**MODIFIED SERVICE- 12TH SUNDAY OF PENTECOST- August 23, 2020**

**ZION EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH, PHLIPSBURG**

Welcome to everyone on this 12th Sunday of Pentecost, where we continue to gather safely from the comfort of our homes as a reminder of our love for one another.

August is passing by quickly! The days are getting shorter and the nights are cooler…fall will soon be here. We are in the midst of a heat wave; but cooler weather is expected later in the week.

Church Council will meet on August 25th, one on the items on the agenda is the resumption of in person worship services. Church Council will keep you informed with any decisions. Please keep your council in your prayers as they discern the guidelines and protocols.

Our GotoMeeting Coffee hour meets at 11:00, please join us!

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.

**GATHERING**

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

**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, with all your faithful followers of every age, we praise you, the rock of our life. Be our strong foundation and form us into the body of your Son, that we may gladly minister to all the world, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

**OPENING HYMN- My Hope is Built On Nothing Less- ELW 695**

**WORD**

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

**FIRST READING: Isaiah 51:1-6**

A reading from Isaiah.

1Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek the Lord. Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug.  
2Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many.  
3For the Lord will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song.  
4Listen to me, my people, and give heed to me, my nation; for a teaching will go out from me, and my justice for a light to the peoples.  
5I will bring near my deliverance swiftly, my salvation has gone out and my arms will rule the peoples; the coastlands wait for me, and for my arm they hope.  
6Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and those who live on it will die like gnats; but my salvation will be forever, and my deliverance will never be ended.

**PSALM: Psalm 138**

1I will give thanks to you, O Lord, with my whole heart; before the gods I will sing your praise.  
2I will bow down toward your holy temple and praise your name, because of your steadfast love and faithfulness; for you have glorified your name and your word above all things.

3When I called, you answered me; you increased my strength within me.  
4All the rulers of the earth will praise you, O Lord, when they have heard the words of your mouth.   
5They will sing of the ways of the Lord, that great is the glory of the Lord.  
6The Lord is high, yet cares for the lowly, perceiving the haughty from afar.  
7Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you keep me safe; you stretch forth your hand against the fury of my enemies; your right hand shall save me.  
8You will make good your purpose for me; O Lord, your steadfast love endures forever; do not abandon the works of your hands.

**SECOND READING: Romans 12:1-8**

A reading from Romans.

1I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.  
 3For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. 4For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, 5so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. 6We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; 7ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; 8the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

The word of the Lord.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 16:13-20**

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

13Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” 14And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” 15He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” 16Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” 17And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. 18And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. 19I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” 20Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

The gospel of the Lord.

**SERMON**

Our gospel reading today marks a pivotal turning point in Jesus’ public ministry in the book of Matthew. His identity has been affirmed; he is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. In the next few weeks of the lectionary the tone will change; Jesus will foretell of his death, be transfigured, and then proceed to Jerusalem where his earthly ministry will continue until his trial, death, and resurrection.

This is also a pivotal turning point in the life of Peter. If we think about it, his life has changed completely! He was a hardworking fisherman, hauling nets, with his brother Andrew, and then this fellow comes along and calls him to be a fisher of people. Peter accepts and along the way he grew in faith; he joined Jesus to walk on water (until he became fearful and questioned his faith), and he became the voice and authority of the disciples when speaking to Jesus. Peter matured, he grew in faith and trust of a man he barely knew, he healed people, he listened, he watched, and he learned. And today in the gospel reading this was affirmed…..

Over that past year, Jesus traveled through the countryside, villages, and towns, folks had certainly heard about his miracles and his teachings. Many were trying to figure out just who this man was. The Pharisees were threatened by him and the Romans would become more distrustful of him. Just who was this man? Jesus had no doubt heard folks talking about him, so he decided to ask the disciples if they knew who he was. They responded by stating that he might be John the Baptist, or perhaps he was a prophet in the likes of Elijah or Jeremiah…they knew Jesus was someone special but they did not understand exactly who he was…he came from God, but that is all they know

Jesus then turns to Peter directly and asks him “ But, who do YOU say that I am? (v15)” Peter’s response is different than the rest. He testifies without any sense of hesitation “you are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (v16) and Jesus rewards him with a blessing that will ultimately change Peter’s life. He gives Peter the keys to the kingdom, he gives him the authority to teach, to forgive and the power to preach the Word.

Now I must admit that Peter does not totally get it, as we will read next week as we continue in Matthew 16; Peter is human after all, he is perfectly imperfect. But on that day Peter’s testimony through his experience of knowing who Jesus was, was true and authentic. He understood Jesus’ significance, he understood God’s love in that moment. Peter eventually goes on to preach the good news in his first sermon on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 and his testimony was a rock, that eventually lead to the formation and foundation of the church.

Jesus and Peter both assumed their rightful identities not because of anything they had done, or anything that they were taught. Their identities were revealed solely by God, by the will and unconditional love of God. And Peter’s understanding and knowing who Jesus was had nothing to do with Jesus teaching him or his own reasoning, it too was solely revealed by God. God is always at work in our lives and the lives of those around us.

Who do we say that Jesus is in our lives? Last week the gospel spoke of the humanity of Jesus in his treatment of the Canaanite woman. Much of my own understanding of who Jesus is speaks to his humanity, it speaks to God understanding what it is like to live as a human in the world and how we treat one another. But that is simply my understanding, it comes from my own experiences and encounters with the divine. Each of us have our own understanding and belief of who Jesus is in our lives and how that leads to our identity in life. Each of us has our own testimony which has formed our life of faith and understanding. The foundations of our faith were probably learned in part from our family, our years in Sunday School and the church, but none of this is possible without the revelation of God, without the love and mercy of God that endures throughout our earthy and eternal lives. Through this faith and love, through the encounters and experiences in our lives, we build a relationship with Jesus Christ just as Peter did, we trust in the Word and live out our lives in response to the love of the living God, and in doing so our lives are changed and so is the world around us.

So, let us praise God, let us praise the power and grace of Jesus Christ, let us live into who Jesus is in our lives through loving and caring for one another, offering peace and justice in a world that is in need of compassion and understanding. Let us affirm our faith knowing that through the revelation of God we are loved unconditionally and fully. How wonderful and life-giving is that!

Thanks be to God!

**HYMN OF THE DAY- O Savior, Precious Savior- ELW 820**

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

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Confident of your care and helped by the Holy Spirit, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need. *A brief silence.*

Bless the church, that despite the hardships experienced during this pandemic, Christians around the globe will stand firm on the rock, who is Christ. Support pastors, deacons, and congregational committees during this challenging time. Give wisdom to churches that are considering when and how to resume in person worship. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Bless the earth, that it be saved from ecological harm. Restore all lands and seas to the beauty and vigor that you intend. Protect animals whose habitat is endangered. Train us to be gardeners of your creation. We pray for those suffering the effects of destructive summer storms, scorching heat, and uncontrolled forestfires and wildfires. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Bless the leaders of nations, that they govern their people with integrity and attend to the needs of the poor. Guard countries from violence and political strife. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Though we walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve us, deliver us, and fulfill your purpose for us. According to your steadfast love, grant healing and wholeness to those who are bereaved, in trouble or adversity, or sick and in need of care especially Eddie, Elaine, Susie, Ruth, Mary Ann, Donelda, Lynette, Barb, Sarah, Carol, and those we name in the stillness of our hearts. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

As a new school year draws near, be with teachers, parents, and students as they discern the future. Give politicians and health officials wisdom to incorporate protocols that are as safe as possible so children may learn, and parents may feel safe in sending their children. Guide parents and educators who will continue to use online opportunities for learning. Lord in your mercy, **hear or prayer.**

Loving God, You call us into the community of Zion, Philipsburg where we are one in Christ. May we recognize in ourselves and in one another the unique gifts you have given us for the building up of the church for the sake of the world. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

You are the everlasting Rock from which we were hewn, and you restore your people to joy and gladness. In blessed memory and hope, we thank you for the lives of our beloved dead. Bring us with them to our heavenly home. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

**PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

Let us pray.

We thank you, O God, for your life-giving Word, for calling creation into being,  
declaring forgiveness from the cross, and delivering the spirit of rebirth.  
We praise you, O God, for your Word: **we praise you, O God, for your Word.**

Your word is a lamp lighting our path, a mirror reflecting our selves, a shield providing us refuge, a fire burning for justice and truth.  
Your word is sweeter than honey: it nourishes our bodies like milk, it sustains your people like bread. We receive your promises, more treasured than gold.  
We bless you, O God, for your Word: **we bless you, O God, for your Word.**

Open our ears to your prophets, apostles, and saints, and to all the cries of the needy.  
Breathe into your church the mighty Spirit of Christ, that heeding your voice of beauty and power we are strengthened to serve wherever we are called.

To you, Father, Son, and Spirit – the Source, Word, and Breath —  
we offer our thanks for your life-giving Word: **we offer our thanks for your life-giving Word.** 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.**

**SENDING**

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

**BLESSING**

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord’s face shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace.

**Amen.**

**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, Christ is with you

**Thanks be to God.**

**SENDING HYMN- We All Are in One Mission- ELW 576**

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