**PEntecost 15- september 5, 2021**

**zion lutheran church, philipsburg**

Welcome to worship on this 15th Sunday of Pentecost, September 5, 2021. How good it is to gather with one another again. We give thanks for the opportunity to do so and also remember those who are gathering at home to listen to the service as well.

Please continue to keep Paul Wegford and his family in your prayers of strength, comfort and peace.

**GATHERING**

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

Blessed be the holy Trinity, + one God, who upholds us through adversity, who consoles us in our sorrows, whose mercy endures forever. Amen

A reading from Isaiah 54:10:

 For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the LORD, who has compassion on you.

 **A PRAYER OF LAMENT**

We lament before you, O God, our Comforter in our distress, the losses that our congregation and community have suffered.

We have missed our weekly assembled worship, our sharing of bread and wine, our communal song, our greetings of peace; the observances of Advent, Christmas, Holy Week, the Three Days, Easter, Pentecost, and Trinity; baptisms and funerals; Christmas bazaars and strawberry socials, coffee hours, soup Sundays and potlucks.

 We have missed the mutual consolation of the faithful enacted each Sunday.

 O God, we lament our losses, for they are many.

Restore us, gracious God.

**Restore us, gracious God.**

We lament before you, O God, Sustainer of the universe,

the tragedies that our world has experienced. We lament the millions sickened; the countless dead; thousands unemployed; medical systems depleted; economic security threatened; government assistance inadequate; political discord escalated; anxiety rampant; racial injustice intensified; communal engagements canceled.

O God, we lament the world’s tragedies, for they are incalculable.

Heal us, compassionate God.

**Heal us, compassionate God.**

**SONG OF LAMENT- *When the Pain of World Surrounds Us*- ELW 704**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5ymPtuEQaM>

**PRAISE ON A SUNDAY OF RE-GATHERING**

 Yet today, O God of the everlasting arms, we rejoice at this re-gathering of our congregation:

we praise you for Sunday worship in word and sacrament;

 for the personal presence of our neighbours of all ages, for our pastor; for live music; for service with one another for the wider community; for the mutual consolation of the faithful enacted on Sundays and weekdays . . .

O God, we rejoice at this re-gathering for baptismal life together.

 Empower our church, faithful God.

**Empower our church, faithful God**.

And we pray, O God of safe harbor, for the emergence of a wholesome world: with health restored; mourners consoled; vaccines available; hospitals restocked; employment reinstated; poverty averted; sustenance shared; science respected; travel resumed; fear replaced with confidence; sorrow turned to joy.

O God, we pray for the emergence of a wholesome world.

 Renew the whole world, merciful God.

 **Renew the whole world, merciful God.**

Give us your peace, eternal God.

**Give us your peace, eternal God. Amen**

**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.

Gracious God, throughout the ages you transform sickness into health and death into life. Open us to the power of your presence, and make us a people ready to proclaim your promises to the whole world, through Jesus Christ, our healer and Lord. **Amen.**

**GATHERING SONG*Dearest Jesus, at Your Word* (ELW 520)**

1 Dearest Jesus, at your word
we have come again to hear you;
let our thoughts and hearts be stirred
and in glowing faith be near you
as the promises here given
draw us wholly up to heaven.

2 All our knowledge, sense, and sight
lie in deepest darkness shrouded
till your Spirit breaks the night,
filling us with light unclouded.
All good thoughts and all good living
come but by your gracious giving.
3 Radiance of God's glory bright,
Light of light from God proceeding,
Jesus, send your blessed light;
help our hearing, speaking, heeding,
that our prayers and songs may please you,
as with grateful hearts we praise you.

4 Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
praise to you and adoration!
Grant us what we need the most:
all your gospel's consolation
while we here on earth await you,
till in heav'n with praise we greet you.

**WORD**

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

**FIRST READING: Isaiah 35:4-7a**

A reading from Isaiah.

4Say to those who are of a fearful heart, “Be strong, do not fear!
Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense.
He will come and save you.”
5Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
6then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;
7athe burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM: Psalm 146**

1Hallelujah! Praise the Lord, O my soul!

2I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.
3Put not your trust in rulers, in mortals in whom there is no help.
4When they breathe their last, they return to earth, and in that day their thoughts perish.
5Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their help, whose hope is in the Lord their God;
6who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that is in them;
who keeps promises forever;
7who gives justice to those who are oppressed, and food to those who hunger.
The Lord sets the captive free.
8The Lord opens the eyes of the blind; the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous.
9The Lord cares for the stranger; the Lord sustains the orphan and widow, but frustrates the way of the wicked.
10The Lord shall reign forever, your God, O Zion, throughout all generations.  Hallelujah!

**GOSPEL: Mark 7:24-37**

The holy gospel according to Mark.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

24[Jesus] set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice,25but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. 26Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophoenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. 27He said to her, “Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.” 28But she answered him, “Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” 29Then he said to her, “For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.” 30So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.
  31Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. 32They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. 33He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. 34Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” 35And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. 36Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. 37They were astounded beyond measure, saying, “He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

**SERMON (ELW p. 217)**

 I have spent much time during the last month in front of my television watching the Olympics. I am what one would call an Olympics fanatic. It is on my tv every day, and then when it is over, I go into a bit of withdrawal. I love watching the sports themselves, especially track and field. I enjoy seeing an athlete try their best, leaving all their energy on the track, or the pitch, or the field. I appreciate the competition and the opportunity to play for one’s country. And this year I was happy to see more of the Paralympics because of the increased media coverage.

 In watching both, I noticed differing reactions from some of the athletes who were interviewed after their events in which they did not place first. A boxer from the UK won a silver medal on August 4. What an amazing achievement to be one of the top two boxers in their weight division in the world! But he did not see it that way. He received his medal and refused to wear it during the awards ceremony. He was interviewed after the ceremony and there was no joy in his voice. He spoke of being a failure because he did not win silver; he lost the gold. If he wasn’t the best, then he was nothing. This of course was not the reaction of all the athletes, so many expressed much gratitude for the experience. But it made me think about how costly the expectations we place on ourselves can be, which affects our worth.

 I then watched the Paralympics and noticed a different tone in the athletes who were interviewed after their events. Some of them did not win gold, or silver or bronze…and yes, they were disappointed at not winning, but they expressed immense gratitude for being able to travel and compete. They knew that they did their best on that day regardless of the outcome. One athlete even stated; look at all that is going on in our world, I am thankful just to be here. I am thankful to compete. Expectations when seen through the eyes of others, are life-giving and life-changing.

 The words we say and how we say them can have a profound effect on people. The actions we take or do not take have an effect as well. This is also true in our gospel reading from Mark today.

 We read that Jesus goes to the regions of Tyre and Sidon (both places found in Gentile territory, areas that Jewish people loathed that were outside of the recognized Jewish community). He goes to a house and asks not to be disturbed but he is immediately recognized and approached by a Syrophoenician woman who begs Jesus to heal her daughter who suffered from unclean spirits. This Gentile woman bowed at Jesus’ feet, showing honour and respect. She recognized who he was but knew that she has little to lose. She was a mother fighting for her child, fighting for her child to be healed, fighting for her child to be whole again.

 The response that Jesus gave to her seems to be problematic and harsh, if not insulting. He basically told her that she was worthless saying “Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs” (Mark 7:27). His words seemed insulting and hurtful, for he believed that Gentiles were no better than dogs; **his mission** was to the children of Israel. Now, wait a minute! Isn’t this the same Jesus who preaches the radical love of God, the one who calls us to love one another, to love our neighbour as we love ourselves?

 Now over the years, many theologians have had differing views on his response. Some say that he was testing her faith, although nowhere else in Mark does Jesus do this, and there is no mention in the passage that this was his intention. Another view states that the economical inequalities between the Jewish folks and the Gentiles could have been the reason Jesus treated her so abruptly. Many of the Jews were exploited by the wealthy and powerful Gentile landowners. Another view is the one that I spoke of just a few moments ago; that of preference. Jesus was so intent on completing the mission for the people of Israel (Matthew 15:24, states “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel”), that he had tunnel vision and presenting his human side in treating her the way he did. No matter the view that one might believe, they all incorporate expectations and judgment of why she was treated the way she was.

 But the good news is that the woman does not back down. In fact, her response was very assertive to Jesus! She proclaimed to him, “Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” I think that was a proverbial mic drop moment, because Jesus had an immediate change of heart, stating, “For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.” Amy Howe explains his change of heart like this, “Jesus’ earlier prejudice was very human and his insight now perhaps divine.”[[1]](#footnote-1)  At that moment, Jesus understood that his mission was not for only the people of Israel but for everyone. God’s love has no barriers; all are beloved children of God.

 Jesus’ expectations were transformed and changed because of the woman’s assertiveness and courage. Her daughter was healed, and she was restored to community. The Syrophoenician woman was humble in her expectations, fully acknowledging the preference of the Israelites but simply asking for her daughter, her child to be “fed and healed” as well. The same can be said for the man who was deaf. He too was a Gentile who was healed by the touch of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. He also was returned to community, knowing that he was a child of God, no matter his culture, identity, or physical impairment.

 Our gospel reading today proclaims God’s power and work among us. How do we as a church proclaim God’s love? How do we share God’s grace and mercy with those in our world who are needing to be fed and given the healing love of God? In both miracles, it is not the young girl and the man who asked to be healed, it was the community who reached out to Jesus. We, as a church, are called to do the same. We are called to cry out to God for humanity to be healed, for our neighbours to be healed, for all to live in the wholeness and completeness of God. We are called to leave our expectations and judgements behind, to have our minds and eyes and ears opened to the healing and redemptive love of God. We cannot keep quiet about the power of God in our lives. We cannot keep quiet about the good news of Jesus Christ in our lives. Our world needs to hear it. The church needs to envision it. We need to live it and give thanks for receiving it so that all can be healed, and all can know that they are loved beyond our wildest expectations. Let it be so. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY*Healer of Our Every Ill* (ELW 612)**

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

Refrain

Healer of our ev'ry ill,
light of each tomorrow,
give us peace beyond our fear,
and hope beyond our sorrow.

1 You who know our fears and sadness,
grace us with your peace and gladness;
Spirit of all comfort, fill our hearts. Refrain

2 In the pain and joy beholding
how your grace is still unfolding, give us all your vision, God of love. Refrain

3 Give us strength to love each other,
ev'ry sister, ev'ry brother;
Spirit of all kindness, be our guide. Refrain

4 You who know each thought and feeling,
teach us all your way of healing;
Spirit of compassion, fill each heart. Refrain

**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.*

Holy One, you bring your people together in worship. Enliven your church. Guide all evangelists, preachers, prophets, and missionaries who seek to share your love through word and deed. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You provide water for thirsty ground and sunshine to feed hungry plants. Bless all who advocate for healthy forests, unpolluted air, and clean waterways. Inspire all people to show care for the world you have made. We pray for all in the United States who are cleaning up after hurricane Ida and the remnants of the hurricane. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

You show no partiality. Increase justice in all nations. Encourage leaders and governments to work with one another for the good of our common world, Especially as we celebrate Labour Day, unite us in seeking the health, safety, and dignity of all. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You accompany those who are most in need. Shelter all fleeing violence or persecution, protect any who are in danger, and sustain them through uncertain and unstable times. We remember the people of Afghanistan, Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

You wrap your arms around the sick and injured. Bring healing and health to all who call out to you. We remember especially Eddy, Elaine, Lynette, Barb, Sarah, Bonnie, Mary, Tilly, Robert, Helen, Katie, Rhonda, Nicole, Esther, Phyllis, Paul and his family, Ian, 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.**

You support the work of your disciples. Be with us as we return to weekly worship here at Zion. Help us to continue to nurture the leadership and ministries of our congregation. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You empower us to learn, loving God. We pray all who are beginning a new school year. Keep students, teachers and all staff safe and free form illness. Guide students in their learning and development. Accompany parents, foster parents, and caregivers who provide encouragement and love. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You embrace all who have died in the faith and brought them into your glorious presence. We thank you for their example and rejoice in their lives. 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.**

*The assembly is seated.*

 **OFFERING Prayer (ELW p. 217)**

God of abundance,

you cause streams to break forth in the desert

and manna to rain from the heavens.

Accept the gifts you have first given us.

Unite them with the offering of our lives

to nourish the world you love so dearly;

through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

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

Let us pray.

Holy God, mighty Fortress, loving Redeemer, steadfast Comforter, as vegetation matures in forests and fields, your living Word undergirds all that lives.

We praise your eternal Word.

**We praise your eternal Word.**

In the words of the scriptures you offer us Christ: our refuge, our savior, our friend,

accompanying us throughout our years and renewing us in love.

We praise Jesus, your Word.

**We praise Jesus, your Word.**

We pray for power from your abiding Spirit. Strengthen us to stand firm in faith,

in devotion to your Word, and in service to others.

We pray for the Spirit of your Word.

**We pray for the Spirit of your Word.**

 To you be honor and praise and glory, today and forever. **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 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 (ELW p. 222)**

Go in peace. The living Word dwells in you.

**Thanks be to God.**

**SENDING SONG*-******God, Whose Almighty Word* (ELW 673)**

1 God, whose almighty word
chaos and darkness heard
and took their flight:
hear us, we humbly pray,
and where the gospel day
sheds not its glorious ray,
let there be light.

2 Christ, who once came to bring,
on your redeeming wing,
healing and sight;
health to the troubled mind,
sight where illusions blind;
oh, now to humankind
let there be light.

3 Spirit of truth and love,
life-giving, holy dove,
speed forth your flight;
move on the water's face
bearing the lamp of grace,
and in earth's darkest place

let there be light.

4 Holy and blessed three,
glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, Love, Might:
boundless as ocean's tide,
rolling in fullest pride,
through the earth, far and wide,
let there be light.

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1. Amy Howe, Mark 7:24-37, Pastoral Perspective in Feasting on the Word: Year B, Volume 4, Kindle Edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)