

Oct 18th, 2020 Worship at Home

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 LBW 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

Trust in the Lord at all times.

Pour out your hearts before God.

God is our refuge and strength, and very present help in times of trouble.

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 576 - We all are one in mission

Prayer of the Day

God of love, from you come all things that are good. Lead us by the inspiration of your spirit. Teach us to know those things that are right and with your merciful guidance help us to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

The WORD

Isaiah 45:1-7

Psalms 96:1-9

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Matthew 16:13-20

Sermon presented by Rev. Jason Zinko –
Bishop, Manitoba/Northwestern Ontario Synod

Grace, Mercy, and Peace to you in the name of Christ our Saviour.

“Peter’s Confession,” as this part of Matthew’s gospel is often called, is an incredibly important part of Jesus’ story. It is a turning point in Matthew’s gospel in some ways. It is here that Jesus starts to unveil his succession plan, handing over the ministry to Peter and the disciples after

Jesus is no longer with us in body. It is also where Jesus' journey to the cross in Jerusalem picks up some steam.

But at the heart of Peter's confession, or should I say the reason for it, is Jesus' question about what people are saying about him. More importantly, Jesus wanted to know what his followers were saying about him and who his disciples believed him to be.

This is not a question about understanding or knowledge. Jesus is not asking if his disciples have seen enough proof or if they have finally caught on to what Jesus has been teaching them.

This is a question of purpose and identity. By posing this question, Jesus is actually asking the disciples, "Why are you here? Why did you leave your old lives behind to wander across the country with me? What does it mean for you to follow me?"

We might think these are questions that the disciples would have asked long before following Jesus around the countryside for a year or more. But again, understanding who Jesus is does not come only through a specific amount of listening, learning, or experience. In part, our belief about who Jesus is comes from God and is revealed through faith. It is God's grace and faithfulness that allow us to see Jesus clearly for who he is.

For us, these questions of Jesus' identity are incredibly important to keep in mind. Who we believe Jesus to be will shape our faith, our discipleship, and ultimately our ability to see God at work in the world around us. They will help us to solidify our identity as disciples, and help us to understand our true motivation in ministry – both as individuals and as a church.

I think it goes without saying that this has been a strange year. Nothing seems to be 'normal' – even after many places across our country have been getting back to some sort of normal over the past months. Certainly, nothing has been 'normal' in the church. Our members, leaders, clergy, and bishops have all had to do some reimagining since March. We have had to pivot a number of times and try to find creative ways of meeting the needs of our congregations and ministries while also making sure that we protected our most vulnerable members and the communities around us.

In all of this, it seems that we have really had to stop and think about our identity and purpose. We have needed to contemplate why we should start up certain practices, programs, or ministries, and why others needed to be postponed or left behind. We needed to prioritize the most effective and most valued ministries because we knew it was impossible to go back to the way everything was last year.

Those decisions about ministry did not rely only on practicalities. Those decisions, when made in faithful and healthy ways, were intended to help us think about, define, and live out our identity as disciples. They will hopefully help our whole church to refine our purpose before we move

forward. But more importantly, those questions will help us to each clearly understand who Jesus is and who we are as his followers. That is what will best allow God to form us in faith so that, in each corner of our lives, we will be better equipped to see God at work and to faithfully respond to the needs of the world.

I am sorry for our church that our youth have missed the experience of a national youth gathering this past summer. Canadian Lutheran Anglican Youth gatherings are extraordinary events to help with the faith formation of some of our younger members. These are places where our youth get to think and pray about who Jesus is and what a life of following Jesus means. They are times of building our Christian identity and growing in our understanding and purpose as God's children.

I hope that we will all find other ways of engaging our youth in the faith formation that they missed this summer. But I also hope that we will seriously consider how we, old and young, can more actively engage in practices that will allow God to form and re-form our faith so that we can see clearly who Jesus is and how our lives as disciples carry on the work that God has called us to in baptism.

his is not work that we do on our own or for ourselves. This is not about becoming better versions of ourselves in order to win God's approval. This is work that can only be possible because of the never-ending grace and faithfulness of God, expressed through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

In baptism, and through the gift of the Holy Spirit, God calls each of us to a life of discipleship – of following Jesus – so that we are able to share the good news that we see and experience all around us.

And that life of discipleship will call us to work for justice for the marginalized and outcast. It will make us re-examine how our actions can bring harm to others, to creation, and to ourselves. And it will demand that we change those harmful ways of being. A life of discipleship will naturally call us to action to care for our communities in a way that carries on the ministry that Jesus embarked on, to which we are called each and every day.

In your homes, communities, and congregations, a life of discipleship will take on different forms and will address different needs. But regardless of the specific ways you live out your faith, a life of discipleship will be characterized by service, compassion, justice, and mercy. It will be a way that others can see and experience God in their lives.

My hope and prayer for each of you is that you are able to see Jesus clearly in your lives and that God will give you the grace and faith that you need in order to follow. My prayer is that we will all learn to be disciples and carry on the ministry that Jesus has entrusted to us.

Grace and peace to you in that work, and in our ministry together. Amen

Hymn: ELW 574 – Here I Am, Lord

Prayers of the people led by Cathy Zimmerling

With confidence in God’s grace and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

Gracious God, you call us by name and invite us to share your good news. Send your Holy Spirit among preachers, missionaries, and evangelists. We give thanks for the witness of your servant Luke, the evangelist, whom the church commemorates today. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of praise, the heavens and all creation declare your salvation. From the rising of the sun to its setting, may the whole universe show forth your goodness. Raise up devoted stewards of all that you have made. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of all, may your word of justice sound forth in every place. Restore divided nations and communities with reconciling truth. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of light, we pray for those living with pain, illness, isolation, grief, anger, or doubt (*especially*). Join their voices in a new song, assuring them that you call them each by name. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of truth, you show no partiality. May your spirit guide the work of justices, magistrates, court officials, and all vocations of the law, that your promise of restoration may be known. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Living God, as you raised Jesus from the dead, so raise up those who have died in you. We give thanks for their witness, confident of your rescuing welcome for all. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Listen as we call on you, O God, and enfold in your loving arms all for whom we pray, in the name of 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 488 - Breathe on me Breath of God.

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.