**Pentecost 13- august 22, 2021**

**zion lutheran church, philipsburg**

Welcome to worship on this 13th Sunday of Pentecost, August 22, 2021. I am Leanne Darlington Pastor at Zion Lutheran Church, Philipsburg and Interim Pastor At St. Peter’s Lutheran in Linwood. This morning Linwood is having their Annual Cemetery Decoration service, folks from Linwood can find a paper copy of that service in the email that was sent out this week.

Our sermon this week is from the ELCIC Summer Sermon series. Our Bishop Michael Pryse shares his thoughts on the final week and theme of Jesus as the bread of life.

Please continue to keep Paul Wegford and his family in your prayers. If you are willing to provide a meal for the family, please call Chris Ehrat.

There will be no coffee hour this week or next as I am on holidays from August 24-31. Pastor Tanya Varner will be providing Pastoral coverage this week. Her cell is 519 505 0866.

Zion will resume in person worship on September 5 at 10:30, look for more information in this month’s Messenger which will be out next week.

**GATHERING**

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

**GREETING (ELW p. 213)**

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 (ELW p. 215)**

Let us pray.

Holy God, your word feeds your people with life that is eternal. Direct our choices and preserve us in your truth, that, renouncing what is false and evil, we may live in you, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

**GATHERING SONG*When Morning Gilds the Skies* (ELW 853)**

1 When morning gilds the skies,  
my heart awaking cries:  
may Jesus Christ be praised!  
When evening shadows fall,  
this rings my curfew call:  
may Jesus Christ be praised!  
  
2 When mirth for music longs,  
this is my song of songs:  
may Jesus Christ be praised!  
God's holy house of prayer  
has none that can compare  
with "Jesus Christ be praised!"  
  
3 No lovelier antiphon  
in all high heav'n is known  
than "Jesus Christ be praised!"  
There to the eternal Word  
the eternal psalm is heard:  
oh, Jesus Christ be praised!  
  
4 Let all of humankind  
in this their concord find:  
may Jesus Christ be praised!  
Let all the earth around  
ring joyous with the sound:  
may Jesus Christ be praised!  
  
5 Sing, sun and stars of space,  
sing, all who see his face,  
sing, "Jesus Christ be praised!"  
God's whole creation o'er,  
today and evermore  
shall Jesus Christ be praised!

**WORD**

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

**FIRST READING: Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18**

A reading from Joshua.

1Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God. 2aAnd Joshua said to all the people, 14“Now therefore revere the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. 15Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”  
  16Then the people answered, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods; 17for it is the Lord our God who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight. He protected us along all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed; 18and the Lord drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God.”

The word of the Lord.

**PSALM: Psalm 34:15-22**

15The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and God’s ears are open to their cry.  
 16The face of the Lord is against those who do evil,  
  to erase the remembrance of them from the earth.  
 17The righteous cry, and the Lord hears them and delivers them from all their troubles.  
 18The Lord is near to the broken-hearted and saves those whose spirits are crushed.   
 19Many are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivers them from every one.  
 20God will keep safe all their bones; not one of them shall be broken.  
 21Evil will bring death to the wicked and those who hate the righteous will be punished.  
 22O Lord, you redeem the life  of your servants, and those who put their trust in you will not be punished.

**SECOND READING: Ephesians 6:10-20**

A reading from Ephesians.

10Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. 11Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 13Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. 15As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. 16With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.  
  18Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. 19Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, 20for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

The word of the Lord.

**GOSPEL: John 6:56-69**

The holy gospel according to John.

[Jesus said,] 56“Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. 57Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. 58This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever.” 59He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.  
  60When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?” 61But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, “Does this offend you? 62Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? 63It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. 64But among you there are some who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. 65And he said, “For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.”  
  66Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. 67So Jesus asked the twelve, “Do you also wish to go away?” 68Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**SERMON - Eastern Synod Bishop, The Rev. Michael Pryse**

Dear friends in Christ. It’s a privilege to be with you as a part of this morning’s worship and to be able to give your dear pastor some much welcome relief. Our rostered ministers have been doing such a wonderful job over the course of the past year and a half. But it’s hard work and we need to do everything we can to give them our encouragement and support and I’m glad to be able to help in this small way.

In today’s epistle and Gospel lessons we are provided with some incredibly rich and evocative images of what it means to live a Christian life. They are also challenging images that have been understood in different ways throughout the church’s history.

Today’s epistle from Paul’s letter to the Ephesians reads as follows. “Therefore, take up the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to with stand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

I must confess that I find the martial, militarized language of this text difficult. It may be that I have been overly sensitized by my summer’s reading of the full five volume—5000 plus pages—Game of Thrones series. As fun as it’s been, I’ve pretty much had my fill of breastplates, helms, swords, and shields! But I am also quite aware of the destructive ways in which Christian people have seen the life of discipleship through militaristic lenses. The images of battle and conquest have been used by Christians to engage In evil acts that are completely at odds with the Gospel of Jesus, the Prince of Peace. As such, we need to be extremely careful in how we read and express such imagery.

I am heartened, however, that the passage is framed with the counsel that we arm ourselves with whatever is necessary to proclaim “the Gospel of Peace.” That is the real point here! And although the imagery used is all about arming for violent battle, the real strength that is advocated is not the might of armies, but rather the world-reconciling power of the Prince of Peace who himself was the victim of a violent and oppressive regime. Yes, evil exists. And yes, we do need to combat evil. But we do so by arming ourselves, not with weapons, but with the virtues of righteousness, peace, faith and the Word of God.

Hence, I find it helpful to read this Ephesians passage alongside other discipleship descriptions employed by Paul, such as this passage from his letter to the Colossians where he writes, “As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ”

Today’s Gospel, likewise, holds a few theological pitfalls of which we need to be careful. This is now our fifth and final Sunday dwelling within John, chapter six. For four of those we have been moving our way through Jesus’ “bread of life discourse” at the synagogue in Capernaum.

For most of us, the phrase“ bread of life” is well known and often used in our churchly discourse; almost casually! But that was not the case for Jesus’ listeners in this passage. For many it was deeply offensive! We read that the people complained and grumbled. “This is difficult! Who can accept it?” Many simply turned and walked away. Have you ever considered the possibility that Jesus might well have preached more people out of the kingdom than into it? For some who walked away that day, I suspect that they could not consider anything other than a quite literal interpretation of Jesus’ words, “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.” “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” This is cannibalism; this is a grotesque abomination.

To which some of us might respond but wait a minute; this is clearly a reference to the eucharist. Jesus is speaking of his presence in the Holy Communion. But if that’s really the case, I don’t know how Jesus could have expected his listener’s to “get it.” The last supper, the event which Christians subsequently viewed as the first eucharist, the first Holy Communion, hadn’t yet occurred. The first record of a liturgical re-enactments of that event, in something resembling what we call Holy Communion, is found in First Corinthians which wasn’t written until around 55 years after Jesus’ death.

Ah, but Bishop! You and I both know that the Gospel of John was probably written between 90 and100 years after Jesus’ death. Its authors would have been a part of a eucharistic community that was conversant with using these images in this way. Maybe they were putting words in Jesus’ mouth or perhaps phrasing them in such away as to affirm their own churchly practices and theological constructs. Perhaps, and there are some scholars who would support that particular interpretation.

But when I look at the John 6 discourse in the context of the whole book–the whole Gospel of John–when I look to a broad range of biblical scholars, I come to a different conclusion. I think what Jesus is really talking about here is incarnation–the Word–the logos–about God entering into the life of God’s own creation and becoming flesh. I also think many of Jesus’ listeners would have heard him saying as such and it was that–that earthshattering theological construct—that they found to be, at worst, offensive, and at best, impossible to believe!

I think that it was—and still is—almost unimaginable that God so loved the world–so loved God’s creation–that God chooses to enter into that world–certainly in the person of Jesus of Nazareth – but also through Jesus into us—into God’s beloved creation—so that we might have true and lasting life and have it abundantly.

Luther Seminary theologian Karoline Lewis describes it this way. “This is truth. Because at the end of the day, life, real life, life lived, abundant life, is hard to fathom, hard to accept, hard to imagine that it could be yours. Judas’s betrayal that is referenced at the end of chapter 6, is fundamentally a rejection of relationship but it is also an unwillingness to receive life beyond measure, an inability to accept that abundant life could be true, a reluctance to envision, to dream, to picture that when God said God loves the world that it actually meant him—and means you.” That’s powerful!

And it is that relationship, as intimate and nourishing as eating and drinking can be–God, in Christ, entering into our lives, our existence, our being—that gives us the will and the capacity to clothe and arm ourselves in the way Paul describes to the Ephesians and the Colossians. Our Gospel lesson today concludes with Jesus asking a question to his disciples. "Do you also wish to go away? "Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God." May Peter’s response be our response. AMEN

**HYMN OF THE DAY*Lead On, O King Eternal!* (ELW 805)**

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

1 Lead on, O King eternal!  
The day of march has come;  
henceforth in fields of conquest  
your tents will be our home.  
Through days of preparation  
your grace has made us strong;  
and now, O King eternal,  
we lift our battle song.  
  
2 Lead on, O King eternal,  
till sin's fierce war shall cease,  
and holiness shall whisper  
the sweet amen of peace;  
for not with swords loud clashing,  
nor roll of stirring drums,  
but deeds of love and mercy  
the heav'nly kingdom comes.  
  
3 Lead on, O King eternal:  
we follow, not with fears,  
for gladness breaks like morning  
where'er your face appears.  
Your cross is lifted o'er us;  
we journey in its light;  
the crown awaits the conquest;  
lead on, O God of might!

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Made children and heirs of God’s promise, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need. *A brief silence.*

God of courage, bless all leaders of your church. Make them ready to proclaim the gospel of peace and strengthen them to preach your loving word. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

God of creation, bless fields and orchards. Protect the land from drought and bring life-giving rain to support growth. Instruct your people in wise treatment of the world you have provided for all your creatures. We continue to pray for all affected by wildfires throughout the world, for the victims of the earthquake in Haiti, and the flash flooding in Ethiopia. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of community, bless all who seek justice between nations and peoples. Give guidance to bridge-builders, heal divisions, and inspire cooperation in times of crisis, disaster, and war. We pray for the people of Afghanistan as they flee their country as refugees looking for safety and peace. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of compassion, bless all who are in any need. Bring healing to those who are injured or ill from sickness and disease. Accompany all who are lonely and feeling abandoned and remind them of your abiding presence. Accompany all who are persecuted and exploited and open us to their cries. We remember *especially* Eddy, Elaine, Lynette, Barb, Sarah, Bonnie, Mary, Tilly, Robert, Helen, Katie, Rhonda, Nicole, Esther, Phyllis, Paul, Debbie, the lives and memory of the thousands of buried children at residential school sites across Canada, and those we name in the silence of our hearts. (Pause) Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of change, bless our transitions. Guide all who are embarking on new stages in their lives such as a new job, or new community. Sustain enduring friendships and kindle new relationships and interests. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of comfort, bless all who mourn the deaths of their beloved ones. We give you thanks for the saints who have gone before us. Renew our confidence in your promise of resurrection and life in the world to come. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Receive these prayers, O God, and those in our hearts known only to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**PEACE (ELW p. 217)**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

**THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD (ELW p. 220)**

Let us pray.

Holy God, our Maker, our Healer, our Teacher,

your magnificent creation springs forth from your Word.

All that has life and breath praises your name.

For your Word that sustains the earth, **We thank you, O God.**

You sent us Jesus, your Word, to renew the world.

He healed the sick, fed the hungry,

preached your mercy, and called us to faith.

For your Word in our Lord Christ, **We praise you, O God.**

Nourish us with the Spirit of your Word,

that we may grow in grace, bearing the fruits of redemption,

and sharing your strength and beauty with all the world.

For your Word in our lives, **We entreat you, O God.**

Accept our thanksgiving and receive our prayer,

for the sake of your living Word, Jesus our Savior. **Amen.**

**LORD’S PRAYER (ELW p. 221)**

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 (ELW p. 221)**

The blessing of God who provides for us, feeds us, and journeys with us + be upon you now and forever. **Amen**

**DISMISSAL (ELW p. 222)**

Go in peace. Be the body of Christ

**Thanks be to God.**

**SENDING SONG*O Jesus, I Have Promised* (ELW 810)**

1 O Jesus, I have promised  
to serve you to the end;  
remain forever near me,  
my master and my friend.  
I shall not fear the battle  
if you are by my side,  
nor wander from the pathway  
if you will be my guide.

2 Oh, let me feel you near me;  
the world is ever near.  
I see the sights that dazzle,  
the tempting sounds I hear.  
My foes are ever near me,  
around me and within;  
but, Jesus, then draw nearer  
to shield my soul from sin.  
3 Oh, let me hear you speaking  
in accents clear and still  
above the storms of passion,  
the murmurs of self-will.  
Now speak to reassure me,  
to hasten or control;  
now speak and make me listen,  
O Guardian of my soul.  
  
4 O Jesus, you have promised  
to all who follow you  
that where you are in glory  
your servant shall be too.  
And Jesus, I have promised  
to serve you to the end;  
oh, give me grace to follow,  
my master and my friend.

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