**4th Sunday of Pentecost- June 28, 2020**

**Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, Philipsburg**

Welcome to everyone on this 4th Sunday of Pentecost where we continue to gather in love for one another from the safety of our homes.

I will be on holidays until July 7. I will be available for pastoral emergencies. Please leave a message on my cell phone and I will return your call. I will not be answering emails. Sunday services will still be posted for each Sunday and we will celebrate communion on my return at the July 11th service.

I ask that you keep the citizens and agri-workers in the Kingsville/ Leamington area in your prayers this week. They were not allowed to move into stage 2 of the pandemic protocol and this is creating frustration, division, and discrimination towards the foreign workers who are here in Canada working so that we have food on our tables.

Our sermon today is written by Rev Dr. Syd Haugen, Bishop of the Saskatchewan Synod. The ELCIC has produced a summer series of sermons for clergy to use this year, it is wonderful to be able to hear different voices within the ELCIC.

Please remember that Zion relies on your continued support each week to meet our monthly expenses. Thank you to all who support and pray for our congregation.

**GREETING**

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.**

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray.

O God, you direct our lives by your grace, and your words of justice and mercy reshape the world. Mold us into a people who welcome your word and serve one another, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.**Amen.**

**OPENING HYMN- Oh Praise the Gracious Power ELW- 651**

**FIRST READING: Jeremiah 28:5-9**

A reading from Jeremiah.

5The prophet Jeremiah spoke to the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the Lord; 6and the prophet Jeremiah said, “Amen! May the Lord do so; may the Lord fulfill the words that you have prophesied and bring back to this place from Babylon the vessels of the house of the Lord, and all the exiles. 7But listen now to this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people. 8The prophets who preceded you and me from ancient times prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms. 9As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes true, then it will be known that the Lord has truly sent the prophet.”

The word of the Lord.

**PSALM: Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18**

 1Your love, O Lord, forever will I sing; from age to age my mouth will proclaim your faithfulness.
 2For I am persuaded that your steadfast love is established forever;
  you have set your faithfulness firmly in the heavens.
 3“I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn an oath to David my servant:
 4‘I will establish your line forever, and preserve your throne for all generations.’
 15Happy are the people who know the festal shout!
  They walk, O Lord, in the light of your presence.
 16They rejoice daily in your name; they are jubilant in your righteousness.
 17For you are the glory of their strength, and by your favor our might is exalted.
 18Truly, our shield belongs to the Lord; our king to the Holy One of Israel.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 10:40-42**

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

[Jesus said to the twelve:] 40“Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. 41Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; 42and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**SERMON- Rev. Dr. Sid Haugen- Bishop Saskatchewan Synod**

 Greetings to you all gathered this Sunday, June 28. Perhaps with some provincial re-openings you will be gathering in your worship spaces again this Sunday. More likely though you will be gathered un-usually in your family rooms or living rooms as you have been since March. This is so not- normal for us, but after several months it is starting to feel like ‘something we do. A sort of new normal — for now.

 I must say that I have been so impressed with our churches “working it out” in this pandemic time. I wonder if any of us expected that our churches would adapt so well to this new world we find ourselves in. For years, we have said and sung, “the church is not a building; the church is the people.” But during COVID, deprived of physically worshiping together, we have rediscovered just that. The church is the people gathered round Jesus. In this time, we are not always gathered in a building, but rather we are gathering virtually through media, or through a phone call from a pastor or from another member of the church community, or through an action to love the world. We have rediscovered that we are a movement, a people, not defined by a building but by the gospel of Jesus.

 The text this week is the word of Jesus to such a people. In that day the church gathered together also without a worship space, as they journeyed in Galilee listening to their rabbi, their beloved teacher, Jesus of Nazareth. I would center with you on the text of the day. I would invite you to turn to Matthew chapter 10 in your Bibles wherever you may gather.

 Today I invite you first to walk with me through the narrative of the Gospel of Matthew to our text for this Sunday, in Matthew chapter 10. Second, to pause a moment to listen for God’s word to us today. Then I will close.

*Prayer: May these words of my mouth and the meditations and imaginations of our hearts and minds be acceptable in your sight, Our Rock and Redeemer. Amen*

 We have been following Matthew’s Gospel this year since late November. Each of the Gospels of course tells the story of Jesus. Each Gospel, each story, is like a painting. The gospel writers paint the portrait of Jesus artfully, with different details, with different highlights—just as portraits try not simply to record something, but to bring out what the person’s life means.

 Matthew’s gospel, in particular, is often called, “the Gospel of the church.” It has been used as a sort of handbook for the church about matters of instruction. It is, significantly, the gospel in which Jesus directly says to Peter, “On this rock I will build my church.” Jesus has come to build a church — not a building — but something more priceless: an “ekklesia”, a movement, a community.

 As you page back in Matthew’s gospel from our text in chapter 10, already by chapter 4 Jesus has begun to call the church together. While he was walking by the seashore, he saw some fisherman: Andrew, James, John and Peter. Yes, Pete the fisherman in a muscle shirt — a tattoo of the name of a girl he once loved on the bicep. It seemed like a good idea at the time. Later, others would join the church: Martha the caterer, Thomas the thinker, Mary the listener. And of course, there was Simon the Zealot, Simon the radical, wearing a black leather jacket with “Black lives matter” painted boldly in block letters across his shoulders.

 What does Jesus do with this gathered church? Early in the narrative, around chapter 5, he takes them up on hill and teaches them. “Blessed are the poor. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the peacemakers.” In the sermon he turned to the little church gathered and said, “Know this! You are the light of the world. You, church, will bring light where you live. You are the salt of the earth. You will bring the best out of the world in which you live. They must have looked at each other and thought, “Her?” “Him”? Or more deeply, “You mean, Me!” Really?

 For several chapters he would continue to preach: “You have heard it said, “love your friends, hate your enemies. I say to you, “pray for your enemies”. Or he would teach them to Pray like this, “Our Father in Heaven.”

 After the sermon, the church would follow him across Galilee as he brought healing to people broken in mind, body, or spirit. He blessed those who so needed a blessing. Throughout the journey in Galilee the church would watch and listen.

 Our text today in chapter 10 is about halfway through the one year of Jesus’ ministry. In Matthew 10, Jesus sends the church out to learn, not just by watching and listening. Now they would need to learn how to be church by doing.

 His instruction begins disturbingly. He says, “Go only to the lost sheep of Israel. Stay away from the Samaritans.” While that may have sounded about right for his church that didn’t have any use for Samaritans, it became a difficult saying for the church during the time of the Acts of the apostles. Some would say, “The text says the Gospel is just for the Jews.” Others at that time would say, “But if the Gospel is only for the Jews, then why was does the Spirit seem to be calling Gentiles in the church!” This church would need to learn new ways; it still does. But back to the narrative.

 Jesus instructions to the church continued. He said, “as you go, proclaim that the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand.” Proclaim it. You are not selling anything. You are not sent out to say, “If you buy our product, if you would only follow Jesus the way we do, God will love you and bless you.” No. You are proclaiming the good news of the Gospel for everyone. That “God so loved the world.”

 Then Jesus gives more specific directions. He said, “Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.” He is listing the exact things they have watched Jesus do in the first chapters of the narrative. They are to do the work of Jesus in the world. They too are to heal those broken in mind or body or spirit with everything they are and with everything they are not yet.

 Then just before his church is going to “take the field” Jesus, like any good coach, speaks of what lies ahead. “When you go into a town, into a house, he said, when they welcome you, give them your Peace. Then he adds, when they don’t receive you, won’t listen to you, just move along. Look, I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. This is not going to easy.

 Then Jesus speaks with eyes looking far into the future. He lays out the difficult future of the church beyond this short chapter about the mission of the 12. Be prepared, he says, for being whipped in public for following me. Be prepared for being brought to trial for following me. Be prepared that families will be divided over me. Be prepared even for this: “You will be universally hated on account of my name.”

 You have to wonder how the little church took it, don’t you? I wonder if they whispered to each other, “I wonder if we are up to this?”

 Then Jesus adds this. To this tiny little group of fisherman and tax collectors, of academics and radicals, broken beautiful human beings, he says: ‘do not be afraid of them. They can only hurt your body not your soul — not the you that is you, deep, deep within. Don’t be afraid. Then, he says “If anyone gives so much as a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is a disciple, then in truth I tell you, he will most certainly not go without his reward.” Whoever gives this little band or even one little one among them, a cup of cold water, will be blessed.

 Then he sends them out to heal and to bless in Jesus name. He still does.

 Now, let’s step back from the narrative for a moment and take it in. It is not an easy narrative to hear is it? The trials of this little church are so daunting. Nor did the trials stop with the pressure from outside the church. A few chapters later in Matthew 18, Jesus told them: “When a member of the church sins against you then go to him and humbly state your case.” This is not an IF, but a WHEN — when a member of the church sins against you. The church will not only have to deal with pressure from outside, but also with issues inside the community.

 To this community facing this array of struggles ahead, I hear one word emerging for the church in our day. That the church, this gathering of followers of Jesus by all its names, in all its complexity, with all its difficulties, is dear to God’s heart. Jesus says to his church: Don’t be afraid of the powers of the world. Not of war. Not of violence. Not of death itself. Then there is the saying about the cup of cold water. Usually that text comes with a call for us to give a cup of cold water, to be generous — of course a quite lovely message — but that’s not quite what this text is about. Listen: “If anyone gives so much as a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is a disciple, then in truth I tell you, he will most certainly not go without his reward. Jesus is saying that this church, this little gathering of followers that Jesus has come to build; is so loved by God, that anyone who gives even a cup of water to the least and last and littlest of this band will be blessed. Isn’t that something?

 So, let me close with this. This church, not the building, but the community, the movement, this church is beloved by Jesus, blessed by God. So, people of God, love this church, love this gathering of people who follow Jesus with you. Love it not because it’s perfect, not because the people are perfect, not because the bishops or pastors or leadership are perfect, not because the community always gets it right. Love the Church because Jesus loves it, in all its strength, in all its frailty.

Love it in all the ways you can love a church. Show up to worship — in person or otherwise. Support the church with your time and with whatever gifts you have to give. Pray for its bishops and pastors and leaders. And give one cup of cold water to one of the least, the lost, and the littlest.

 It is breath-taking isn’t it? We are part of a community, a movement, a church, that Jesus came to build. How cool is that! Amen

**HYMN OF THE DAY- The Church of Christ in Every Age- ELW 729**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBUAQKGyc5A>

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Called into unity with one another and the whole creation, let us pray for our shared world.

God of companionship, encourage our relationships with our siblings in Christ. Bless our conversations. Shape our shared future and give us hearts eager to join in a festal shout of praise. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of abundance, you make your creation thrive and grow to provide all that we need. Bless farmers as they watch over their crops which provide much needed food for both human and animal consumption. Inspire us to care for our environment and be attuned to where the earth is crying out. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of mercy, your grace is poured out for all. Inspire authorities, political leaders, members of parliament, mayors, and judges, to act with compassion and justice for everyone. Teach us to overcome fear with hope, meet hate with love to bring an end to racism, to give a cold cup of water to those who thirst, and to welcome one another as we would welcome you. We remember this morning all people of colour, the LGBTQ community, our Indigenous brothers and sisters, and all others who feel oppressed and unheard in society. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of care, accompany all who are in deepest need. Strengthen those who are in prison or awaiting trial. Comfort those who are sick, injured, lonely, or abandoned. We remember this morning Eddie, Elaine, Ruth, Mary Ann, Susie, David, Donelda, Lynette, the citizens and agri-workers in Leamington and Kingsville, and those we name in the stillness of our hearts. Renew the spirits of all who call upon you. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of community, we give thanks for this congregation. Give us passion to embrace your mission and the vision to recognize where you are leading us. Teach us how to live more faithfully with each other. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of love, you gather in your embrace all who have died. Keep us steadfast in our faith and renew our trust in your promise. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Receive these prayers, O God, and those too deep for words; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

**THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD**

Let us pray.

O God of justice and love, we give thanks to you that you illumine our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, awaken us to the needs of others, and at the end bring all the world to your feast; 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**

The God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus. **Amen.**

The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

The God of all grace ☩ bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, giving one cup of cold water to the least, the lost, and the littlest.

**Thanks be to God.**

**SENDING HYMN- To Be Your Presence- ELW 546**

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