**5th Sunday of Pentecost- July 5, 2020**

**Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, Philipsburg**

Welcome to everyone on this 5th 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 Tuesday July 7, but am available for pastoral emergencies. Please leave a message on my cell phone and I will return your call. I will not be answering emails. We will celebrate communion on my return at the July 12th service.

Our sermon today is written by Rev Prema Samuel, Assistant to the Bishop for Congregational Life in the Alberta 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.

You are great, O God, and greatly to be praised. You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. Grant that we may believe in you, call upon you, know you, and serve you, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

**OPENING HYMN- Come to Me All Pilgrims Thirsty- ELW 777**

**FIRST READING: Zechariah 9:9-12**

A reading from Zechariah.

 9Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!
 Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. 10He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war-horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall command peace to the nations; his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. 11As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. 12Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double.

The word of the Lord.

**PSALM: Psalm 145:8-14**

 8The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
 9Lord, you are good to all, and your compassion is over all your works.
 10All your works shall praise you, O Lord, and your faithful ones shall bless you.
 11They shall tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your power,
 12that all people may know of your power and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
 13Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; your dominion endures throughout all ages.
  You, Lord, are faithful in all your words, and loving in all your works.
 14The Lord upholds all those who fall and lifts up those who are bowed down.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30**

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

[Jesus spoke to the crowd saying:] 16“To what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,
 17‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.’ 18For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; 19the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”
  25At that time Jesus said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; 26yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. 27All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.
  28“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**SERMON- Rev Prema Samuel, Assistant to the Bishop, Alberta, and the Territories Synod**

We have a lot of great sayings that we use to try and pluck up our courage in difficult times. “Whatever doesn’t kill you only makes you stronger.” “You can pull yourself up by your own bootstraps.” “Suck it up.” And so on and so forth. We remind ourselves that we are tough, strong people, perfectly capable of handling anything thrown our way. After all, we have done it before, so we can do it again. We can’t be weak. We have to bear the difficult times on our shoulders. That’s what it means to take responsibility and live our lives, doesn’t it? We need to be tough and not shirk responsibility.

 Yet, over the last number of weeks and months, how many of us have felt close to break­ing, close to being completely overwhelmed by the events of 2020? We are faced with a global pandemic that has caused so much of our society to screech to a halt. We are faced with economic fall-out that will plague us for many years as a result of trying to curb the spread of the pandemic. There are also signs of a rising mental health crisis in our world, a crisis that will impact our world in very real, very serious ways. We have seen racial tensions explode in the United States and throughout the world, forcing all of us to look deeply at beliefs we may not have even realized we held. It is a shake-up of the very world order, and we are standing right in the middle of it. Our own treatment of our indigenous brothers and sisters in this country should give us serious reason to pause if we are ever tempted to point fingers at our friends to the south.

 Do you still feel the need to stand alone? Do you still feel the need to believe that your own strength is good enough to face a world that has changed so drastically and so fast that most of us can’t even fathom what it may look like when everything is said and done? The reality is that not one of us is strong enough to weather this time on our own. Not one of us has all of, or perhaps any of, the answers. We are lost right now. And you know what, it is ok to admit that. We are lost.

 But we won’t admit it. Not really. Secretly, many of us hope that we return to the world we knew before all of this happened. We just need to get through this and things will go back to normal. We hold on to that fantasy, even as we know the truth of the matter. There isn’t any going back.

 That is the kind of truth that can break us if we try and stay stalwart and strong. But we are not called upon to be stalwart and strong. We are called on to be honest about our hurt, our fear and our anxiety about the future. We might be horrible about naming those truths, yet it is not our strength that is needed. It is the ability to name what we are feeling and then to trust. We need to find it in ourselves to let go and truly know that God guides us.

 Perhaps that is why Jesus, in our reading from Matthew, mentions that the cynical and dismissive audience around him, who dismissed John the Baptist as an ascetic and Jesus as a drunkard, are so wrapped up in the myth of their own superiority that they simply cannot hear what Jesus is trying to tell them. They can’t. Their ears are blocked. Instead, God’s will is revealed to infants. The young understand.

 It is not the first time Jesus mentions or engages with children. Children often become a measuring stick which Christ uses against the adults he is surrounded with. The children get it, through their innate trust, their openness, their lack of suspicion. They know what it is to trust because their whole life depends on it. They know this. And it translates into their life of faith as well. We complain about people with a “Sunday School” faith, lacking true maturity and discernment, but those children, with a Sunday school faith, are more willing to trust and be guided by God than many of us.

 I don’t think that we are being served too well right now relying on our own strength and our own stubborn belief in how things should be. The yoke that we are choosing to pick up as we make this choice is a heavy, killing yoke. It is a burden too great for any of us. It is the kind of burden that breaks people, relationships, and communities. We think it is our responsibility to bear this yoke. But it isn’t. It never has been.

 One of the songs we liked to sing in the Long-Term care homes where I served as a Chaplain was, *“Are you weary, are you heavy hearted, tell it to Jesus.”* I don’t need to reiterate again the kinds of burdens the residents and their loved ones carry.

 Dalit Christians in India sing, *“Cast your burden on the Lord, for he cares for you.”* They did not believe in a magical Jesus to wipe their burdens and tears, but they believe because this Jesus is one who understands their overwhelming weight of it.

 This is the invitation we are given again in our Gospel today Jesus, speaking to his audience, encouraged them to come to him and he would give them rest from that which was killing them. Those words echo throughout history. They are words that speak to us now, as we struggle under the burden of this time in history. “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

 This is the welcome we hear again in our Gospel today Jesus, speaking to his audience, encouraged them to come to him and he would give them rest from that which was killing them. Those words echo throughout history. They are words that speak to us now, as we struggle under the burden of this time in history.

Words of hope, if ever hope could have a voice. Our saviour is asking us, imploring us, to come as children do, with the trust and hope of a child. Can we? Are we truly open to being set free?

 Because there is a caveat, as there always is in matters of faith. To be set free is not to be free for whatever pleasure may come our way. To be set free is to be set free into a life where we can stand with our brothers and sisters of color, where we can fight for the rights of the created world, where we can dream of a world with a new economic order that doesn’t leave the poor behind but resembles what God had in mind all along, manifested so beautifully in the covenant Yahweh established with the people of Israel. A new kind of society, based on justice, equality, and a place for all people. We cannot champion any of this if we are crushed under the burden of our own solitary pride. We cannot truly follow Christ if we are arrogant enough to believe that we are strong enough on our own.

 So, let your burden go. Give it to Christ and then re-enter the world made new by the grace of God and the freedom which that gives to us in to love all people. “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” The world may break us. But God will lift us up, so that we in turn may lift up others. In this difficult time, such news, such good, amazing news, truly is balm to the soul. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY- I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say- ELW 611**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XUVCpF8-VuE>

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

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

We pray for the church. Sustain us as we share your word. Embrace us as we struggle to find our common ground. Lift up leaders with powerful and prophetic voices. Free us from stagnant faith. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for the well-being of creation. Protect the air, water, and land from abuse and pollution. Free us from apathy in our care of creation and direct us toward sustainable living. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for the nations asCanada, celebrates her nationhood. Guide leaders in developing just policies and guide difficult conversations. Free us from patriotism that hinders relationship-building. Lead us to expansive love for our neighbor. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for all in need. For all who are tired, feeling despair, sick, or oppressed Eddie, Elaine, Ruth, Mary Ann, Susie, David, Donelda, and those we name in the silence of our hearts. Take their yoke upon you and ease their burdens. Give your consolation and free us from all that keeps us bound. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for this congregation. Bless pastors, deacons, and congregational leaders. Energize ministry volunteers, church administrators, and those who maintain our building. Shine in this place that we might notice the ways your love transforms our lives. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We give thanks for those who have died in faith. Welcome them into your eternal rest and comfort us in our grief until we are joined with them in new life. 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**

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

**Amen.**

**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Share the good news.

**Thanks be to God.**

**SENDING HYMN- Light Dawns on a Weary World- ELW 726**

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