

## Worship in the Home: August 30, 2020

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### Worship in the Home

#### Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

#### Lectionary 22

August 30, 2020

*In this time of world-wide crisis, congregations throughout this church are not able to gather for worship as the body of Christ. While you cannot be together in person, we can hear the word of God and hold each other in prayer. We offer this brief resource as an aid for prayer in the home. As with our prayers in the gathered assembly for worship, you are encouraged to prepare or adapt them locally for your context.*

The prophet Jeremiah speaks of the incurable wound of his suffering yet finds in God's words the delight of his heart. When Peter doesn't grasp Jesus' words about suffering, Jesus tells the disciples they will find their lives in losing them. Such sacrificial love is described by Paul when he urges us to associate with the lowly and not repay evil with evil. In worship we gather as a community that we might offer ourselves for the sake of our suffering world.

*Find a peaceful place to pray, perhaps a table. You may wish to light a candle near where you pray.*

*One person may lead in this acclamation and then pray the Prayer of the Day.*

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all. **Amen.**

*The Prayer of the Day may be prayed.*

Let us pray.

O God, we thank you for your Son, who chose the path of suffering for the sake of the world.

Humble us by his example, point us to the path of obedience, and give us strength to follow your commands, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

#### First Reading: Jeremiah 15:15-21

*Jeremiah's delight in the word of the LORD is contradicted by the heaviness of God's hand upon him and God's seeming unfaithfulness. God's tough love to Jeremiah says that if he repents, he will be allowed to continue in his strenuous ministry. Jeremiah is strengthened by the simple words, "I am with you."*

<sup>15</sup>O LORD, you know;  
remember me and visit me,

and bring down retribution for me on my persecutors.

In your forbearance do not take me away;  
know that on your account I suffer insult.

<sup>16</sup>Your words were found, and I ate them,  
and your words became to me a joy  
and the delight of my heart;  
for I am called by your name,  
O LORD, God of hosts.

<sup>17</sup>I did not sit in the company of merrymakers,  
nor did I rejoice;  
under the weight of your hand I sat alone,  
for you had filled me with indignation.

<sup>18</sup>Why is my pain unceasing,  
my wound incurable,  
refusing to be healed?  
Truly, you are to me like a deceitful brook,  
like waters that fail.

<sup>19</sup>Therefore thus says the LORD:  
If you turn back, I will take you back,  
and you shall stand before me.  
If you utter what is precious, and not what is worthless,  
you shall serve as my mouth.  
It is they who will turn to you,  
not you who will turn to them.

<sup>20</sup>And I will make you to this people  
a fortified wall of bronze;  
they will fight against you,  
but they shall not prevail over you,  
for I am with you  
to save you and deliver you,  
says the LORD.

<sup>21</sup>I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked,  
and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless.

Word of God, word of life.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **Psalm: 26:1-8**

<sup>1</sup>Give judgment for me, O LORD, for I have lived<sup>1</sup> with integrity;  
I have trusted in the LORD and<sup>1</sup> have not faltered.

<sup>2</sup>Test me, O<sup>1</sup> LORD, and try me;  
examine my heart<sup>1</sup> and my mind.

<sup>3</sup>For your steadfast love is before my eyes;  
I have walked faithfully with you.

<sup>4</sup>I have not sat<sup>1</sup> with the worthless,  
nor do I consort with<sup>1</sup> the deceitful.

<sup>5</sup>I have hated the company of<sup>1</sup> evildoers;  
I will not sit down<sup>1</sup> with the wicked.

<sup>6</sup>I will wash my hands in innocence, O LORD,  
that I may go in procession<sup>1</sup> round your altar,

<sup>7</sup>singing aloud a song<sup>1</sup> of thanksgiving  
and recounting all your wonderful deeds.

<sup>8</sup>LORD, I love the house in<sup>1</sup> which you dwell  
and the place where your glory abides.

## **Second Reading: Romans 12:9-21**

*Paul presents benchmarks for faithful relationships with Christians and non-Christians. Love is the unflagging standard of our behavior. When we encounter evil, we do not resort to its tactics but seek to overcome it with good. While Christians cannot control the actions and attitudes of others, we seek to live at peace with all people.*

<sup>9</sup>Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; <sup>10</sup>love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. <sup>11</sup>Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. <sup>13</sup>Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

<sup>14</sup>Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. <sup>15</sup>Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup>Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. <sup>17</sup>Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup>If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. <sup>19</sup>Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." <sup>20</sup>No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." <sup>21</sup>Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Word of God, word of life.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **Gospel: Matthew 16:21-28**

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*After Peter confesses that Jesus is "the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (16:16), Jesus reveals the ultimate purpose of his ministry. These words prove hard to accept, even for a disciple whom Jesus has called a "rock."*

<sup>21</sup>From that time on, [after Peter confessed that Jesus was the Messiah,] Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. <sup>22</sup>And Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." <sup>23</sup>But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

<sup>24</sup>Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup>For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. <sup>26</sup>For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?

<sup>27</sup>"For the Son-of-Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. <sup>28</sup>Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son-of-Man coming in his dominion."

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

## **Reflection**

*Having read these readings, think of this:*

We would often like to think that having faith in God should lead to an easy life. Jeremiah discovered the opposite. And in Matthew's Gospel, Peter made a God-given confession last Sunday but this Sunday he opposes Jesus by arguing for that easy life. Still, what is it to "take up our cross?" This is not a call to invent new sufferings nor to think we will save ourselves nor to counsel other people to put up with injustice. Rather, we need to tell the truth about how the world is full of suffering and see that in sharing our sufferings and death, God in Christ saves us all and shows us a way to [walk behind](#) him. Paul gives detail to that way: taking no vengeance;

associating with people who are considered lowly; weeping with those who weep; not claiming to be wiser than we are; persevering in prayer; rejoicing in hope — those are some of the traits of the way of the cross for us. In ordinary times we were able to be strengthened for this humble way by receiving the gift of Christ's life-giving cross in the holy communion. But now, in this time of waiting, we can still gladly join Jeremiah in eating — trusting and taking deeply into our lives— the words we read.

*If you have a hymnal (or using the graphic below), you might now sing or read "Take Up Your Cross, the Savior Said" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 667); "Jesus Still Lead On" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 624).*

[Take Up Your Cross, the Savior Said](#)  
[Jesus, Still Lead On](#)

As we gather separately and together in the Spirit, let us pray for the needs of the world, responding to each petition with the words, "In your steadfast love, receive our prayer."

Caring for the church around the world, we pray —  
for a spirit of ecumenical cooperation,  
for the health of congregations during this difficult time,  
for our bishops, pastors, deacons, and lay leaders. . .

*A brief silence.*

Hear us, God our Savior;

**In your steadfast love, receive our prayer.**

Seeing before us your good creation, we pray —  
for the repair of what we have harmed,  
for polar ice,  
for lands dealing with oppressive heat,  
for fields ravaged by storms and fires. . .

*A brief silence.*

Hear us, God our Creator:

**In your steadfast love, receive our prayer.**

Facing so many international problems we pray —  
for the strengthening of democracies,  
for peaceful resolutions to conflicts,  
for the people of Belarus, Lebanon, and Yemen,  
for researchers seeking a vaccine,  
for racial justice within our nation,  
for our legislators to assist the lives of the poor,  
for an ethical election campaign. . .

*A brief silence.*

Hear us, God our mighty Fortress;

**In your steadfast love, receive our prayer.**

Surrounded by people with great and hidden need we pray —  
for families frightened by the uncertain future,  
for those whose homes have burned down,  
for students deprived of effective education,  
for refugees and for prisoners. . .

*A brief silence.*

Hear us, God our Hope,

**In your steadfast love, receive our prayer.**

Aware of all who are sick and suffering we pray —  
for all who are facing the coronavirus,  
for those without medical care,  
for those we remember here before you. . .

*A brief silence.*

Hear us, God our Healer;

**In your steadfast love, receive our prayer.**

Confident of your love for us, we pray also for ourselves:

*A longer period of silence.*

Hear us, God our Friend;

**In your steadfast love, receive our prayer.**

Mindful of all who have gone before us in the faith, we offer our thanks —

for all the saints famous and forgotten,

for medical workers who have died of the virus,

for friends and family we have loved,

for the promise of everlasting life with you. . .

*A brief silence.*

Hear us, God our Homeland;

**In your steadfast love, receive our prayer.**

In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you;  
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

*If you have a hymnal (or using the graphic below), you might now sing or read "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 656); "Son of God, Eternal Savior" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 655).*

[Blest Be the Tie That Binds](#)

[Son of God, Eternal Savior](#)

*Then conclude with these prayers:*

Let us pray.

*A brief silence is kept before the prayer.*

We thank you, O God, for your life-giving Word,

for calling creation into being,

declaring forgiveness from the cross,

and delivering the spirit of rebirth.

We praise you, O God, for your Word:

**we praise you, O God, for your Word.**

Your word is a lamp lighting our path,

a mirror reflecting our selves,

a shield providing us refuge,

a fire burning for justice and truth.

Your word is sweeter than honey:

it nourishes our bodies like milk,

it sustains your people like bread.

We receive your promises, more treasured than gold.

We bless you, O God, for your Word:

**we bless you, O God, for your Word.**

Open our ears to your prophets, apostles, and saints,  
and to all the cries of the needy.

Breathe into your church the mighty Spirit of Christ,

that heeding your voice of beauty and power

we are strengthened to serve wherever we are called.

To you, Father, Son, and Spirit – the Source, Word, and Breath —

we offer our thanks for your life-giving Word:

**we offer our thanks for your life-giving Word.**

Amen.  
**Amen.**

## Offering

Please remember to mail in your offerings so that Grace can continue to serve you.

## Offering Prayer

God of goodness and growth, all creation is yours, and your faithfulness is as firm as the Heavens. Water and word, wine and bread: these are signs of your abundant grace. Nourish us through these gifts, that we might proclaim your steadfast love in our communities and in the world, through Jesus Christ, our strength and our song. **Amen.**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.**

## Then speak the Blessing:

Almighty God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless us now and forever.

**Amen.**

Due to copyright restrictions, we are only able provide downloadable hymns that are in the public domain. Other suggestions provided above may be found in Evangelical Lutheran Worship. To purchase a copy of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* for the home, visit the [Augsburg Fortress website](#) or call 1-800-328-4648.

**Devotional Music Links:** For your individual or group devotion, you may choose to listen to the following choral recordings made available through Augsburg Fortress: "[Where Charity and Love Prevail](#)," "[My Hope is Built](#)," "[What Wondrous Love Is This](#)."

## Readings for the Week:

**Monday** Psalm 17. **Tuesday** Revelation 3:7-13. **Wednesday** (commemoration of Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig, bishop, renewer of the church, died 1872) Jeremiah 17:5-18. **Thursday** Psalm 119:33-40. **Friday** Romans 10:15b-21. **Saturday** Ezekiel 33:1-6. **Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost** Ezekiel 33:7-11; Psalm 119:33-40; Romans 13:8-14; Matthew 18:15-20.

**Daily Prayer Resources** are available, including simple forms of Morning, Evening, and Night Prayer; Responsive Prayer; and prayers for mealtimes and other occasions.

Reflection text: Gordon Lathrop. Intercessory Prayer: Gail Ramshaw

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**Please keep in your prayers this week:** Kevin Johnson, Barbara Metzger, Rob Johnson and Steve Lindberg (Streeter Family Friend's & Kin), Noah Klenken (Fred Fixsen's Nephew), Cal Curtis & Patty Thompson (Carole Holten's Son-in-Law & Sister), Bill Warner, David Warner, Emily (Ben & Casey's Daughter), Terry Newgard, Judy Wings.

## **I was unable to put out the sermon for last week, so here it is for everyone along with Pastor Sass's midweek sermon.**

Pastor Bill Sass—Sermon for Sunday, August 23, 2020

“Solid as a Rock”

Matthew 16:13-20

Jesus and His disciples were in the region of Caesarea Philippi when He asked His disciples one of the most famous questions in our faith: “Who do people say that I am?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets” “But what about you?” He asked. “Who do you say I am?”

And, that is the eternal question, isn't it? Who do you say Jesus is? This is a question asked through the centuries but it still must be confronted. Many people aren't really sure what they believe about Jesus. They address Him as Lord, Savior, Master, but still they are uncertain what those titles infer.

FOR EXAMPLE, DOES CHRIST REALLY TAKE AN INTEREST IN MY LIFE? That's certainly a relevant question. Does Jesus care what is happening to me? Does He care what I do with my life?

There is an amusing story about a woman at work when she received a phone call that her daughter was very sick with a fever. She left work, and stopped by the pharmacy to get some medication for her daughter. When she returned to her car, she had locked her keys inside. She was in a hurry to get home to her sick daughter. She didn't know what to do, so she called home, and told the babysitter what had happened, and she did not know what to do.

The babysitter told her that her daughter was getting worse. She said, “You might find a coat hanger, and use that to open the door.” The woman looked around, and found an old rusty coat hanger thrown on the ground, possibly by someone else who had locked their keys in their car. Then she looked at the hanger and said, “I don't know how to use this.” So she bowed her head, and asked God to send her some help. Within five minutes, an old rusty car pulled up with a dirty, greasy, bearded man wearing an old rag on his head. The woman thought, “Great, God. This is what you sent to help me?” But, she was desperate, so she was also very thankful.

The man got out of his car, and asked if he could help. She said “Yes, my daughter is very sick....I stopped to get her some medication, and I locked my keys in my car. I must get home to her. Please, can you use this hanger to unlock my car?” He said, “SURE.” He walked over to the car, and in less than one minute, the car was opened. She hugged the man, and through her tears she said, “THANK YOU SO MUCH...You are a very nice man.” The man replied, “Lady, I am not a nice man. I just got out of prison today. I was in prison for car theft, and have only been out for about an hour.” The woman hugged the man again and cried out loud: “Thank you, God, for sending me a professional!”

Does Jesus care what happens in our lives? There comes a time when you must settle this question once and for all. Do you trust Christ with your life? Some people—even Christians—have difficulty trusting. Well, one proof God loves us is the sun that wakens our world each morning, or food that graces our table each day, and people who care for us, and the joy when we behold the beauty of creation, and all other blessings we might enumerate. God's love is everywhere. But that is the first question we might ask: Does Christ really take an interest in my life?

The second is much like the first. CAN CHRIST REALLY HELP ME WITH MY PROBLEMS? Has He left me alone in this world to fend for myself? A waitress at a Denny's restaurant in Arlington, Texas was finishing her shift when she saw a young man with a cup of coffee in front of him. He had no menu. He looked to be about nineteen or twenty. When the waitress asked if he wanted anything else, he said he just came in to get out of the heat. He didn't have money to pay for the coffee, so he had not touched it yet.

The waitress told him to enjoy his coffee, as she would buy it. She then made a statement, our loud, more to herself than him, that she hoped if ever she didn't have money for a cup of coffee, someone would buy her a cup. A little later, she saw the same young man crying. She went over

to him, and asked if he was all right? He said people at the next table gave him \$5 on their way out. Then another couple asked if he had a place to stay, and gave him an additional \$10. He said a gentleman, a couple of booths over, offered him a job washing cars at a garage. He said when he woke up that morning, he decided this was to be his last day on earth. His parents kicked him out when he was 16, and recently times had become very hard. He had nowhere to turn. Now he had a job, a place to stay, at least for the weekend, and \$15 cash. All this unfolded because he was brave enough to admit he had no money. The waitress adds a footnote, "I cannot tell you what this did for my faith in my fellow man. I am still crying when I think of it. This seems to be an Angels and miracle story. I don't remember ANY of the people he said approached him. It was my section at the very back of restaurant. I thought that except for the two of us, it was empty. The next day "Ricky" came back to the restaurant after work. He is very excited to have a job, and said things were really looking up."

One way God provides for our needs is by sending angels into our lives. These are generally not mystical beings that appear, and then disappear mysteriously. They're simply friends and family members and colleagues at work, and sometimes even complete strangers God uses to meet our needs. Sometimes, we thwart God's efforts to meet our needs because we isolate ourselves from others, and try to go alone. Sometimes, God needs us to be angels to someone else. The important thing is that millions of people can testify they have come in a difficult time in their lives, and yet when they were ready to give up, God used someone to extend a helping hand. Of course, even if an angel does not intervene, God is always present. There is a popular contemporary Christian song based on the two Biblical accounts of Jesus in the storm. The chorus goes: "Sometimes, He calms the storm. He can whisper, 'Peace be still.' He can settle any sea, but that doesn't mean He will. Sometimes He holds us close and lets the wind, and waves, go wild. Sometimes He calms the storm, and other times, He calms His child."

I have experienced God's calming influence in my life. Have you? So, who do you say Christ is? Do you believe He cares what happens to you? Do you believe He is able to help you in times of distress? WILL CHRIST BE THERE WHATEVER LIFE, OR DEATH, MAY BRING?

A television program preceding the 1988 Winter Olympics featured blind skiers being trained for slalom skiing, impossible as that sounds. Paired with sighted skiers, the blind skiers were taught on the flats how to make right and left turns. When that was mastered, they were taken to the slalom slope, where their sighted partners skied beside them shouting, "Left!" and "Right!" As they obeyed commands, there were able to negotiate the course, and cross the finish line, depending solely on the sighted skiers' word. It was either complete trust, or catastrophe. What a vivid picture of the Christian life! In this world, we often are blind about what course to take. We must rely solely on the Word of the only One who is truly sighted—God Himself. His Word gives us direction we need to finish the course.

Will God be there whatever life, or death, may bring? Of course, He will. That is the one truth we can rely on from this day, and forevermore. There is One we can trust in all things.

So, who do you say Christ is? Do you believe He cares what happens to you? Do you believe He is able to carry you through any storm? Do you believe Christ will be there whatever life, or death, may bring? Here is where successful living really begins—to be able to walk confidently because you know who Christ is and you trust him without reservation. He will never let go of your hand.

AMEN



Pastoral message for August 26, 2020

Recently I had occasion to correspond about my good experiences working with persons of another race at Supreme Jewelers on east 53rd Street on the south side of Chicago. I mentioned Diane, Fred, and Homer, and have since remembered the names of Charles and Gordon. I worked there part-time while attending the Lutheran Seminary. Before that I took prep classes at a Methodist seminary in Kansas City.

There were always several armed employees and owners of the jewelry store. Fred and Homer were off-duty Chicago police. Fred was imposing in stature. The high value of diamonds, gold, etc., made it a tempting target for thieves.

As I recall, one day a Caucasian named Gary came into the store for a purchase and visit. After he departed, one of the store people said Gary had worked as a guard at Supreme some years before. So why did he leave? As Paul Harvey would say, that's the "rest of the story."

While Gary was armed and working as a guard at Supreme, a robber with a sawed-off shotgun in a shopping bag ordered everyone to stand still while he plundered the show cases. When it came time to grab jewelry in the front window the robber had to turn his back to Gary. For some or many reasons, Gary "froze" and did not shoot him. No one was hurt, and the robber simply walked out of the store. Fortunately. It could have been a blood bath with a shotgun at short range.

As time went by, Gary and both store owners, Shirley and Jerry, wondered why he did not act while he had the chance to do what he was paid for. Gary quit working at Supreme by mutual agreement. It seemed he left on mostly good terms.

So, what would you have done under similar circumstances? Would you have "frozen" as Gary did? Most probably neither you or I would want to be an armed guard. But the lesson here still applies. What will we do when the chips are down? We can prepare for some emergencies, but surely not all as we live day-by-day. What then?

I have come to believe that God will assist us if we pray even a short prayer such as, "Lord, help me!" What comes to me now is the sudden death of my grandfather Joe Kirchhoff. He had a heart attack in our backyard. Since I'd had a class in high school on artificial respiration, I did that until medics arrived. Later I was told he had such a massive clot in his heart that he could not have been saved even in a hospital. To date his is the only death of a loved one when I was there. I'm sure I prayed then.

Preparation and prayer. Quite a combo. It's tough to prepare for every eventuality, but the prayer should come easy. God knows our needs, especially in a pinch. What will tomorrow bring? Only God knows. Don't fear the future. We are in the safe hands of the Lord. Can you even imagine a safer place? I can't.

Peace;

Pastor Bill Sass