



Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

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Church at Home

Announcements

Welcome to Trinity's worship resource for 22 August 2021, celebrating the thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

We add Ida Rappe to our prayers, who fell, broke her hip, and is now recovering from surgery.

We also add Hart Johnstone, a friend of Wanda's, to our prayer list.

Thank you again for your support for Trinity. Please continue to mail in cheques, or drop them off in the church's mailbox or make your donation either through PAR or through the Donate button on the church's website, at www.trinitylutheran.ca.

Now to worship.

Worship

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all! **And also with you!**

Prayer of the day:

Holy God, your word feeds your people with life that is eternal. Direct our choices and preserve us in your truth, that, renouncing what is false and evil, we may lie in you, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord.

Amen

First Reading: Joshua 24: 1-2a, 14-18

Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God. And Joshua said to all the people,

"Now therefore revere the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. Now if you are unwilling to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

Then the people answered, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight. He protected us along all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed; and the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will

serve the LORD, for he is our God.”

Psalm Psalm 34:15-22

The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry.

The face of the LORD is against evildoers, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears, and rescues them from all their troubles.

The LORD is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD rescues them from them all.

He keeps all their bones; not one of them will be broken.

Evil brings death to the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.

The LORD redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

Second Reading: Ephesians 6:10-20

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For 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.

Therefore 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. Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth

around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Pray 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. Pray 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, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

Gospel Reading: John 6:56-69

Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This 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.” He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?” But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, “Does this offend you? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But 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. And he said, “For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.”

Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. So Jesus asked the twelve, “Do you also wish to go away?” Simon Peter answered him, “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.”

Homily

Over the last few weeks the gospel readings have been marching through the sixth chapter of John's gospel where Jesus talks about being the Bread of Life.

Last week was the section where the Jews in the audience pushed back. Jesus goes on and on about 'eating his body' and 'drinking his blood', which evokes repulsive images of cannibalism in our minds. If you think about it literally what Jesus is saying is really gross. But consider that in Old Testament times, from Moses on, the blood of a thing was considered its very life force. Ancient holiness codes have instructions about whether or not to ensure the blood was drained from an animal sacrifice or to include it in a burnt offering, depending on the circumstances. While it is true that John is writing after the temple has been destroyed, the historical tradition of ritual sacrifice would not be far from their minds. Perhaps Jesus is saying, in a language that this part of his audience will understand, that Jesus, himself, is the very essence, the life-force of creation.

The week previous Jesus is setting up this very idea when he talks about having come down from heaven, doing the will of his father, "that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day."

Remember that many in the audience were looking and hoping for a messiah that would arrive in great and mighty power to throw off the shackles of their Roman occupation and restore them to the station that 'God's chosen people' deserved. How could this Jesus, whose carpenter father they know, be anything that special. Again Jesus draws the contrast between the Manna that God gave their ancestors as food in the desert – bread from heaven that lasted only one day at a time - and himself, the bread of heaven that brings eternal life.

This teaching began, some 5 weeks ago, with the miracle of Jesus feeding bread and fish to a huge crowd of 5000 (men as well as any of their family members there with them). What a great way to start a lesson! Provide physical bread to satisfy the entire crowd and then move on to spiritual bread. When Jesus says "the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." the disciples say, "give us this bread always", to which Jesus replies, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry"¹.

This morning's reading from John's gospel reveals another concept that was emerging in late First Century Palestine called Gnosticism. This was a collection of ideas that the way to heaven / salvation / spiritual Nirvana, if you will, was through pursuing secret spiritual knowledge that was somehow revealed by following Jesus. In this mind-set your physical body and desire for material things could hold you back from ascending along the desired spiritual path.

This idea was likely helped along with Jesus saying things like, "It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless", as we hear this morning. Some of the gospels that are not part of our Bible – the gospel of Mary, the gospel of Thomas, for examples, have some spiritual language that also likely helped the movement along. Throughout the second century Gnosticism was condemned as heresy and not part of orthodox church teaching, until its followers fell away to become other, non-Christian sects.

It seems to me that the ideas behind Jesus' words here are more closely aligned to the chat we read about between Nicodemus and Jesus, about being born anew, in John's chapter 3. Nicodemus is all hung up on the physical, material aspect of birth – he says, "Can one enter

¹ John 6:33-35

a second time into the mother's womb and be born?"². Jesus answers him with, "no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit"³.

Like Nicodemus, we all get hung up on this. We are born, we become viable, we learn and grow, becoming more and more independent along the way. We fend for ourselves, we fight for ourselves, and we spend so much energy on proving to ourselves and others that we are OK, even better than OK, we are making it.

Of course the symbols of our success are all material. Whether it is food or expensive wine or fancy cars or big houses we buy into the world's seductive lie that we must always be accumulating more and better stuff, the lie that we should want to make others green with envy, the lie that without all of that we are pitiful losers. To do that we have to subjugate nature, pillaging the resources we need to show off our excesses and poisoning the rest of creation with what we use up and throw away. When that is not enough we try to subjugate others. Be it slavery of old or the economic slavery we engage in today, we somehow convince ourselves that we are better than the bum in the street, or the guy who parks my car, or picks up my garbage, or scans my groceries. We strive so hard to be independent and unique, as if our egos cannot stand the idea that we might not be special.

Along comes Jesus who says that none of that matters. We are all loved by God, and loved dearly. What is more, that love cannot be earned or deserved, but freely given.

Chief Seattle said, "All things share the same breath – the beast, the tree, the man. The air shares its spirit with all the life it supports".

Neale Donald Walsch writes, "You must stop seeing God as separate from you, and you as separate from each other. Nothing exists in the universe that is separate from anything else. Everything is intrinsically connected, irrevocably interdependent, interactive, interwoven into the fabric of all life".

Saint Bonaventure wrote, "In everything, whether it is a thing sensed or a thing known, God himself is hidden within".

Jesus comes along to say that despite the energy we spend trying to be materially unique and separate from each other, we are all connected. We are connected as part of creation. From the air we breathe to the dust from which we were formed, we are all part of each other, and we are all part of God.

As the bread of life, Jesus is longing for us to see how interconnected we are with each other and with God's beautiful creation. Eating the bread of communion reminds us of how connected we are – not just with each other in this room, but also with those long dead and those yet to be born. In God we are all one.

Kathy Troccoli is a Christian musical artist and song-writer. I am borrowing words she wrote in a recent Facebook post, and I want you to imagine them as coming from Jesus:

"I yearn more than ever—to be manna from heaven for you.

² John 3:4

³ John 3:5

I yearn to be the bread and wine of life to nourish you and fill you.
I yearn to be the hand that lifts your head to look at where your help comes from.
I yearn to be a voice that infuses hope when your soul is oh, so weary.
I yearn to carry the torch in the night, so you can find your way."

Jesus yearns to love you.

Amen

PEACE The peace of the Lord be with you always.

THE PRAYERS, 20210822

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

A brief silence.

Good and gracious God, you are part of everything we see and hear. We thank you for the spiritual nourishment that sustains us, and for these blessings,
which we name out loud or in our hearts... in gratitude,
hear our prayer.

God of courage, bless all leaders of your church. Make them ready to proclaim the gospel of peace and strengthen them to preach your loving word. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

God of creation, bless fields and orchards. Protect the land from drought and bring life-giving rain to support growth. Instruct your people in wise treatment of the world you have provided for all your creatures. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

God of community, bless all who seek justice between nations and peoples. Give guidance to bridge-builders, heal divisions, and inspire cooperation in times of crisis, disaster, and war. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

God of compassion, bless all who are in any need. Accompany all who are lonely and feeling abandoned and remind them of your abiding presence. Accompany all who are persecuted and exploited and open us to their cries. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

God of change, bless our transitions. Guide all who are embarking on new stages in life such as a new job, new school, or new community. Sustain enduring friendships and kindle new relationships and interests. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

God of inspiration, we pray for your church in our little corner of the world, especially this morning for the congregation of Redeemer, London, and their pastor Katherine Gohm. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of growth, bless the families of this congregation, particularly this morning the Hermann, Herold, and Hillman families.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of presence, bless those of this community who cannot be with us this morning, and those who walk with them, especially:

In Residence: Margaret; Therese; Maria; Stan; Katie; Katherine; Cordelle;

Needing our prayers: Peter; Brenda; Doug; Dorothy; Bill; Bev; Ed; Marilyn; Debbie; Audrey; John; John; Greg; Sam; Katie; Walter; Hart;

recovering: Katherine; Carol; Betty; Betty; Gary; Greg; Kati; Bill; Sharon; Mary; Ida;

Home-bound: Augusta;

And all those we name in our hearts...

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of comfort, bless all who mourn the deaths of their beloved ones. We give you thanks for the saints who have gone before us. Renew our confidence in your promise of resurrection and life in the world to come. 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.

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom, and teach us to pray:

**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.

Benediction

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God

and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord;

and the + blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,

be among you and remain with you always.

Amen

Dismissal

Worship is over, now service begins.

Go on your way rejoicing, enabled by the Holy Spirit, to love and serve the risen Lord.

Thanks be to God!