

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

June 28, 2020

For video viewing of music and service go to:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEO_pAVddaeV1_dOvvUd5eITX0IJKxqmM

***PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P: Let us pray together:

C: *O God, you direct our lives by your grace, and your words of justice and mercy reshape the world. Mold us into a people who welcome your word and serve one another, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen*

***THE FIRST LESSON**

Jeremiah 28:5-9

⁵The prophet Jeremiah spoke to the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the LORD; ⁶and the prophet Jeremiah said, "Amen! May the LORD do so; may the LORD fulfill the words that you have prophesied, and bring back to this place from Babylon the vessels of the house of the LORD, and all the exiles. ⁷But listen now to this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people. ⁸The prophets who preceded you and me from ancient times prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms. ⁹As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes true, then it will be known that the LORD has truly sent the prophet."

***THE SECOND LESSON**

Romans 6:12-23

¹²Do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. ¹³No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. ¹⁴For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. ¹⁵What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! ¹⁶Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, ¹⁸and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to greater and greater

iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification. ²⁰When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. ²²But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. ²³For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord..

***THE GOSPEL READING**

Matthew 10:40-42

[Jesus said to the twelve:] ⁴⁰"Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. ⁴¹Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; ⁴²and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward."

SERMON: PASTOR RYAN RADTKE

For being so short, our Gospel reading today has kind of a big statement in it: "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me." Wow. When others welcome us as disciples of our Lord Jesus, they are in essence welcoming Jesus. They are welcoming God. Kind of inspires you to make a good first impression, huh? Because if they are welcoming God when they welcome you, they're also kind of meeting God through their interaction with you, too. No pressure, right?

So what does a welcome look like? A mat outside your door? A brochure or a goodie bag handed to a visitor? One of these [bob your head and say "hey"]? A handshake or a hygienically appropriate substitute? I'm guessing Jesus was talking about more than that, since today's reading is part of a longer speech to send the disciples out into the towns to proclaim the good news and heal the sick. Jesus is talking about a whole-hearted welcome of the disciples, and the message they're sharing, and the one who is sending them. How do we welcome someone else, truly and wholly?

And that brings me to the goat story. In seminary my wife and I had the opportunity to go with a group of other students to the country of Namibia, just northwest of South Africa. The majority of folks in Namibia identify as Christian, and the majority of Christians in Namibia are Lutherans, and there are long-standing ties between the Lutheran churches in the U.S. and the Lutheran churches there. Namibia had also been under Apartheid rule along with their neighbor South Africa, and church leaders helped lead the efforts to end that oppression.

While we were in Namibia we met with some of those pastors and bishops who helped work against Apartheid and helped lead the churches and the country into the new era once it ended. We got to visit churches in the cities, in the countryside, and in a shantytown. We got to do some sightseeing, like some giant sand dunes and a safari. And we got to meet with leaders who were working to curb the spread of HIV and AIDS. That's how we met the king and queen.

In the northern, more rural, part of the country, there are still areas with tribal kings and queens. The church was partnering with one king and queen to provide education and care to combat HIV/AIDS. On the day we were supposed to visit them, we were running late. Everywhere we went we were greeted with amazing hospitality and - you guessed it - sincere and gracious welcomes. Sometimes those welcomes took a while, and so we were behind schedule.

We finally arrived at the king and queen's compound. We received a tour. We sat and listened. We asked questions. We got sunburns. The queen, whose name was Elizabeth, thought it was neat that my wife Liz would be a pastor, and they bonded over that good name they shared. When it was time to leave, though, there was a problem: we got there so late, that by the time we were going to leave it was lunchtime. But the welcome they had prepared for us was just cold drinks - no meal. To not provide us with a meal would have been a serious lack of welcome and breach of social etiquette. So, to make up for it, they gave us a goat.

Tied to a tree near our bus was a live, one-year-old male goat. Very biblical. In essence, it was lunch to go. And it didn't matter that we still were traveling farther before we would return home, and that the goat would have to tumble around in the luggage compartment under the bus for hours until we could get back and properly prepare it. It didn't matter that many of the folks in our group were city folks who didn't usually get to meet our protein before it ended up on their plates. We couldn't not accept the goat - that would have been an insult. We couldn't let it go farther down the road - it was marked, and people would know where it came from. So the goat went with us.

This poor goat rode with us to the northern border with Angola and back to where we were staying. This poor goat sat there some more when our bus broke down for a while. This goat was with us for hours before we got back. After the goat was given to a neighbor to prepare for a barbecue the next night, it escaped during the night and ended up - I kid you not - hiding in the church. My wife said that it was looking for sanctuary; someone else said it just wanted to confess its sins while it could.

Either way, the barbecue happened. And you know what? It was wonderful. It was full of people and full of joy. We spent more time with folks we had visited with only briefly before that. We got to meet folks we wouldn't have met without the barbecue. We got to sing songs and blow bubbles with some of the local kids. We had a moment of peace with some of our traveling companions that we were getting tired of traveling with. The king and queen's

seemingly inconvenient gift of welcome and hospitality multiplied and created more and greater opportunities for welcome and community than we could have planned or imagined.

Welcome is a two-way street. In Namibia, it wasn't just about how we were welcomed as guests by our hosts. Our receiving of all of their welcomes, including the goat, was a return of welcome; it was us sharing a welcome in return.

So, what does a welcome look like? It's the golden rule played out in real time, in live interactions. It's you putting yourself in the shoes of the person you're welcoming. It's a role reversal of kindness. It's doing for the other what you would appreciate and need if you were in their place. Even Jesus knew that not everyone the disciples met would receive the whole message of the gospel; he said "whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a discipl" Welcome in the form of a cup of cold water to hot and dusty travelers. Isn't that what you would want?

Welcome in the form of a cup of cold water welcomes the thirsty disciple, which in turn welcomes Jesus, the disciples' teacher and Lord, which is really welcoming God. And that's the least you can do. From there you can offer your very best, like a goat that leads to a time of fellowship. From there you can offer your very self, by putting yourself in the other person's shoes, by listening to their needs, by seeing things from their perspective. A mat outside your door doesn't have enough room for what a Welcome truly is.

In today's reading from Romans, Paul talks about a preemptive welcome, a welcome-in-reverse: he talks about how to present yourself. Present yourselves as those who have been brought from death to life, so that you welcome others with the grace and forgiveness you have received and know. Present yourselves as instruments of righteousness, treating others as you would want to be treated. Present yourselves as living under God's grace so as to invite others into that shelter. Present yourselves as those who are being sanctified - that is, you're not perfect, but God is working on you, making you holy, setting you apart as disciples to go and share the good news in word and deed. Present yourselves as a welcome to God, so that you may receive a corresponding welcome in turn.

We can apply this to our churches. As difficult as it has been to be apart and away from each other for so long during this time of quarantine, there is great opportunity in coming back together again really make sure that everything we do is steeped in intention and welcome. Before we get together again, take a moment and put yourself in the shoes of a visitor to Messiah. Imagine you are someone who has never been to church before, or was hurt by a church experience at some point in the past [move to the outer edge of the screen]. What would the building, the welcome, the routines and rituals look like from the margin, from the safety of having one foot out the door? Does worship make sense from over here? Are there cliques in the fellowship hall that you watch from the edge?

Or imagine you are a kid [move to the bottom edge of the screen]. Is the church experience, especially worship time, at all made to include you? Can you see? Can you reach things? Or are you left out for grown-up time?

Or imagine that you are different than everyone else, or disabled, or any of a host of other factors - how do we present ourselves? What is our preemptive welcome? And then, what is our actual welcome like? How would you want to be welcomed?

Jeremiah says in our reading today that you'll know a prophet is from God when they prophesy peace and their prophesy comes to pass. I think that the promise of peace that comes with the good news of the kingdom of God through Christ Jesus is one where welcome is reciprocal, and whole, and robust. And that might start in our church building, in our Sunday worship time, but it then must extend beyond that to each of our lives, our daily interactions, especially with those who are different than us, or who disagree with us.

Please note - we aren't welcoming others as a part of some sort of Santa-Claus/always watching/naughty-or-nice/checking-the-list-twice situation. It's as simple as this: in the waters of baptism, you have been welcomed, unconditionally, and loved. Jesus asks us to do no less in our welcome to others.

A cup of cold water is good. A one-year-old male goat without blemish is, it turns out, pretty amazing. But presenting yourselves as those who have been brought from death to life and then also putting yourselves in the shoes of others and seeing things from their perspective, and treating them accordingly...well, that truly is a welcome of endless reward.

*May the welcoming peace of Christ be with you, this day and always.
Amen.*

***NICENE CREED**

We believe in one God,

**the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen**

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,

**the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God, begotten not made,
of one Being with the Father.**

Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven;

by the power of the Holy Spirit

he became incarnate from the virgin Mary, and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;

he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;

he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen**

***PRAYERS**

A: Called into unity with one another and the whole creation, let us pray for our shared world. *(A brief silence.)*

A: God of companionship, encourage our relationships with our siblings in Christ. Bless our conversations. Shape our shared future and give us hearts eager to join in a festal shout of praise. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: God of abundance, you make your creation thrive and grow to provide all that we need. Inspire us to care for our environment and be attuned to where the earth is crying out. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: God of mercy, your grace is poured out for all. Inspire authorities, judges, and politicians to act with compassion. Teach us to overcome fear with hope, meet hate with love, and welcome one another as we would welcome you. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: God of care, accompany all who are in deepest need. Comfort those who are sick, lonely, or abandoned (especially). Strengthen those who are in prison or awaiting trial. Renew the spirits of all who call upon you. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: God of community, we give thanks for this congregation. Give us passion to embrace your mission and the vision to recognize where you are leading us. Teach us how to live more faithfully with each other. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: God, you are life. We pray for our world, our country, our community, our church as they face the challenges of coronavirus. We pray for those who grieve the loss of love ones, for the sick and their families, for those fearful of an unknown future. We pray for the millions of unemployed, for children and others at home - that they be safe from abuse. We pray for those who are alone and isolated during this time that they may feel your loving presence. We pray for all the hospital and health care workers, and all first responders, that they receive needed supplies and be kept protected in the work they do. We pray for those making decisions about how to live into the future and when that will happen. Keep us all in your care as we wait for a new day. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of families. For all our Messiah families and especially this week for the Gigante, Gilnett and Glatfelter families. For the talents and good things You have given each of them. Keep them united and faithful to You and each other. Guide them, protect them and equip them to do Your will. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

A: Receive these prayers, O God, and those too deep for words; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

***THE LORD'S PRAYER**

P: Now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to pray:

**C: *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**

P: Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

C: Amen

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WELCOME PASTOR RYAN!

While Pastor Ryan is not physically here yet, he will be available by email at messiahmechpr@gmail.com; and by phone at (507)-360-7276 . His 'office' hours will be 11am – 8 pm our time since California is three hours behind Virginia. This is such an exciting but strange time for us as we continue to worship from afar. We wish Pastor Ryan and family a safe transition to Virginia when they are able to do so. Pastor Ryan will continue to provide updates to the congregation as moving details are finalized.

A NOTE FROM PASTOR RYAN

I would like to give everyone an update on our timetable for finally making it to Virginia. We have good news - we will have pictures taken of our house this Monday - and will hopefully be officially listed by Tuesday afternoon. The market here has been good, so we are hopeful the house will get good offers quickly, and we'll soon be loading up a moving truck. So, it means waiting just a couple of weeks more, but the end is finally, concretely in sight. I am so thankful and humbled by all of your patience and support and prayers through all of our delays and obstacles. We are beyond excited to arrive in Mechanicsville, move into a house, put down some roots, and begin our ministry - in person - together.

WEEKLY FINANCIAL UPDATE

Beginning March 8th, we began providing a summary of the financial well-being of our congregation. Here is this week's information:

- Contributions to general fund averaged \$3018 through June 21st (down from \$3087 on June 14th).
- We are \$9642.21 behind the year-to-date budget needs (down from \$7588.21 behind the budget the week prior).

MCEF NEWS

MCEF is now OPEN for clients to receive food and/or clothing. The procedure allows the client to select what they need and a volunteer completes their "order" on a drive through basis. Those needing clothing are escorted to the appropriate closet to make their choices. All volunteers and those clients entering the OSS must be afebrile and wear a mask. All donations may be made to the OSS on the first or third Sunday of the month, 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. or placed in the grocery cart in the narthex when the building is opened. Hopefully, school will be starting and needs include underwear and socks for school-aged children, all sizes. Check out the updated website, <https://4mcef.com/>, and our Facebook page for further information.

POWER IN THE SPIRIT IS GOING ON-LINE!

Power in the Spirit 2020 is online, for a whole week! And it's free! Join in on Monday, July 6, through Friday, July 10 for a week of study, prayer, fellowship, worship, and art. Learn about theology and advocacy, about evangelism and worship. Experience new ways of worshiping at home and online. This year's theme is The Holy Spirit. Go to <https://www.vasynod.org/event/power-in-the-spirit-2020/> for more information as well as to register.

KAIROS IS GOING ON-LINE TOO!

Since in-person Kairos has been canceled for 2020, we are hosting Virtual Kairos 2020! Join us July 19-23, 2020 (Sunday evening to Thursday morning) for Virginia Synod rising 9th through 12th Graders. We are going to try and squeeze as much of in-person Kairos into this online event as we can! with large group, small group, daily prayer, t-shirts, CLIPPS, Open Talent Mic Show, faith testimonies, comic relief, reflection time, prayer around the cross, speed friending, songs, t-shirt fashion show, and more! Cost per participant: \$25 and payment is required at time of registration. For more information about registration, and to register online, visit www.vasynod.org/event/kairos.

ELCA PLEDGE TO COMMIT TO ANTI-RACISM

Beyond statements and prayers, we are called to also act and respond to injustices. The ELCA invites you to sign the pledge, "I commit to study, prayer and action to become an anti-racist individual in an anti-racist church," and share your participation on social media using #ELCA4justice. To sign the pledge, go to <https://elca.org/racialjusticepledge>.

DEVOTIONS FROM AUGSBURG FORTRESS

Every Monday Augsburg Fortress sends a devotional message and selection of artwork based on the text from the day before. This email devotion is free and similar to the devotions in the Christ in Our Home devotional book many congregations offer. To sign up for the weekly email go to: <https://go.augsburgfortress.org/augsburg-fortress-weekly-devotional>.

PRAYER LIST TO BE RESET

The current prayer list will be reset next Sunday, July 5 to begin the third quarter. Please contact Davina with names that need to remain on the list. Email her at MessiahMech@gmail.com or phone 746-7134 with your requests.

JOIN THE 75,000 MORE! FACEMASK CHALLENGE

When Lutheran World Relief launched the 75,000 Face Mask Challenge less than a month ago, they knew the compassionate response would be overwhelming – and that good people like you would meet the challenge. They just had no idea you'd pull it off so quickly. Thank you! To reach even more people in dire need, Lutheran World Relief is collecting 75,000 more masks! How many will you make to help stop the spread? Sign up for more info. www.lwr.org/masks.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

We thank you for your faithful giving! Please continue to mail in your offering to the church office, 8154 Atlee Road, Mechanicsville, VA 23111, or use on-line giving through Vanco which is available on the church website. See messiahmech.com for more details.

BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS

Those who would like to place announcements in our Sunday 'ebulletin' please send them to Donna Shaw at dmslaw70@gmail.com by Wednesday for inclusion.

Prayer List

WE PRAY FOR EACH OTHER

Kenneth Deere	"Doc" Kondaki
Adam Dworak, Sr.	Linda Krupa
JoAn Firebaugh	Mac McAllister
Bill Fulop	Roberta McMillen
Elisabeth Gardner	Pat Motley
Werner Gardner	Nathan, Ruth Schroeder & family
Steve Gilnett	Judy Schwerdtfeger
Geoffrey Honan	

WE PRAY FOR OUR EXTENDED FAMILY AND NEIGHBORS

Danny Allen, friend of the Whirleys
Boyd Allison, friend of Jean Wightman.
Family and Friends of Dennis Anderson, father of James Anderson.
Joe Griffin, friend of Anne Mason.
Pete Gunn, friend of the Schwerdtfeger's
Christina Nibali, sister of Anita Philip.
Dee Schroeder, sister-in-law of Roger.
Tim Schroeder, nephew of Roger.
Family and friends of Wanda Umlauf, Vicar Ginny Banister's mother
Elizabeth Zimmerman, Karen Morris' daughter-in-law's aunt
T.J., grandson of the Whirleys.

Pastor Ryan, as he begins his journey with us
Our veterans, their fellow soldiers & their waiting families
All law enforcement, firefighters & first responders
The people and pastor, Rev. Katherine, of All Souls Episcopal & our shared ministry

Hospitals, nursing homes, other health care facilities
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
The World Health Organization Medical researchers and scientists
Schools, workplaces, government institutions and municipal agencies
For all who travel