

August 29th, 2021 Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost – Email Missal

The ZOOM link for today's service, which opens at 9.30 am on August 29th, 2021, can be found here:

Sunday Worship August 29th, 2021 09:30 am ZOOM room opens; service begins at 10:00 am.

Click here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87943072549?pwd=RUI5UDlucjdGK3kxTmYvWHBmeXAvQT09>

Meeting ID: 879 4307 2549

Passcode: 768271

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:

+17789072071,,87943072549#,,, *768271# Canada

+12042727920,,87943072549#,,, *768271# Canada

Dial by your location:

+1 778 907 2071 Canada

+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

Meeting ID: 879 4307 2549

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Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87943072549?pwd=RUI5UDlucjdGK3kxTmYvWHBmeXAvQT09>

We plan to reopen on Sunday, September 12th for in-person worship – please join us!

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: ELW # 323 'God Loved the World' (Bradley Moggach – organ)

Click here: <https://youtu.be/cDwwfcF4go4>

(Title: God Loved the World – Rockingham Old; Text: Gesangbuch, Bollhagen, 1791; tr. August Crull, 1846-1923, alt. Public Domain

Music: Trente quatre psaumes de David, Geneva, 1551. Public Domain

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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:

O God our strength, without you we are weak and wayward creatures. Protect us from all dangers that attack us from the outside, and cleanse us from all evil that arises from within ourselves, that we may be preserved through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen

The First Reading: Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9

So now, Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe, so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of

the LORD your God with which I am charging you.

You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!” For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is whenever we call to him? And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today?

But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children’s children. (NRSV)

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

Psalm: 15

LORD, who may dwell in your tabernacle?

Who may abide upon your holy hill?

**Those who lead a blameless life and do what is right,
who speak the truth from their heart;**

they do not slander with the tongue, they do no evil to their friends;

they do not cast discredit upon a neighbor.

In their sight the wicked are rejected, but they honor those who fear the LORD.

They have sworn upon their health and do not take back their word.

They do not give their money in hope of gain, nor do they take bribes against the innocent.

Those who do these things shall never be overthrown.*

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The Second Reading: James 1:17-27

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God’s righteousness. Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.

But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world. (NRSV)

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

The Holy Gospel according to Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus, they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles. So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders,

but eat with defiled hands?" He said to them, "Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written,

‘This people honors me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me;
in vain do they worship me,
teaching human precepts as doctrines.’

You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition."

Then he called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile."

For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person." (NRSV)

The Gospel of the Lord. **C: Praise to you, O Christ.***

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

One day I went into a sandwich shop for lunch. As I watched the young man behind the counter making my sandwich, I noticed that he wore a pair of disposable gloves and a mask. I thought to myself, "That's good. I'm glad he isn't making my sandwich using his bare hands, and he covers his mouth too." As I watched, the young man handled everything behind the counter wearing those same gloves, and his mask doesn't actually cover his nose. After a while, I began to wonder, "does he really know the reason why he should wear gloves and a mask?"

People today are very concerned about having clean hands. Since the COVID-19 virus is so scary, many people wear a face covering and carry hand sanitizer. That is a really good idea. After all, as my mother used to say, "Cleanliness is next to godliness." Or is it?

In today's Gospel reading, the Pharisees and scribes make a big deal of Jesus' disciples not washing their hands before eating. And Jesus' response is harsh too. Does it make you wonder – what's going on here? Actually, in Jesus' time, the Pharisee's practice of washing hands before eating was not only for hygienic reasons. As it was suggested by Mark, it was a ceremonial wash – a wash to make oneself clean and ready for receiving food from God.

Understanding this, we might find it harder to mistake the Pharisees for wondering why some of Jesus' disciples did not wash their hands before eating a meal. It would be like wondering today why a group of Christians does not say grace before eating.

But when people pick on other's appearance of religious practice, Jesus sees their heart. He notices that there is a tremendous gap between the Pharisees' external religious practice and their internal faith. Like Pharisees, many religious people have concentrated so much on the external measures of religious practice that the internal faith is missing. There are plenty of outward signs of religion that might look holy and well-meaning, but Jesus believes that the inward attitude of faith is what matters.

That is exactly what Jesus points out in today's Gospel reading. He says, "Nothing outside you can defile you by going into you. Rather, it is what comes out of you that defiles you." And he adds, "From within, out of the heart of people, come evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness." Those are pretty wicked powers to be all inside us at once. But beyond all these, there is another power, that may be more devastating than any of the rest. It is the power of fear.

The fear of breaking the law leads Pharisees and scribes to set up more and more rigid regulations like fences around every law given by God through Moses and prophets. They carefully block every possibility of touching the law. They believe that by not touching the law, you would not break it. However, they also block every possibility of using the law to serve people's needs.

Fear also tricked the Pharisees into thinking that if they did the proper external acts, then they would be made inwardly clean. If they washed their hands before every meal, then nothing unclean would ever enter them. The same fear often drives us into an obsession with what goes into our lives. We shelter ourselves, we try not to threaten ourselves. We try not to get dirty.

But maybe our deepest fear is that our inside is not so clean anyway. Our deepest fear is that there really is uncleanness in us and we are afraid to face it. There is everything Jesus mentioned, from evil thoughts to adultery to slander to foolishness and more. Our deepest fear may be that we really are guilty and despite whatever we do to be made clean--washing our hands before eating or praying before going to bed at night--despite anything we do, our fear is that there is no way to be made clean, no way to be made whole. That's the fear that drives us to do all we can on the outside to clean ourselves up ten percent to be clean inside as well. This is the fear that drove the Pharisees to such a degree that Jesus finally called them "whitewashed tombs," clean on the outside but dead on the inside.

It is to those deepest fears that Jesus speaks. Fear can be a paralyzing power, but there is a way out. It is the way of freedom because it is the freedom that is the opposite of fear. Jesus freely ate with outcasts, with unclean people, with unclean hands. It was the freedom that engaged Jesus with people. He was free not to be scared of strangers but to speak the truth to them in love. And this same freedom allows us to look at ourselves honestly and to see that, indeed, there is uncleanness in us. There is all manner of sin. There is plenty to be ashamed of. But this same freedom also enables us to accept the mercy of Jesus Christ; it enables all of us to love and to be loved.

It is not, then, what goes into us that defiles us. And it is not what goes into us that makes us holy either. It is what comes out of us. Do fear and obsession with ourselves come out of us or does freedom and love for others come out?

Let us not escape uncleanness but touch the unclean and broken in ourselves and others with the freedom and love of Jesus Christ. Then we shall be holy indeed. Amen.

Hymn of the Day: ELW # 712 'Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service' (*Bradley Moggach – organ*)

Click here: <https://youtu.be/kt5vfXUwA8M>

(Title: Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service; Text: Albert F. Bayly, 1901-1984, Text © 1961 Oxford University Press. All rights reserved.

Music: The Sacred Harp, Philadelphia. 1844; arr. Selected Hymns, 1985. All rights reserved.

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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.

We pray for the church, that it is a safe haven for all who seek your presence. Fill it with pastors, deacons, and leaders who echo your expansive and generous welcome. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the whole of creation, that plants and animals have the habitat and resources to thrive and flourish. Inspire us to protect threatened habitats and ensure a sustainable future for generations to come. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for individuals in positions of authority. Raise up wise and discerning leaders in federal, state, and local governments and guide them to seek the benefit of every person. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who are in need. Support and encourage those who are unemployed, underemployed, or experiencing poverty. Bring food, shelter, clothes, and stability for daily life. Lord, in your mercy, ***hear our prayer.***

We pray for this congregation, especially those beginning a new school year our students, our teachers and the others. Empower teachers and school administrators. Guide students in their learning and development. Accompany parents, foster parents, and caregivers who provide encouragement and love. Lord, in your mercy, ***hear our prayer.***

We pray for all who are sick or in need of comfort, especially Bill, Don, Tammy, Alice, Don, Lynn, Sharon and Bryan. Encourage, strengthen and renew us with your Spirit. Lord, in your mercy, ***hear our prayer.***

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We give thanks for the faithful departed who showed us how to honor God with our heart. Inspire us by their example and renew our faith, trusting that we will be united with them in glory. 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: ELW # 588 'There's a Wideness in God's Mercy' (Bradley Moggach – organ)

Click here: **https://youtu.be/x40YdUod_ng**

(Title: There's a Wideness in God's Mercy; Text: Frederick W. Faber, 1814-1863, alt. Public Domain

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Dismissal:

Go in peace. You are the body of Christ.

Thanks be to God.