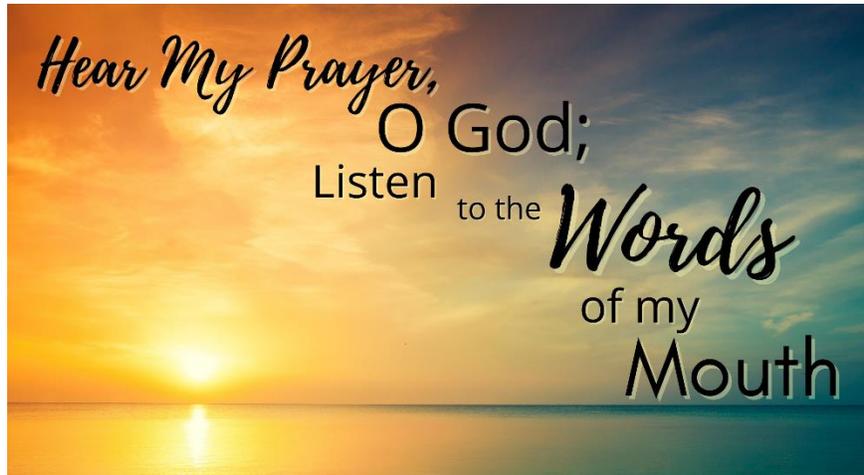


Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

Mission Statement: **Belong. Believe. Be sent. Share Jesus Christ for Life!**



17th Sunday After Pentecost

September 19, 2021

Today we hear James warn against selfish ambition, while the disciples quarrel over which one of them is the greatest. Jesus tells them the way to be great is to serve. Then, to make it concrete, he puts in front of them a flesh-and-blood child. We are called to welcome the children God puts in front of us, to make room for them in daily interaction, and to give them a place of honor in the assembly.

GATHERING

Prelude

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✚ one God, whose teaching is life, whose presence is sure, and whose love is endless. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sins to the one who welcomes us with an open heart.

Silence is kept for reflection.

God our comforter:

like lost sheep, we have gone astray. We gaze upon abundance and see scarcity. We turn our faces away from injustice and oppression. We exploit the earth with our apathy and greed.

Free us from our sin, gracious God. Listen when we call out to you for help.

Lead us by your love to love our neighbors as ourselves. Amen.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. By the gift of grace in ✚ Christ Jesus, God makes you righteous. Receive with glad hearts the forgiveness of all your sins.

Amen.

Opening Hymn: #588

There's a Wideness in God's Mercy

Prayer of the Day

O God, our teacher and guide, you draw us to yourself and welcome us as beloved children. Help us to lay aside all envy and selfish ambition, that we may walk in your ways of wisdom and understanding as servants of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Word

First Reading: Jeremiah 11:18-20

Today's reading tells of the suffering of the prophet Jeremiah, who announced God's word to Judah but was met with intense opposition and persecution. Jeremiah continues to trust in God in the midst of his suffering.

¹⁸It was the LORD who made it known to me, and I knew; then you showed me their evil deeds.

¹⁹But I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter. And I did not know it was against me that they devised schemes, saying, "Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, let us cut him off from the land of the living, so that his name will no longer be remembered!"

²⁰But you, O LORD of hosts, who judge righteously, who try the heart and the mind, let me see your retribution upon them, for to you I have committed my cause.

After Reading: Word of God word of Life. **Thanks be to God!** *Silence for Reflection*

Psalm: 54

God is my helper; it is the Lord who sustains my life. (Ps. 54:4)

¹Save me, O God, by your name; in your might, defend my cause.

²**Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth.**

³For strangers have risen up against me, and the ruthless have sought my life, those who have no regard for God.

⁴**Behold, God is my helper; it is the Lord who sustains my life.**

⁵Render evil to those who spy on me; in your faithfulness, destroy them.

⁶**I will offer you a freewill sacrifice and praise your name, O LORD, for it is good.**

⁷For you have rescued me from every trouble, and my eye looks down on my enemies.

Second Reading: James 3:13--4:3, 7-8a

The wisdom God gives unites our hearts and minds. Instead of living to satisfy our own wants and desires, we manifest this wisdom in peace, gentleness, mercy, and impartiality toward others.

¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. ¹⁴But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. ¹⁵Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. ¹⁶For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. ¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. ¹⁸And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.

¹Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? ²You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures. ⁷Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ^{8a}Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

After Reading: Word of God word of Life. **Thanks be to God!** *Silence for Reflection*

Gospel Acclamation



Gospel: Mark 9:30-37

Jesus' teaching and action in this text are directed to the church whenever it is seduced by the world's definition of greatness: prestige, power, influence, and money. The antidote to such a concern for greatness is servanthood.

³⁰[Jesus and the disciples went on] and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it;³¹for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again."³²But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

³³Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?"³⁴But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest.³⁵He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all."³⁶Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them,³⁷"Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

After reading: The Gospel of our Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.** *Silence for reflection*

Sermon

Do you ever wonder what it was like to be one of Jesus's disciples? Today's reading from Mark gives us some glimpses of the disciples and their relationship with Jesus and this made me think more deeply about them. These were men in a very unique situation. They were following a man who clearly was someone special, different, unique. They were attracted to him to the point of leaving their personal lives behind and committing their lives to be with, travel with, live with, learn from, observe, serve, imitate, and be a disciple of this man; this very distinctive and uncommon man. It makes me wonder, how did they process that decision? What went on in their heads? What was the attraction? How did they answer their family and friends when they told them, "I'm leaving to follow this man, this teacher, this exceptional person." How did they justify this to themselves? I can imagine their internal struggle. "I'm going to leave everything and everybody and follow this man I know nothing about. I'm going to do what? No, I can't do that. I have to stay here where my life is safe and secure. So why am I packing up and getting ready to leave? This is nonsense. This is foolishness. I can't simply walk away from life as I know it. But I can't stay. The pull is too great. For better or for worse, here I go." For them this was life-changing.

And in their early days I can imagine they experienced a wide range of emotions. They had to be in awe of what he did. He made wine from water; restored sight to the blind; fed thousands with minimal provisions; drove out evil spirits; walked on water and more. I imagine they never knew what to expect next. I can hear them saying, "What? Did you see that? Did he really do that? How did he do that? How can he top that? What's he going to do next? This is great, I'm glad to be one of his most intimate followers."

They had to be amazed at what he said. He taught with confidence. He spoke with wisdom beyond his age. He shared contentious concepts that challenged the status quo. He made risky statements that contradicted the established religious laws, regulations, and traditions. While amazed this must have worried them as

well. He was challenging their long held beliefs, values, philosophies, and convictions and probably made them once again question their decision to follow him.

They had to be astonished at how he treated people; the compassion he demonstrated; his kindness; and his humility. This had to feel right and it validated their life-changing decision.

They had to wonder at his claims to be the Son of Man; the promised Messiah, the Christ. “Can this be? Is he really the one we’ve been waiting for; the one we heard about in the synagogue? Am I really this close to the Messiah?” They had to feel a sense of pride and honor that this godly man had chosen them to be his disciples.

And at times when they were feeling pretty good about themselves and their situation, this pride evolved into an inflated sense of self-worth and even resulted in competing with one another about who was the greatest. An example of this was shared in today’s gospel reading. Mark writes that during their walk to Capernaum they argued among themselves about who was greatest; each wanting to be considered greater than the others; maybe claiming to understand what the others did not; maybe wanting to be Jesus’s favorite; maybe arguing that they were Jesus’s closest and most trusted confidant. They were naturally susceptible to personal ambition and the societal norms of rank and superiority and because of this, as shared in today’s reading, they incurred Jesus’s disappointment and anger.

And at times they felt fear and apprehension because they didn’t always understand what He was telling them and couldn’t come to grips with what was coming next. Today’s gospel shares one of those times.

Mark writes... *They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.*

We might read this and think, “What dullards these disciples were. How could they not understand this? This wasn’t the first time Jesus talked about his impending suffering and death. It makes sense that they might be confused and fearful. They sacrificed their personal lives to follow this man; this man who seems to be the real Messiah promised by the prophets; the Messiah who will change history. But now he says he’s going to be betrayed; he’s going to be killed; and then in three days rise. How can this be? That’s not how this Messiah thing is supposed to work. The Messiah will take over; establish a new kingdom; and rule with power and justice. The Messiah is too powerful for this to happen. He can’t be betrayed. He can’t die. And what’s this rise in three days stuff? What’s up with that? What does that mean? How is this possible? And a bigger question, why? Why? Why?

All this is contrary to their expectations; their understanding of the prophecies; their hopes; their desires. So it’s only natural for them to have questions; to be disillusioned; feel anxious; and be emotionally distressed at the thought of Jesus being killed.

Those are my thoughts about what it was like to be a disciple of Jesus. It’s far from a complete assessment but I believe it’s fairly accurate. You likely have additional images. From all the stories and accounts found in the New Testament we can readily see that being a disciple included: experiencing an unexplainable attraction; committing oneself to Jesus but at the same time questioning that decision; being in awe of miracles; amazed at his profound messages; astonished at the depth of his compassion; marveling at his Son of Man identity; gratified at being one of his chosen few; emboldened by being one of his chosen few and having visions of greatness; fearful at being one of his chosen few; unable to comprehend his declarations; clueless about what the future had in store; running away from threats; protecting oneself by denying even knowing Jesus; but eventually denying oneself on behalf of Jesus even to the point of death and martyrdom. It’s quite a mixed bag; good, bad, and ugly, but it’s all normal; all part of their human condition.

The question I began with was, “Do you ever wonder what it was like to be a disciple of Jesus.” It was clearly understood that I was asking if you ever wonder what it was like to be a disciple of Jesus at that time; during the life and ministry of Jesus and that’s the question I answered. But a similar question, and maybe a more

important question is “What is it like to be a disciple of Jesus?” That’s a question that each of us can answer; one we can answer from personal experience. We all know what it’s like from our first-hand experience; because we all are disciples of Jesus now; at this moment. At least that’s my assumption because if we weren’t disciples we wouldn’t be here today. Some may disagree with that assumption and argue that true discipleship involves some higher calling or a superior level of faith maturity, or a deeper personal relationship than most of us have. However, after looking at the original disciples, I’m convinced that we, like them, are indeed disciples.

I believe I am safe in assuming this because I believe each of us, like the original disciples, has made a commitment to him. Each of us seeks a deep personal relationship with him. We want to be close to him; walk with him. We want to learn from him. We want to be like him; imitate him; be a living copy of him. We want to follow his example; model our lives after his. We want to love as he loved; serve as he served; forgive as he forgave. And, we want to follow his command; spread the Gospel and bring others into a personal relationship with him so they might know and experience him just as we have. In all these ways we are like the original twelve. Like them we are disciples. But we are like them in other ways as well; maybe less desirable ways; but nevertheless just like them.

We, like they, struggle with our human condition and all the shortcomings associated therewith. We have moments of doubt. We question our faith. We lack trust. We become disillusioned. We don’t always do what we should. We succumb to temptations. We revert to our old sinful habits. We don’t love our neighbors as ourselves. We are motivated by selfish ambition and personal gain. We look out for ourselves; wanting what we want when we want it even at the expense of others. We, like the original twelve, don’t fully understand what’s in store for us. We don’t always see God at work in our lives. We don’t fully put our trust in God and completely let go of our personal lives and interests. We want to be faithful disciples but only to a certain point. We are fearful of what might happen if we fully let go; worried how it will change our lives. We are concerned about appearances. How will others see us? Will they think less of us? The original twelve had a set of expectations that Jesus didn’t fulfill. We do likewise. We develop concepts of God, Jesus, and faith based upon our meager understanding and we become disillusioned when those concepts are discredited or proved wrong. We cut and run in difficult times when we should stand firm trusting in God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We lack conviction. We keep the Good News of Jesus Christ to ourselves. We serve ourselves. We overlook or ignore the needs of others. We constantly struggle against our human condition. Just as the disciples did.

We are disciples and we are, in so many ways, just like the disciples hand-picked by Jesus. That’s good news and bad news. It’s one of those good news/bad news quandaries.

Jesus’s original disciples were flawed people with human frailties and shortcomings and yet were entrusted to carry on Christ’s mission and ministry; to share the Good News of God’s immeasurable love for the world and how He gave his Son so all might have everlasting life.

Likewise, you and I are flawed people with human frailties and shortcomings and yet we are disciples of Jesus entrusted to carry on Christ’s mission and ministry; to share the Good News of God’s immeasurable love for the world and how He gave his Son so all might have everlasting life.

The disciples of Christ, them and us, then and now, different but very much alike. All with the same mission to Believe, Belong, Be Sent – Share Jesus Christ for Life.

Amen.

Silence for Reflection

Hymn of the Day: #781

Children of the Heavenly Father

Apostle’s Creed

A: With the whole church, let us confess our faith. **C: 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 of Intercession

Made children and heirs of God's promise, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need. *A brief silence.*

God of community, we pray for the church around the world. Unite us in our love for you. Help us overcome our divisions, that we are encouraged to work together for your sake. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**
God of creation, we pray for this hurting earth. Awaken in us a new desire to care for this world and empower us to support agencies, organizations, and individual efforts to heal our environment. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of cooperation, we pray for nations of the world embroiled in conflict. Inspire leaders to listen to each other and work towards peaceful solutions to disagreements. Protect the vulnerable, especially children, who cannot find safety in their home or country. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of comfort, we pray for all who live with mental or physical illness. Help them find appropriate care. Bring healing and wholeness when the path forward seems bleak. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of compassion, we pray for the young people of this congregation. Renew in us your call to welcome the children in our midst. As they grow, strengthen their faith and our commitment to them. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those on our prayer list: Janet McKinley, Shirley Williams, Bonnie Hileman, Dale Neild, Becky Oden, Nancy Jamerson, Peggy Gilbert, Mara Joy Nelson, Linda Rager Hampton, Marie Betten-Niccum, Nancy Coble, Betty Hamlin, Betty Lawrenz, and Robert & Lois Dowd, Erin Working, and the family and friends of Ruth Hauser. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of consolation, we give you thanks for our loved ones who have died and pray for all who grieve today. Shine your grace on all your saints. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Receive these prayers, O God, and those in our hearts known only to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Meal

Offering Prayer

God of abundance, **you cause streams to break forth in the desert and manna to rain from the heavens. Accept the gifts you have first given us. Unite them with the offering of our lives to nourish the world you love so dearly; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

The Great Thanksgiving

P: The Lord be with you. **C: And also with you.** P: Lift up your hearts! **C: We lift them to the Lord.** P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.** P: It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, ... we praise your name and join their unending hymn: **C: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, hosanna in the highest.**

Words of Institution

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread... Do this for the remembrance of me.

The Lord's Prayer

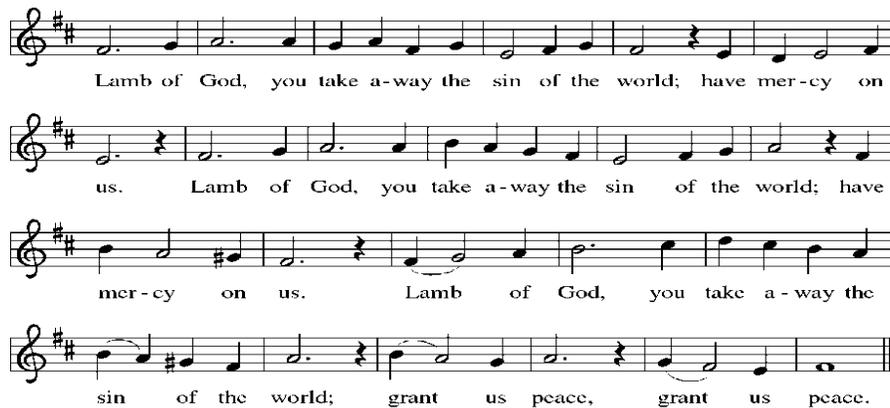
Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

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.

Invitation to Communion

All who hunger and thirst, come. The table is ready.

Lamb of God



Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on
us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the
sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

Prayer after Communion

Lord of life, in the gift of your body and blood you turn the crumbs of our faith into a feast of salvation. Send us forth into the world with shouts of joy, bearing witness to the abundance of your love in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Sending

Blessing and Dismissal *we bless each other*

People of God, you are Christ's body, bringing new life to a suffering world. The holy Trinity, ✠ one God, bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

Go in peace. The living Word dwells in you.

Thanks be to God.

Sending Hymn: #537

On Our Way Rejoicing

Postlude

Announcements:

Stan Escott will be providing the sermon for Sunday the 26th and Pastor Heather Apel from the Indiana and Kentucky Synod will lead worship on October 3.

PRAYERS & CONCERNS *In order to keep the prayers and concerns list up to date, please notify the church office when prayers are no longer needed. Thank you for your assistance.*

