

PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
PENTECOST - THE SPIRIT BECKONS
Reverend John R. Hanson
August 8, 2021, 8:00 and 10:30 a.m.

PRELUDE

J. Hanson, Musician

INTRODUCTION

The call to action continues this week. Though the readings seem to be quite disparate in their themes, the single thread that runs through them all is the call to live with grace, integrity, and compassion, for both friend and enemy! It's the small, daily acts of love and forgiveness, of honesty and compassion, that make a difference in the world, and it is these acts that we are invited to make the habits of our lives. May the grace, honesty, and compassion of Jesus be seen in us because we have gathered. We live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.

THEME AND VERSE

We will praise God in every moment and through every situation. Through our words and action, our lives will pay tribute to him. Whenever the poor and humble hear of his greatness, they will also celebrate! We come and lift up God's name; we praise his name together!

The Lord hears his people when they call to him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those who are crushed in spirit. The Lord will redeem those who serve him. Everyone who trusts in him will be freely pardoned. ~ Psalm 34:17-18, 22

HYMN

"Oh, How I Love Jesus"

Burgundy #250

There is a name I love to hear, I love to sing its worth;
It sounds like music in my ear, the sweetest name on earth.

***Oh, how I love Jesus, oh, how I love Jesus,
Oh, how I love Jesus because he first loved me!***

It tells me of a Savior's love, who died to set me free;
It tells me of his precious blood, the sinner's perfect plea.

It tells me what my father hath in store for every day;
And tho' I tread a darksome path, yields sunshine all the way.

It tells of one whose loving heart can feel my deepest woe,
Who in each sorrow bears a part that none can bear below.

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THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION God is good. **All the time.**

GOSPEL: John 6:35, 41-51

After feeding more than five thousand people in the wilderness, Jesus proclaims himself as the bread of life. He responds to his critics by comparing the life that he gives to the manna that their ancestors ate in the wilderness, which could not keep them from death. Rather, Jesus says, he gives life that does not end, and he reveals God to those who are drawn to him.

³⁵Jesus said to [the crowd,] "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

⁴¹Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." ⁴²They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" ⁴³Jesus answered them, "Do not complain among yourselves. ⁴⁴No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. ⁴⁵It is written in the prophets,

'And they shall all be taught by God.'

Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. ⁴⁶Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father.

⁴⁷"Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸I am the bread of life.

⁴⁹Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. ⁵⁰This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹I am the living bread that came down from heaven.

Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION All the time.

God is good!

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

We gather together to worship

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

Let us restart this time with God by taking time for our true confession.

Lord God, we call ourselves people of faith, but we think when we reach the end of our rope it is the end of the rope. We fill up our hearts with wrangling, bitterness, and malice, and call it "standing up for what's right," yet your overwhelming message to us is your grace. We need your redeeming love. We need it badly! You deliver to us "the bread of life," but we resist allowing it to nourish us, and so we wallow in despair or self-righteousness. Forgive us for the sins; save us!

Our Heavenly Father draws us to himself through the word and the word made flesh. Jesus Christ is the word made flesh, the living bread come down from heaven. It is for Christ's sake that our sins are forgiven. Through this grace we regain our strength and put away anger and wrath and all sorts of evil dealing. Even our words give grace to those who will hear. In the Spirit, as beloved children of God, living in love as Christ loved us, we give ourselves as an offering and sacrifice to God.

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

SHARING OF THE PEACE

CHILDREN'S SERMON

"Go Ahead, Start It!"

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Gracious, loving God, we have tasted your goodness in the past, and it has satisfied us. But now, in this new day, we turn to you again for the bread of life that you have prepared for us and for the wine of the Spirit that you pour out for your people. Help us, Lord, to empty ourselves of things that hinder us from knowing the fullness of your love and fill us with those things that make us what you want us to be. We need you, Lord. Touch us and make us whole. This we ask through Christ Jesus your Son. Amen

READING: Ephesians 4:25—5:2

The apostle instructs the Ephesian believers on how to live as true followers of Christ. This does not mean Christians are perfect. Paul encourages them to be honest with one another, to speak to one another in edifying ways, and to avoid anger, shouting, and slander. The Spirit is at work in our lives so that our actions and attitudes genuinely reflect the love and forgiveness we have received through Christ and his death.

²⁵So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. ²⁶Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷and do not make room for the devil. ²⁸Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. ²⁹Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear.

³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. ³¹Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, ³²and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

^{5:1}Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, ²and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

HYMN

“I Am the Bread of Life”

Blue # 702

“I am the Bread of life, you who come to me shall not hunger,
And who believe in me shall not thirst.
No one can come to me unless the Father beckons.”

***“And I will raise you up, and I will raise you up,
And I will raise you up on the last day.”***

“The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world,
And you who eat of this bread, you shall live forever, you shall live forever.”

“I am the resurrection, I am the life, you who believe in me,
Even if you die, you shall live forever.”

SERMON *“Compassion, integrity, and healing of our small section of the world becomes like a pebble dropped in a pond, spreading ripples out into the world.”*

HYMN

“Be Thou My Vision”

Blue # 776

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me save that thou art;
Thou my best thought by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word;
I ever with thee and thou with me Lord.
Thou my great father and I thy true one,
Thou in me dwelling and I with thee one.

Riches I heed not nor man's empty praise;
Thou mine inheritance now and always.
Thou and thou only be first in my heart,
High king of heaven, my treasure thou art.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

THE LORD'S PRAYER

BLESSING & PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Lord God, you draw us to you and welcome us, emptied of pride and hungry for grace, to this your kingdom feast. Nowhere can we find the food for which our souls cry out but here, Lord, at your table. 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

As we go into the coming week, may we experience the abundance of God's marvelous love. May we come to know how wide, how long, how high, and how deep God's love really is. All glory to God, who is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or imagine!

We live, empowered by God's love.

Filled with the goodness of God, the nourishment of Jesus Christ, the bread of life, and the power of the Holy Spirit, we go in peace to serve God in all that we think, do, and say.

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 on the back 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's readings hold together a variety of disparate elements. In the Gospel we find Jesus being challenged for saying that he is the bread of life, and claiming that he reveals God, that he offers eternal life to those who come to him, and that his followers will be raised by him at the last day. There is a tremendous strength in Jesus' response to his critics, even as he proclaims a deeply invitational message.

In Paul's words to the Ephesian Church, some simple, practical guidelines are offered for living together as Christ followers. How we speak to one another and treat one another is significant, because it builds our life together, and reflects the life and grace of God. In the light of these themes, what stands out is a call to Christlike behavior that is lived in the daily routines of our lives. As we celebrate God's goodness, we are called to reflect and imitate that goodness in Christlike grace, compassion, gentleness, and honesty. We are called to resist evil, but love those who oppose us, even to the point of grieving their demise. This is not just living "what comes naturally," but is a challenge to embrace forgiveness, love and honesty in a radical, counter-cultural way, and in so doing, allowing God's life to flow through us to touch and restore our neighbors, our communities and our world. The simple challenge of this week is to believe that choosing to live like Christ – the Bread of Life – each day can have positive consequences for our world. As someone once suggested, we need to think globally and act locally – even in considering our daily interactions and choices.

It doesn't take much thinking to recognize the benefits of living as Paul describes in our homes and communities. What we might not always realize, though, is that it is when we live like this that we make a positive impact on the world. As we follow the Bread of Life and live in ways that bring life to our families, friends, neighbors, strangers, and even enemies, we become little "breads of life" to our world. As we live in ways that extend Christ's invitation to others, so they begin to find life and compassion, forgiveness and restoration through us.

It starts with the small things like being honest, speaking graciously and being quick to forgive. As these simple daily acts become the habits by which we live, we find ourselves growing to the point where love for our enemies, even to the extent of grief at their suffering, becomes a regular feature of our lives as well. This Christlikeness, lived out daily, then contributes to the compassion, integrity and healing of our small section of the world, and becomes like a pebble dropped in a pond, spreading ripples out into the world. Like Gandhi suggested: we become the change we want to see. If we long for a world that begins to reveal God's Reign on earth "as it is in heaven" this is the first step to becoming co-workers with God to make that happen.

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