

PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
PENTECOST - THE HOLY SPIRIT BECKONS
Reverend John R. Hanson
Sunday, August 22, 2021, 8:00, 9:15, 10:30 a.m.

MUSICIAN

J. Hanson

INTRODUCTION

The readings offer a different perspective and a helpful tool for our lives this week. The decision is whether we will remain faithful in following Christ or not. The perspective is to recognize that, as we resist evil, it's not people we are dealing with but the evil in our own hearts and in the institutions, systems, and structures of the world. And the tool which makes it possible for us to navigate all of this is prayer. May our worship lead us to Christlike perspectives and compassionate prayer.

THEME AND VERSE

How beautiful are the places where you dwell, O Lord! This house of worship cannot contain your glory; even the heavens are bursting with the goodness of your presence! Happy are those who find their strength in you. Hear us this day, Holy God, as we proclaim your praises to all the earth!

"Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God." John 6:68-69

HYMN

"All Things Bright and Beautiful"

Blue # 767

***All things bright and beautiful all creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful, the Lord God made them all.***

Each little flower that opens, each little bird that sings,
God made their glowing colors and made their tiny wings.

The cold wind in the winter, the pleasant summer sun,
The ripe fruits in the garden, he made them every one.

God gave us eyes to see them, and lips that we might tell
How great is God Almighty, who has made all things well.

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PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

God is good.

All the time.

GOSPEL: John 6:56-69

The "hard saying" that offends Jesus' disciples is his claim that his followers must eat his flesh and drink his blood. The followers who return to their old lives know something about how odd this sounds. Simon Peter, on the other hand, knows something about the scarcity of living, gracious words. He asks the most important question: "To whom shall we go?"

[Jesus said,] ⁵⁶"Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. ⁵⁷Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. ⁵⁸This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever." ⁵⁹He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum. ⁶⁰When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?" ⁶¹But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, "Does this offend you? ⁶²Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? ⁶³It is the spirit that

gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ⁶⁴But among you there are some who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. ⁶⁵And he said, "For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father."

⁶⁶Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. ⁶⁷So Jesus asked the twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?" ⁶⁸Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

All the time.

God is good!

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

We gather as one holy people to worship

in the name of the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Where can we go with our unworthiness? How can we present ourselves before God?

Lord God, we call ourselves your children, but we turn away as soon as your teachings become difficult. We stake our claim on your claim of us as your "chosen people." But are you the Lord of the way we live? We say the words and confess you as Lord, yet we do not follow as disciples. Instead, we choose to serve ourselves. This hour we do not wish to go away, Lord, to whom can we go? Lord, forgive our sins.

It is the Lord God who brings us out of the bondage of unworthiness and the slavery of sin. Our heavenly Father has chosen us, for Christ Jesus is revealed to us. For Christ's sake our sins are forgiven. On this day may we choose to live the words of eternal life. By the power of the Holy Spirit may we choose to serve our risen Lord, living as disciples of truth and faithfulness.

All to the glory of the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

WELCOME

SHARING OF THE PEACE

CHILDREN'S SERMON

"Fearfully and Wonderfully Made"

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Holy One, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below. You keep covenant and hold steadfast love with all who walk before you with pure and upright hearts. Fill our lives with your glory. Give us the strength and the power to withstand the forces of evil at work in our lives and in our world. Amen.

READING: Ephesians 6:10-20

Like a general giving a rousing speech to troops before battle, the apostle encourages the Ephesian Christians to recognize that their struggle is not against human beings but against spiritual forces, and in order to stay strong, they need to put on God's armor and remain faithful in prayer. He then he asks for prayers as he seeks to spread the Gospel.

¹⁰Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹²For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

¹³Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. ¹⁵As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready

to proclaim the gospel of peace. ¹⁶With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. ¹⁹Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

HYMN

"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"

Green # 229

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
Our helper he amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe!

His craft and pow'r are great, and armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal.

A mighty fortress is our God, a sword and shield victorious;
He breaks the cruel oppressor's rod and wins salvation glorious.
The old satanic foe has sworn to work us woe!

With craft and dreadful might, he arms himself to fight. On earth he has no equal.

God's Word forever shall abide, no thanks to foes who fear it;
For God himself fights by our side with weapons of the Spirit.

Were they to take our house, goods, honor, child, or spouse,
Though life be wrenched away, they cannot win the day. The Kingdom's ours forever!

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SERMON - *A Cultural Phenomenon or a Human Defect? "Lord, to whom shall we go? This teaching is difficult." Some, after asking for direction, quit before they started! To be strong in the Lord is to join Peter in his confession and in his belief, "You are the Holy one of God!" This is the FOUNDATION of our faith!*

The Church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ, her Lord;
She is his new creation by water and the Word.
From heav’n he came and sought her to be his holy bride;
With his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died.

Elect from ev’ry nation, yet one o’er all the earth;
Her charter of salvation: One Lord, one faith, one birth.
One holy name she blesses, partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses with ev’ry grace endued.

Though with a scornful wonder this world sees her oppressed,
By schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed,
Yet saints their watch are keeping; their cry goes up: “How long?”
And soon the night of weeping shall be the morn of song.

Through toil and tribulation and tumult of her war,
She waits the consummation of peace forevermore;
Till with the vision glorious her longing eyes are blest,
And the great Church victorious shall be the Church at rest.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

THE LORD’S PRAYER

BLESSING & PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Lord God, you reach out to us in Jesus Christ, forgiving our sins and nourishing us for life without limit. Our sins are forgiven; we can be at peace! Invigorate and nourish us that in and through this bread and wine your love may meet us and your life complete us with the power and glory of your kingdom. Amen

BENEDICTION & SENDING

These are complex times. As we go into this following week, let us look carefully how we walk, not blundering along like fools, but as those who live in the wisdom of Christ.

Wherever we go and whatever happens to us, we will give thanks to God, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Go, blessed and filled with the wisdom of God, blessed and nourished by the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, +, and blessed and directed by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Amen! We go in Christ’s name, to love and serve!

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**Worship, as an action, continues to change.
Use the space below to guide your thoughts as the Spirit may lead you.**

Use this time to center your distractions in order to help activate your worship.

This week there is the choice to abandon our devotion to God and God's ways. In the Gospel, many of Jesus' followers find his call to be completely united with him – to believe that he is the source of life and to take him into their beings (eating his flesh and drinking his blood) – too much to handle and they abandon Jesus. But, his disciples, although they may be feeling like they want to go, recognize that life is found in Christ and so remain faithful. In the Old Testament related reading, Joshua calls the people to choose where they will put their devotion, while making his own commitment to God clear and public.

Linked with our choice to follow Jesus there is a call to prayer. In the famous passage from Ephesians, Paul calls the believers to prepare themselves for the attacks of evil by putting on God's armor (making a choice to stay faithful), and he calls them to prayer for themselves and for him as he seeks to spread the Gospel.

The theme this week is simple and clear: every day we will be faced with the choice to remain faithful to Christ or to turn away, and we will need the intimacy with God that comes through prayer and through sharing in the life of Christ to remain true to our calling. In a world where religion is being questioned and falling out of fashion, and in which many parts of the Church are in decline, this choice, and the call to prayer, are as important as ever.

One of the struggles we face in the Church today is the tendency to demonize one another, especially those of other creeds or belief systems. By doing this we justify our judgment and thus free ourselves from the guilt of failing to love as Jesus did. This is a choice to abandon the life of Christ in favor of our own self-interest. It's a choice we deal with between denominations and religions, within church communities, and even in our own homes. Yet, if we take seriously the call to stay faithful to Christ, then we cannot avoid "eating his flesh and drinking his blood" – taking the life, the values, the mission, the purposes, the attitudes, and the priorities of Jesus into our hearts and souls and living completely from the choice to follow Jesus.

This means that we never have an excuse to stop loving, and we cannot justify our condemnation of another person. It means that when we resist evil, we have to look beyond individuals to the systems and ideologies that oppose God's Reign. Only then can we love our enemy, while fighting for justice.

In our neighborhoods, communities and homes, we need this "Jesus perspective" to find ways to overcome partisanship and work together for the good of all. To get this "Jesus perspective" requires a life of deep, transforming prayer which goes beyond just asking God for things, and becomes about immersing ourselves in the life and mission of God. This is the stuff of "living Christian" – praying, choosing daily to stay true to the love and grace of Jesus, and working to heal whatever evil we encounter within and outside of us, without rejecting other people in the process. May God help us as we seek to rise to this challenge.

John van de Laar at sacredise.com