

JULY 4 PENTECOST 6
Worship with Holy Communion

Preparing for worship:

We will have Holy Communion together - separately this worship time.
You will need either wine or grape juice and bread of some kind.
You may use what cups & plates you have – do not go out & purchase.
Here is a list: a white cloth, large cup or individual ones, a large paten(plate) for bread or small – depending on the size of your family. A cross and a candle.

Welcome to worship,

This Liturgy is from the Evangelical Lutheran Book of Worship and the modified prayers this morning are based on those from Sundays & Seasons. Shut off all the distractions in your home. Sit in the quiet for a bit – take some deep breaths. Light the candle.

We GATHER and begin with CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the Holy Trinity, + One God, who gathers us in the wilderness to redeem us, anoint us, and make us new, Amen.

Let us be honest and confess our sin, and receive God's promise of mercy. ***Silence is kept for reflection.***

God at the margins,

We have wandered far from your home; again and again we lose our way.

We turn inward, afraid of the world around us. We forget that you have saved your people before and promise to do it again.

Do not remember the deeds of our past, but turn our faces towards the future, where we know your forgiveness is sure, your welcome is clear, and your love overflows. Amen.

Like a hen who gathers her chicks, God embraces you in tender care.

Like manna in the desert, God feeds you with surprising mercy.

Like a loving parent, God runs to meet you again this day,

Forgiving your sins for the sake of Christ, and leading you from death to life.

Amen

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 396 / WOV 684 - Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness

The Prayer of the day: God of the covenant, in our baptism you call us to proclaim the coming of your kingdom. Give us the courage you gave the apostles, that we may faithfully witness to your love and peace in every circumstance of life, in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord. Amen

THE WORD

The first reading is from **Ezekiel 2:1-5**

Psalm 123 is found on **page 279 LBW**

The second reading is from **2 Corinthians 12:2-10**

Holy, Holy, Holy, our hearts adore you. Our hearts are glad to say the words: you are Holy God.

The Gospel reading is from **Mark 6: 1-13**

Bishop Larry Kochendorfer from the Synod of Alberta and the Territories

Welcome to this summer sermon series that our Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada is providing for congregations. I am Larry Kochendorfer and I serve as the Bishop of the Synod of Alberta and the Territories. It is great to be with you this Sunday and to be able to give your dear pastor or deacon and lay leaders some much welcomed relief. Our rostered and lay leaders have been offering an incredible ministry over the course of the past year. But it's hard work and we need to do everything we can to give them our encouragement and support!

As I prepared today's sermon, I want to acknowledge my appreciation for the writings of Karoline Lewis, Bradley Schmeling and Barbara Brown Taylor and, the preaching resource, Feasting on the Word. I have significantly borrowed their wisdom and insights, and their words, in the shaping of today's sermon.

Let us pray: ¹

Into your hands, almighty God, we place ourselves: our minds to know you, our hearts to love you, our wills to serve you, for we are yours.

Into your hands, incarnate Savior, we place ourselves: receive us and draw us after you, that we may follow your steps; abide in us and enliven us by the power of your indwelling.

Into your hands, O hovering Spirit, we place ourselves: take us and fashion us after your image; let your comfort strengthen, your grace renew, and your fire cleanse us, soul and body, in life and in death, in this world of shadows and in your changeless world of light eternal, now and forever. Amen.

When our family moved to Edmonton, Alberta in 2002 I recall getting stuck in a traffic circle near our home and the congregation to which I had been called. This was a traffic circle with five entrances, and of course, five exits, and I would get stuck in the inside lane, going round and around, passing my exit several times.

Our minds can be like that. Or, at least, mine can. I can get stuck in a loop. I revisit conversations in my mind wishing that I had said something different, or at least in a different way, practicing in my head what I wished I had said.

I revisit arguments, and I make my case, point by point to my invisible and absent antagonist. Sometimes I just stew, usually over something ridiculous. Or, lately, I seem fixated on a theme: politics, or COVID, or details for our son's wedding service which took place recently.

At times, my mind is like a dog with a bone. I can hardly let go.

I suspect that some of you may understand. There are times, even during a ZOOM meeting, that I see a participant's lips moving I check to see if the individual is unmuted. Sometimes their lips are moving even though nothing is being said. And sometimes there's just a look in someone's eyes on ZOOM and I know that something is going on; that something is going round and around in their mind.

There's huge energy in stewing. It is circular energy. It moves round and round, with no exit ramp. No entrance ramp for anyone else, either. Just round and round.

¹ (Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Additional Prayers – Commitment. ©2006 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Augsburg Fortress, p. 86.)

I wonder if this kind of circular energy gives us a way of considering the two brief stories that appear as our gospel text for today.

In the first, Jesus comes home and on the sabbath preaches in the synagogue. What strikes me is not that the people are upset about his preaching. People have always gotten upset about preaching. What surprises me is that, as a result, Jesus is not able to do any deeds of power – except for the few sick people that he laid his hands on and healed. Something happens in that synagogue that keeps the energy of God's reign – already drawing near – from getting in. There is no entrance ramp. Even Jesus is shocked at its strength.

The gospel writer does not actually tell us what Jesus said in his sermon. He only tells us their reaction to the message. The energy in the synagogue turns – they were astounded, and they become critical. Their comments turn to insults. Jesus is mentioned as “son of Mary,” a strange construction in the first century when the father would have been mentioned.

Are they saying something about this “fatherless” child? This illegitimate voice? And they say that he is nothing but a carpenter. We hear “carpenter” as a skilled and prized trade. However, the actual meaning here is more like, “manual laborer.” Who does this illegitimate, laborer think he is? He was familiar to them. They knew him as the eldest child of a large clan, a child like their own children, none of whom was traipsing around the countryside cleansing lepers and casting out demons. Who does he think he is?

I suspect that all of these comments and more, you know how it happens, were made at the coffee hour. You can almost picture the crowd turning from Jesus toward one another, whispering in each other's ears, their communal connection closing off this outside influence.

As a community, they draw the circle closer, their connection becomes a kind of centripetal force pulling them harder and tighter together.

Is it any wonder that a community that uses insecurity and anxiety and suspicion as its connection is impervious to the reign of God? It is no wonder that Jesus cannot break through. It is no wonder that this community cannot experience deeds of liberating power. It has closed itself off.

This is a warning to any community of faith that it should evaluate what it is that connects the community. Is it this kind of narcissistic energy, always turned inward? Does it spin so strongly round and around that there are no longer any

entrance ramps for new voices, new energy, new ideas? No exits ramps to get away from the fear and anger? Is it a closed system, unopen to change, to possibility, to opportunity, facing only inside the circle?

This happens so easily in communities because almost by nature we use our deep insecurity or our prejudice, our anxiety and suspicion to keep connected. As church we will even couch it all in God language.

We want to belong, but we organize around judgment of the other – the stranger, the enemy, the wounded, the voiceless. We create a community that looks and sounds just like we do. God help the prophet who comes to announce a different perspective!

You can see this in churches that become rigid and hardened theologically; no questions allowed. You see this in politics where there is only win or lose. You see this in family systems that assign members to particular roles that are not allowed to change. You see this in congregations that are organized around the past or one personality or a particular cultural expression. It happens in just about every community.

In the second brief story in today's gospel we see what is instructive for us through Jesus' reaction. He is amazed by the power of their unbelief. He is amazed at how it can stop even the grace of God.

And, instead of stewing, or arguing his case, or justifying his perspective, or just getting stuck in the traffic circle, he moves on to another village. He sends the disciples out two by two to find places that will come alive with a new Spirit. Strap on your sandals, take your staff, and find the households that are open to you. Find the places, the communities, where connections are open and wide and welcoming of the message, places where the circle of the people will welcome this new way of love, compassion, healing, and justice to enter.

And, when you are rejected, pick yourself back up, dust yourself off, and move on. Do not do what everyone else does: fight about it or stand your ground or prove that you are right or just lay in bed terrified of being terrified. This is the grace of Jesus' action here: deep within his own being is love, compassion, healing, and justice, and he moves on.

The crucifixion is symbol of the world stuck in this loop – this circle. Organized around fear, it marshals the weapons of power to kill the messenger; to demean

the opponent; to silence the prophet. It is terrified of forgiveness and weakness, scared to death of losing, and it cannot trust vulnerability, love, or compassion.

And here is the good news for us today: Easter is God's answer to the loop – to the circle. Jesus suddenly appears on the inside of the locked doors; on the other side of our walls; inside our circles.

Easter life provides a way out, even as it lets the new voice in. Instead of limits, this Easter life is one of possibility and of opportunity. This Easter life enriches deeds of healing and peacemaking. This Easter life brings people together. This Easter life spins the circle toward openness, where each of us find, and our faith communities find ourselves turning outward to the world with a kind of grace and generosity that is truly prophetic, and truly good news for all.

The Spirit of Jesus leads us, pulls us together, makes us a new community, and then sends us out two by two, three by three into the neighborhood where the love of God is already flowing, where God's presence is known in the eyes of the other – the stranger, the enemy, the wounded, the voiceless. Where we too will discover that Jesus is enough. That the good news is sufficient. That God's love and forgiveness is enough. That the Word and the water of baptism is enough. That the meal of bread and wine, Christ's own body and blood, is enough.

Where the circle of our lives spins toward openness, and we find ourselves turning to the world with a kind of grace and generosity that is truly prophetic, and truly good news for all.

May it be so among us. AMEN

Prayer: (adapted from The Rev. Susan R. Briehl. Day 1, April 30, 2000.)

Come to us, risen Lord Jesus,
and grant us faith enough to share the good news.

Send us, filled with the breath of your Holy Spirit,
To breathe peace into fearful lives,
To love one another as we have been loved,

To welcome the stranger and make friends of enemies,
To forgive the sins that bind others to the past,
To serve, on bended knee, all in need of care;
To be your wounded and risen Body in the world
And to enter with joy God's in-breaking, startling future. Amen

Hymn : a Taize Hymn – Eat this Bread , Drink this Cup

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.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE - JOY STATHAM

Let us come before the triune God in prayer.

A brief silence.

God of all, through the waters of baptism you claim people of all races,
ethnicities, and languages as your beloved children. Sustain the baptized and

increase their faith, that your gospel may be proclaimed throughout the earth. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of the heavens, your creating Spirit animates the universe. We give you thanks for the moon and stars, for the planets and the Milky Way Galaxy, and for all of the mysteries of the cosmos that remain unknown to us. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of freedom, you have liberated us from sin and death and rescue us from all forms of spiritual, social, and political oppression. Defend us from tyrants in our midst and deliver us from all forms of slavery or corruption. Direct our freedom for works of liberation and wholeness. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of compassion, you became vulnerable in the person of Jesus Christ in solidarity with the disempowered. Strengthen those who feel faint, give courage to those who fear, and bring wholeness to those in need (*especially* Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of holiness, you send us out into the world to proclaim your love. We pray for all our outreach ministries Equip us to witness and serve our neighbors. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We give you thanks that in every time and place you call forth prophets who move us towards freedom. Thank you for those who work for human rights, community organizers, and all who strive for liberty for all. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We lift our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your abiding grace. **Amen.**

The Peace of Christ be with you always - and also with you.

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.**

GREAT THANKSGIVING

DIALOGUE

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ; who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life .And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name.

In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.
Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

The Lord's Prayer

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.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Please take time now to have your Communion at home.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Wellspring of joy, through this meal you have put gladness in our hearts. Satisfy the hunger still around us, and send us as joyful witnesses, that your love may bring joy to the hearts of all people, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

HYMN: ELW 576 / WOV 755 - We are All One in Mission

BLESSING

May our glorious God grant you a spirit of wisdom to know and to love the risen Lord Jesus. The God of life, Father, ✝ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL Go in peace. Remember your neighbor. **Thanks be to God.**