

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 23, 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, with all your faithful followers of every age, we praise you, the rock of our life. Be our strong foundation and form us into the body of your Son, that we may gladly minister to all the world, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen*

***THE FIRST LESSON**

Isaiah 51:1-6

Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness,
you that seek the Lord.

Look to the rock from which you were hewn,
and to the quarry from which you were dug.

Look to Abraham your father
and to Sarah who bore you;

for he was but one when I called him,
but I blessed him and made him many.

For the Lord will comfort Zion;
he will comfort all her waste places,

and will make her wilderness like Eden,
her desert like the garden of the Lord;

joy and gladness will be found in her,
thanksgiving and the voice of song.

Listen to me, my people,
and give heed to me, my nation;

for a teaching will go out from me,
and my justice for a light to the peoples.

I will bring near my deliverance swiftly,
my salvation has gone out
and my arms will rule the peoples;

the coastlands wait for me,
and for my arm they hope.

Lift up your eyes to the heavens,
and look at the earth beneath;

for the heavens will vanish like smoke,
the earth will wear out like a garment,
and those who live on it will die like gnats;

but my salvation will be for ever,
and my deliverance will never be ended.

***THE SECOND LESSON**

Romans 12:1-8

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God-- what is good and acceptable and perfect.

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

***THE GOSPEL READING**

Matthew 16:13-20

When Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you,

Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

SERMON: PASTOR RYAN RADTKE

Have you ever heard of an image consultant? This is someone that you hire - that you pay money to - to help you with your image. Maybe you've heard of various celebrities - actors, politicians, athletes, other public figures - hiring an image consultant to help them with their "branding." Maybe you're about to walk the red carpet. Maybe you're about to take on a new big role or launch a new campaign or want to try selling some new product. Maybe you're about to be on trial for something and you want to clean up your image. It could be anything from your hair and your clothes to your reputation and what things come up first when someone searches you on the internet.

You don't have to be a celebrity to seek out an image consultant...at least, that's what their websites say. Maybe you are headed to a big job interview. Maybe you're just ready for a fresh look, a new start. All those reality makeover shows can't be wrong, can they? Or maybe you're tired of people assuming certain things about you, just based on your appearance. I've got to say, it's kind of sad that we judge each other so much on our appearances that folks end up paying good money for these services, but there you go. As one image consulting firm from New York City puts it on their webpage: "If you demand respect, power, and results from your image, you've come to the right place."

Today's scene from Matthew's Gospel almost sounds like Jesus is consulting a focus group to gather some market research on his public perception and brand recognition. (Those are all things people say, right?) "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" Jesus has been using that title on himself...but what does the general public think of when they hear "Son of Man"? The disciples report: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the other prophets." Not bad. Good names to be associated with. Then comes the follow-up: "Who do you say that I am?"

Before I get to Peter's answer, let me just say: Jesus is doing that thing again. He's doing that thing where he's turning the expectations and the rules of the world upside down, on their heads. Because as much as it sounds like Jesus is in the middle of an image consulting session for himself, concerned about worldly respect, power, and results, his whole exchange is less about Jesus and his public image, and more about us and how we answer the question. Maybe this is a better way to say it: Who you say Jesus is says as much about you as it does about him. One more time: who you say Jesus is says as much about you as it does about him. But more on that in a minute.

Back to Peter's answer. Who do you say that I am? "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." And Jesus is very pleased with that answer: "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven." God gave Peter the faith to see that Jesus was more than a prophet, but rather something new: the long-awaited savior, the Son of the Living God, spilling over with life for the world, as we've seen over the last few weeks: feeding the hungry multitudes, teaching with authority, extending the life to even those outside the covenant. controlling the forces of chaos and always, always, through his words and deeds, telling the hopeless: do not be afraid. Blessed are the poor, the meek. The kingdom of heaven has come near for you. Don't worry about worldly respect, power, and results; God gives you all you need.

In his short answer - "You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God" - Peter crystalizes who Jesus is and why he has come. And Jesus recognizes the faith God has given Peter, faith to grasp Jesus' true image. He gives Peter that very name: Petros, the rock. Jesus will build his church on this rock of faith and recognition. And Jesus grants Peter the keys of the kingdom: whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

This binding and loosing is usually understood to be talking about forgiveness. But that won't make sense until later in the Gospel. That's probably why Jesus praises Peter for a good answer and then turns around and sternly forbids any of them from telling anyone that he is the Messiah (not good marketing, by the way). Because none of what Jesus is doing will make sense until the covenant is sealed through the cross and the empty tomb. Salvation comes through the cross and the resurrection. Forgiveness comes through the cross and the resurrection. Our use of the keys, our power to bind and loose, only makes sense in the context of the cross and the resurrection.

Who do you say that I am? You are the Messiah and the Son of the living God. You are the savior, and you conquer death. You are God's Son, and you forgive our sins. And then you give us the keys to the kingdom, the power to bind and loose. The power to forgive or not. How you answer Jesus' question says as much about you as it does about him. And if you confess, along with Peter, that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of the living God, then you use the keys you've been given in his name. You who have died to sin and been raised to new life through the cross and the resurrection, through the grace of God's forgiveness, you are granted these keys accordingly.

Having the power of these keys does not give you the job of acting as a spiritual image consultant for others. Having the responsibility of forgiveness on our keychains does not mean that God's grace is only dependent on the sins that we forgive; it means that the more forgiving we are in our lives, the more our lives reflect our answer to Jesus' question: You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. You died and were raised to forgive me and save me. By the grace of God I know who you are; by God's grace may you teach me to be more like you, especially when I'm holding your keys.

Through baptism we are inseparably joined to Jesus' salvation through the cross and the resurrection, and our entire lives are shaped by forgiveness as a result. We are blessed to be a blessing. We are forgiven to be forgiving. We forgive others in the name of, and in the identity of, the one who forgives us. We are created in the image of God. And God is love. God is merciful. God forgives. That is my free image consulting advice for you today: you are created in the image of God. And God is love. God is merciful. God forgives. Go and do likewise.

Paul says: present your bodies as a living sacrifice. Jesus sacrificed his life on the cross so that God could raise him, and through him all of us, to new life. Live your lives, words and deeds, even your bodies, as a living sacrifice, in God's image.

Each of us are uniquely gifted, but members of the one body - when we see ourselves as part of the whole, working together, diverse yet united in Christ, there we are again - a living image of Christ in the world.

Isaiah said, "Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you." Your mother and father were role models of faith, believing God's promise that they'd somehow produce descendants. And if Peter is the rock, we're hewn from him, too - not perfect, not by a long shot, but as faithful as we can be, learning as we go, and trusted with the keys to the kingdom.

Above all look to Christ, the cornerstone, the image of love and grace and sacrifice we consult to live in a world that is a merciless, un-asked-for image consultant to us. Look to Christ, the Messiah and Son of the living God, when the world tears you down. Come back to the waters of baptism, to the seal of the cross on your brows, and remember the hands that shaped you, the wounded hands that bless you. The world says, "If you demand respect, power, and results from your image, you've come to the right place." Jesus says: "You are created in the image of God, and you have all you need; respect others, give your power away to the powerless, and expect no results in return."

Our image is rooted in Christ, and our entire lives are shaped by his forgiveness. May your entire life be a living answer to Jesus' question, freely telling the world: You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. 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;
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,
and became truly human.

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,
who with the Father and the Son is is worshiped and glorified,
who 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: Confident of your care and helped by the Holy Spirit, we pray for the church,
the world, and all who are in need. (*A brief silence.*)

A: Lord our rock, you are our foundation in Jesus Christ, your Son, whom we
confess as the living God. Prepare your church for its mission in bearing
witness to Christ, both here at home and throughout the world. Lord, in your
mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

A: You call forth praises from the far reaches of the universe to the smallest of
creatures. Join our songs to theirs, that a spirit of praise and thanksgiving will
arouse us to cherish this wondrous home you give us. Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

A: All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O Lord. Direct the leaders of
countries, legislators and magistrates, mayors and councils, to walk in your
ways. Help leaders regard those in need with mercy and fulfill your loving
purposes in the governance of peoples. Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

A: Though we walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve us, deliver us, and fulfill your purpose for us. According to your steadfast love, grant healing and wholeness to those who are bereaved, in trouble or adversity, or sick and in need of care (especially). Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

A: You call us into this community in which we, though many, are one in Christ. May we recognize in ourselves and in one another the unique gifts you have given us for the building up of the church for the sake of the world. Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

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. Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

A: Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of families. For all our Messiah families and especially this week for the McMillen and Morris 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. Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

A: In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you; 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

PASTOR RYAN'S 'OFFICE' HOURS

Pastor Ryan is still figuring out the best balance between in-person office hours and working from home. He also still needs to learn the commute! Wherever he happens to be, he is available by email at messiahmechpr@gmail.com and by phone at (507)-360-7276. His "office hours" will be 8 am – 5 pm, and he looks forward to setting some set regular office hours and dedicated drop-in hours soon.

PASTOR RYAN'S WEEKLY UPDATE

The roller coaster continues! Even though our first escrow fell through, another offer and counter-offer were made and accepted and we're back in escrow again. There has already been an inspection on the house, too, so we'll see what surprises that brings. But we are feeling cautiously hopeful. Our cars also just arrived, so we're slightly more mobile now. Please keep the prayers coming - they are felt and appreciated! (:

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 \$2853 through August 16th (down slightly from \$2887 on August 9th).
- We are \$18,176.11 behind the year-to-date budget needs (down from \$16,527.11 behind the budget the week prior).
- Weekly budget need is \$3404

LUTHERAN FAMILY SERVICES

As in years past, Lutheran Family Services needs our help with school supplies. Because of all the regulations, LFS has provided a link through Amazon to purchase the supplies that are needed. If you buy through Amazon, supplies will be sent directly to the LFS office. You can also buy supplies your own, bring them to church, and they will be delivered to the LFS office. Either way works. Please buy through Amazon until August 21, 2020 using this link

https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/WLBH3WZPXEVQ?ref_=wl_share.

Otherwise, take supplies to church on August 23rd. There will be a box outside the Narthex doors that will be checked every two hours before dark that Sunday and then delivered on Monday. If this doesn't work for you, please call Sharon Addair at 804-543-9709 or text her and she will arrange a pick up.

BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS NOW GO TO DAVINA

After many, many months of being the go-to person for announcements, we thank Donna Shaw for all her time and energy making sure everyone is in the loop. Now that Pastor Ryan has some office time, we're going back to having announcements "in-house." So, please send any announcements you would like to place in the Sunday e-bulletin to Davina at messiahmech@gmail.com instead of to Donna Shaw. Davina will still need them by Wednesday for inclusion in the coming Sunday's bulletin.

LUTHERAN FAMILY SERVICES = enCircle

Over four years ago the **Virginia Lutheran Family Services (LFSVA)** leadership and Board of Directors began a thoughtful discussion about the sustainability and growth of LFSVA because they wanted to provide their vital services to even more people. After careful consideration, the Board voted in late spring to change their business operating name to enCircle. Their legal name will remain Lutheran Family Services of Virginia, the Minnick Schools' name will not change, but the public name is evolving to include people of all backgrounds, faiths, and abilities.

MESSIAH RECEIVES FEDERAL COVID-19 LOAN

Council is pleased to announce that Messiah has received a loan of \$17,314 from the federal Paycheck Protection Program. The "PPP" provides very low interest (1%) loans to help small businesses keep their workforce during the Coronavirus crisis. Loan recipients must spend at least 60% of loan proceeds on payroll costs; the remainder must be used for mortgage and lease interests as well as certain utilities. Funds must be used by the end of 2020. If the Church meets the loan criteria for use of the funds, the federal government will forgive the full amount of the loan. We thank John Cline for his hard work and time spent to take care of the application process.

SMALL GROUPS

Hopefully everyone has received the guidelines for Small Group Meetings and Cleaning Protocols either through email or hard copy. Please contact Davina when wanting to schedule a time you would like your group to meet at church. The only areas open at this time include the Fellowship Hall, the hallway to the restrooms, and the restrooms. All other parts of the building remain 'closed' for now. There will be copies of the forms at church on the kitchen counter for you to use at your meeting along with necessary cleaning supplies. Davina will maintain the completed forms in her office. Although apart, we are still Messiah! Stay well everyone!

CHURCH DIRECTORY IS BEING UPDATED

Davina will be updating the church directory in the near future. Please let her know if you've had changes to your address, phone number, or email address.

REOPENING SURVEY IS NOW CLOSED

Thank you to all who returned the Council Reopening Survey! We had a tremendous response, 77 members! The data has been compiled and council will begin looking at your responses and determining next steps. Stay safe and well until we are together again.

LIVING LUTHERAN WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU!

What seasonal recipes have been important to you in your faith life? By or before August 30, send your complete recipe, and 300-word story to livinglutheran@elca.org for consideration in their November theme issue on food and faith. Please include Messiah's name and location in your entry. Have fun and good luck!

REBUILD RVA GRANT PROGRAM

The Rebuild VA Grant Fund is a program to help small businesses and non-profits whose normal operations were disrupted by COVID-19, including restaurants, brick and mortar retail, exercise and fitness facilities, personal care and personal grooming services, entertainment and public amusement establishments, and campgrounds. Businesses and non-profits that are approved for a Rebuild VA grant may receive up to 3 times their average monthly eligible expenses up to a maximum of \$10,000.

VIRGINIA RENT AND MORTGAGE RELIEF PROGRAM (RMRP)

The Virginia Rent and Mortgage Relief Program (RMRP) is designed to support and ensure housing stability across the commonwealth during the coronavirus pandemic. Depending on availability of funds and household need, the RMRP may provide financial assistance for rent or mortgage payments for eligible households. This includes financial assistance for rent or mortgage payments past due beginning April 1, 2020 and onward. Financial assistance is a one-time payment with opportunity for renewal based on availability of funding and the household's need for additional assistance and continued eligibility. For more information please visit: Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD): www.dhcd.virginia.gov/rmrp.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT – IT'S SUMMERTIME!

Summer is upon us. We are thankful for the PPP loan, but our giving has been in decline through these summer quarantine months. Thank you for the generosity you have shown, and please continue your faithful giving as we get closer to being back together again! Please 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.