



ST. PAUL
LUTHERAN CHURCH
ANAMOSA, IOWA

CREATIVELY CONNECT • INTENTIONALLY GROW • JOYFULLY SERVE

June 14, 2020
2nd Sunday after
Pentecost

Prayer Concerns: For Judy Zehr sister of Barb Kleis; for all facing issues from the corona virus—sickness or social isolation; and for the family of Taylor Ray Siebels who died recently, Taylor is the grandson of Lisa Bierman. (send prayer requests to stpaulanamosa@gmail.com; include your name, prayer recipient name, and family relationship)

Introduction: Moses tells the Israelites that they are called to be a priestly kingdom and a holy people. Jesus sends out the disciples as laborers into the harvest. In baptism we too are anointed for ministry, sharing God's compassion with our needy world. From the Lord's table we go forth to proclaim the good news, to heal the sick, and to share our bread with the hungry.

Service in the "Park"ing Lot: Weather permitting, an outdoor worship experience will be offered at 10 A.M. each Sunday on the east side of the Education Building. **Bring your lawn chairs** for versatile social distancing in the parking lot. A few spaces within earshot will be made available for those who are unable to exit their vehicles. The service will be comprised of an opening song, a reading, a brief testimonial or reflection, prayers of intercession, the Our Father, and a closing song. This service is not intended to replace the recorded Sunday service but to accentuate it. An e-blast announcement will be sent by 9:00 a.m. if the service is cancelled. **Wear your favorite Live Generously shirt.**

Forks and Friends will be providing packaged meals EVERY THURSDAY EVENING between 5 and 6 PM until further notice. Meals may be picked up at the East door (parking lot) of the Anamosa United Methodist Church.

Jones County Food Bank: To donate money, make checks payable to Jones County Community Food Bank (NOT HACAP) and mailed to 105 Broadway Place, Anamosa IA 52205. For appointment to drop off/pick up call 462-4343. **They need pancake mix to match the large donation of pancake syrup just received; also canned fruit, peas, green beans and corn.**

Anamosa Community Blood Drive

Tuesday, July 7th 2:00 pm – 6:00 pm
St. Paul Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall.

Sign up online at bloodcenter.org or with Trevor Hulett at thulett@fmbank.biz

***Please make an appointment.

Walk-ins will not be allowed to make sure that social distancing guidelines are met.

As a special THANK YOU, all donors will get a \$5 gift card of their choice!

St. Paul Office Hours

Lois: M-Th 9-2; F 9-12
Nancy: M, W, Th 9-12
Kaileen: M-F 6:00-9:30 pm (summer hours)

Hours Open

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Please call us if we can be of assistance. PLEASE leave a message if we cannot answer. We will return your call ASAP. We may be separated, BUT we are not alone!

The first reading in the Sunday liturgy is usually taken from the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament), except during the Easter season when we read from Acts of the Apostles, and is chosen by the compilers of the Lectionary to more or less complement the gospel. Sometimes, the message of the second reading also echoes the message of the other two, as it does today. One possible problem with this approach is the implication that the Hebrew Scriptures are only worthwhile when interpreted through the Christian scriptures.

Little is further from the truth. The Hebrew Scriptures stand on their own as a record of God's developing relationship with the Jewish people, our ancestors in faith. We believe God's plan to save all creation came to perfect completion in Jesus, but in no way lessens the importance of the Christ's constant and evolving relationship with the Jewish people. There is much we can learn from our ancestors.

First Reading: The Hebrew Book of the Exodus 19:2—8a

²[The Israelites] had journeyed from Rephidim, entered the wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness; Israel camped there in front of the mountain.³Then Moses went up to God;

the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites: ⁴You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. ⁵Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, ⁶but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites."

⁷So Moses came, summoned the elders of the people, and set before them all these words that the Lord had commanded him. ^{8a}The people all answered as one: "Everything that the Lord has spoken we will do."

In this passage from Exodus, we hear what could be referred to as "God's initiative or invitation" to us through the Israelites. We sometimes get so preoccupied with our attempts to win God's favor that we forget it was God who moved towards us first. If we understand that God stands with arms wide open towards us, our lives are less about "seeking God" and more about "accepting and responding to God."

It was the Lord God YHWH who chose Moses to lead the Israelites through the desert away from Egypt. God had seen the misery and suffering of enslaved Israel, and when the Pharaoh's stony heart did not change, God took the initiative to lead the Israelites to freedom. The Egyptian's suffering came about because they chose to ignore the invitation of a loving God to do what was right. Moses agreed to be the mouthpiece (prophet) of the Lord when he realized that God was acting on behalf of their welfare.

Why does God take the initiative to save? God is love, and by its very nature, love moves outward toward others. The Greek philosophers tell us that "goodness/love diffuses itself." The very creation of the cosmos came about because God **needed** to create. The Israelites knew their God loved them, showed mercy to them, and was a righteous judge, meaning God's response fit their behavior. Those who see the God of the Hebrews solely as an angry, spiteful judge need to delve into the story a little more fully. The better image is that of a loving parent who disciplines for a change in behavior. It is generally those who do not want to change their behavior who call God a vengeful, punishing tyrant.

God promises the house of Jacob {the nation known as Israel which was comprised of the tribes stemming from the twelve sons of Jacob} that they will be his people if they keep his covenant of love.

They will be dear to Him. They will be a "kingdom of priests, a holy nation." In this statement, God is referring to the priest as one who offers willing sacrifice on behalf of others and mediates the divine relationship. In living this way, the people will be less tied to the things of this earth and be able to see with the eyes of love: with God's eyes. To be holy is not to remove oneself from this place but to be able to live in it through the power of love.

Psalm 100

¹Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all you lands!

²Serve the LORD with gladness; come into God's presence with a song.

³**Know that the LORD is God, our maker to whom we belong; we are God's people and the sheep of God's pasture. R**

⁴Enter the gates of the LORD with thanksgiving and the courts with praise; give thanks and bless God's holy name.

⁵**Good indeed is the LORD, whose steadfast love is everlasting, whose faithfulness endures from age to age. R**

Second Reading: St. Paul's letter to the Christian community in Rome 5:1-8

¹Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. ³And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

⁶For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. ⁸But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

Not only did God take the initiative in loving us, but He does so when we least deserve it. We cannot remind ourselves too often that being a Christian means first and foremost that we are on the receiving end of God's generous outpouring of goodness. Christianity is not about what we must do to be saved; Christianity is about what has already been done by God through Jesus in order to save us. Our lives are a response to that love.

This may sound a little different than the message many Christians heard while growing up. But this passage presses the issue even more by saying that our actions as believers, especially in the context of organized religion, still must begin and be rooted in a love relationship with a God who loved us from the first. Our sacramental celebrations are a response in thanksgiving from a community of redeemed sinful people. Our prayers for blessing are not asked for personal benefit alone but rather so that we can bless the community around us. We don't get overly concerned about "wrath," which less represents God's anger and more the tragic results of human choices, because we have been saved in our sinfulness by the loving action of Christ. Our response to that love is a clear expression of and participation in that eternal life now. We do not fear the Day of Judgment because our love for God will continue and God's love for us will be "known" in its fullest. Listen carefully today as Paul eloquently draws out for us the consequences of God's love for us.

Gospel: Matthew 9:35-10:8

³⁵Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. ³⁶When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

^{10:1}Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. ²These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; ³Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

⁵These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' ⁸Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. [⁹Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, ¹⁰no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for

laborers deserve their food. ¹¹Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. ¹²As you enter the house, greet it. ¹³If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. ¹⁵Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

¹⁶"See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues; ¹⁸and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles. ¹⁹When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; ²⁰for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. ²¹Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; ²²and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ²³When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes."]

The movement of God's love toward the world is heard again in the compassion Jesus feels for the crowds in this gospel story. We can also hear it in the selection of the twelve Apostles who were commissioned to take a message of hope and compassion to the people of Israel. Not only are they to proclaim the reign of God is at hand, but also display God's loving power; they are to heal, cast out evil spirits, cleanse lepers, and even raise the dead (this does not always mean physically.) Their ministry is to be like God's: freely given without expectation for return.

It might sound at first like Jesus is excluding some people from the ministry of his followers, but if we keep in mind that at the beginning of his ministry, Jesus was attempting to redeem the Chosen People, his directives seem less exclusive. Salvation still needed to come for the Jews and so their conversion as a nation was crucial to the message of the reign of God. Later, of course, the Good News would be revealed to the Samaritans, the Gentiles, and other non-believers in various pagan territories.

Taking it home:

- Recall a time you went out of your way to assist someone who did not deserve it. You were demonstrating the love of God.
- Recall a time someone was totally ungrateful when you gave up something or denied yourself something for her or him. You were walking in the footsteps of the Apostles.

Youth: list three things you could give up this week without causing yourself any suffering and three things that if given up might lead to some suffering. Live as if all six things are gone.

- The next time you're walking through the produce aisle at the grocery store, or the next time you put a tomato in your mouth, ask yourself where the food came from. Who grew it? How was it grown? Who profited from the price. If you say "I don't know" to even one of these questions, make a special effort this week to research food production in the U.S. Don't be surprised if you find that the people who picked your tomato make about \$6,900 a year. Do you like a local Mexican or Italian style restaurant? Look into the relationship between it and the tomato pickers. Is it a just one? What is the responsibility of a Christian with this information? Talk to your friends about it! Pray about it! Call someone! Strive to understand better the relationship between "resident aliens" and our economy. What do the Scriptures tell us about dealing with resident aliens?

Mindfulness (set aside five minutes. breathe and read through three times. Which words or ideas hold energy for you? What images and feelings emerge in your imagination?)

"As I said, this Spirit has two jobs. First, she creates diversity, as exemplified in the metaphor of wind—just breathing out ever-new life in endlessly diverse forms. But then the Spirit has another job: that of the Great Connector—of all those very diverse things! All this pluriform life, the Spirit keeps in harmony and "mutual deference"—"so there shall be one Christ, loving Himself," as Augustine daringly put it."

— **Richard Rohr, The Divine Dance: The Trinity and Your Transformation**

"One of the great surprises is that humans come to full consciousness precisely by shadowboxing,

facing their own contradictions, and making friends with their own mistakes and failings (shadow side). People who have had no inner struggles are invariably both superficial and uninteresting. We tend to endure them more than communicate with them, because they have little to communicate."

— **Richard Rohr, Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life**

Declaration on the Way: Church, Ministry and Eucharist, is a declaration of the consensus achieved by Lutherans and Catholics on the topics of church, ministry and Eucharist as the result of ecumenical dialogue between the two communions between 1965 and 2015.

II. STATEMENT OF AGREEMENTS: The Church's Foundation in God's Saving Work (1) Catholics and Lutherans agree that the church on earth has been assembled by the triune God, who grants to its members their sharing in the triune divine life as God's own people, as the body of the risen Christ, and as the temple of the Holy Spirit, while they are also called to give witness to these gifts so that others may come to share in them. (2) They agree as well that the church on earth arose from the whole event of Jesus Christ, who remains its sole foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11). (3) Further, they hold in common that the church on earth is gathered by the proclamation of the gospel of God's saving mercy in Christ, so that the gospel, proclaimed in the Holy Spirit by the apostles, remains the church's normative origin and abiding foundation. (4) An agreement follows that the church on earth is in every age apostolic, because it is founded upon the apostles' witness to the gospel and it continuously professes the apostolic and evangelical faith while living by mandated practices handed on from the apostles. Thus, Lutherans and Catholics recognize in both their ecclesial communities the attribute of apostolicity grounded in their ongoing continuity in apostolic faith, teaching and practices.