

JULY 18, 2021 Pentecost 8 Service of Word and Prayer
Nelson Mandela International Day *'...heroes are those who make peace and build.'*

We are using parts of the Service of the Word liturgy this morning, from your green hymn book, the Lutheran Book of Worship, p. 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.

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: It is good to be together, God, on our screens or reading these words, with these people. Listening for your voice, united by your Spirit. In this worship, tell us about your kingdom of care, welcome and inclusion, so that we can seek it and your justice. May we walk with you, humbly, closely, daily. Amen.

Hymn: ELW 502 /LBW 456 The King of Love My Shepherd is

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 Catholic 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: Lord, use our lives to touch the world with your love. Stir us, by your Spirit, to be neighbours to those in need, serving them with willing hearts. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

The Word

The First Reading is from **Jeremiah 23: 1-6**

Psalm 23, found on page 225 (LBW)

The Second Reading is from **Ephesians 2: 11-22**

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.***

The Gospel is from **Mark 6: 30-34, 53-56**

The Sermon is provided today by Rev. Prema Samuel, Assistant to the Bishop, Synod of Alberta and the Territories.

We are exhausted.

As I am preparing this sermon, I am hot and sticky and tired. It is 34 degrees and I have a whole week of this ahead. How I feel this dry, hot day reflects how I have felt the past number of months.

I turn to Facebook for some escape. I usually enjoy pictures of people's camping trips and flower gardens, beautiful baby pictures and family events. But populated throughout social media are stories of the great injustices – injustices perpetrated on our Muslim brothers and sisters... the horrors of the residential schools. These issues, along with concerns of climate change and gender equality, are of immense importance. But for just a few blessed minutes I want to find an escape from all that needs to be done, to be challenged, voiced — to find peace. Quickly enough, that quest for positivity becomes swallowed up by the darkness I was hoping to avoid for a few, precious minutes.

When I check out the news feeds from my family and friends in India, I find the same thing waiting for me. The grim realities of COVID, as my country of birth faces levels of death and trauma due to the virus which some have referred to as a genocidal in nature. Of course, that does not even take into consideration the migrant workers seeking work

or refuge, amidst the numerous atrocities towards women and young children, students and so on. I feel helpless, knowing I am half a world away and can do nothing to help. All I can do is pray and hope that God will see my family and my country through this horrible time, and I worry.

The COVID realities here in Canada are fraught with uncertainty. The province I am currently living in is set to open on July 1st and many await it with anxiety. Yes, it will be nice to see everyone again and do the many things we have put on hold, but there is always the worry that this might precipitate another wave. We do not want to go through anymore lockdowns, but we certainly don't want to see any more loss of life either.

Needless to say, I am exhausted, deep in my bones and soul and I know that I echo a sentiment shared by many. I am exhausted!

In our Gospel reading, Mark tells of the disciples returning to Jesus from their missionary work, excited by all that they have done and taught. It reminds me of the day when my grade 1 child returned from a hot field trip day at the Zoo. He was so excited to tell all me about all that he saw and did at the Zoo, that he did not give any thought to the heat of the day and that he had been walking through most of it and possibly very tired. As a mother, my first thought was, "did you eat your lunch, did you drink enough water throughout the day?" – to ensure that he was well and cared for.

Responding to them, Jesus recognizes that and offers the disciples the invitation for rest and nourishment. They are invited to eat and rest, knowing that soon enough they will need to return to world. But right now, rest is far more important. Without it, they will not be able to do what they have been called to do.

How many times, over the last many months, have you rested? And when I say rested, I mean truly rested. A soul rest that leaves you nourished and feeling alive. The soul rest that is so needed after the soul work, the Spirit's work that comes from passion and love for the speaking and doing – proclaiming the Gospel.

This soul rest has certainly been a challenging one for me through this time of COVID. Along with negotiating the world we live in, to negotiate education and care for my family, ensure the call I have been invited to serve is... to worry about loved ones' health and well-being. Not even to mention the exhaustion from weeping for and with our Indigenous siblings, speaking for climate justice, challenging discrimination against persons of color and disabilities, against the many oppressions and injustices... This is soul work and it is exhausting! And needs the soul nourishment and soul rest.

There isn't time for soul rests and taking the kind of nourishment that brings fullness to the soul. I am sure that like me, you have to make do with little dribblets of rest, most of which feel like cat naps when what we need is a long, real soul rest.

When Jesus offers his disciples rest, there is a part of me that wants to call out, "Me too. Please. I need that food and rest too!" It sounds so wonderful, to rest in the presence of Jesus.

Perhaps that sentiment was shared by others outside of the disciples. Because, as they rest, others, many others, come to Jesus. They are seeking something. Perhaps it is healing or wholeness or perhaps just standing in the presence of Jesus. Jesus, seeing them, goes to them because he has compassion on them. As the disciples rest, Jesus continues the soul work of teaching and healing. Many, like the Syrophenician woman from the June 27th reading, are content just reaching out to touch the fringe of Jesus' cloak. In that moment, they find the rest, the love and the wholeness that they need. We don't know what kind of life they were facing, but it was likely not easy. The Romans and the Judean elites would have made life difficult for them. But in Jesus, they had found life and it was enough just to touch the fringe of his cloak. It was enough for them to find the healing they needed so that they could keep moving and keep living.

In this moment of our history, we need the rest in Jesus. We echo the needs of the disciples and those that came running and those that were brought to Jesus. Whether we were trying to help negotiate the church through this unprecedented time or whether we were just trying to hold on, our very being cries out for relief and for hope. We are crying out for our God. And as Christ does, he comes to us in compassion and offers us that peace, that rest. Christ gathers us in and bids us to rest, to put down our burdens and let go.

That is not to say that we are no longer needed in the world. Soon enough, we will need to set off once again and be agents of Christ's love in the world. But we also need to rest and find nourishment and succor for our souls. We need to find that healing and peace that only Christ can give, or we risk being taken down by the cares of the world.

And mind you, as he did that day... while the disciples rested, Christ continued to heal, teach, nourish and care.

In our need, Christ comes and offers us food and rest knowing that we will have to go back out into the world. As we rest Christ continues the healing and teaching. We rest in Christ to be strengthened to get back to where Christ is to speak, challenge, heal, teach, nurture and nourish in compassion – to go and do the soul work. We are needed to be the hands, heart, ears, voice, eyes of Christ. But for now, knowing Christ continues the work of compassion, we are invited to rest, to rejuvenate, to renew. We will go out with

renewed strength to clearly see and do, with refreshed heart to passionately love and challenge, with revived hope to heal and forgive. But he won't let us do that so exhausted that we cannot even function. Instead, he will grant us peace, restore our hope and help us to see again that we are valued and loved always so that in turn, we can value and love God's children.

To this God who, in challenging and calling us to be the missionaries of justice, healing and peace, invites and reminds us of the peace, healing and rest bringing wholeness, we say, "Amen and thanks be to God."

Hymn: ELW 612/WOV 738 Healer of Our Every Ill

OUR RESPONSE

OFFERING PRAYER Gracious God, receive our gifts as you receive us. You walk beside us and you meet us in hunger with bread from heaven. 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 Mark Boese

Rooted in Christ and sustained by the Spirit, we offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

Tend your church, O God. Encourage bishops, pastors, and deacons in their proclamation of the gospel. Raise up new leaders and encourage those pursuing a call to ministry. Embolden all the baptized to embody your love and justice. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Restore your creation, O God. Sustain croplands and pastures and safeguard all farm animals and livestock. Preserve lakes, rivers, and streams that offer refreshment. Revive lands recovering from and dealing with natural disasters, including wild fires and drought, and protect coastlands threatened by rising oceans. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Reconcile the nations, O God. Break down the dividing walls that make us strangers to one another and unite us as one human family. Equip leaders to deal wisely with conflict and guide diplomats who seek peaceful solutions. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Heal your people, O God. Look with compassion on immigrants, exiles, refugees and all who are afraid or feel lost. Give rest to those who are weary, comfort to those who are grieving, and recovery to those who are ill (*especially from both congregations: Chris & Kathy, Ed & Rosemary, Linda & family, Joe & Shelley, Diane, Don, Briar & Joy. And Friends of the Parish: Joan, Leslie, Tere, Lorraine, Mary, Lucille, Spencer, Brenda, Alivia, Lennis & Kathleen*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Nourish this congregation, O God. Prepare a table where we receive food for our hungry spirits. Renew our commitment to provide for one another and revitalize our ministries of feeding and nurturing hungry neighbors. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Refresh all those who seek peace, connection & re-creation in these days apart from daily work and care. Give them joy in special places, near and far, including our Pastor, Norine, her family, and all on vacation in our families and community. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You lead us home, O God. We give thanks for all who have died, now gathered with the saints (*especially we remember Stan*). As you have gathered them home, so welcome all of us to dwell in your house forever. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We lift these and all our prayers to you, O God, confident in the promise of your saving love; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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 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.
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom,
the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

Hymn: ELW 818/LBW 492 O Master, Let Me Walk With You

BLESSING:

And now receive the blessing of God, all loving: God our mother who holds us, God our brother Jesus Christ who gives us strength, and God the Spirit who binds us together.
Amen.

DISMISSAL: Go in peace, and remember your neighbour! **Thanks be to God.**