

Holy Worship

November 15, 2020

GATHERING AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS (ELW p. 116)

In the name of the Father,
and of the + Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Gracious God,
have mercy on us. We confess that we have turned from you and given ourselves into the power of sin. We are truly sorry and humbly repent. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things we have done and things we have failed to do. Turn us again to you, and uphold us by your Spirit, so that we may live and serve you in newness of life through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. In the name of + Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith.
Amen.

GATHERING SONG *O God, Our Help in Ages Past* (ELW 632)

O God, Our Help in Ages Past

1 O God, our help in a - ges past, our hope for years to come,
2 Un - der the shad - ow of your throne your saints have dwelt se - cure;
3 Be - fore the hills in or - der stood or earth re - ceived its frame,
4 A thou - sand a - ges in your sight are like an eve - ning gone,

our shel - ter from the storm - y blast, and our e - ter - nal home:
suf - fi - cient is your arm a - lone, and our de - fense is sure.
from ev - er - last - ing you are God, to end - less years the same.
short as the watch that ends the night be - fore the ris - ing sun.

5 Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
bears all our years away;
we fly forgotten, as a dream
dies at the op'ning day.

6 O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
still be our guard while troubles last
and our eternal home!

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674–1748, alt.
Music: ST. ANNE, William Croft, 1678–1727

O God, Our Help in Ages Past

1 O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
our shelter from the stormy blast,
and our eternal home:

2 Under the shadow of your throne
your saints have dwelt secure;
sufficient is your arm alone,
and our defense is sure.

3 Before the hills in order stood
or earth received its frame,
from everlasting you are God,
to endless years the same.

4 A thousand ages in your sight
are like an evening gone,
short as the watch that ends the night
before the rising sun.

5 Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
bears all our years away;
they fly forgotten, as a dream
dies at the op'ning day.

6 O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
still be our guard while troubles last
and our eternal home.

GREETING (ELW p. 120)

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. 124)

Let us pray.

Righteous God, our merciful master, you own the earth and all its peoples, and you give us all that we have. Inspire us to serve you with justice and wisdom, and prepare us for the joy of the day of your coming, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

WORD

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

FIRST READING: Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18

A reading from Zephaniah.

Zephaniah (like the prophet Amos in last week's first reading) presents the day of the Lord as one of judgment and wrath. Descriptions of the last day in the New Testament include details taken from Old Testament accounts of the day of the Lord.

7Be silent before the Lord God!
For the day of the Lord is at hand;
the Lord has prepared a sacrifice,
he has consecrated his guests.

12At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps,
and I will punish the people
who rest complacently on their dregs,
those who say in their hearts,
"The Lord will not do good,
nor will he do harm."

13Their wealth shall be plundered,
and their houses laid waste.
Though they build houses,
they shall not inhabit them;
though they plant vineyards,
they shall not drink wine from them.

14The great day of the Lord is near,
near and hastening fast;
the sound of the day of the Lord is bitter,
the warrior cries aloud there.

15That day will be a day of wrath,
a day of distress and anguish,
a day of ruin and devastation,
a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and thick darkness,
16a day of trumpet blast and battle cry
against the fortified cities
and against the lofty battlements.

17I will bring such distress upon people
that they shall walk like the blind;
because they have sinned against the Lord,
their blood shall be poured out like dust,
and their flesh like dung.

18Neither their silver nor their gold
will be able to save them
on the day of the Lord's wrath;
in the fire of his passion
the whole earth shall be consumed;

for a full, a terrible end
he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 90:1-8 [9-11] 12

So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom. (*Ps. 90:12*)

1 Lord, you have been our refuge
from one generation to another.

**2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or the land and the earth were born,
from age to age you are God.**

3 You turn us back to the dust and say,
“Turn back, O children of earth.”

**4 For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past
and like a watch in the night;**

5 you sweep them away like a dream,
they fade away suddenly like the grass:

**6 in the morning it is green and flourishes;
in the evening it is dried up and withered.**

7 For we are consumed by your anger;
we are afraid because of your wrath.

**8 Our iniquities you have set before you,
and our secret sins in the light of your countenance.**

9 When you are angry, all our days are gone;
we bring our years to an end like a sigh.

**10 The span of our life is seventy years, perhaps in strength even eighty;
yet the sum of them is but labor and sorrow, for they pass away quickly and we are
gone.**

11 Who regards the power of your wrath?
Who rightly fears your indignation?

**12 So teach us to number our days
that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.**

SECOND READING: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

A reading from 1 Thessalonians.

Though we do not know and cannot calculate the day of Christ's return, we live faithfully in the here and now as we anticipate the day when we will be given eternal salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. 2 For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like

a thief in the night. 3When they say, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! 4But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; 5for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. 6So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; 7for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. 8But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. 9For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. 11Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

CHILDREN'S SERMONS

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (ELW p. 124)

Alleluia. Abide in me as I abide in you;* those who abide in me | bear much fruit. *Alleluia.* (John 15:4, 5)

GOSPEL: Matthew 25:14-30

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus tells a parable about his second coming, indicating that it is not sufficient merely to maintain things as they are. Those who await his return should make good use of the gifts that God has provided them.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] 14"For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; 15to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. 16The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. 17In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. 18But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. 19After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. 20Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.' 21His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' 22And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.' 23His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I

will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ 24Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; 25so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ 26But his master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? 27Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. 28So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. 29For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. 30As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ ”

The gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON (ELW p. 125)

I loved Amanda’s description of doom scrolling in her message last week. (A special word of thanks to her for sharing the Word with us and for Marv for updating us about the ongoing ministry and situation at Shetek.). In the past few weeks, I have found myself doing this, doom scrolling, as well. In fact, maybe this has been one of the hardest parts of being in quarantine these past couple of weeks (we are doing fine, by the way). Do you turn on the news to stay informed and have something on in the background? But how, then, do you not get sucked in and anxious as you watch? When do you turn it off? When do you change it to something light hearted?

Because, I have found, for me, that I really have to turn it all off at some point and refocus. Otherwise, social media, negative comments, foreboding emails, and the media.... it can cloud my opinion of everything. I stop really noticing the kind efforts of those around me and the joys that regularly fill my life. Or, these blessings can start to seem insignificant in comparison to the burdens around me.

Recently Bishop Anderson shared an article which highlighted this effect. The article offered a good reminder to pastors that sometimes the people around us seem the most harsh and unhelpful when we are tired, burnt out and have surrounded ourselves primarily or solely by things that are soul-draining instead of creating space for life giving things in our lives. The article was a helpful reminder to me that when I’m rested and have taken the time to dwell in life’s joys and pleasures, the hardships of life don’t seem so overwhelming.

I think it’s with this mindset that we should read today’s Gospel passage. With all of the harshness we are all surrounded with, even with the way Christianity is often portrayed in the world, it’s easy to focus only on the ending of this passage. It’s easy to only focus on the slave who just

buried his talent and the harsh rebuke by the master. It's easy for us, when we look at how harsh the world is around us, to fixate on the anger and rebuke of the master, and, I admit, that is a troubling aspect of this passage. But doing so is a reflection of our fears, the messages we hear on a regular basis and where our sights are often set.

Because much of the parable is infused with *good news* and promise. One of the greatest promises of this parable is that the master blesses his servants with talents. The master trusts the slaves with his blessings. The master doesn't just hoard his benefits but allows the servants to use the talents and trusts them to multiply the talents.

Dirk Lange writes the following on this passage, "What is initially striking in this parable is the superabundance of gifts. The table, so to speak, is overflowing. A talent is a vast sum of money and generously distributed to the servants though in different amounts. The master entrusts his wealth to his servants. Not only is he trusting them with his wealth, he does so over a long period of time. Our culture, which places so much value on things happening immediately, even instantaneously, has become unaccustomed to waiting. Yet here another gift is the gift of time, a 'long time,' allowing the servants to live faithfully in this superabundance. The servants already participate, in a yet incomplete fashion, in the life of their master."¹

If we become overly focused on the end of the parable and too swayed by our own fears of being judged and cast aside, we can miss the bulk of the passage. We can miss the invitation to "enter into the joy of our master." We can miss the abundance that these servants are working with. It is estimated that a talent would be worth 15-20 years worth a salary for a day laborer.²

Where have you been blessed with an abundance? How has Jesus entrusted you with an abundance and how has that been multiplied?

This year has been a year of changes and losses. Our bishop keeps reminding us of the importance of creating space and time to lament these losses. As we prepare for Thanksgiving and Christmas, I know certain family traditions will look very different or won't happen. Our services will look differently and some of the practices we treasure may not happen. We make time and space in our hearts, our church and our lives to lament these formidable losses.

But this year has been a year when I've really seen how abundantly we've been blessed.

We have such a plethora of talents here at First Lutheran. People with skills for music, administration, working with youth and more. This year, I've seen and learned about gifts and talents that I don't know if I ever would have otherwise fully seen. Maybe that's the point of the parable that we overlook. As we are working, serving the master, we trust that the gifts and talents we know we have will be multiplied. We will find other talents in ourselves, in others, that we

¹ Commentary on Matthew 25: 14-30. http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=4621

² Sunday's Sermon- Digging Holes- Matthew 25:14-30. <https://www.heritagepres.com/sundays-sermon-digging-holes-matthew-2514-30/>

didn't That is simply how this works. Like the servants who multiplied their talents, we don't work in fear that we will fail, but rather in trust that we will find blessings.

This past week, my family found itself quarantined at home. This isn't, as some of you know, the first time we've had close calls. Please continue to keep our nanny and her family in your prayers as she recovers. In a week I felt panicked, frustrated, bored, overbusy, confused and overwhelmed. I know many of you have been through this experience too, and some of these feelings may sound familiar. But, as the week went on, I started to see more clearly the abundance that surrounded me. Both Cole and I had an abundance of people checking in us and praying for us, there was an abundance of staff and members who carried on important tasks, Austin and Kelli brought us groceries and many of you offered. I looked around our house and realized we had so many good things. Most importantly, my son was well, and with us, my husband was well, and our two trusty cats were providing plenty of entertainment for Landon. During the week, we opened some of Landon's birthday gifts early to have more time to play with them. In some ways, the extended quarantine I had feared happening, finally did, and when I accepted it, I found I was able to stop, look around and see the abundance of blessings that was surrounding you. For weeks I had been so focused on what could go wrong, responding to needs, keeping people safe, planning ahead and more... that I just hadn't stopped to see the blessings in front of me. Being quarantined forced me to do that. And, as I paused, regrouped and accepted where I was at, I found feel the words of the master in my life, "Enter the joy of your master." Each day, in all circumstances, we hear Jesus telling us, "Enter the joy of your master." That joy is surrounding us every day.

A lot of you have had things you were dreading finally happen. School went online. The family Thanksgiving was called off. Community Thanksgiving called off. My prayer is for you that, after the dust and the pain settles a bit from these losses... and the pain and loss I know is real and frustrating...that maybe your eyes would refocus like mine did, and you could see some of the abundance that God surrounds you with. We tend to gloss over the abundance provided by the master in this parable. The repeated phrase, "Enter the joy of your master," gets forgotten. Like the slave who buried the talent, we start to operate out of fear and dread, and, of course, when we do that we usually find disappointing results.

This week, think about the abundance you have in your life. Find a way to focus on that. I know it sounds corny but I saw this the other week and decided to take a moment to write some of our blessings around the circumference of a pumpkin. This pumpkin of blessings will be on our Thanksgiving table, helping us to remember the blessings that are surrounding us. Find something in your home where you can start writing your blessings down and keep adding to it in the upcoming weeks. When you find yourself overwhelmed and disappointed, keep adding to the list.

These upcoming weeks, in the middle of our losses, we are going to keep repeating to ourselves, "Enter into the joy of your master." May we defiantly and boldly find ways to do this and may this be a witness to a confused and hurting world.

Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY *Lord of Light* (ELW 688)

Lord of Light

1 Lord of light, your name out - shin - ing all the stars and
 2 By the toil of faith - ful work - ers in some far out -
 3 Grant that knowl - edge, still in - creas - ing, at your feet may
 4 By the prayers of faith - ful watch - ers, nev - er si - lent

suns of space, use our tal - ents in your king - dom
 ly - ing field, by the cour - age where the ra - diance
 low - ly kneel; with your grace our tri - umphs hal - low,
 day or night; by the cross of Je - sus, bring - ing

as the ser - vants of your grace; use us to ful -
 of the cross is still re - vealed, by the vic - to -
 with your char - i - ty our zeal; lift the na - tions
 peace to all and heal - ing light; by the love that

fill your pur - pose in the gift of Christ your Son.
 ries of meek - ness, through re - proach and suf - f'ring won.
 from the shad - ows to the glad - ness of the sun:
 pass - es knowl - edge, mak - ing all your chil - dren one:

Refrain
 Fa - ther, as in high - est heav - en, so on earth your will be done.

Text: Howell E. Lewis, 1860-1953, alt.
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Lord of Light

1 Lord of light, your name outshining
all the stars and suns of space,
use our talents in your kingdom
as the servants of your grace;
use us to fulfill your purpose
in the gift of Christ your Son:

Refrain

Father, as in highest heaven,
so on earth your will be done.

2 By the toil of faithful workers
in some far outlying field,
by the courage where the radiance
of the cross is still revealed,
by the victories of meekness,
through reproach and suffering won: Refrain

3 Grant that knowledge, still increasing,
at your feet may lowly kneel;
with your grace our triumphs hallow,
with your charity our zeal;
lift the nations from the shadows
to the gladness of the sun: Refrain

4 By the prayers of faithful watchers,
never silent day or night;
by the cross of Jesus, bringing
peace to all and healing light;
by the love that passes knowledge,
making all your children one: Refrain

CREED (ELW p. 126)

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.***

**On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

*Or, "he descended into hell," another translation of this text in widespread use.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Longing for Christ's reign to come among us, we pray for the outpouring of God's power on the church, the world, and all in need.

Lord of the church, ignite your people with the passion of your love. By the fire of your Holy Spirit, unify us across ministries, congregations, and denominations, and refine us to participate in your activity throughout the world. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Lord of creation, we pray for our community and care facilities that have been so significantly impacted by COVID. Heal those in need of healing. Strengthen those who are managing difficult situations. Be with our schools and teachers as they make preparations for the upcoming school weeks. Be with families as they manage learning from home and the ever changing realities. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God, be with families as they make decisions about Thanksgiving and the holidays. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Lord of all in need, search out all who cry to you in distress. Scatter the heavy clouds of depression, chronic illness, unemployment, and loneliness with your radiant light. We especially remember Send us as encouragement and signs of your healing. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Lord of the stranger, stir up holy restlessness in us to extend love to those at the margins. Release our desire for control and open us to learn from the perspectives of others. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Lord of the living and the dead, we give you thanks for all the saints at rest from their labors. We especially remember..... Michael Smith, Roy Sletten.... Rouse us to live by their example, that saints yet to come may also know your love. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Receive our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior, until that day when you gather all creation around your throne where you will reign forever and ever.

Amen.

OFFERING AND CGC MOMENT

OFFERING PRAYER (ELW p. 129)

Let us pray.

God of abundance, we bring before you the precious fruits of your creation, and with them our very lives. Teach us patience and hope as we care for all those in need until the coming of your Son, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER (ELW p. 134)

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**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.**

BLESSING (ELW p. 136)

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.

SENDING SONG *Rise Up, O Saints of God!* (ELW 669)

Rise Up, O Saints of God!

The image shows a musical score for the hymn 'Rise Up, O Saints of God!'. It consists of two systems of music. Each system has a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are printed between the staves. The first system contains five lines of lyrics, and the second system contains two lines of lyrics. The music is written in a simple, hymn-like style with block chords and moving lines.

1 Rise up, O saints of God! From vain am - bi - tions turn;
2 Speak out, O saints of God! De - spair en - gulfs earth's frame;
3 Rise up, O saints of God! The king - dom's task em - brace;
4 Give heed, O saints of God! Cre - a - tion cries in pain;
5 Com - mit your hearts to seek the paths which Christ has trod;

Christ rose tri - um - phant that your hearts with no - bler zeal might burn.
as heirs of God's bap - tis - mal grace, the word of hope pro - claim.
re - dress sin's cru - el con - se - quence; give jus - tice larg - er place.
stretch forth your hand of heal - ing now, with love the weak sus - tain.
and, quick - ened by the Spir - it's pow'r, rise up, O saints of God!

Text: Norman O. Forness, b. 1936
Music: FESTAL SONG, William H. Walter, 1825-1893
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Rise Up, O Saints of God!

1 Rise up, O saints of God!
From vain ambitions turn;
Christ rose triumphant that your hearts
with nobler zeal might burn.

2 Speak out, O saints of God!
Despair engulfs earth's frame;
as heirs of God's baptismal grace,
the word of hope proclaim.

3 Rise up, O saints of God!
The kingdom's task embrace;
redress sin's cruel consequence;
give justice larger place.

4 Give heed, O saints of God!
Creation cries in pain;
stretch forth your hand of healing now,
with love the weak sustain.

5 Commit your hearts to seek
the paths which Christ has trod;
and, quickened by the Spirit's pow'r,
rise up, O saints of God!

DISMISSAL (ELW p. 137)

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

From sundaysandseasons.com.

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