

Living Faith Lutheran Church **7th Sunday of Easter May 24, 2020**

We are gathered together in worship ... although worshipping separately!
(pause a moment and “listen” to Val play “**Beautiful Savior**”)
Beautiful Savior, King of creation, Son of God and Son of Man!
Truly I’d love thee, truly I’d serve thee, light of my soul, my joy my crown.

Beautiful Savior, Lord of the nations, Son of God and Son of Man!
Glory and honor, praise, adoration, now and forever-more be thine!

This hymn seems to capture the spirit of this Sunday ... The Ascension of Jesus was 40 days after Easter (last Thursday) and Pentecost Sunday (50 days after Easter) is next week.

In today’s Gospel we return to the week before Easter ... Thursday night in Holy Week. We find Jesus at prayer in the Garden. He is praying to His Father and He is praying for us. During these agonizing hours the disciples are sleeping. Jesus knows what lies ahead. Of course now, we find ourselves on this side of Easter and we experience the resurrection in our Sunday worship and in our everyday lives. It’s a wonderful gift to know the risen and living Saviour! **Christ is risen! Alleluia! He is risen indeed, Alleluia!**

Gathering Hymn: #392 Alleluia! Sing to Jesus

Alleluia! Sing to Jesus; His the scepter, his the throne;
Alleluia! His the triumph, his the victory alone.
Hark! The songs of peaceful Zion thunder like a mighty flood:
“Jesus out of every nation has redeemed us by his blood.”

Alleluia! Not as orphans are we left in sorrow now;
Alleluia! he is near us; faith believes, nor questions how.
Though the cloud from sight received him when the forty days were o’er,
shall our hearts forget his promise: “I am with you ever-more.”?

Alleluia! Bread of heaven, here on earth our food, our stay;
Alleluia! Here the sinful flee to you from day to day.
Intercessor, friend of sinners, earth’s redeemer, hear our plea
where the songs of all the sinless sweep across the crystal sea.

Alleluia! King eternal, Lord omnipotent we own;
Alleluia! born of Mary, earth your footstool, heaven your throne.
As within the veil you entered, robed in flesh, our great high priest,
here on earth goth priest and victim in the eucharistic feast.

Alleluia! Sing to Jesus; His the scepter, his the throne;
Alleluia! His the triumph, His the victory alone.
Hark! The songs of peaceful Zion thunder like a mighty flood:
“Jesus out of every nation has redeemed us by his blood.”

Confession and Absolution:

Lord God, You not only show us how to obey Your word, but You help us to obey and live it. You not only show us how to love, but You help us to be loving. Jesus, You taught Your disciples and You teach us also, to see the lives of others through Your eyes. We confess we have not always done that well. We have said and done things we regret. Too often we have resisted Your call to be Your voice in the world. Forgive us loving God. Give us Your righteousness and the courage each day to try again. O Lord, open our ears to really hear You, and our eyes to see Your way for us as we live resurrection lives. In the name of Jesus, Amen

People of God, receive the good news: God turns to us in love and tells us, *"I will put my spirit in you, and you shall live."* All our sin is forgiven in the name of Jesus Christ, who is the free and abounding gift of God's grace for us. Accept His forgiving love and know His peace. Amen

Hymn: # 801 Change My Heart O God

Change my heart O God, make it ever true, change my heart O God, may I be like You.
You are the Potter; I am the clay. Mold me and make me; this is what I pray. *(back to first line)*

Prayer of the Day:

Holy and loving Father, as we see Jesus at prayer in the Garden, we know He was not only praying to you and praying for His disciples, but Jesus included us in this prayer. How good it is to know that! Lord Jesus, we know the crown of thorns, the nails, the cross, were experienced because of our sin. Thank You, thank You, Jesus. Thank You for our faith that knows forgiveness, new life and purpose, for Your words of peace and the gift of the Spirit. These are Your gifts to us. The gifts that set us free to be Your people in our day. Thank You, Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen

First Reading: Acts 1:6-14 (The Message) The ascension of Jesus

6 When they were together for the last time they asked, "Master, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel now? Is this the time?"

7-8 He told them, "You don't get to know the time. Timing is the Father's business. What you'll get is the Holy Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit comes on you, you will be able to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, all over Judea and Samaria, even to the ends of the world."

9-11 These were his last words. As they watched, he was taken up and disappeared in a cloud. They stood there, staring into the empty sky. Suddenly two men appeared—in white robes! They said, "You Galileans! --why do you just stand here looking up at an empty sky? This very Jesus who was taken up from among you to heaven will come as certainly—and mysteriously--as he left."

Returning to Jerusalem

12-13 So they left the mountain called Olives and returned to Jerusalem. It was a little over half a mile. They went to the upper room they had been using as a meeting place: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James, son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, Judas, son of James.

14 They agreed they were in this for good, completely together in prayer, the women included. Also Jesus' mother, Mary, and his brothers.

Gospel Alleluia – say together:

We come to the Word to hear God’s call to service, we come to meet the Christ who claims us

We come, rejoicing that God cares for us; we come for we are not our own, God’s love made us His!

The Gospel: John 17:1-12 (The Message)

Jesus’ Prayer for His Followers

17 1-5 Jesus said these things. Then, raising his eyes in prayer, he said:

Father, it’s time. Display the bright splendor of your Son

So the Son in turn may show your bright splendor.

You put him in charge of everything human

So he might give real and eternal life to all in his charge.

And this is the real and eternal life:

That they know you, the one and only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you sent.

I glorified you on earth by completing down to the last detail what you assigned me to do.

And now, Father, glorify me with your very own splendor, the very splendor I had in your presence before there was a world.

6-12 I spelled out your character in detail to the men and women you gave me.

They were yours in the first place; then you gave them to me,

And they have now done what you said.

They know now, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that everything you gave me is firsthand from you, for the message you gave me, I gave them;

and they took it, and were convinced that I came from you.

They believed that you sent me. I pray for them.

I’m not praying for the God-rejecting world, but for those you gave me,

for they are yours by right.

Everything mine is yours, and yours mine, and my life is on display in them.

For I’m no longer going to be visible in the world; they’ll continue in the world while I return to you.

Holy Father, guard them as they pursue this life that you conferred as a gift through me, so they can be one heart and mind as we are one heart and mind.

As long as I was with them, I guarded them in the pursuit of the life you gave through me; I even posted a night watch.

And not one of them got away, except for the rebel bent on destruction (the exception that proved the rule of Scripture).

Sermon:

Our Father ... God is our Father and we are His children John 17:1-11

Of all His names, *Father* is God’s favorite ... this is the one He used most

- while on earth, Jesus called God “*Father*” over two hundred times ...

- in His first recorded words Jesus explained, “*Didn’t you know that I must be in my Father’s house?*”

- in his final triumphant prayer Jesus proclaims, “*Father, I give you my life*” (Luke 23:46)

- in the Gospel of John alone, Jesus repeats this name 156 times ...

- God loves to be called “*Father*”... after all, didn’t Jesus teach us to begin our prayer with the phrase, “*Our Abba*”?

“*Abba*” was an everyday word ... it was a homely family-word ...

- today’s equivalent would be Papa, Daddy or Dad ...

- it is right for you to call God your Creator, indeed He is

- you speak truth when you call Him your Master, indeed He is
- it is appropriate for you to call Him your King, Lord and Sovereign God ...
- but if you want to touch his heart, call him by the name He loves to hear ...
- call Him *Abba* ... call him your *Father*

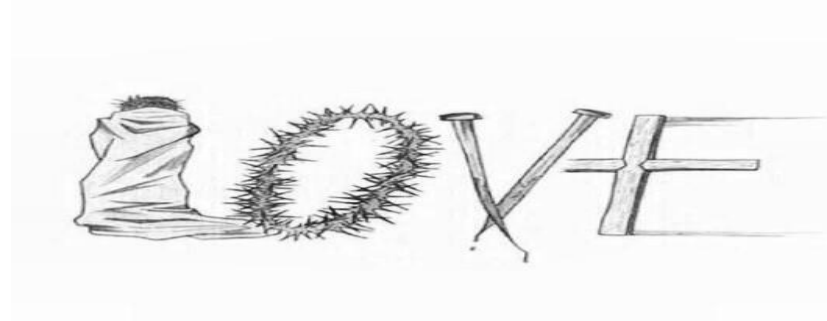
Many, many years ago I spent several weeks in the Holy Land which included many days in the Old City of Jerusalem

- one afternoon, as we were exiting the Jaffa gate in a throng of people ...
- from somewhere in the crowd we heard the voice of a small child., crying out “Abba!, Abba!”
- we turned and looked ... there was a young girl, perhaps four or five years of age
- she had become separated from her family ... and as the people were rushing past, she stopped and was afraid. “Abba! Abba!” ... and from out of nowhere, her father appeared ...
- when he heard his daughter cry *Abba!*, he had realized that she was separated from the family and she was frightened and crying for her father
- I watched closely; I wanted to see what an *abba* would do ...
- he hurried over to her ... lowered himself to her level, held her close, then looked at her in the face and brushed away the tears ... then stooped and lifted her up
- she wrapped her arms around his neck and legs around his waist ... and her father held her as they walked on and joined the family ... and continued their journey

That is what an “abba” does ... and isn’t that what God has done for us?

- when we wander away, He finds us ... lowers himself to our level ... picks us up and leads us on our journey
- yes, you and me ... we have an Abba
- One who has claimed our heart, made it His home ... and gave us His
- it’s true ... our Abba has high affection for us ...
- when we speak, God listens ... when we pray ... heaven takes note
- our prayer impacts the heart of God
- why? Because we are a child of God ... we can say we have a good Father... a good, good Father.

The Prayer of Jesus – In the Garden John 17



I encourage you to pause reading here for a few minutes to study the picture.

- really, it doesn’t need words ... the picture itself does the speaking ... but it does beg a response
- it lays out the setting, the scene of this deeply personal prayer of Jesus ... to His Father

In the Gospel today we see Jesus praying to His Father

- and that is just how Jesus begins his prayer ... “Father ...”
- John 17 takes us back to Holy Week ... the Thursday before Good Friday and Easter
- Jesus and His disciples have left the Upper Room where they ate together their last meal ...and now we see them in the Garden ...

- Jesus reminds them *“Sit here while I go over there and pray. My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death”* (Matthew 26:36)
- that’s Jesus ... in the grove ... on the ground ... His clothes soaked with sweat ... He is kneeling, imploring ... He agonizes
- a sound is heard in the trees ... snoring!
 - there, in the garden ... the dearest friends He has ... are asleep ... heaved with the evening meal
 - His yearnings, His distress ... doesn’t move them ... they are tired

But Jesus doesn’t scold or lecture them ... instead in His last moments with His disciples ... He prays for them ... *“I pray for these followers, but I am also praying for all those who will believe in Me through their teaching.”*

- and we need to note too, that in His final prayer ... Jesus prayed for you too ... and for me!
 - we are *“all those* who will believe in Me through the teaching of the disciples”
 - as Jesus stepped into the garden ... we were in His prayers ...
- His final prayer was about you ... His final pain was for you ... His final passion was you (and all of us who would believe in Him because of the words of the disciples)

As we look at that prayer of Jesus ... we realize He is praying about the days ahead

- He knew that what must be done ... what lay ahead ... that only He can do ...
 - no force on earth can face the force of evil ... and win ... except God
- and as Jesus foresaw the agony that lay imminently before Him ... He saw you and me ...
 - He saw us in the middle of a world which isn’t fair
 - He saw us cast into a river of life we didn’t request
 - He saw us betrayed by those we love
 - He saw us with a body which gets sick and a heart which grows weak
 - He saw us in our own garden of gnarled trees and sleeping friends
 - He saw us staring into the pit of our own failures ... and into the mouth of our own grave
- yes, I believe Jesus saw us in our own Garden of Gethsemane ... and He didn’t want us to be alone!
 - Jesus wanted us to know that He has been there too ...
- yes, Jesus knows what it’s like to be plotted against ... to be confused ... to be torn between two desires
 - He knows what it’s like to smell the stench of satan ... to beg God to change His mind ...

And Jesus saw the cross ... the place and the means of His death

- Jesus knew the thorns would be there ... woven especially for Him to wear
- Jesus knew the nails were ready ... and the hammer ... and the pain
 - He knew what was ahead for Him as He knelt in prayer ... listening to His sleeping disciples nearby ...
 - He knew ... just what we needed ... *“new life in His name”* ...
 - life beyond the cross, beyond the empty tomb, beyond His Ascension ... to Pentecost ... to today
- Jesus could also see you and me as He prayed ... and there was no turning back ...
 - Jesus did this for us! His prayer was for us ... the crown, nails and cross ... were for us!

This week I dug back into my own Lenten devotional journey, re-reading especially thoughts from the final week of Jesus ...

- I have been deeply re-touched by the fact that Jesus did all He did ... willingly carrying our sin to the cross ... He did it all for us!
- and this re-run (because of our Gospel text today) has been healthy and life-giving to me all over again

We are not in this Christian life alone ... ever

- it is not ... thank God ... all our own doing ... or entirely up to us
- on the night He was betrayed into the hands of sinners ... Jesus prayed for us and He continues to do so
- and it is His praying ... just as it is His living ... which sustains us

- it is His praying, His commissioning us for the work of “telling His Story” ...
- which gives us life, strength, unity ... together in Him, empowered by His Spirit

And because Jesus did all this for me ... then I know “*I can do all things through Christ Jesus who strengthens me (for His work today)*” (Philippians 4:13)
 - so ... because of Him ... I can! You can! We can ... together! Just as Jesus prayed we would!



Sung response to God’s Word: Don’t be shy to sing aloud **Jesus Loves Me This I Know!**
 Can you remember first learning this song ... perhaps in your home language? Now, at this time in your life, what does this song mean to you? Share some thoughts!

Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so;
 Little ones to Him belong; they are weak but He is strong.
 Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!
 Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.
 Jesus loves me! Loves me still, tho’ I’m very weak and ill;
 That I might from sin be free, bled and died upon the tree.

Jesus loves me! He who died, heaven’s gates to open wide;
 He will wash away my sin, let this little child come in.

Jesus take this heart of mine, make it pure and wholly Thine;
 On the cross You died for me, I will henceforth live for Thee.

Hymn of the Day: #339 Christ, the Life of All the Living

Christ, the life of all the living, Christ the death of death, our foe,
 Christ, yourself for me once giving to the darkest depths of woe:
 through your suffering, death, and merit life eternal I inherit.
Thousand, thousand thanks are due, dearest Jesus, unto you.

You have suffered great affliction and have borne it patiently,
even death by crucifixion, fully to atone for me;
for you chose to be tormented that my doom should be prevented.
Thousand, thousand thanks are due, dearest Jesus, unto you.

Then, for all that bought my pardon, for the sorrows deep and sore,
for the anguish in the garden, I will thank you ever-more;
*thank you for the groaning, sighing, for the bleeding and the dying,
for that last triumphant cry, praise you ever-more on high.*

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

Prayers for the 7th Sunday After Easter

All powerful God, You have proven yourself as our faithful Abba/Father and what You ask
of us is that we be Your trusting children. So today we come before You with a willing heart
and ask You to do Your good work in us and through us. We cannot imagine Your glory!
You have given us new life in the risen Christ. You have delivered us because You delight
in us. What a gift, Father! *"Thousand, thousand thanks are due, dearest Father, unto You!"*

Loving Father, the thing that continues to occupy our every day, the thing which frightens
our world is the pandemic ... that insidious virus that wants to destroy everything it touches.
Remind us that we are not alone. You know our struggles of isolation, loneliness, grieving.
Your world is still groaning, and now Africa will groan as it never has before. We ask You
to hold Your people in Your loving care, in Your wide embrace. We pray for healing, comfort,
courage and an end to this rampant virus. *"Thousand, thousand thanks are due, dearest Father,
unto you."*

How grateful we are for those who put their own lives in danger in order to bring comfort,
courage, hope and healing to those sick and the dying. Protect them, loving Father. They are
servants in numerous ways, living humble and selfless acts of love and kindness each in their
own work every day. Thank You for each and all of them! *"Thousand, thousand thanks are
due, dearest Jesus, unto you."*

Our strong Father, when life's circumstances overwhelm us, stand with us, stir our gratitude
and praise, giving us strength to overcome. Thank You Lord, for walking with us today.
Ours may be a journey of grief, celebration or unknown activities, but You are leading so
we can follow in confidence. May Your truth confirm our trust in You and in Your way.
It is good to be in Your care. As we continue to sing the alleluias this week and prepare our

hearts for the Day of Pentecost, enable us live with the glow of that grace on our face. Thank You for resurrection, for life going forward. *“Thousand, thousand thanks are due, dearest Father, unto you.”*

Lord Jesus, as You breathed Your Spirit into the fear-filled disciples, we pray that you would breathe Your Spirit into the church in a fresh way today. Unite and renew Your church and leaders in the truth of Your Gospel, and with Your power, unite us in mission and send us into the world with Your love. We ask You to empower the leaders of nations to work for the well-being of all. Send peace, hope and healing into every place where the pandemic, war, injustice of any kind has brought death, ruin, loss, weeping and fear. *“Thousand, thousand thanks are due, dearest Jesus, unto you.”*

For those in need in our congregation, we ask You to be close and look with compassion on those who have special needs these days: We continue to remember Randi and Karsten Haukaas as Randi is in her new home now, and be present to Gwen, Ed, and the family of Liila Best as they grieve her passing. We pray for those living alone and those in Care Homes. (If I have missed any, please add their names). *“Thousand, thousand thanks are due, dearest Jesus, unto you.”*

Thank You for letting us overhear the prayer of Jesus. As we pray, bring to birth in our hearts the things that really count in Your eyes. May we move slowly enough this week to hear Your voice so You can show us how to care for ourselves and reach out to the needs of others. Enable our hearts to feel and reflect Your deep love for the world. Hearing Jesus pray makes me want to pray more than ever. Continue Your prayers for us, Lord Jesus!

And just as Jesus prayed to His Father ... we pray: “Lord Jesus, keep me faithful in my prayers for those You have given to me: for family and friends, neighbours and colleagues. Let my work in prayer sustain them in their work of love.” We join our prayers with our scattered congregation today as we pray for and with each other, in the name of the Risen One, Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord. **Amen Christ our risen Lord ... hear our prayer.**

Share the Peace of Christ with those near you today. *May the peace of our risen Lord be with you.* After worship will you consider phoning a friend from the congregation and offer them the Peace of Christ!

Offering Prayer: Remember your church and others in need with your gifts.

Generous God, You have given us life, this community of faith, and the gifts we are privileged to give. Continue to move in our hearts to live generously, that we might use Your gifts to bring the hope, the peace and the blessings of this Easter season wherever we are. Into Your hands this morning we place ourselves as our offering for You to use in service to this world that You love, that all people may know the amazing story of Your living Son, our Savior and Lord of all. Amen

The Lord’s Prayer

The Benediction (I suggest you give this blessing to those you are with just now.)

May grace from God our Father's own heart, peace from Christ the risen and living Saviour, and strength from the Spirit of life, be blessings for you today and through you to others ... always, all ways. all days! So, go into this week full of the tenderness of Jesus' care for each one of us, carrying with you the abundance of God's grace and love. Let it overflow as blessing wherever you are. Remember, Jesus is out in the world, still calling us to life and love. Alleluia! Amen

Sending Hymn: #661 I Love to Tell The Story of Jesus and His Love

I love to tell the story of unseen things above
of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love.
I love to tell the story, because I know it's true;
It satisfies my longings as nothing else would do.

Refrain: I love to tell the story; 'twill be my theme in glory
to tell the old, old story of Jesus and His love.

I love to tell the story: how pleasant to repeat
what seems each time I tell it, more wonderfully sweet!
I love to tell the story, for some have never heard
the message of salvation from God's own holy Word.

I love to tell the story, for those who know it best
seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest.
And when, in scenes of glory, I sing the new, new song,
I'll sing the old, old story that I have loved so long.

Something to carry into the week ahead, considering the times we are experiencing:
Jesus prayed that we would be kept/guarded/protected. I hope this is blessing to you!
*"Father, I've never been here before (pandemic days), but I know where I am...
I'm with You!"* (Gloria Gaither) and (the photo below: thanks to Susan Deneve)

