**NVMA SErvice- august 15, 2021-pentecost 12**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Welcome to worship on this 12th Sunday of Pentecost, August 15, 2021. Welcome to Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Philipsburg, I am Pastor Leanne Darlington, our lector today is Gwen Kalbfleisch and our musician is Trevor Wagler. Thanks to Dick Holm for recording us! This week has brought us into the dog days of summer where we are experiencing hot and humid conditions, I try not to complain to much because I know that winter will be here before we know it. I do hope everyone is getting to enjoy some of the wonderful produce and fruit that is available this time of year. God is good.

We will be celebrating the sacrament of Holy Communion today. I invite you to prepare your table and gather some bread or crackers and some wine or juice.

Let us take a moment to prepare our hearts and minds for worship.

**GATHERING SONG-*Praise and Thanksgiving* (ELW 689)**

1 Praise and thanksgiving, God, we would offer
for all things living, you have made good:
harvest of sown fields, fruits of the orchard,
hay from the mown fields, blossom and wood.

2 God, bless the labor we bring to serve you,
that with our neighbor we may be fed.
Sowing or tilling, we would work with you,
harvesting, milling for daily bread.

3 Father, providing food for your children,
by Wisdom's guiding teach us to share
one with another, so that, rejoicing
with us, all others may know your care.

4 Then will your blessing reach ev'ry people,
freely confessing your gracious hand.
Where you are reigning, no one will hunger;
your love sustaining showers the land.

**GREETING (ELW p. 98)**

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. 102)**

Let us pray, Ever-loving God, your Son gives himself as living bread for the life of the world. Fill us with such a knowledge of his presence that we may be strengthened and sustained by his risen life to serve you continually, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

**WORD**

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

**FIRST READING: Proverbs 9:1-6**

A reading from Proverbs.

 1Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn her seven pillars.
 2She has slaughtered her animals, she has mixed her wine, she has also set her table.
 3She has sent out her servant-girls, she calls from the highest places in the town,
 4“You that are simple, turn in here!” To those without sense she says,
 5“Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed.
 6Lay aside immaturity, and live, and walk in the way of insight.”

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM: Psalm 34:9-14**

 9Fear the Lord, you saints of the Lord, for those who fear the Lord lack nothing.
 10The lions are in want and suffer hunger, but those who seek the Lord lack nothing that is good.
 11Come, children, and listen to me; I will teach you reverence for the Lord.
 12Who among you takes pleasure in life and desires long life to enjoy prosperity?
 13Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from lying words.
 14Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

**SECOND READING:****Ephesians 5:15-20**

A reading from Ephesians.

15Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, 16making the most of the time, because the days are evil. 17So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, 19as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, 20giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL: John 6:51-58**

The holy gospel according to John.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

[Jesus said,] 51“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”
  52The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” 53So Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; 55for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. 56Those 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.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

**SERMON**

Our gospel reading today continues directly from last week's discourse in John chapter 6, focusing on Jesus as the bread of life. I mentioned last week in my sermon, that many of these passages on the bread of life seem heady, confusing, and repetitive. And this week is no different! And it seems that the author even took it up a notch making it more abstract and outlandish. We read in verse 51, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever, and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” Throughout this past month, we have learned that Jesus is the bread of life, he was the bread from heaven, now he is the living bread that came down from heaven. And what about verse 53, “Very truly I tell you unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood you have no life in you.” Jesus is not asking us to eat his flesh and drink his blood, is he?

 The religious authorities were still confused and complaining about Jesus’ self-claimed identity. They disclaim his words stating that he is going against the Jewish food laws of purity and cleanliness, in asking one to consume his body and blood. Notice as well, that they never say his name. Jesus is referred to as “this man.” There is no way in their minds that Jesus is the living bread from heaven, let alone the Son of God. Jesus was once again turning the world upside down with his radical claims about the radical love of God, the same God that the religious authorities believed in. Yes, confusion, disillusionment, and controversy were alive and well in antiquity….some things never change, even some 2000 years later.

 So, what do we learn from our gospel this week? When Jesus talks about his flesh and blood, we ascertain that he must be talking about the sacrament of Holy Communion. It is interesting to note that the Gospel of John does not contain anything about the establishment of the Lord’s Supper as the other Synoptic gospels do. But scholars do believe that the author of John is referring to the sacrament of Holy Communion in this passage.

 Often Communion is a ritual that we partake of on a regular or semi-regular basis. How often do we stop and reflect on the meaning of the bread that we eat and the wine that we drink? Do we understand what the bread and wine really represent, not only the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ but eternal life itself?

 When we eat the bread and drink the wine, we proclaim the Lord’s death until Christ returns. In the bread and wine, we are naming and claiming our faith as beloved children of God through the incarnation of the Wisdom and the Word, through the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ our Lord who died on the cross, who was resurrected and ascended to heaven, giving us eternal and abundant life.

In our First Testament reading this morning, the author of Proverbs speaks of wisdom. In ancient times, God was thought to be active and present in the world, enforcing a moral code. Wisdom meant following the rules. As time moved on, the thought of wisdom grew and changed to become a way of engaging the world. It is mysterious yet constant. In our reading this morning, wisdom is a woman who has an intimate knowledge of God and the world. She shares her vision of faith and grace, inviting God's children to live a new life of love, caring, and peace. In our reading, wisdom prepares a feast of bread and wine for all, sort of like a grandmother preparing a feast for her family. Wisdom is a voice that guides us, offering hope and life. Embracing wisdom is a call to relating to and understanding the world in a new way.

 The wisdom of the woman is similar to the life and work of Jesus Christ? Jesus also prepares a feast for us. A feast of bread and wine, his body and blood, offering new life, abundant life, hope, and unconditional love so that we can navigate our way in an ever-changing world.

 Jesus is the living bread. He is the truth, the way, and the life. The words from John chapter 1 come to life when paired with our passage today, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God…and the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory as a father’s only son, full of grace and truth” (John 1:1,14). Acknowledging the flesh of Jesus Christ emphasizes the relevance of the incarnation, of God becoming human, to give to us eternal and everlasting life.

 So, what does all of this mean to us in our modern-day world? Who are we called to be in this ever-changing world? What does the incarnation mean to us in the every day of our lives? How does the bread and wine of Holy Communion, the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, translate into our everyday lives?

 Will Willomen answers these questions best when he states, “There is no knowing who the Christ is without visceral, total engagement…the incarnation means that we must get up, come forward, hold out our empty hands, sip wine, chew bread.[[1]](#footnote-1)” As members of the church, as members of the body of Christ, we need to step up and come forward with our hands and hearts open. We are called to step out of our comfort zones and do the hard work that we as beloved children of God are called to do. We cannot rest on our laurels waiting for it to be done for us! We have been given a most incredible gift from God. We have been given the gift of grace, mercy, and unconditional love through Wisdom and the Word, through the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. This gift meets us exactly where we are at, whether it be sitting in a church pew, on your couch or at the kitchen table. It might be on a street corner or a deserted park bench, or in a hospital bed, we just have to find the courage to do so. This is the promise that has been given to us. This is the gift given to us.

 The sacrament of Holy Communion nourishes our faith giving us the opportunity to understand the risks that Jesus took, the unconditional love that God had for us through the life of his only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Jesus, as the living bread that came down from heaven gave to us his own flesh and blood. He gave his life to be hung and nailed to a cross, offering us abundant life now and forever. May we live into that gift each and every day of our lives. Let it be so. Amen

**HYMN OF THE DAY *As We Gather at Your Table* (ELW 522)**

1 As we gather at your table,
as we listen to your word,
help us know, O God, your presence;
let our hearts and minds be stirred.
Nourish us with sacred story
till we claim it as our own;
teach us through this holy banquet
how to make Love's vict'ry known.

2 Turn our worship into witness
in the sacrament of life;
send us forth to love and serve you,
bringing peace where there is strife.
Give us, Christ, your great compassion

to forgive as you forgave;
may we still behold your image
in the world you died to save.

3 Gracious Spirit, help us summon
other guests to share that feast
where triumphant Love will welcome
those who had been last and least.
There no more will envy blind us
nor will pride our peace destroy,
as we join with saints and angels
to repeat the sounding joy.

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Rooted in Christ and sustained by the Spirit, we offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all of creation. *A brief silence.*

God of wisdom, enlighten your church. Guide theologians, biblical scholars, authors, and seminary professors as they seek greater knowledge and invite others into deeper understanding. Teach us and encourage us to ask faithful questions and open our minds to new ideas of how to share your love with all the world. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of creation, mend the earth. Cool warming oceans and preserve melting ice caps. Increase our awareness of changing climate patterns and reveal new approaches to the ecological challenges we face. Shield those in the path of hurricanes or tropical storms and bring relief to countries, provinces, and states affected by continuing wildfires. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of all nations, direct our leaders. Grant them courage to lay aside political grudges and renew their determination to address difficult conflicts. Guide them in the work of reconciliation. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of compassion, tend to the wounded. Rescue those tormented by mental illness or mired in addiction. Ease the anxiety of those struggling with dementia. Come quickly to help all who are grieving and all those who suffer especially Eddy, Elaine, Lynette, Barb, Sarah, Bonnie, Mary, Tilly, Robert, Helen, Katie, Rhonda, Deb, Nicole, Esther, Phyllis, the lives and memory of the buried children at residential school sites across Canada, and those we name aloud or in the silence of our hearts. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of beauty, inspire artists. Bless those whose visual and musical gifts enliven our congregations. Bless the creative work of poets, hymnwriters, composers, painters, sculptors, and others that enrich our worship and daily life. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of resurrection, bring us to new life. Give us the living bread from heaven through which we abide in your love, and on the last day raise us with all the saints to eternal life. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We lift these and all our prayers to you, O God, confident in the promise of your saving love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**PEACE (ELW p. 106)**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

**MEAL**

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

**OFFERING PRAYER (ELW p. 107)**

Let us pray.

Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts: our selves, our time, and our possessions. Use us, and what we have gathered, in feeding the world with your love, through the one who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

 **DIALOGUE (ELW p. 107)**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

 Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

 Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

**PREFACE (ELW p. 108)**

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,

that we should at all times and in all places

give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,

through our Savior Jesus Christ;

who on this day overcame death and the grave,

and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life.

And so, with all the choirs of angels,

with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,

we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (ELW p. 108)**

Holy, holy, holy Lord,

God of power and might,

heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

**THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE (ELW p. 108)**

Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord,

heaven and earth are full of your glory.

In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son,

who reached out to heal the sick and suffering,

who preached good news to the poor,

and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.

In the night in which he was betrayed,

our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;

broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:

Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,

and gave it for all to drink, saying:

This cup is the new covenant in my blood,

shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection, and ascension,

we await his coming in glory.

Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord,

and unite the wills of all who share this heavenly food,

the body and blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord;

to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,

be all honor and glory, now and forever. **Amen.**

**LORD’S PRAYER (ELW p. 112)**

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.**

**INVITATION TO COMMUNION (ELW p. 112)**

Christ has set the table with more than enough for all. Come, eat and be satisfied.

**COMMUNION (ELW p. 112)**

The body of Christ, given for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION (ELW p. 114)**

Let us pray.

Gracious God, in this meal you have drawn us to your heart and nourished us at your table with food and drink, the body and blood of Christ. Now send us forth to be your people in the world, and to proclaim your truth this day and evermore, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

**SENDING**

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

**BLESSING (ELW p. 114)**

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

**SENDING SONG*Sent Forth by God's Blessing* (ELW 547)**

1 Sent forth by God's blessing,
our true faith confessing,
the people of God from this dwelling take leave.
The supper is ended.
Oh, now be extended
the fruits of this service in all who believe.
The seed of Christ's teaching,
receptive souls reaching,
shall blossom in action for God and for all.
Your grace shall incite us,
your love shall unite us
to work for your kingdom and answer your call.
2 With praise and thanksgiving
to God ever-living,
the tasks of our ev'ryday life we will face--
our faith ever sharing,
in love ever caring,
embracing God's children, the whole human race.
With your feast you feed us,
with your light now lead us;
unite us as one in this life that we share.
Then may all the living
with praise and thanksgiving
give honor to Christ and his name that we bear.

**DISMISSAL (ELW p. 115)**

Go in peace. Be the body of Christ

**Thanks be to God.**

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1. Will Willomen,”John 6:51-58, Homiletical Perspective” in Feasting on the Word, Year B, Volume 3, Kindle version, (Louisville KY, Westminster John Knox Press, 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)