**modified service 5th sunday of easter, may 10, 2020**

**zion evangelical lutheran church, philipsburg**

Welcome to everyone on this 5th Sunday of Easter. We give thanks that we can gather today in spirit and faith with one another from the comfort and safety of our homes. Happy Mother’s Day to all Mom’s and mothering figures this morning! This certainly is a different Mother’s Day, for many there will be cards sent in the mail, telephone calls, online chats, or socially distanced visits. Please keep Reta Seyler and her family in your prayers, she is in Grand River hospital receiving some tests as she was experiencing some digestion issues.

Please remember that Zion relies on your continued support each week to meet our monthly expenses. Our PAR application and instructions are now found on Zion’s website for those who may be interested. Thank you to all who support and pray for our congregation. If there is anyone you would like to include on our prayer list, please call or email me, or send an email through the website.

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.**

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

**Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray.

Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. Give us grace to love one another, to follow in the way of his commandments, and to share his risen life with all the world, for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

**SECOND READING:****1 Peter 2:2-10**

2Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation—3if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.  
  4Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God’s sight, and 5like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6For it stands in scripture:  
 “See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious;  
 and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”  
7To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe,  
 “The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner,”8and  
 “A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall.”  
They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.  
  9But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

**The word of the Lord.**

**GOSPEL: John 14:1-14**

The holy gospel according to John.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] 1“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. 2In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. 4And you know the way to the place where I am going.” 5Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” 6Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”  
  8Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” 9Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? 10Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. 11Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. 12Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. 13I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.”

**The gospel of the Lord.**

**SERMON**

Our gospel reading today is another well-known funeral passage, perhaps not quite as popular as Psalm 23 that we read last week, but it too offers comfort and hope in our times of sorrow and grief knowing that God has a place prepared for our loved ones when they leave this earthly life. This reading from the book of John, is Jesus speaking and living at his pastoral best. He is steadfast in calming the fears of the disciples on the night before his death. The disciple’s hearts are troubled; Jesus has just washed their feet, an act of complete servanthood that confused them. Judas has just left the building, knowing that he will betray him, and Jesus has just informed Peter that he will deny him, not once but three times. Jesus will physically be leaving the disciples and none of them can follow to where he is going. Yes, there is heaviness and trouble in the hearts of the disciples. What were they to do? Who could they turn to?

Jesus responds to their lament with one simple sentence, “Believe in God, believe also in me”(v1). Jesus in saying that simple sentence offered the disciples hope and promise for the future. He offered them new life through a simple invitation, an invitation to be in relationship with God through Jesus’ death and resurrection.

When I hear the words of verse 2 “In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places,” my mind goes back to my childhood when I thought of heaven being like a great mansion. Some versions of the Bible like the New International Version translate the verse to read, “In my Father’s house there are many rooms,” so I always pictured heaven to be a large Victorian mansion with 11-foot ceilings full of hallways. They seemed to go on forever! In each hallway were many ornate doors made from the wood of an oak tree that was stained in a dark tone. The doors were large, but they swung open easily and silently. It was inviting, yet perhaps a little intimidating for a kid who understood the bible from a more literal point of view. Who cleaned and dusted all those rooms?

The Greek word for dwelling place or room is *monai.* And while it can be defined as a physical room, there is also a biblical interpretation defining *monai* as a place to abide; a place to remain stable or fixed. To abide with one another is to be in a relationship with one another. Jesus prepared the disciples that night by telling them that he had to leave them, but they would still be in a relationship with him, there would still be a connection between them that was stable. It did not matter that Jesus was going to be physically separated from the disciples, he was returning to God to prepare an abiding place for the disciples, for you, for me, for everyone. Jesus offered the promise of a God who wants to dwell with us, who wants to grow within us, who wants us to be in a relationship with God and with one another. The disciples may have felt that their relationship was broken that night through the actions of Judas and Peter, but Jesus did not turn his back on them, and God never turns his back on us. God is always there offering repentance, forgiveness, and love to our imperfect selves. God is always seeking to dwell among God’s people, through the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ that is made available to us.

But, Thomas and Philip just do not get it and let’s be honest, many times we do not get it either. They question Jesus on why he must leave them and where he is going. We question and lament when we do not know the answers, or when we do not get the answer we want to hear. Jesus does not get angry with them, nor us; he is patient and responds in true Jesus form (remember that Jesus does like to turn our worlds upside down), giving them an answer that they were not expecting. Instead of a where and why answer he responds with a “who” answer, stating, “I AM the way, the truth, and the life” (v6). Here Jesus is offering that invitation to a relationship with him, to follow him, to live boldly in hope and promise for the future. And in doing so we are invited to live just as Jesus lived; to accompany all for whom the journey is long, to not judge others, to offer welcome to those who are deemed outcasts in society, to continue to offer hope to others in these challenging times with phone calls, and dropping off food and groceries on doorsteps. When we love our neighbour, when we reach out to one another, when we live out the values and trust that Jesus embodied, we are sharing in the abundant life of God. And in living that abundant life, we find our strengths for the future and we find peace and comfort in the struggles that we are facing. In the abundant life and enduring love that God provides, our troubled hearts are held and healed, just as the hearts of the disciples were held and healed on the night of that last supper so many years ago.

Our reading from 1st Peter also invites us to come to Jesus Christ who is described as the living stone, the one who calls us out of the darkness and into the light of the resurrection life. We are reminded that we are God’s people who are so dearly loved and forgiven. We too are living stones who continue to carry out the work of Jesus Christ in the world. So, do not let your hearts be troubled, believe in God, and believe also in Jesus Christ. Know that God abides with us and that there is room for all, there is room for everyone. Through the death and resurrection of God’s only Son Jesus Christ, we have been given the gift and promise of eternal life that gives us the strength we need for today and hope and promise for all our tomorrows. Let it be so.

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Uplifted by the promised hope of your 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.

Build us up, holy God, as living stones united in your spiritual house. Continually strengthen your church as it is sent forth to proclaim your love. We pray for all pastors and congregations in these times of uncertainty, that they can reach one another in your name and love. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Form us, creator God, to be humble participants in your complex and amazing creation. We praise your power in evolving a magnificent earth, from flowering trees to tropical rainstorms, from black holes to beloved pets. Lead us to respect your wondrous earth with both all that creates and all that destroys. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Align our ways to your love, O God. Assist the leaders of nations to find and follow your ways of justice. Guide their way through the  challenges of pandemic and poverty. Despite our own considerable needs, keep us mindful of the needs of others, especially refugees and prisoners. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of healing and rest, help those whose hearts are heavy and weighed down by many troubles. Comfort their suffering, ease their distress, and carry their burdens Eddie, Elaine, Betty, Ruth, Mary Ann, Reta, all who are affected by Covid-19 and those we name in the stillness of our hearts Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Nurturing God, on this Mother’s day we pray for women who are mothers, through birth, adoption, or foster care.  We pray that they may be supported in their mothering task by the men and other women in their lives; that their children may be provided with enough food, shelter, and healthcare. We pray for aunts, sisters, and grandmothers and all those who play mothering roles in our lives. We remember that this day is difficult for many, for women and men who long to be parents, but struggle with infertility. We pray for women who have lost children, either in utero, through sickness, through war or violence, or tragic accident.  Comfort them in your loving arms. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those for whom this is a day of mourning and sadness.  For those who have lost mothers and other important women in their lives, that they may be comforted with the peace that passes all understanding. Give us faith to take hold, and to know the way of your promise of eternal life. 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.**

**THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD**

Let us pray.

Praise and thanks to you, holy God, for by your Word you made all things: you spoke light into darkness, called forth beauty from chaos, and brought life into being. For your Word of life, O God, **we give you thanks and praise.**

By your Word you called your people Israel to tell of your wonderful gifts: freedom from captivity, water on the desert journey, a pathway home from exile, wisdom for life with you. For your Word of life, O God, **we give you thanks and praise.**

Through Jesus, your Word made flesh, you speak to us and call us to witness: forgiveness through the cross, life to those entombed by death, the way of your self-giving love. For your Word of life, O God, **we give you thanks and praise.**

Send your Spirit of truth, O God; rekindle your gifts within us: renew our faith, increase our hope, and deepen our love, for the sake of a world in need. Faithful to your Word, O God, draw near to all who call on you; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever.

**Amen.**

**LORD’S PRAYER**

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 almighty God, the Father who created us to live in love,

the Son who died and rose to bring us new life, and the Spirit who gives us a glimpse of hope, bless us all, now and forever.

Amen.

**DISMISSAL**Go in peace. Trusting the promise.

Thanks be to God!

For Christ is risen!

**Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

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