

Time after Pentecost July 5 2020 Worship at Home Lect A

Good morning – welcome to worship

I hope you are able to gather everyone in your household together this morning. If you are not alone - assign parts of this beforehand. If you don't have a Bible you can google the scripture readings and print them out too. Perhaps print out copies of this for everyone present. This Liturgy is from the ELW book. Prayers are from Sundays & Seasons.

Shut off all the distractions in your home. Sit in the quiet for a bit – take some deep breaths. Light your candle.

The Gathering

Call to Worship

Call to the Lord, who hears our prayers.
Wait for the Lord, the source of our hope.
Sing to the Lord, who delights in our songs.
Let us worship.

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

Hymn – ELW # 412: Come, Join the Dance of Trinity

Prayer of the Day

God of compassion, you have opened the way for us and brought us to yourself. Pour your love into our hearts, that, overflowing with joy, we may freely share the blessings of your realm and faithfully proclaim the good news of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

The WORD

Zachariah 9:9-12 Psalm 145:8-14 Romans 7:15-25 Matthew 11:16-19,25-30

Reflection by Rev. Prema Samuel. Prema is the Assistant to the Bishop of the Synod of Alberta & the Territories. Her ministry focus is Congregational Life.

We have a lot of great sayings that we use to try and pluck up our courage in difficult times. “Whatever doesn’t kill you only makes you stronger.” “You can pull yourself up by your own bootstraps.” “Suck it up.” And so on and so forth. We remind ourselves that we are tough, strong people, perfectly capable of handling anything thrown our way. After all, we have done it before, so we can do it again. We can’t be weak. We have to bear the difficult times on our shoulders. That’s what it means to take responsibility and live our lives, doesn’t it? We need to be tough and not shirk responsibility. Yet, over the last number of weeks and months, how many of us have felt close to break-ing, close to being completely overwhelmed by the events of 2020? We are faced with a global pandemic that has caused so much of our society to screech to a halt. We are faced with economic fall-out that will plague us for many years as a result of trying to curb the spread of the pandemic. There are also signs of a rising mental health crisis in our world, a crisis that will impact our world in very real, very serious ways. We have seen racial tensions explode in the United States and throughout the world, forcing all of us to look deeply at beliefs we may not have even realized we held. It is a shake-up of the very world order, and we are standing right in the middle of it. Our own treatment of our indigenous brothers and sisters in this country should give us serious reason to pause if we are ever tempted to point fingers at our friends to the south. Do you still feel the need to stand alone? Do you still feel the need to believe that your own strength is good enough to face a world that has changed so drastically and so fast that most of us can’t even fathom what it may look like when everything is said and done? The reality is that not one of us is

strong enough to weather this time on our own. Not one of us has all of, or perhaps any of, the answers. We are lost right now. And you know what, it is ok to admit that. We are lost. But we won't admit it. Not really. Secretly, many of us hope that we return to the world we knew before all of this happened. We just need to get through this and things will go back to normal. We hold on to that fantasy, even as we know the truth of the matter. There isn't any going back. That is the kind of truth that can break us if we try and stay stalwart and strong. But we are not called upon to be stalwart and strong. We are called on to be honest about our hurt, our fear and our anxiety about the future. We might be horrible about naming those truths, yet it is not our strength that is needed. It is the ability to name what we are feeling and then to trust. We need to find it in ourselves to let go and truly know that God guides us. Perhaps that is why Jesus, in our reading from Matthew, mentions that the cynical and dismissive audience around him, who dismissed John the Baptist as an ascetic and Jesus as a drunkard, are so wrapped up in the myth of their own superiority that they simply cannot hear what Jesus is trying to tell them. They can't. Their ears are blocked. Instead, God's will is revealed to infants. The young understand. It is not the first time Jesus mentions or engages with children. Children often become a measuring stick which Christ uses against the adults he is surrounded with. The children get it, through their innate trust, their openness, their lack of suspicion. They know what it is to trust because their whole life depends on it. They know this. And it translates into their life of faith as well. We complain about people with a "Sunday School" faith, lacking true maturity and discernment, but those children, with a Sunday school faith, are more willing to trust and be guided by God than many of us. I don't think that we are being served too well right now relying on

our own strength and our own stubborn belief in how things should be. The yoke that we are choosing to pick up as we make this choice is a heavy, killing yoke. It is a burden too great for any of us. It is the kind of burden that breaks people, relationships, and communities. We think it is our responsibility to bear this yoke. But it isn't. It never has been.

One of the songs we liked to sing in the Long-Term care homes where I served as a Chaplain was, "Are you weary, are you heavy hearted, tell it to Jesus." I don't need to reiterate again the kinds of burdens the residents and their loved ones carry. Dalit Christians in India sing, "Cast your burden on the Lord, for he cares for you." They did not believe in a magical Jesus to wipe their burdens and tears, but they believe because this Jesus is one who understands their overwhelming weight of it. This is the invitation we are given again in our Gospel today Jesus, speaking to his audience, encouraged them to come to him and he would give them rest from that which was killing them. Those words echo throughout history. They are words that speak to us now, as we struggle under the burden of this time in history. "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." This is the welcome we hear again in our Gospel today Jesus, speaking to his audience, encouraged them to come to him and he would give them rest from that which was killing them. Those words echo throughout history. They are words that speak to us now, as we struggle under the burden of this time in history. Words of hope, if ever hope could have a voice. Our saviour is asking us, imploring us, to come as children do, with the trust and hope of a child. Can we? Are we truly open to being set free? Because there is a

caveat, as there always is in matters of faith. To be set free is not to be free for whatever pleasure may come our way. To be set free is to be set free into a life where we can stand with our brothers and sisters of color, where we can fight for the rights of the created world, where we can dream of a world with a new economic order that doesn't leave the poor behind but resembles what God had in mind all along, manifested so beautifully in the covenant Yahweh established with the people of Israel. A new kind of society, based on justice, equality, and a place for all people. We cannot champion any of this if we are crushed under the burden of our own solitary pride. We cannot truly follow Christ if we are arrogant enough to believe that we are strong enough on our own. So, let your burden go. Give it to Christ and then re-enter the world made new by the grace of God and the freedom which that gives to us in to love all people. "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." The world may break us. But God will lift us up, so that we in turn may lift up others. In this difficult time, such news, such good, amazing news, truly is balm to the soul. Amen.

HYMN WOV # 742 What a friend we have in Jesus

Prayers of the people prayed by Maureen Reuckwald

Called into unity with one another and the whole creation, let us pray for our shared world. *A brief silence.*

We pray for the church. Sustain us as we share your word. Embrace us as we struggle to find our common ground. Lift up leaders with powerful and prophetic voices. Free us from stagnant faith. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for the well-being of creation. Protect the air, water, and land from abuse and pollution. Free us from apathy in our care of creation and direct us toward sustainable living. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for the nations *especially the United States and Canada, celebrating their nationhood this month.* Guide leaders in developing just policies and guide difficult conversations. Free us from patriotism that hinders relationship-building. Lead us to expansive love for our neighbor. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for all in need. For all who are tired, feeling despair, sick, or oppressed *especially those we name in our hearts.* Take their yoke upon you and ease their burdens. Give your consolation and free us from all that keeps us bound. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for this congregation. Bless Pastor, and congregational leaders. Energize children's ministry volunteers, church administrators, and those who maintain our building. Shine in this place that we might notice the ways your love transforms our lives. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We give thanks for those who have died in faith. Welcome them into your eternal rest and comfort us in our grief until we are joined with them in new life. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Receive these prayers, O God, and those too deep for words; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

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.

HYMN LBW #260 ELW# 537 On our way rejoicing

Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you,

The Lord's face shine upon you and be gracious unto you,

The Lord look upon you with favour and give you (+) peace. Amen.

Dismissal Go in peace. Christ is with you. **Thanks be to God.**