**MODIFIED SERVICE- 13TH SUNDAY OF PENTECOST- August 30, 2020**

**ZION EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH, PHLIPSBURG**

Welcome to everyone on this 13th Sunday of Pentecost, where we continue to gather safely from the comfort of our homes as a reminder of our love for one another.

Can you believe that it is August 30th…..where has the time gone!!!

Church Council met on August 25th. Zion will reopen for in person worship on October 11, Thanksgiving Sunday. The topic was discussed for a lengthy period of time and council unanimously decided to wait and see what happens with school openings. More information will be available in the September Messenger which will be available later next week.

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, we thank you for your Son, who chose the path of suffering for the sake of the world. Humble us by his example, point us to the path of obedience, and give us strength to follow your commands, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

**OPENING HYMN- Let us Ever Walk With Jesus – ELW 802**

**WORD**

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

**FIRST READING: Jeremiah 15:15-21**

A reading from Jeremiah.

15O Lord, you know; remember me and visit me, and bring down retribution for me on my persecutors. In your forbearance do not take me away; know that on your account I suffer insult.  
 16Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I am called by your name, O Lord, God of hosts.  
 17I did not sit in the company of merrymakers, nor did I rejoice; under the weight of your hand I sat alone, for you had filled me with indignation.  
 18Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? Truly, you are to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail.  
19Therefore thus says the Lord: If you turn back, I will take you back, and you shall stand before me. If you utter what is precious, and not what is worthless, you shall serve as my mouth. It is they who will turn to you, not you who will turn to them.  
 20And I will make you to this people a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you, but they shall not prevail over you, for I am with you to save you and deliver you, says the Lord.  
 21I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked, and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless.

**PSALM: Psalm 26:1-8**

1Give judgment for me, O Lord, for I have lived with integrity; I have trusted in the Lord and have not faltered.  
 2Test me, O Lord, and try me; examine my heart and my mind.  
 3For your steadfast love is before my eyes; I have walked faithfully with you.  
 4I have not sat with the worthless, nor do I consort with the deceitful.   
 5I have hated the company of evildoers; I will not sit down with the wicked.  
 6I will wash my hands in innocence, O Lord, that I may go in procession round your altar,  
 7singing aloud a song of thanksgiving and recounting all your wonderful deeds.  
 8Lord, I love the house in which you dwell and the place where your glory abides.

**SECOND READING: Romans 12:9-21**

A reading from Romans.

9Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; 10love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. 11Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. 12Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. 13Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.  
  14Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. 15Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. 17Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. 18If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” 20No, “if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.” 21Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

The word of the Lord.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 16:21-28**

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

21From that time on, [after Peter confessed that Jesus was the Messiah,] Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. 22And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.” 23But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”  
  24Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. 26For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?  
  27“For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. 28Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**SERMON**

Poor Peter, just a few verses ago he was in Jesus’ good books so to speak. If you remember in our gospel reading from last week, Peter testified to who Jesus was, that Jesus was the Messiah, which affirmed Jesus’ identity. In response, Jesus proclaimed that Peter was the rock on which the church would be built. Peter got it!!!

But only a few short verses later, after Jesus describes what his future would look like, Peter became defiant and emphatically stated that God forbid Jesus should die, God forbid Jesus should suffer on a cross for the sins of others. Peter was upset!! His response was a human one out of concern for his friend, mentor, and teacher. Peter believed Jesus to be a man of power and authority. Why on earth would someone of Jesus’ stature have to suffer and be put to death? Peter did not completely comprehend the radical love of Jesus Christ; he did not understand the cost of discipleship that resulted in the unconditional and eternal love of God. Peter was more concerned with human things than divine things. And Jesus’ response is stark. He called Peter not a rock but a stumbling block telling him to “Get behind me, Satan!” Poor Peter, he did not get it, but I wonder how many of us would if we put ourselves in Peter’s sandals…..

Jesus then goes on to explain and invite Peter and the disciples to a deeper relationship with him and with God, but his words were not so easy to understand. Jesus stated, “If any want to become my followers let them deny themselves and take up their crosses and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it and those who lose their life for my sake will find it” (v24-25). Jesus was inviting the disciples and us into a new relationship, he was inviting us to a new discovery of ourselves; to discover who we are as Christians and where we are led in the world.

What does Jesus mean when he states that we are to deny ourselves? Are we just supposed to give away all our possessions and deny our being? Is it like a strict diet where we deny ourselves our favourite snacks of chips or chocolate in order to lose weight? While some do participate in denial of things we enjoy during Lent, this was not the denial that Jesus was talking about.

In this relationship, Jesus is inviting us to a life away from self-centredness, a life free of doing what is best for ourselves alone. Jesus is asking us, where do we find our satisfaction in life? Is it in buying the latest gadget, or having the largest bank account? Is it looking after only yourself at the expense of others? Do we, like Peter set our minds on human things and not the divine? Do we as a church look to spiritually fulfilling our own needs instead of fulfilling the needs of others? These many questions are not always that easy to answer, perhaps we do not want to answer them because it involves taking up our own crosses. It involves examining our lives and our commitment to God through the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Taking up our own crosses involves us dismantling our own comfortable and familiar lives, leaving us feeling vulnerable and even fearful of change. But in the dismantling and denying ourselves, we become open to the radical love that only God provides.

These past 6 months have been difficult for many. There is the worry of getting Covid, there are feelings of loneliness and isolation, there is the stress of financial issues and economic downturns, there is the stress of our children and grandchildren returning to school. There is the stress of numbers rising, of second waves and lockdowns, returning. But amidst the stress and difficulties, we have also been given an opportunity to change the way we live, to pull ourselves out of our comfort zones and try something new. We have been given the opportunity to dismantle what is broken! What if God is using this time to lead us on a new journey wanting us to be truly satisfied in life by being the light of the world, in lifting each other up when we struggle and suffer with loss or grief, by welcoming the stranger, by dismantling racism and unjust policies that hurt our neighbour, by celebrating diversity, by praying for one another, and working towards a clean and safe environment. In denying ourselves we are given the opportunity to turn to one another in love and respect and instead of being in an “I” relationship it becomes an “us” relationship. Instead of being an individualistic society, we can become a community where all can live in harmony and peace. This is what Paul writes about in our second reading this morning, this is the mark of our identity as true Christians, this is our role as disciples in the world.

Jesus accepted his journey to Jerusalem and the cross knowing that humanity would reject the radical love of God, he accepted the sacrifice of the cross. We too are on a journey; we are much like Peter. Throughout our lives we are both rocks and stumbling blocks, in true Lutheran form, we are both sinner and saint. Sometimes we get it, more often, we do not. But through all the ups and downs, we are loved, and we are not alone. We are not alone in our suffering, our grief, our anxiety, or fear. We are not alone in our joys and happiness. We are loved and every day we are given the choice of new life in the grace and mercy of God’s only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. So, let us take up our crosses, let us deny ourselves for the sake of others and journey onward making a compassionate difference in a world that so desperately needs it. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY- Lord Jesus, You Shall be My Song- ELW 808**

[**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFxmIT\_NJyo**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFxmIT_NJyo)

**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.

God of faithfulness, you bid your people to follow Jesus. Set the mind of your church on divine things. Grant us trust in you, that we lose our lives for the sake of Christ and thereby discover joy in life through him. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of wonder, the earth is yours and all that is in it. Heal your creation and give us eyes to see the world as you do. As the seasons change, pattern the rhythm of our lives in harmony with all creation. Send plentiful rain to all affected by wildfires and forest fires in California and British Columbia. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of all nations, you call us to live peaceably with all. Give us ears to hear one another, even those we name as enemies. Fill leaders with mercy and understanding, that they advocate and genuinely care for those who are poor and most vulnerable in their communities. Guide law enforcement around the world to act with justice in the senseless acts of racism and intolerance that are taking place. We say the name of Jacob Blake, remembering that he is a father, brother, son, cousin, and uncle, but most of all that that he is human. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of salvation, you promise to deliver us. Give all who suffer a strong sense of your presence and love. Accompany those who are anxious and worried, raise the spirits of those who are grieving, and heal the sick and the injured Eddie, Elaine, Susie, Ruth, Mary Ann, Donelda, Lynette, Barb, Sarah, Carol, Bill, Janet, the victims of hurricane Laura, and those we name in the silence of our hearts. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of community, you call us to rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, and persevere in prayer. Make our congregation a workshop of your love. When we quarrel, bring reconciliation. Help us overcome evil with good. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

God of learning, we enter into this new school year with fear and uncertainty for our children and educators. Guide teachers and staff as they adapt to new protocols to keep our children safe. Give patience and hope to parents who are anxious. Be with children as they navigate this new normal. Lord in your mercy, **hear or prayer.**

God of all grace, you give us everlasting life. In love we recall your holy ones who now live in your undying light. In our remembering, give us a foretaste of the feast to come. 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.**

**THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD**

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.**

**SENDING**

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

**BLESSING**

Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

God the creator, + Jesus, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the comforter, bless you and keep you in eternal love. Amen.

**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Christ is with you.

**Thanks be to God.**

**SENDING HYMN- Blest Be The Tie That Binds-  ELW 656**

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