

Worship in the Home: May 9, 2021

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Worship in the Home

Sixth Sunday of Easter, Year B May 9, 2021

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.

This Sunday's image of the life the risen Christ shares with us is the image of friendship. We are called to serve others as Jesus came to serve; but for John's gospel, the image of servanthood is too hierarchical, too distant, to capture the essence of life with Christ. Friendship captures the love, the joy, the deep mutuality of the relationship into which Christ invites us. The Greeks believed that true friends are willing to die for each other. This is the mutual love of Christian community commanded by Christ and enabled by the Spirit.

Find a peaceful place to pray, perhaps a table. You may wish to light a candle and place a bowl of water in remembrance of your baptism. One person may lead this acclamation and then pray the Prayer of the Day.

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

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

Amen.

Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

O God, you have prepared for those who love you joys beyond understanding. Pour into our hearts such love for you that, loving you above all things, we may obtain your promises, which exceed all we can desire; through Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

First Reading: Acts 10:44-48

While Peter shares the good news of Jesus with a Gentile soldier and his family, the Holy Spirit comes upon them. Recognizing that the Spirit works inclusively in the lives of both Jews and Gentiles, Peter commands that these Gentiles also be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

⁴⁴While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. ⁴⁵The believers from among the Jewish people who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, ⁴⁶for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷"Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" ⁴⁸So Peter ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 98

¹Sing a new song to the LORD, who has done ¹ marvelous things, whose right hand and holy arm have ¹ won the victory.

²O LORD, you have made ¹ known your victory, you have revealed your righteousness in the sight ¹ of the nations.

³You remember your steadfast love and faithfulness to the ¹ house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the victory ¹ of our God.

⁴Shout with joy to the LORD, ¹ all you lands; lift up your voice, rejoice, and sing.

⁵Sing to the LORD ¹ with the harp, with the harp and the ¹ voice of song.

⁶With trumpets and the sound ¹ of the horn shout with joy before the ¹ king, the LORD.

⁷Let the sea roar, and ¹ all that fills it, the world and those who ¹ dwell therein.

⁸Let the rivers ¹ clap their hands, and let the hills ring out with joy before the LORD, who comes to ¹ judge the earth.

⁹The LORD will judge the ¹ world with righteousness and the peoples with equity

Second Reading: 1 John 5:1-6

God's children believe that Jesus is the Messiah and love God by keeping God's commandments. Thus the world is conquered not through military might but through love and faith.

¹Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey God's commandments. ³For the love of God is this, that we obey the commandments, which are not burdensome, ⁴for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. ⁵Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

⁶This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel: John 15:9-17

The holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

On the night of his arrest, Jesus delivers a final testimony to his disciples to help them in the days ahead. Here, he repeats the most important of all his commands, that they love one another.

[Jesus said:] ⁹"As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in my Father's love. ¹¹I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

¹²"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I

command you. ¹⁵I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Reflection

Having read these readings, think on this:

As in the synoptic Gospels, both the Gospel according to John and the First Letter of John articulate two commandments: we should love God and we should love each other. But even if these commandments are “not burdensome,” we often do not keep them. Are we then really children and friends of God? In answer to our failure and sin, God gives the witness that overcomes the world: the Spirit, the water, and the blood. The Spirit enables us to trust that Jesus comes among us by the water of his baptism and by the blood of his cross. More: these things come to us, when we are in assembly and even when we are alone. As Jesus dies he gives over the Spirit to be among us and teach us. The water has not been withheld from us and, like Cornelius and his family, we have been baptized into him. We have received and we will receive again his blood in the holy communion. Spirit, water and blood testify to us that we are indeed children of God, forgiven and formed anew as friends to turn to our neighbor in love.

If you have a hymnal, you may now sing or read “Great God, Your Love Has Called Us” (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 358), “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling” (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 631), “God Is Love” (All Creation Sings 1041). Selected hymns are provided below for those without a hymnal at home.

[God Is Love](#)

[Love Divine, All Loves Excelling](#)

Then pray these intercessions:

Remembering the life of Nicolaus Zinzendorf, we pray on this sixth Sunday of Easter for the Moravian Church, for the baptized around the world, and for all people according to their needs, responding to each petition with the words “fill us with your love.”

A brief silence.

O triune God, we praise you for your wondrous love, for the witness of Moravian Christians, and for the steadfastness of believers throughout this pandemic. Whenever churches face hardship or challenge, strengthen us in affection within and between denominations.

A brief silence.

Hear us, loving God:

fill us with your love.

We praise you for the beauty of spring, and we stand in awe of even the hungry cicadas. Wherever creation is beckoning us to lives of ecological restraint, teach us your care of our earth.

A brief silence.

Hear us, creating God.

fill us with your love.

We praise you for all efforts to achieve peace throughout the world. Wherever violence prevails, wherever brutality silences protest, wherever prejudice reigns, wherever the rich oppress the poor, lead us and all nations into the ways of justice.

A brief silence.

Hear us, righteous God:

fill us with your love.

We praise you for the gradual lessening of the pandemic and for your gift of vaccines. Wherever the virus still rages (especially India, Turkey, and South America), wherever medical resources are

depleted, wherever medical advice is rejected, extend the power of your healing hand. Be present with all who today will die, and visit all who are sick or suffering, especially

A brief silence.

Hear us, healing God:

fill us with your love.

We praise you for the loving support of mothers to their children. Bless mothers, stepmothers, foster mothers, godmothers, and all of each gender who give mothering care. Protect mothers in societies where women have few rights. Comfort those who grieve because they cannot mother a child. Wherever children are deprived of mothering, provide responsible and affectionate care.

A brief silence.

Hear us, mothering God:

fill us with your love.

We praise you for calling yourself our friend. Receive now the petitions of our own hearts.

A longer period of silence.

Hear us, dearest God:

fill us with your love.

We praise you for the witness of all who have died in the faith, especially for Nicolaus Zinzendorf, the apostle Matthias, and those we name in our hearts. Keep us united with all your children until we join them in your presence forever.

A brief silence.

Hear us, everlasting God:

fill us with your love.

In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

If you have a hymnal, you may now sing or read "Beautiful Savior" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 838), "Jesus Loves Me" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 595), "Jesus, Still Lead On" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 624). Selected hymns are provided below for those without a hymnal at home.

[Beautiful Savior](#)

[Jesus Loves Me!](#)

[Jesus, Still Lead On](#)

Then conclude with these prayers:

Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

Holy, living, and loving God, we praise you for creating an earth of splendor and for making us into a people of your own.

With all the saints who have received your Word
we worship you, holy God.

We worship you, holy God.

We praise you for your eternal Word,
for conquering the force of death,
and for raising us up through the resurrection of our Lord.

For your Word alive among us,
we praise you, living God.

We praise you, living God.

Breathe the Spirit of the risen Christ on us,
that led by your Word
we may honor your earth and its many peoples
and serve all who are in need.

For your Word animating our Easter life,
we bless you, loving God.

We bless you, loving God.

All worship, praise, and blessing be to you,
Source of life, Ruler of life, and Power of life, today and forever.

Amen.

Offering Prayer

God of love, you call us beloved children and welcome us to your table. Receive our lives and the gifts we offer. Abide with us and send us in service to a suffering world; for the sake of your beloved Child, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Please remember to mail in your offerings so that Grace can continue to serve you. (Our mailbox has a lock on it, so is secure.)

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:

May our glorious God grant us a spirit of wisdom
to know and to love the risen Lord Jesus.

The God of life,
Father, + Son and Holy Spirit, bless us now and forever.

Amen.

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Devotional Music Links: For your individual or group devotion, you may choose to listen to the following choral recordings made available through Augsburg Fortress: "[Oh, Love How Deep](#);" "[Sing Unto God a Song of Joy](#);" "[Unless You Lead Me, Love](#)."

Readings for the Week:

Monday Psalm 93. **Tuesday** 1 Timothy 6:13-16. **Wednesday** Deuteronomy 11:18-21. **Thursday** (Ascension of Our Lord) Luke 24:44-53. **Friday** (Matthias, Apostle) Luke 6:12-16. **Saturday** John 16:4-11. **Seventh Sunday of Easter** Acts 1:15-17, 21-26; Psalm 1; 1 John 5:9-13; John 17:6-19.

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

Due to copyright restrictions, we are only able to provide downloadable hymns that are in the public domain and selected hymns for limited use. To purchase copies of [Evangelical Lutheran Worship](#) and [All Creation Sings](#) for the home, visit the [Augsburg Fortress website](#) or call 1-800-328-4648. Selected hymns from [All Creation Sings](#) will be provided for limited use.

Reflection text: Gordon Lathrop. Intercessory Prayer: Gail Ramshaw.

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Thank you to those who clean the Church following worship.

Thank you to those who provide you with these worship services.

Thank you to everyone who helped clean the church and surrounding area.

"Our church is looking for an Administrative Assistant to replace Diane Eddy who is retiring on June 1. This position will support our future pastor, the Council and Congregation, by managing the Church office. This is a paid position working 15-18 hours a week. A full position description is posted on the fellowship hall bulletin board. If interested please contact Diane (426-3343) or any Council member. (Elizabeth Eddy, Walt Ford, Len Flesher, Joe Frauenshuh, Carole Holten, Lynette Maas, Dick Rohde, Ron Smith, Bev Streeter)"

Grace Women with Grace will be sponsoring the Community Meal May 19th. If you would like to help please talk to Mary Ann Kult or Diane E.

Please keep in your prayers this week: Kevin Johnson, Barbara Metzger, Rob Johnson and Steve Lindberg (Streeter Family Friend's & Kin), Cal Curtis & Patty Thompson (Carole Holten's Son-in-Law & Sister), Emily (Ben & Casey's Daughter), Carole Holten, Lois Goossen (Friend of Newgard's), Danny Vorbeck.

Pastor Bill Sass – Sermon for Sunday, May 2, 2021

THE HEART OF GOD

1 John 4: 7-21

A Sunday School teacher asked her students how they felt about their church. The students responded in usual ways: some said something silly to get the rest of the class to laugh, while others tried to be more serious.

One of the girls was new to the class, and she felt uncomfortable about class discussions, so she never raised her hand, or volunteered an answer. That Sunday, however, she did have an answer for her Sunday School teacher, and it was unforgettable. She said going to church was, "like walking into the heart of God."

I like that. That is a description of the church as it should be: "like walking into the heart of God."

Our epistle lesson was written to encourage church people to be more loving toward one another and those in need. If we can't do that, we've missed the heart of faith that Christ gave us. Because, THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTIAN FAITH IS LOVE. That is where we begin.

But it's not always easy to love. Many years ago, while Dr. Albert Beaven was in college, one of his friends did something that hurt him deeply. Albert was so angry he swore he would get revenge. As he was walking around campus, he thought of ways to even the score. He saw a sticky burr covered with sharp thorns and put it in his pocket.

Albert's plan was to carry the burr with him until he found the person who hurt him. Then he would throw the burr down his ex-friend's back and rub it, causing great pain. Perhaps we can identify with Albert. When someone hurts us, we want to hurt them back—and even hurt them more than they hurt us.

But something interesting took place that day as Albert walked around campus with that burr, looking for the young man who had offended him.

Every time he took a step, the burr would poke into his leg. Every time he sat down, it hurt more. Finally, at the end of the day, Albert pulled the burr from his pocket and discovered all the thorns were gone. They were all in his leg. He had wanted to even the score, but instead he had only hurt himself. That happens sometimes. When we want to hurt another, we end up hurting ourselves even more. But if we took the teachings of Jesus seriously, we would not have that problem.

The essence of Christian faith is love. Just as Christ laid down His life for us, so we lay down our lives for others. That means loving all people—even those who misuse us, and that means doing good to all people—even those we may not approve of, and that means leaving our “comfort zone.”

The essence of Christian faith is love. That brings us to something else important to realize.

LOVE IS OUR PRIMARY WITNESS TO THE WORLD. If the day comes when the Christian church is as loving as our Master, the world will beat a path to our door. John asks, “How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother, or sister, in need and yet refuses to help?”

Love is more than just an emotion, or a feeling. Love is feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, and imprisoned. Love is not a passive verb, but an active one. And it is the primary way we share Christ with the world. That kind of church is “like walking into the heart of God.” As the saying goes, “People don’t care how much we know until they know how much we care.” But there’s one thing more that we need to see.

LOVE IS A GIFT FROM GOD. Our nature is to strive for survival. God’s nature is self-giving love. The closer we are to God, the better able we are to love others. John writes, “And by this, we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit that He has given us.” That Spirit is love.

It’s like a man named Daniel – a big man. He used to be a weight-lifter. Today he teaches others to lift weights at a small gym.

Daniel enjoys his work, but dreams of owning his own business. Sometime back, Daniel had the opportunity to purchase his very own gym. The bank offered him a loan if he could find someone to co-sign. They worked out the details and the loan was approved. Daniel was excited: he could already see the new business. But there was a mix-up the day Daniel went to the bank to pick up his loan check. He was told his brother had already been in the bank, taken the promised money and applied it to his own mortgage. Daniel was furious with his brother. The only thing that kept Daniel from beating his brother up when he went home was his brother’s children playing nearby. Daniel told his brother if he ever saw him again, he would break his neck.

Several months later, Daniel met a young missionary who taught him about Jesus. Daniel and his wife soon became Christians. But Daniel still found it impossible to forgive his brother. He did not see him again for two years.

One day, on a busy street, Daniel encountered his brother. “I saw him,” Daniel said, “but he didn’t see me.” Daniel clenched his fists, and he felt his face get hot. His initial impulse was to grab his brother around the throat, and choke the life out of him. As he looked into his brother’s face, though, his anger began to melt.

For suddenly, he noticed how much his brother resembled their father. He saw their father’s expression. He noticed their father’s look. And as he saw their father in his brother’s face, his enemy once again became his brother.

Daniel walked toward his brother. His brother saw him, stopped, turned, and started to run. Daniel quickly caught up with him though, and grabbed him. Expecting only the worst, the brother was taken by surprise when, instead of having his throat crushed, he found himself in a giant hug. And the brothers stood in the middle of the crowded sidewalk and wept.

The words John wrote centuries ago are still true for us today, “And this is His commandment, that we should believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ and love one another, just as He commanded us.” When the love of God truly abides in our heart, we are able to look into the faces of others and see our sisters and brothers. Only then will coming to church be like walking into the very heart of God.

AMEN!

“S.D.G.”

Pastoral Mid-week Message for May 5, 2021

There is an elusive love in the life of comic-strip character Charlie Brown. She is “the little red-haired girl.” She is Charlie Brown’s ideal. But either circumstances, or the little boy’s own shyness, stands in the way of their romance.

Once upon a time, there was a Charlie Brown. Only his “little red-haired girl” had golden curls and smiling, beguiling blue eyes. The real-life boy – his name was Harry – met her in Sunday school when six. He learned her name, Elizabeth Virginia Wallace. He would not use it for five years. So in awe was he that for five years, he could not summon the courage to speak to her.

As the youngsters grew up, it became apparent that pretty Miss Wallace was the more athletically inclined of the two. Superlative in sports. The only girl in town who could whistle through her teeth. Little Harry admired her greatly for it. Still he worshipped from afar. He might have been intimidated by her family’s affluence, or her grandfather’s status – but he was not. He was merely overwhelmed by her, as it seemed he would always be.

In high school, Harry continued to daydream about lovely Elizabeth Wallace, although by then, he had managed to make occasional contact. He had once even walked Elizabeth home from school, carrying her books, which the love-struck boy considered a major triumph. He wrote songs for her, and doubtless, poetry. Of course, Harry was not her only admirer. Elizabeth had more prospective boyfriends than all other girls in school put together. How might she, then, have noticed that one boy with room in his heart for only her?

At age nineteen, the high-spirited, strong-willed young lady was dealt a deflating blow. Her 43-year-old father committed suicide. Following the tragedy, Elizabeth moved into her grandfather’s mansion at 219 North Delaware, and to an exclusive finishing school.

When Elizabeth was winning shot-put contests and serving as her school basketball team’s star forward, Harry remained home and true to her memory, earning modest wages as a local bank clerk. It is incredible that these two people ever got together. Even after Elizabeth’s graduation, there was still very little foundation for a relationship with Harry. She liked fishing, ice-skating, tennis, dancing, card games, ball games, and all the activities by which Harry was completely bored.

To Elizabeth’s grandparents, he was something less than a suitable suitor. No money, no college education, apparently no future, a thoroughly unpromising prospect for a husband. But there was one thing the young lady’s family and friends had not counted: the young man loved her deeply, had placed her on a pedestal at the age of six in Sunday school, and simply refused to let her down.

If a success was what Elizabeth’s mother and grand parents wanted for her, then he would become successful. He would court the girl of his dreams until she gave in, and she did marry him – at thirty-five – in 1919!

Yes, they lived happily ever after. Shared an infinite affection and a marvelous sense of humor, it is said. For this was the Independence, Missouri, courtship of Harry and Bess Truman. In 1924 they had one child, Mary Margaret, their mutual delight.

Have a blessed and wonderful Mother’s Day!