 31But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

The gospel of the Lord.

**reflection**

I read a story last week about a man in Ireland diagnosed with Covid-19. He was in the hospital in critical condition and giving up hope that he would beat the virus. He was lonely and isolated, kept behind a closed door where no family, no pastor, and no friends could visit. The hospital staff were besieged with other cases of the virus and could not spend any time with him other than their required duties. He was afraid and full of doubt, and he found himself crying out to God asking God to help him through this incredibly challenging time.

A short while later his door opened, and a cleaner came in fully dressed in PPE. He began to chat with the man lying in the bed, asking him how he was feeling while performing his duties. The men talked for a while and then the conversation turned to God and faith in challenging times and as the cleaner was preparing to leave he asked the man if he could pray for him. He began to pray for God to watch over the fellow and asked God to heal the man. He then left to continue his work for the evening, but every once and a while he would walk past the man’s room and smile and give the thumbs-up sign to show the man that he was not alone in his anxiety and pain. For the first time in weeks, the man had a restful night of sleep…..God shows up behind closed doors….

The disciples were also in a room with a closed door fearing for their lives. Their emotions would have been all over the map. They would have heard Mary Magdalene’s story about meeting Jesus and that would have left them feeling confused and fearful, but also excited and hopeful. Was this idle gossip or had Jesus really been resurrected from the dead? Perhaps there was hope and promise for the future after all? Yes, the disciples were facing challenging and uncertain times. Does this story sound familiar? Can we relate to how the disciples may have been feeling? Is there hope for us among the isolation, loneliness, and confusion.

And then suddenly Jesus appeared alongside them, even though the door was locked. He offers them peace and breathes the Holy Spirit into them, sending them out into the world to proclaim the Word and forgive as they had been forgiven. In breathing his Spirit into the disciples, Jesus was inviting them into a new future borne by the resurrection promise.

When Thomas heard that Jesus had appeared, he was doubtful. He was not with the disciples when Jesus first appeared, and he wanted evidence to know that Jesus had been resurrected. Can you blame him? The others had witnessed Jesus’ presence; they had seen him with their own eyes. Thomas needed to be sure. And so, Jesus shows up again one week later. He again offered peace and went directly to Thomas asking him to place his hands on the scars found on his own hands and to feel the hole in his side. Jesus welcomed Thomas’ doubt; he did not judge or condemn him. He met Thomas exactly where he was at. Jesus showed up…

Doubt for many years has gotten a bad rap. We have been taught that expressing doubt goes against one’s faith, that doubt belittles one’s faith, but in reality, doubt is an integral part of our faith. If we had no doubts we would not grow in faith. Doubt is not a failure of morality; doubt is a natural process in building an intimate relationship with God. Having doubt allows us to be vulnerable, it encourages us to question, to lament, and cry out to God, be it in joy or despair. Even in our doubt, God shows up.

Right now, we are all aware of the trials, isolation, fear, and heartache that is happening in our lives. Our faith may be tested, and doubt may well creep into our thoughts. But know that God is present in the doubt and that God will protect and nurture us through our doubt. As followers of Jesus Christ, we have been given a living hope that enables us to endure the hardships that occur in our lives. This hope enables us to look forward to tomorrow helping us to believe that there will be brighter days ahead. Having faith is knowing that we are all in this together. Covid-19 has touched every one of us in some way, shape, or form as it is now in 210 countries worldwide. Together we have a resurrection hope that God the creator will bring new life out of the hardships. God through the power of the Holy Spirit and the resurrection of Jesus Christ continually shows up in our lives…..

I have some homework for you this week. Take some time to see where God shows up in your life. It could be in a phone call or a letter you receive in the mail. It could be looking out your window and noticing the beauty of pure white clouds of floating against the blue of the sky, It could be seeing your first tulip in bloom. It could be listening to birds singing a sweet melody or receiving a video call from a loved one. Reflect on your experience and if you feel comfortable, share it with someone. Share it with your pastor, I would love to hear from you!!

The man in the story that I shared with you earlier recovered from Covid-19. His faith grew because of one person who showed up, who took a few moments out of his day to connect with him, someone who took the time to share God’s love with his neighbour in his time of need. God showed up for him. God showed up for Thomas and God always shows up for us, no matter the doubt, fear, or hardships we face. God shows up letting us know we are unconditionally loved! May peace and love be with each of you this week. Amen

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Uplifted by the promised hope of healing and resurrection, we join the people of God in all times and places in praying for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

Open the doors we shut, O God, when we fear those who worship you in different ways. Guide us to unity and harmony so that we may come to respect and cherish our commonalities. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Open the paths we ignore, O God, when we prioritize financial gain and convenience over listening to the groaning of the earth. Inspire all to care for the world you have made so that living things might thrive. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Open the rooms we lock, O God, to those who live without a homeland or place of safety. We pray that generous nations offer refuge and peace for all. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Open the hearts we close, O God, to the cries of those in pain. We pray for those isolated physically or emotionally through incarceration, addiction, mental illness, chronic suffering, illness, injury, grief, and all in need especially Eddie, Elaine, Betty and those we name in the silence of our hearts. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Open the ways of love, O God, in the pursuit of healing and peace throughout the world as we continue to deal with the effects of Covid-19. Bless the efforts of healthcare professionals, scientists and researchers, front line service workers, PSW’s and cleaners, and all who are doing their best to keep us safe and healthy in these times. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Open the way to eternal life, O God, as we remember those who have died in faith. Free us from the fear of death, that we embrace the peace you have promised. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

With bold confidence in your love, almighty God, we place all for whom we pray into your eternal care, through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus 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 the one who brought froth Jesus from the dead raise you to new life, fill you with hope and turn your mourning into dancing.

Almighty God, Father + Son, and Holy Spirit bless you now and forever.

**Amen**

**DISMISSAL**

Alleluia, Christ is risen.

Go in peace. Share the good news.

**Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

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