**Easter 6- May 9, 2021**

**Zion, Philipsburg and St. PEters, Linwood**

Welcome to worshipon this 6th Sunday of Easter, May 9, 2021.

Happy Mother’s Day to all the Mom’s and Mothering figures in our lives!

As I record this on Saturday morning, the sun is shining and drying up the pavement after rain throughout the night. May certainly has been a mixed bag weatherwise.

Some announcements today….I will be taking next week off as a study week. The service next Sunday will be a NVMA service. I will still be available for emergency pastoral care, please call my cell phone and leave a message. Otherwise, I will return all emails and phone calls upon my return on May 18.

I ask that you keep the family of Pastor Dale Finch in our prayers. Pastor Dale passed away last Saturday after being diagnosed with cancer. His funeral was held this past Thursday at St. Luke’s Lutheran Church in Kitchener. Pastor Dale was the Interim Pastor as St. Matthews in East Zorra Tavistock prior to his retirement in the fall.

We also remember in our prayers today the people of India who have been affected by Covid. This is a humanitarian crisis as the virus is now travelling to the rural regions where 70% of the population lives. Included in the weekly email yesterday was a letter from the CLWR who is collecting donations for India. If you would like to make a donation through your envelope, please use the “other” line and address it to “India Appeal.”

Coffee hour will take place today at 11:00. Have you considered joining us? All are welcome! Please remember that Zion relies on your contributions in these times. Thank you to all who continue to support and pray for our congregation.

**GATHERING**

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

**THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, the fountain of living water, the rock who gave us birth, our light and our salvation. **Amen.**

Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism, we are clothed with God's mercy and forgiveness.

Let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

We give you thanks, O God, for in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters.

And by your Word you created the world, calling forth life in which you took delight.

Through the waters of the flood, you delivered Noah and his family.

Through the sea you led your people Israel from slavery into freedom.

At the river, your Son was baptized by John and anointed with the Holy Spirit.

By water and your Word, you claim us as daughters and sons, making us heirs of your promise and servants of all.

We praise you for the gift of water that sustains life, and above all we praise you for the gift of new life in Jesus Christ.

Shower us with your Spirit, and renew our lives with your forgiveness, grace, and love.

To you be given honor and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever. **Amen.**

**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 have prepared for those who love you joys beyond understanding. Pour into our hearts such love for you that, loving you above all things, we may obtain your promises, which exceed all we can desire; through Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

**GATHERING SONG*All Are Welcome* (ELW 641)**

1 Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:
Refrain
All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.

2 Let us build a house where prophets speak,
and words are strong and true,
where all God's children dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness
and as symbol of God's grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus: Refrain

3 Let us build a house where love is found
in water, wine and wheat:
a banquet hall on holy ground
where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus,
is revealed in time and space;
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us: Refrain

4 Let us build a house where hands will reach
beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger
bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger: Refrain

5 Let us build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter: Refrain

**WORD**

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

**FIRST READING: Acts 10:44-48**

A reading from Acts.

44While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. 45The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, 46for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, 47“Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” 48So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

The word of the Lord.

**PSALM: Psalm 98**

 1Sing a new song to the Lord, who has done marvelous things,
  whose right hand and holy arm have won the victory.
 2O Lord, you have made known your victory,
  you have revealed your righteousness in the sight of the nations.
 3You remember your steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel;
  all the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.
 4Shout with joy to the Lord, all you lands; lift up your voice, rejoice, and sing.
 5Sing to the Lord| with the harp, with the harp and the voice of song.
 6With trumpets and the sound of the horn shout with joy before the king, the Lord.
 7Let the sea roar, and all that fills it, the world and those who dwell therein.
 8Let the rivers clap their hands, and let the hills ring out with joy before the Lord, who comes to judge the earth.
 9The Lord will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with equity.

**SECOND READING: 1 John 5:1-6**

A reading from 1 John.

1Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. 2By this we know, that we love the children of God when we love God, and obey his commandments. 3For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, 4for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. 5Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?
 6This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth.

The word of the Lord.

**GOSPEL: John 15:9-17**

The holy gospel according to John.

[Jesus said:] 9“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. 10If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. 11I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.
  12“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. 14You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. 16You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. 17I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**SERMON**

What does it mean to be chosen?

Perhaps your mind goes back to your grade school days at recess or in gym class. Two kids were picked to be captains of two teams, and they were asked to choose who they want to have on their teams. The best at the sport or activity would always be picked first, and then the rest of the spots would be filled. Everyone waited with bated breath to hear their names being picked early on; we all wanted to be chosen first. One was either elated at being chosen first or heartbroken at being chosen last. Feeling chosen or not chosen can have a drastic and lasting effect on our lives.

Jesus speaks of being chosen in our gospel reading today. But it has little to do with a game of baseball at recess time. Jesus spoke his words of being chosen to the disciples on the eve of his crucifixion. On this night he washed the disciples’ feet in an act of genuine love, knowing that he would soon be unjustly arrested, tried, convicted and executed. Yes, Jesus knew all that was about to happen, but he chose to spend his time caring for, loving, and reassuring the disciples, even those who would betray him. In choosing love, Jesus explained that there was no longer master and servant, there was only the relationship of friendship and love. He held nothing back from the disciples, he was genuine and authentic. Jesus loved the disciples just as God so loved the world. Those words of love offered a needed reassurance to the disciples, they offered joy and hope amongst the pain of the days ahead.

This reassurance and hope are further explained in verse 16 where Jesus states, “You did not choose me, I chose you.” Jesus was restating his words of hope from John 6:70, “Did I not choose you, the 12?” The disciples were afraid and fearful, unsure of what the future held, but Jesus provided them with reassurance and love, revealing the abundant love of God through the grace of Jesus Christ.

We too have been chosen. In the life-giving waters of our baptism, we are chosen by God through the power of the Holy Spirit. As I mentioned last week, we are named and claimed by love. We are chosen. We are loved.

This choosing, this love, goes on throughout our lives. Just as the disciples were chosen through no power or control of their own to become fishers of people, to become disciples of Jesus Christ, we too are called into that relationship. We are chosen, and we are invited to be fishers of people as well. There is nothing we can do to undo that relationship. We can try to walk away, we can even run away, and we can turn our backs, but the love of Jesus Christ never fails, it never leaves us. We are chosen and we are loved.

If you happened to drive by Zion this week, you probably noticed that the message on our sign has changed. It was not an easy decision to decide what to put on our sign with all that is going on in Wilmot Township. Folks are stressed, folks are angry, and folks are hurting. We wanted to convey a message of hope, support, and love, so we used 2 simple words, “Choose love.” The picture was posted to Facebook and has received over 1000 likes and has been shared many times.

Now choosing to love should be simple, it should be easy, right? And in a perfect world, it would be.

But in reality, choosing to love is hard, because it requires work on our part. It requires us to acknowledge some hard truths in the way we treat our neighbours. If we are truly choosing love, then we must be willing to acknowledge our stereotypes, our biases, and our privilege. In choosing love we are called to listen to the stories of the marginalized, to listen to the stories of people of colour, to listen to the stories of the LGBTQIA, and to listen to the stories of our Indigenous brothers and sisters. Listening is hard because there are so many heartbreaking stories of injustice, indifference, racism, and hate, yes hate. Hate is taking place in our communities, and when we keep silent or turn a blind eye saying that it does not happen in our community, we are not choosing love. We are not living out our call to serve God.

Choosing love is more than liking a post on Facebook. It is listening and learning and taking action against racial and social inequality. Choosing love is acknowledging that when Black lives matter, when Brown lives matter, when Indigenous lives matter, when LGBTQIA lives matter, then ALL lives will matter. Full stop. Choosing love is using our voices to rally together and proclaim the need for meaningful change in society. This is what Jesus meant when he stated the greater love of laying down one’s life for their friends. This is the body of Christ leading a positive change in the world. This is the love of God showing up in a weary world. This is the action of the church in bearing one’s fruit, fruit that will feed the next generations, our children, our grandchildren, and our great-grandchildren.

Let us pray, Holy and Loving God, We come to you knowing that there is inequality and indifference in our world. Give us the courage and strength to take the action to genuinely choose love. Help us to live out the commandment that your Son Jesus Christ gave to us, that we love one another as we have been so loved. Amen. Let it be so.

**HYMN OF THE DAY*Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love* (ELW 708)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-rh_3ic6xX0>.

Refrain
Jesu, Jesu,
fill us with your love,
show us how to serve
the neighbors we have from you.

1 Kneels at the feet of his friends,
silently washes their feet,
master who acts as a slave to them. Refrain

2 Neighbors are wealthy and poor,
varied in color and race,
neighbors are near us and far away. Refrain

3 These are the ones we will serve,
these are the ones we will love;
all these are neighbors to us and you. Refrain

4 Kneel at the feet of our friends,
silently washing their feet:
this is the way we will live with you. Refrain

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Alive in the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we bring our prayers before God who promises to hear us and answer in steadfast love. *A brief silence.*

Loving God, you call us to be your fruit-bearing church. Strengthen the bonds among all Christian churches. Help us to recognize our call to serve you in the world by acknowledging our privilege, our stereotypes, and our bias. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Creating God, the earth praises you. The seas roar and the hills sing for joy. Fill the earth with your love so that by their song, all creatures of land and sea and sky, burrowing and soaring, may call us to join with them in praise. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Faithful Savior, you conquer the world not with weapons but with undying love. Plant your word in the hearts of the nations’ leaders and give them your Spirit, so that the peoples of the world may live in peace. Embolden us to honour and uphold your commandment to love one another as we are so dearly loved. Give us voices to speak where there is silence. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Caring Healer, you forget no one and accompany the lonely. Be present with those who are sick or suffering from illness or injury. Provide for those needing homes or medical care and point us towards life-changing responses to these needs in our own communities. We especially Eddy, Elaine, Donelda, Lynette, Barb, Sarah, Alea, Mary Ann, Cheryl, Bonnie, Mary, Ruth, Tilly, Nancy, Robert, Helen, the family of Pastor Dale Finch, all who are suffering from the effects of Covid, especially the citizens of India where covid variants are ravaging the country, and those we name in the silence of our hearts. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Gracious God, as a mother comforts her child, you comfort us. Bless mothers and mothering people in our lives. Comfort those who miss their mothers, mothers who grieve, those who grieve because they cannot be mothers, and those who have never known a loving mother. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Gentle Redeemer, all who die in you abide in your presence forever. We remember with thanksgiving those who shared your love throughout their lives. Keep us united with them in your lasting love. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

**THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD**

Let us pray.

 Praise to you, O God, for your Word of life: creating a wondrous universe, proclaiming freedom from captivity, becoming the song of your people. We praise you, O God, for your Word.

Your Word is made flesh among us: with Mary in the garden, you call us by name. With Thomas beholding your wounds, you call us to believe. With sheep of other folds, we are gathered by your voice. Your Word names our death and our life: a seed that falls into the earth and dies, rain and snow that come down from heaven to water the earth, a vine in which we abide. Through your Word, you appoint us to bear fruit, fruit that will last. We bless you, O God, for your Word.

By your living Word, we are witnesses of these things. Breathe into us your Holy Spirit. Open our minds to understand the scriptures. Give us wisdom to declare what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands concerning the word of life. Fill us with strength to love, not in word or speech alone, but in truth and action. With every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, we join in the hymn of all creation, as we thank you, O God, 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**

May the righteous fairness of God, the loving friendship of Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **Amen.**

**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Share the good news of God’s love.

**Thanks be to God.**

**SENDING SONG*Beautiful Savior* (ELW 838)**

1 Beautiful Savior,
King of creation,
Son of God and Son of Man!
Truly I'd love thee, truly I'd serve thee,
light of my soul, my joy, my crown.

2 Fair are the meadows,
fair are the woodlands,
robed in flow'rs of blooming spring;
Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer,
he makes our sorrowing spirit sing.

3 Fair is the sunshine,
fair is the moonlight,
bright the sparkling stars on high;
Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines purer
than all the angels in the sky.

4 Beautiful Savior,
Lord of the nations,
Son of God and Son of Man!
Glory and honor, praise, adoration,
now and forevermore be thine!

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