

August 22nd, 2021 Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost – Email/At Home Missal

The ZOOM link for today's service, which opens at 9.30 am on August 22nd, 2021, can be found here
 Sunday Worship August 22nd, 2021 09:30 am ZOOM room opens; service begins at 10:00 am.

Click here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86566578300?pwd=WnlrZ01zRXp3b3V0Q1RlTUx5RTlHZz09>

Meeting ID: 865 6657 8300

Passcode: 411838

You don't have to have a computer or internet to connect to any of our church Zoom services; you can also just call in on one of these numbers (long distance charges may apply): (All Canadian numbers). You can also access the ZOOM from your telephone by using the "One tap mobile" option:

+12042727920,,86566578300#,,,,*411838# Canada

+14388097799,,86566578300#,,,,*411838# Canada

Dial by your location

+1 204 272 7920 Canada

+1 438 809 7799 Canada

+1 587 328 1099 Canada

+1 647 374 4685 Canada

+1 647 558 0588 Canada

+1 778 907 2071 Canada

Meeting ID: 865 6657 8300

Passcode: 411838

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kbPCYJmux>

We plan to reopen on Sunday, September 12th for in-person worship! Further details to follow!

PASTORAL VISITS: Even though our church is closed, please know that our Interim Pastor Chun Zhang is available for safe visits with social distancing requirements in place, and also for telephone visits. Please reach out to him by calling the church office at 519-653-4721 to arrange a visit.

Thanksgiving for Our Presence on This Land:

Click Here: <https://youtu.be/SqEZLBrAu4c>

Gathering Hymn: 'Come and Join Us' (*Bradley Moggach – vocal & piano*)

Click here: <https://youtu.be/f5QzyBgW3Fg>

(Text: John Wesley Oldham/Music: Bradley Moggach)

Greeting:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all, in your home and in mine.

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 live in you, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen**

The 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.” (NRSV)

Word of God, Word of Life. **C: Thanks be to God.***

Psalm: 34:15-22

The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous,
and God’s ears are open to their cry.

***The face of the LORD is against those who do evil,
to erase the remembrance of them from the earth.***

The righteous cry, and the LORD hears them
and delivers them from all their troubles.

***The LORD is near to the brokenhearted
and saves those whose spirits are crushed.***

Many are the troubles of the righteous,
but the LORD delivers them from every one.

***God will keep safe all their bones;
not one of them shall be broken.***

Evil will bring death to the wicked
and those who hate the righteous will be punished.

***O LORD, you redeem the life of your servants,
and those who put their trust in you will not be punished.****

(From sundaysandseasons.com. Copyright © 2021 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved).

The Second Reading: Ephesians 6:10-20

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. (NRSV)

Word of God, Word of Life. **C: Thanks be to God.***

Gospel Acclamation: ‘Listen, Listen to the Gospel Message....’ (Bradley Moggach – piano)

Click here: # <https://youtu.be/X2jHYEsLg8A>

The Holy Gospel according to John 6:56-69

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus said, “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.” (NRSV)
The Gospel of the Lord. **C: Praise to you, O Christ.***

Sermon (Imagine Interim Pastor Chun Zhang’s voice here)

In a conversation I had with a faithful elderly congregant, she was sad about the fact that her children and grandchildren do not come to church often. Although she told me that everyone could choose their own way of religious expression, she did complain about the trend today of many youngsters and their parents turning to sports as a form of religion. They will do anything to keep themselves involved in sports. They become so committed and loyal to sports that everything else takes a back seat. In fact, according to a current survey, there are less Canadian attending church on Sunday than taking their children to sports.

Responding to this situation, our first lesson today has much to teach us. Even though we as Lutherans believe, as did the Israelites, that God has taken the initiative to choose us; nonetheless, like Joshua and the Israelite tribes, we are called upon to respond to God’s having chosen us first by also choosing to be faithful to God.

In the setting of today’s 1st reading, Joshua was already very old. Under his faithful and wise leadership, the Israelite tribes had entered the Promised Land. They had been successful in their military campaigns against the Canaanites. The Israelites had occupied the Promised Land and the land had been allocated to all 12 tribes. Life was going back to normal.

However, in his heart, Joshua knew that there were dangers within this normal life. The danger is that whenever life becomes easier and more prosperous, people start to depend on themselves rather than on God. It could cause the people to become indifferent towards the LORD and their commitment to him. It could delude them into believing that it wasn’t God who had been providing for them all along, rather, they could falsely believe that it was all because of their positive attitude and their hard works. Moreover, the Israelites could put their eggs in multiple baskets by worshipping various gods associated with the people around them. And they might lose their sense of identity as God’s Chosen People.

Joshua is now at the end of his life. And he saw this danger with the help of God’s Spirit. So he called Israelites all together in one place, to renew the covenant between God and His people and reinforce their identity and unity in God. So, in a very solemn speech, Joshua reminded the Israelite tribes of how God had called Abraham away from the worship of many gods in the land of his birth to the worship of the One, True God who led him to the Promised Land and multiplied his offspring.

Joshua then urged the Israelite tribes to abandon all false gods from foreign lands and serve the LORD their God only. He left them an option: “choose this day whom you will serve” the LORD God or the false gods of

their ancestors. Then, he made it clear: “as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.” In this call to covenant renewal, Joshua took the initiative as God’s chosen leader to set the example before the people—even though the majority of Israelite tribes serve other false gods, Joshua was going to serve the LORD God. He did not force his people, what he did was setting a good and right example.

The people of Israel, in response, did remember what the LORD their God had done to them and literally recited their salvation history. They remembered how God had delivered and protected and provided for them. Then they promised to God by answering Joshua, saying: “Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God.”

Joshua, to reinforce their commitment to God further, reminded them of the tragic consequences of serving other gods, which led to the eternal punishment and separation from the One and true God.

In our faith and life journey, we too can run into dangers and temptations. There are literally millions of false gods we can choose to follow and worship. We, like Joshua and the Israelites, also need to remember who’s our God, and what relationship we have with our God. We b/need to remember where we have been, where we are now, and where we are heading to. Jesus makes that quite clear for us in the Gospel reading for today. He tells us that we, like the Israelites, have been delivered, protected, and provided for. We, like the Israelites, have been and still are chosen by God. We have been called, loved, and forgiven. We have been assured that Jesus is still with us always.

Do we take this promise for granted? Do we, like many people of this world, cherry-pick the benefits while ignoring the divine calling of being blessings of this world. Or do we, like Joshua and the Israelites say: “We will serve the LORD”?

Each Sunday in a sense is a covenant renewal ceremony. We are given the opportunity to remember who we are, whose people we are, where we are, where we are going, and how to get there. Therefore, Joshua’s confession of faith is really one that we all can join together in: “As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.” Amen.

Hymn of the Day: ELW # 465 ‘As the Grains of Wheat’ (*Bradley Moggach – piano & vocal*)

Click here: <https://youtu.be/tHSIRnAd758>

Text: Didache, 2nd cent.; Marty Haugen; Text © 1990 GIA Publications, Inc., 7404 S. Mason Ave., Chicago, IL 60638. www.giamusic.com. 800.442.3358. All rights reserved. Used by permission Under One License # A727610)

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 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 abundance, bless all who are sick or in any need, especially Bill, Don, Tammy, Alice, Don, Lynn, Sharon and Bryan. Encourage those who have begun to lose heart. Strengthen and renew us with your Spirit. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

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

Share the peace of Christ:

The Peace of Christ be with you always, in your home and in mine, and throughout God's creation.

You are invited to prepare your table with bread and wine, or crackers and juice, whatever is available to you, so that you may participate in the meal.

Meal: Click here for the communion liturgy from worship on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/-RnRfJoYmjs>

Prayer after Communion

Jesus, Bread of life,
we have received from your table
more than we could ever ask.
As you have nourished us in this meal,
now strengthen us to love the world with your own life.
In your name we pray.

Amen

Blessing:

The blessing of God,
who provides for us, feeds us, and journeys with us,
✠ be upon you now and forever.

Amen.

Sending Hymn: 'In Midst of Life's Adversity' (Bradley Moggach – piano)

Click here: <https://youtu.be/H92hluqeelc>

(Text: John Wesley Oldham/Music: Bradley Moggach)

Dismissal:

Go in peace. You are the body of Christ.

Thanks be to God.