**Our Redeemer Lutheran Church Prospect Heights, IL**

**12th Sunday after Pentecost Sunday, August 23, 2020**

**AS WE GATHER**

God’s people have gifts that are signs of His loving presence and demonstrations of His gracious power. In a sermon preached in 1538, Martin Luther observed, “Whoever comes to faith can only say that the Holy Spirit comes when and where and to whom He pleases at the time He pleases. He comes when and where He pleases and also gives a person as many gifts as He pleases” (*WLS* § 2057). As people in whom the Spirit dwells, we have the joy of discovering special gifts of God in one another and in ourselves as well. May that mutual discovering and celebrating be truly God pleasing in every way!

**HYMN** **“Come, Thou Almighty King”**  LSB 905

1 Come, Thou almighty King,
Help us Thy name to sing;
 Help us to praise;
Father all-glorious,
O’er all victorious,
Come and reign over us,
 Ancient of Days.

2 Come, Thou incarnate Word,
Gird on Thy mighty sword;
 Our prayer attend.
Come and Thy people bless,
And give Thy Word success,
And let Thy righteousness
 On us descend.

3 Come, holy Comforter,
Thy sacred witness bear
 In this glad hour!
Thou, who almighty art,
Now rule in ev’ry heart,
And ne’er from us depart,
 Spirit of pow’r.

4 To Thee, great One in Three,
Eternal praises be
 Hence evermore!
Thy sov’reign majesty
May we in glory see,
And to eternity
 Love and adore.

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**INVOCATION**

Pastor: In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**People: Amen.**

**CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION**

Pastor: Let us now confess our sin to God, our merciful Father.

**People: Gracious God, with contrition and repentance, we admit and confess our sinfulness. We are by nature sinful and unclean. Daily we have sinned and done things we ought not to have done and have not done that which we are to have been doing as Your servants. We indeed deserve Your punishment in this life and for eternity. Trusting in Your mercy, we come to You for forgiveness. Our trust is not in ourselves but in the merits of Your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. Have mercy on us, O God. Grant us remission of all of our sins, and by the power of the Holy Spirit at work within our hearts and lives, lead us into ways that reflect Your goodness and love.**

Pastor: God is gracious and merciful and hears our supplications. By the command of our Lord and as His called and ordained servant, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**People: Amen.**

**INTROIT** *Psalm 2:6–7; Psalm 117; antiphon: Psalm 115:18*

Pastor: But we will bless the Lord
 from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the Lord!

**People: As for Me, I have set My King
 on Zion, My holy hill.**

Pastor: I will tell of the decree:
 The Lord said to Me, “You are My Son; today I have begotten You,”

**People: Praise the Lord, all nations!
 Extol Him, all peoples!**

Pastor: For great is His steadfast love toward us,
 and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord!

**People: Glory be to the Father and to the Son
 and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning,
 is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

Pastor: But we will bless the Lord
 from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the Lord!

**HYMN OF PRAISE** “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty” LSB 790

1 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!
O my soul, praise Him, for He is your health and salvation!
 Let all who hear
 Now to His temple draw near,
Joining in glad adoration!

2 Praise to the Lord, who o’er all things is wondrously reigning
And, as on wings of an eagle, uplifting, sustaining.
 Have you not seen
 All that is needful has been
Sent by His gracious ordaining?

3 Praise to the Lord, who has fearfully, wondrously, made you,
Health has bestowed and, when heedlessly falling, has stayed you.
 What need or grief
 Ever has failed of relief?
Wings of His mercy did shade you.

4 Praise to the Lord, who will prosper your work and defend you;
Surely His goodness and mercy shall daily attend you.
 Ponder anew
 What the Almighty can do
As with His love He befriends you.

5 Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore Him!
All that has life and breath, come now with praises before Him!
 Let the Amen
 Sound from His people again;
Gladly forever adore Him!

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**SALUTATION & PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

**People: And also with you.**

Pastor: Let us pray, Almighty God, whom to know is everlasting life, grant us to know Your Son, Jesus, to be the way, the truth, and the life that we may boldly confess Him to be the Christ and steadfastly walk in the way that leads to life eternal; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**People: Amen.**

**OLD TESTAMENT READING** *Isaiah 51:1–6*

1“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness,

you who seek the LORD:

look to the rock from which you were hewn,

and to the quarry from which you were dug.

2Look to Abraham your father

and to Sarah who bore you;

for he was but one when I called him,

that I might bless him and multiply him.

3For the LORD comforts Zion;

he comforts all her waste places

and makes 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.

4“Give attention to me, my people,

and give ear to me, my nation;

for a law will go out from me,

and I will set my justice for a light to the peoples.

5My righteousness draws near,

my salvation has gone out,

and my arms will judge the peoples;

the coastlands hope for me,

and for my arm they wait.

6Lift up your eyes to the heavens,

and look at the earth beneath;

for the heavens vanish like smoke,

the earth will wear out like a garment,

and they who dwell in it will die in like manner;

but my salvation will be forever,

and my righteousness will never be dismayed.

Lector: This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

**EPISTLE** *Romans 11:33–12:8* (We are one Body in Christ.)

33Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

34“For who has known the mind of the Lord,

or who has been his counselor?”

35“Or who has given a gift to him

that he might be repaid?”

36For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

1I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

3For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. 4For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, 5so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; 7if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; 8the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Lector: This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

**HOLY GOSPEL** *Matthew 16:13–20*

Pastor: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the sixteenth chapter.

**People: Glory to You, O Lord.**

13Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” 14And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” 15He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” 16Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” 17And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. 18And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” 20Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**People: Praise to You, O Christ.**

**HYMN OF THE DAY** “My Hope is Built on Nothing Less” LSB 575

1 My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness;
No merit of my own I claim
But wholly lean on Jesus’ name. Refrain

ref On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

2 When darkness veils His lovely face,
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In ev’ry high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil. Refrain

3 His oath, His covenant and blood
Support me in the raging flood;
When ev’ry earthly prop gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay. Refrain

4 When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may I then in Him be found,
Clothed in His righteousness alone,
Redeemed to stand before His throne! Refrain

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**SERMON**

            **What a surprising Savior we follow.**

**He breaks rules even as he says he’s come not to break the rules but to fulfill them.**

**He tries to make clear to his disciples again and again that he’s the Messiah, but when they finally get it and call him that, he tells them to tell no one else.**

**The people expected the Messiah to act in power and with military might, if necessary, to rid the land of the Romans and restore Israel, but Jesus says no. He says his kingdom isn’t like that. To draw the world to himself, he says, he won’t be conquering anyone with anyone’s army. Rather, he will — and must — die.**

**In the passage we read from the gospel of Matthew today, we see the surprising nature of this savior highlighted. This passage includes the famous statement from Jesus that his disciple Simon, son of Jonah, now will be known as Peter (*Petros*, in Greek, which means rock) “and on this rock I will build my church,” Jesus says. This passage helps us look at what this surprising Savior is calling us to do as his disciple.**

            But first let’s set the scene because that will help us put this story and its lessons in greater perspective.

            As Matthew tells it, Jesus has been curing lots of people and miraculously feeding thousands. But he needs a break from all that, especially after a demand from religious leaders to “show them a sign from heaven.”1 He says, in response, that no sign will be shown to this “evil and adulterous generation” except for the sign of Jonah.2 What’s the sign of Jonah? Bible scholars believe Jesus is referring to the three days Jonah spent in the belly of the fish and to the three days Jesus himself will spend in a tomb after his crucifixion.

            Jesus wants to get away from all that controversy and to avoid, at least temporarily, immediate death at the hands of the puppet king, Herod Antipas, who already had murdered John the Baptist. So Jesus gathers his disciples and heads north to the city of Caesarea Philippi. It’s at the foot of Mount Hermon, which usually remains snowcapped even in summer. This is about a 25-mile trek to a remote location that gives Jesus and his disciples time to talk.

            Even though Caesarea Philippi was considered a Gentile city outside the authority of King Herod, it had an interesting religious history that makes Jesus’ question about who he is take on a broader meaning. Scholars tell us there were a dozen or more ancient temples in the area once used for worship of the god Ba`al. And a cavern in a nearby hill was said to be the birthplace of the Greek god of nature, Pan, which explains why Caesarea Philippi’s original name was Panias. Also in Caesarea Philippi was a huge marble temple built by Herod the Great to honor none other than Caesar.

            Do you see what’s happening here? Jesus, as the incarnate one and only God of creation, surrounds himself and his followers with evidence that for a long time, humanity has been making various guesses about who God really is. And the people who have been coming up with this or that answer had built monuments to those answers.

            In what we today might call an interfaith setting, Jesus uses a term he sometimes calls himself and he asks his disciples this: “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They give several responses, all of which pretty much miss the point. So he asks them the more important question, “Who do *you* say that I am?”

            Friends, that’s the question that faces all of us, whether we’re already disciples of Christ or not. The answer to that question can and will shape our lives, no matter how we answer it.

            It’s no surprise that the impetuous Peter answers first: “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Bingo, says Jesus — well, without actually using the word “bingo.”

            The problem with Peter’s answer is that he seems to have one idea of what it means that Jesus is the Messiah while Jesus has quite a different idea.

            As Jack Miles writes in his 2001 book, *Christ: A Crisis in the Life of God*, “Peter believes that he knows from scripture what Jesus must do if he is to be the Messiah. Peter is mistaken, but his is not an ignorant mistake. Though the concept of messiah was fluid in some regards, the future that Jesus sketches for himself clearly violates it. The Messiah was not to be rejected, much less slain, by the people he would come to save. On the contrary, he would rally them, just as Joshua and David did, against enemies holding the Promised Land against God’s will.”3

            So Peter draws on the accepted Jewish tradition of what the long-promised Messiah would do and be. But God has a different plan. He has decided that Jesus’ calling cannot and should not be limited to the restoration of Israel’s territory and sovereignty. Instead, his mission is to include the restoration and redemption of the whole world, a concept Peter doesn’t yet grasp — but will.

            Two thousand years later we grasp this broader idea. We can see that what Jesus meant to do was to free us, redeem us, give us sight. We can see that Jesus was serious when he said that when he was lifted up he would draw humanity to him, would let all of us see that the kingdom, or reign, of God he was proclaiming starts here and now today.

            That’s why Jesus began his ministry not by promising to deliver Israel from the Romans or by promising us wings to let us fly around in heaven. Rather, he was saying that the reign of God starts today, right here, with justice and mercy and compassion and love. He insisted that right now we can get a foretaste of what that kingdom will look like when it finally comes in full flower.

            **The question for us remains the very one Jesus asked: “Who do *you* say that I am?” And let me suggest that the word “say” there is not limited simply to orally identifying Jesus’ job or divine identity. Rather, it carries with it the implication that if we *say* Jesus is the Christ, God’s own Messiah, our answer immediately brings with it *the responsibility to follow this Jesus*, to care about what Jesus cares about, to love the brokenhearted, the poor, the wretched of the Earth, the people without hope. For what breaks God’s heart must surely break ours.**

**Saying that Jesus is Lord means nothing if it doesn’t affect how we live. Christianity is a difficult religion. It’s full of demands because it’s full of grace. It offers forgiveness, acceptance, love and mercy but it doesn’t offer us what German martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer called “cheap grace.” Rather, it calls us to devote ourselves not in part but in whole to living by kingdom values.**

**Will we fail every day at that despite our best efforts? Of course we will. Peter, who correctly answered the question of Jesus’ identity, failed and failed and failed too. But, in turn, Jesus forgave and forgave and forgave him. Remember where Peter was when he denied Jesus three times? He was in a courtyard in Jerusalem next to a charcoal fire. Remember where Peter was when the resurrected Christ later asked him three times if Peter loved him? He was on the shore near a charcoal fire.**

**So on that latter day, Jesus gave Peter not only a new future but also a new past. How so? Well, after the second scene in which Peter was by a charcoal fire, he wouldn’t have to remember his earlier denial by such a fire. Instead, when he saw a charcoal fire he could remember the job Jesus gave him: “Feed my sheep.” For the past 6 and a half years it has been my privilege to “feed” you with Christ and His word. Sometimes, I have done it well. Other times not so much. Brothers and Sisters in Christ, Jesus has given to you a new past and a new future in His eternal and never ending kingdom. Between now and that new future never forget that you are a follower, a disciple (a sheep) of Christ, continue receiving Christ, His body, His blood, continue to receive His Word, until we meet again in His eternal kingdom, in Jesus name, Amen.**

**The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ, and His Word, today and always, Amen.**

**CONFESSION OF FAITH** *Apostles’ Creed*

C **I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life T everlasting. Amen.**

**PRAYER OF THE CHURCH**

Having heard the Word proclaimed, let us pray for ourselves, for all the faithful and for all people as they have need.

For all people, that they may have faith in Christ and heed the voice of God calling by His Word; For the Church, that the people of God may pursue righteousness with peace and joy in their hearts; and For all pastors and their ministry of Word and Sacrament and for all vocations to the ministry, that the lives of God’s people may redound to His praise and glory, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For our president, Congress, governor and all civic leaders in their pursuit of peace and unity; For all judges and magistrates in their pursuit of justice with mercy; and

For those who protect us from violence and preserve order here and everywhere, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all noble professions, and for the flourishing of the arts and music; For favorable weather and the fruits of the earth; and For those unemployed, the poor, the homeless, the hungry and all people in need, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all families and children, single adults and youth; For those who teach and those who learn, that they may advance in wisdom and grace; and For the catechumens and those who teach the faith to them, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the work of God’s kingdom in this place; For our faithful support of the Church and the renewal of our parish life through the Means of Grace; For our communion this day upon the life-giving body and blood of Christ; and For our growth in grace, that we may attain to the full stature of Christ, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

Be merciful to us, O Lord, and hear our prayers. Grant to us the grace of Your Holy Spirit, that we may be led into all truth and be steadfast in the confession of Christ; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. **Amen.**

**LORD’S PRAYER** *Matthew 6:9–13*

**People:** **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**

Pastor: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.

**People: Amen.**

**HYMN** **“The Church's One Foundation”** LSB 644

1 The Church’s one foundation
 Is Jesus Christ, her Lord;
She is His new creation
 By water and the Word.
From heav’n He came and sought her
 To be His holy bride;
With His own blood He bought her,
 And for her life He died.

2 Elect from ev’ry nation,
 Yet one o’er all the earth;
Her charter of salvation:
 One Lord, one faith, one birth.
One holy name she blesses,
 Partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses
 With ev’ry grace endued.

3 Though with a scornful wonder
 The world sees her oppressed,
By schisms rent asunder,
 By heresies distressed,
Yet saints their watch are keeping;
 Their cry goes up, “How long?”
And soon the night of weeping
 Shall be the morn of song.

4 Through toil and tribulation
 And tumult of her war
She waits the consummation
 Of peace forevermore
Till with the vision glorious
 Her longing eyes are blest,
And the great Church victorious
 Shall be the Church at rest.

5 Yet she on earth has union
 With God, the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion
 With those whose rest is won.
O blessèd heav’nly chorus!
 Lord, save us by Your grace
That we, like saints before us,
 May see You face to face.

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