

**Jan. 31, 2021 Fourth Sunday after Epiphany ~ Service of Word and Prayer**

**We are using the Service of the Word liturgy this morning, from your green hymn book, the Lutheran Book of Worship, page 126. The prayers are based on Sundays & Seasons.** Shut off all the distractions in your home. Enjoy the quiet for a bit – take in some deep breaths. Light your candle. May your family be blessed in this time together.

**IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT:** St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Arnprior will be holding their Annual General Meeting on Sunday February 14 at 10a.m. This will be a ZOOM event. Further details will follow in our February newsletter.

**The Gathering**

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

**Call to Worship:**

God knows each one of us personally, and God loves each one of us. We gather together and come into the presence of our Lord. We set aside our feelings of boredom, our confusion and our concerns as we stay at home. We worship today with grateful hearts and we take delight in all that we have and all that we are. We celebrate the hope that God offers to us all. Amen.

**Hymn: LBW 393 ELW 665 - Rise Shine You People**

God has made us his people through our Baptism into Christ. Living together in trust and hope, we confess our faith.

**The Apostles' Creed**

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 church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

**The Lord be with you** ~ and also with you.

**Prayer of the day:** Compassionate God, you gather the whole universe into your radiant presence. You continually reveal your Son as our Saviour. Bring wholeness to all that is broken. Speak the truth to us in our confusion, we pray through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, Amen.

### **The Word**

The Old Testament lesson is from **Deuteronomy 18:15-20**

**Psalm 111** found on page 270

The New Testament lesson is from **1 Corinthians 8: 1-13**

Please rise for the gospel lesson. *Holy, Holy, Holy, our hearts adore you. Our hearts are glad to say the words: you are Holy God.*

**Bishop Susan Johnson our National Bishop, whose office is in Winnipeg, brings us the message this morning.**

**Gospel: Mark 1:21-28**

*They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in*

*their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching — with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.*

Grace to you and peace in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. And greetings to you from your siblings in Christ from coast to coast to coast that make up this part of the family of God that we call the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

Mark's gospel is really interesting. At least to me it is! It is so compact, so fast moving. In some ways. It's like the *Readers Digest* condensed version of the gospels.

This morning's gospel lesson starts at only the 21<sup>st</sup> verse of the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter. But in the 20 verses prior we have heard John the Baptist proclaim prepare the way of the Lord, Jesus has been baptized, then tempted in the wilderness and then the first disciples have been called. That is compact writing!

Today's gospel lesson is also jam packed. Jesus teaches at the synagogue in Capernaum as one who has authority. A man approaches, full of an unclean spirit. The spirit taunts Jesus. Jesus rebukes the spirit and calls the spirit out. The crowd is amazed at both the teaching and the healing and Jesus' fame spreads.

Jesus teaches with authority and the unclean spirit taunts him. What does this mean to us in our times when the phrase "fake news" has entered our regular conversation?

Jesus is not just any self-proclaimed prophet. He is the holy one of God. Even his enemies recognize this. When the unclean spirit speaks out, Jesus calls out what is not right. He names the evil.

Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."

What do these statements of Jesus and of Martin Luther King Jr. mean to us right now in the light of the happenings that have been taking place at the capitol in the United States?

The current pandemic has become the focus of much of our lives. The temptation is for us to be very inward looking, focused on our bubble, and our work, and our provinces' restrictions and numbers of cases and numbers of deaths.

But the realities of COVID call us to look out beyond ourselves to see the ways that the pandemic is pointing out and underlining disparities and structural inequities around the world and in Canada.

In Canada there are higher incidence rates of COVID in poorer and racialized communities. Many in those communities also experience more severe symptoms often due to underlying health conditions due to poverty.

Women in the workforce have faced more challenges than men have. They often bear the primary burden of childcare and homeschooling and have fallen farther behind in terms of the gendered pay gap.

There has also been an increase in domestic violence in Canada and around the world as lockdowns have increased both stress and proximity.

We may be concerned because there are worries about us not having enough vaccine to keep up with our capacity to vaccinate. Yet there are many developing countries that have still not received any vaccine. And recent news has shown that

countries that are willing to pay above market value for vaccines are able to jump the queue and procure them faster.

When I think about these things and then look back on today's text, Jesus' actions cause me to ask these questions.

First what is the evil, what is the injustice, what are the evil spirits that need to be named and confronted around us?

Second, how can we, like Martin Luther King Jr. and like Jesus "stop being silent about things that matter." For to do this is to participate in the new life that Jesus promises us.

It is hard for us to know how and when to speak out. We would usually rather wait for things to change and problems to go away.

But speaking out to injustice, speaking out to lies, is part of Jesus' command to love our neighbours. It is a way we show our commitment to the common good. It is a way that we can follow the way of Jesus and live by his example.

I recently heard Archbishop Linda Nicholls talk about the moral injury that people are experiencing. So many things happening around us that break our understanding of what our moral code is. Even after the pandemic ends, we will need to continue working to address this moral injury. We will need to follow Jesus in speaking out against injustice, working for healing, and building up healthy community. But we are not alone.

In this time of Epiphany, we begin by remembering the wise ones who followed a star to find the Christ child, the light of the world. In the season of Epiphany, we reflect on how we are called to follow and share that light. Jesus continues to call to each of us to follow him and sends the spirit to nurture the gifts we have been given to work to build God's reign among us. It is the source of our light, our hope, our love, and our strength. Amen.

## Hymn: LBW 90 ELW 310 - Songs of Thankfulness and Praise

### Our Response

#### OFFERING PRAYER

Gracious God, receive our gifts as you receive us. Nourish us anew in your tender care, and empower us in faithful service to tend to others with this same love, through Jesus Christ our saving grace. **Amen.**

#### Prayers of the People by Maureen Reuckwald

Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need.

*A brief silence.*

For all who share the gospel and proclaim freedom in Christ throughout the world: prophets, teachers, pastors, deacons, and lay leaders; for the church and its ministries, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For all God's works in creation: plants and animals, water and soil, forests and farms; and for those tasked with protecting our natural resources and all that exists, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For government and leaders: cities and nations, rescue professionals and legal aid attorneys, elected officials and grassroots organizers; for all responsible for the well-being of civil society, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For those who suffer in mind, body, or spirit: those who are sick and hospitalized, those living with HIV/AIDS, those struggling with mental illness, those who are hungry or homeless, and all in any need *especially those we name in our hearts*, for caregivers, hospice workers, and home health aides, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For the concerns of our faith communities, for those who travel, those celebrating birthdays or anniversaries; for the people of God in this place and for other needs in our community let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For the covenant God made with us in the waters of baptism, in thanksgiving for the baptized who have died in the Lord, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

**The peace of Christ be with you always . . . . . and also with you.**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray **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 356 ELW 658 - O Jesus, Joy of Loving Hearts**

**Benediction**

The Lord bless you and keep you,  
The Lord's make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you,  
The Lord look upon you with favour and give you (+) peace. Amen.

**Dismissal** Go in peace. Be the light of Christ.

**Thanks be to God.**