**epiphany 5- February 5, 2021**

**zion evangelical lutheran church philipsburg**

Welcome to everyone on this 5th Sunday of Epiphany where we continue to gather in love for one another from the safety of our homes. Again, we have had a mixed bag of weather this week….some beautiful sun and then just to remind us that it is winter, some snow and wind.

Council will meet online this Tuesday evening to discuss the 2021 budget. Also, look for our “Lent in a bag” activity to arrive at your door or in your mailbox later this week. Thank you to the worship committee for organizing and delivering the bags.

Our GoTo meeting coffee hour takes place today at 11, please consider joining us! Please remember that Zion relies on your continued support to meet our monthly expenses. Sincere thanks to everyone who remembers us in your prayers.

**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.

Everlasting God, you give strength to the weak and power to the faint. Make us agents of your healing and wholeness, that your good news may be made known to the ends of your creation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

**GATHERING SONG*Gather Us In* (ELW 532)**

1 Here in this place the new light is streaming,  
now is the darkness vanished away;  
see in this space our fears and our dreamings  
brought here to you in the light of this day.  
Gather us in, the lost and forsaken,  
gather us in, the blind and the lame;  
call to us now, and we shall awaken,  
we shall arise at the sound of our name.  
  
2 We are the young, our lives are a myst'ry,  
we are the old who yearn for your face;  
we have been sung throughout all of hist'ry,  
called to be light to the whole human race.  
Gather us in, the rich and the haughty,  
gather us in, the proud and the strong;  
give us a heart, so meek and so lowly,  
give us the courage to enter the song.  
  
3 Here we will take the wine and the water,  
here we will take the bread of new birth,  
here you shall call your sons and your daughters,  
call us anew to be salt for the earth.  
Give us to drink the wine of compassion,  
give us to eat the bread that is you;  
nourish us well, and teach us to fashion  
lives that are holy and hearts that are true.

4 Not in the dark of buildings confining,  
not in some heaven, light years away--  
but here in this place the new light is shining,  
now is the kingdom, and now is the day.  
Gather us in and hold us forever,  
gather us in and make us your own;  
gather us in, all peoples together,  
fire of love in our flesh and our bone.

**WORD**

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

**FIRST READING: Isaiah 40:21-31**

A reading from Isaiah.

21Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?  
 22It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to live in; 23who brings princes to naught, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.  
24Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows upon them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble. 25To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One. 26Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these? He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name; because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing.  
27Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, “My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God”?  
28Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.  
29He gives power to the faint and strengthens the powerless. 30Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted;  
31but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

**PSALM: Psalm 147:1-11, 20c**

1Hallelujah! How good it is to sing praises to our God! How pleasant it is to honor God with praise!  
 2The Lord rebuilds Jerusalem and gathers the exiles of Israel.  
 3The Lord heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds.  
 4The Lord counts the number of the stars and calls them all by their names.   
 5Great is our Lord and mighty in power; there is no limit to God’s wisdom.  
 6The Lord lifts up the lowly, but casts the wicked to the ground.  
 7Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving; make music upon the harp to our God,  
 8who covers the heavens with clouds and prepares rain for the earth, making grass to grow upon the mountains.   
 9God provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they cry.  
 10God is not impressed by the might of a horse, and has no pleasure in the speed of a runner,  
 11but finds pleasure in those who fear the Lord, in those who await God’s steadfast love. 20c Hallelujah!

**SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 9:16-23**

A reading from 1 Corinthians.

16If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel! 17For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission. 18What then is my reward? Just this: that in my proclamation I may make the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my rights in the gospel.  
  19For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. 20To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. 21To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law) so that I might win those outside the law. 22To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. 23I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.

**GOSPEL: Mark 1:29-39**

The holy gospel according to Mark.

29As soon as [Jesus and the disciples] left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30Now Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. 31He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.  
  32That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. 33And the whole city was gathered around the door. 34And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.  
  35In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. 36And Simon and his companions hunted for him. 37When they found him, they said to him, “Everyone is searching for you.” 38He answered, “Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.” 39And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

**SERMON**

Here we are, already in the 5th week of Epiphany, we are in a new month and even though we are still in the midst of a pandemic, time continues to move forward. However, our lectionary is still in the 1st chapter of Mark. Jesus has been a busy fellow! Last week in the sermon from Bishop Susan, we heard that Jesus was teaching and preaching in the synagogue with authority, he was healing the sick on the Sabbath, offering the radical grace of God. Preaching and healing was Jesus’ mission in the world for “the time was fulfilled, and the kingdom of God was near” (Mark 1:15).

         In our gospel reading today, Jesus and the disciples have left the synagogue, it is still the Sabbath and they made their way to Simon’s house that he shared with his in-laws. Upon their arrival, we find out that Simon’s mother-in-law (who remains nameless, like so many women in the bible) is ill with a fever. Jesus immediately goes to the woman and with a simple touch of his hand she is healed and lifted up. Now we may read and understand this passage as just another healing in the miracle and promise of Jesus Christ. But if we look at the passage just a little bit closer we see that this is no ordinary healing; it is different from the healing of the man possessed in the synagogue that we heard of last week. This healing, this moment in time, is the beginning of the good news of the gospel. In the simple and gentle touch of Jesus’ hand, the woman is restored to health and she responds by quietly getting up and serving.

          Now one may say that she served the men because of her status as a woman in a culture where it was a woman’s job to serve. But this was different…Jesus does not command her to get up and serve them. The woman was healed, and she rose from her bed on the Sabbath and took the initiative to serve, fully knowing the consequences of straying from the law. This woman knew Jesus, she understood the good news. Simon, Andrew, James, and John may have been the first disciples of Jesus, but this unnamed woman was the first true servant of Jesus. She lived into Jesus' words found in Mark 10:44-45, where he states, “whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave to all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” The disciples do not yet understand this, especially Simon who wants Jesus to stay in Capernaum and continue to heal the masses, not understanding his own call to serve or the call to proclaim the good news to all the world.

         But his mother-in-law, well she gets it. She understands the gift that she has been given. She understands the presence of God through the work of Jesus Christ. And in acknowledging this, she has been forever changed and set free to be the person God created her to be. She experienced *diakonisa*and became the first deacon, a faithful servant of the early church, in the authentic sense of God's understanding of the church. For many in today's society, our image of the church is the brick-and-mortar sacred space that we usually worship in each week, where there are constitutions, unspoken rules, and budgets to follow. The early church was founded on a sense of service and a mission of building relationships and community in the daily happenings of life, in the good and bad days, in loving your neighbour, in serving one another simply because it is what we are called to do as beloved children of God. The grace and power of Jesus Christ does not fit within the walls of any building.

         I wonder who we most resemble in our gospel reading today? Are we like the mother-in-law, the unnamed woman who when healed and restored, immediately gets up to serve? She was healed and then became the healer. She was offered a hand up and then offered her hand to others.

          Do we offer our own hand to those around us when someone is hurting and in need of help or a kind word? Do we offer our hand when someone needs to be lifted up out of poverty or addiction, oppression, or racism? Do we fully understand the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ, the one who died on the cross between two thieves offering us salvation, the forgiveness of sin, and freedom?

         Or are we more like Simon, not fully understanding our call to serve others? Do we wait for others to do it for us? Do we not trust ourselves? Do we offer our hand to one person and not another? Do we enjoy the glory of the moment thinking that we are in control forgetting that it is God who is in control of our lives? It is God who created us. It is God who gives us the strength and courage to carry on when we feel powerless and faint. It is God who acts against the forces of power in our world, bending them like stubble in the wind. It is God who offers repentance and forgiveness. It is God who offers compassion, unconditional love and a promise for eternal life through the life of God’s only Son, Jesus Christ.

         I would like to think we are a bit of both, I know I certainly am. We try our best, but we do make mistakes, knowing that we are perfectly imperfect in the eyes of God. May our gospel reading today remind us that God’s hand through the Word and work of Jesus Christ is always outstretched to us. God’s hand is willing and ready to lift us up offering hope, healing, and unconditional love. God’s hand is there to hold us offering comfort and strength when we are hurting physically or emotionally or when are full of sorrow and grief. God’s hand offers us forgiveness and repentance and supports us throughout our earthly and eternal lives helping us to know that we are never alone. I ask that you take some time this week to reflect on how God’s hands have lifted you up throughout your life, whether in good times or times of struggle and how can you offer your hand to a world in need. Let it be so. Amen

**HYMN OF THE DAY God, Whose Almighty Word (ELW 673)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y6G3vhBVPM4>

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need. *A brief silence.*

For the church: for ministries of healing and wholeness, for hospital, hospice, and military chaplains, for those serving in prison ministry, for all who proclaim freedom and release in the name of Christ, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For creation: for insects in the grass, clouds on the mountaintops, for cattle and horses and the rainwater they drink, for eagles whose great wings soar in the wind, for the humility to take our place among all creatures of the earth, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For the nations and the countries of the world: for all who lead in cities and towns, provinces and countries; for community organizers, school officials, and CEOs; for international health organizations, that in times of trial, fear, or hopelessness, they find freedom in service to those most in need, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For all wearied by life’s burdens: for those who are poor, for those lacking supportive relationships, for those crushed by debt, for those struggling with chronic pain or other injury or illness, for those exhausted from overwork or stress, and for all who cry out to you for healing and restoration. We especially remember Eddy, Elaine B, Susie, Donelda, Lynette, Barb, Sarah, Alea, Mary Ann, Cheryl, Bonnie, Mary, Elaine S, Ruth, and those we name in the stillness of our hearts, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For long term care and retirement homes in outbreak from COVID, for hospitals and ICU’s, and the staff who care for patients, for families whose loved one’s have died, for all who have the virus. We especially remember Caressant Care Listowel, and peopleCare Tavistock, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God**.

For the congregations of Zion and St. Peters: for outreach and social ministries centered there, for parish nurses and visitors; for ministries of companionship and support, for the young people in this place who open us to new understandings, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

In thanksgiving for the faithful departed, who were called by name and now rest from their labors, that their lives serve as witnesses to the goodness of God, let us pray.

**Have mercy, O God.**

O loving God, you know the needs of all the world. By your Spirit, grant that we, having turned to you in prayer, now might turn to one another in peace, tend and keep what you have made, and love our neighbor with the love of Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

**PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

**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.**

**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. Share the good news.

**Thanks be to God.**

**SENDING SONG-*I Love to Tell the Story* (ELW 661)**

1 I love to tell the story  
of unseen things above,  
of Jesus and his glory,  
of Jesus and his love.  
I love to tell the story,  
because I know it's true;  
it satisfies my longings  
as nothing else would do.  
Refrain  
I love to tell the story;  
'twill be my theme in glory  
to tell the old, old story  
of Jesus and his love.

2 I love to tell the story:  
how pleasant to repeat  
what seems, each time I tell it,  
more wonderfully sweet!  
I love to tell the story,  
for some have never heard  
the message of salvation  
from God's own holy word. Refrain  
  
3 I love to tell the story,  
for those who know it best  
seem hungering and thirsting  
to hear it like the rest.  
And when, in scenes of glory,  
I sing the new, new song,  
I'll sing the old, old story  
that I have loved so long. Refrain

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