

**To PST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**Aitkin, Minnesota**  
**July 7, 2024**  
**Seventh Sunday after Pentecost**  
**ONLINE ORDER OF WORSHIP**

**P** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C** Amen.

**P** Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

**P** Our help is in the name of the Lord,

**C** **who made heaven and earth.**

**P** I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,

**C** **and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.**

**P** O almighty God, merciful Father,

**C** **I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.**

**P** Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C** Amen.

## Introit

*Introit*

Oh, taste and see that the | LORD is good!\*

Blessèd is the man who takes ref- | uge in him!

For the LORD has chosen | Zion;\*

he has desired it for his | dwelling place:

“This is my resting place for- | ever;\*

here I will dwell, for I have de- | sired it.

I will abundantly bless her pro- | visions;\*

I will satisfy her | poor with bread.

Her priests I will clothe with sal- | vation,\*

and her saints will | shout for joy.”

**Glory be to the Father and | to the Son\***

**and to the Holy | Spirit;**

**as it was in the be- | ginning,\***

**is now, and will be forever. | Amen.**

Oh, taste and see that the | LORD is good!\*

Blessèd is the man who takes ref- | uge in him!

## Collect of the Day

*Proper 9 (Year B)*

**P** Let us pray.

O God, Your almighty power is made known chiefly in showing mercy. Grant us the fullness of Your grace that we may be called to repentance and made partakers of Your heavenly treasures; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**G Amen.**

## Old Testament Reading

*Ezekiel 2:1–5*

He said to me, “Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak with you.” And as he spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard him speaking to me. And he said to me, “Son of man, I send you to the people

of Israel, to nations of rebels, who have rebelled against me. They and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day. The descendants also are impudent and stubborn: I send you to them, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD.' And whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that a prophet has been among them."

**A** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

### Epistle

*2 Corinthians 12:1–10*

I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. Though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. So to keep me from being too elated by the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships,

persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

**A** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

## Holy Gospel

*Mark 6:1–13*

[Jesus] went away from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished, saying, “Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. And Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household.” And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief.

And he went about among the villages teaching.

And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts— but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics. And he said to them, “Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.” So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.

**P** This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**C** Praise be to Thee, O Christ.

### **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 everlasting. Amen.

### **Sermon Text – Exekiel 2:1-5**

#### **Theme – “The Call to Preach Law and Gospel”**

A little over 36 years ago I received the divine call to serve as pastor of St. John’s Lutheran Church in Aitkin. It was a call that the Lord extended to me through the Voters’ Assembly of this congregation. That makes the call I received a “mediate call.” We call it that because God didn’t directly call me to serve in this place, but He used the members of this congregation to do so.

In Scripture, though, there are cases where someone receives what we call an “immediate call.” One

example of this from the Old Testament is the call Moses received when the LORD spoke to him out of a burning bush and told Moses that he was to go to Pharaoh and tell him to let God's people go (Exodus 3).

Isaiah also received an "immediate call" from the LORD. In Isaiah chapter 6, Isaiah "**heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?'**" To which Isaiah replies, "**Here I am! Send me**" (Isaiah 6:8).

There are others in both the Old and New Testaments who received such immediate calls to proclaim God's Word to people. The one, however, that I particularly want to talk about today is Ezekiel. We hear how the LORD called him in our text for today. The Lord said to Ezekiel "**Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel**" (Ezekiel 2:3).

Now when I received the call to serve this congregation as its pastor, there were two parts to the call documents which I received. There is what is called "The Diploma of Vocation." That is an official looking thing, printed on special paper. It has the pastor's name on it, the name of the congregation and its location, and then there were signatures of some of the congregation's officers. That's the first part.

The second part of the call documents is what we call "The Supplement to the Diploma of Vocation." That is a multi-page document that lists what the congregation is asking the pastor to do and what the congregation promises to do. In this part of the call documents additional information is given about the congregation and the community in which it serves. There is also

information about such things as salary and retirement and health care benefits provided by the congregation.

In our text for today, we have both “The Diploma of Vocation” and “The Supplement to the Diploma of Vocation” for the immediate call Ezekiel received from the LORD to speak God’s Word to the people of Israel. Ezekiel’s Diploma of Vocation needs no signatures because he was receiving the call from God, Himself.

The Supplement to the Diploma of Vocation in our text include these words which describe the people that Ezekiel would proclaim God’s Word to. They are described as being **“rebels, who have rebelled against [the LORD]”** (Ezekiel 2:3a). **“They ... have transgressed against [the LORD]”** (Ezekiel 2:3b). They **“are impudent and stubborn”** (Ezekiel 2:4a). By the way **“impudent”** means that they did not have respect for other people.

I have to tell you, these are not the kinds of things that one who is filling out the call documents for this congregation will want to put down in describing this congregation. After all, you want the pastor who receives the call to accept the call.

Besides that, any pastor who will receive a call knows that the words rebellious, impudent, and stubborn describe this and every congregation. Early in my ministry an old, retired pastor told me, “People are the same in every congregation.”

Now as I was thinking about this text in preparation for this my final sermon before my retirement, I thought this would be the perfect opportunity for me to bring up things that were said and done that hurt me or my family.

I know of a pastor who did that very thing in his final sermon.

But if I were to do that I would not be practicing what I preached. In my 26 years in serving as a Circuit Visitor, I told pastors who were leaving a parish, not to bring up specific things that had been hurtful. Instead, I told them to preach the Gospel.

Of course, a pastor must preach both Law and Gospel. In my 36 years of ministry here I have tried to preach both Law and Gospel. In my preaching of the Law, there may have been times when it might have seemed to you that I was speaking directly to you as the sin I was talking about was one that you were guilty of.

Let me tell you, though, as I proclaimed the Law, the one who I was first speaking to was myself. That's because I know that I can be stubborn. I don't even have to ask my wife about that. I know that I have been rebellious. I know that I have transgressed God's Law, each and every day. For that I ask God for His forgiveness.

That's the goal of the preaching of the Law. That's because once we recognize that we are sinful, then we are able to see Jesus for what He is: our Savior.

Ezekiel certainly preached the Law as he tried to fulfill his divine call. Ezekiel also preached the Gospel. One of the ways Ezekiel did this was by using the image of a shepherd. In chapter 34, after speaking against a whole stream of shepherds who had not been good shepherds, the kind that had led God's sheep astray, the LORD says, **“Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. <sup>12</sup>As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been**



**scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. ... <sup>14</sup> I will feed them with good pasture ... <sup>15</sup> I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. <sup>16</sup> I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice” (Ezekiel 34:11-12, 14a, 15-16).**

Those words are pointing ahead to Jesus. Jesus is the good shepherd who not only does all those things, but He also laid down His life for His sheep (John 10:11). It was all so that we could have the forgiveness of sins. It was all so that we could have the promise of heaven. In bringing this good news to people God uses pastors who He calls through congregations.

It has been my privilege to serve as pastor of this congregation for almost 36 years. Now, it's time for me to retire. Some have told me that this is hard for them. In many ways I think it is going to be harder for me.

I know that the Lord will provide pastors who will serve this congregation into the future. I will warn you: the next pastor will not be like me and that is not all bad. The next pastor will have different gifts than what I have and that's not all bad.

The one way that I pray that he will be like me is that he will proclaim God's Law and Gospel. That's what stubborn and rebellious people like you, and me, need to hear. We need to see our sin for what it is and we need to know that Jesus is our only Savior from sin.

I am going to end this sermon with a little story: There was a congregation whose pastor received and accepted a call to serve another congregation. In time a new pastor came to serve the congregation. Now, the pastor who had left would often go out into the church yard and pick up the sticks that had fallen out of the trees. Well, wouldn't you know it, after the new pastor arrived there was a windstorm and a lot of sticks had fallen out of the trees onto the church yard.

Soon after that storm there was a Voters' Meeting and it was brought up at the meeting that the previous pastor had always picked up the sticks that were in the church yard. The new pastor didn't say much that night, but at the next Voters' Meeting he reported that he had called the previous pastor and told him that the people wanted him to come back and pick up the sticks. The new pastor then said, "He said he didn't want to do it anymore!"

Well, I went a little longer than my usual 10-12 minutes. I ask you to forgive me for that. I also ask you to forgive the poor guy who follows me when he preaches a sermon that is 15-18 minutes long. AMEN

**P** The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

**C** Amen.

### **Prayer of the Church**

We bless You, Lord, for You have heard the voice of our pleas for mercy and sent Your Son, Jesus Christ, our strength and shield. Save Your people and bless Your heritage forever.

Send laborers into Your harvest, Lord. Preserve Your ministers among us devoted to Your Word and to prayer. Give many servants to Your Church, that neither the preaching nor the care of Your people may fall into neglect or disregard.

Gracious Lord, You have revealed Your righteousness in the sight of the nations: Christ Jesus, Your holy arm. By His death and resurrection, You have worked salvation. Strengthen the song of Your Church. Give skill to musicians, poets and artists. Give boldness to Your congregation in this and every place to sing the eternally new song of Christ.

O Lord, soften the hearts of Your people in every home. Turn parents and children toward each other in love and patience. Banish the spirit of impudence, stubbornness and rebellion from all. Sanctify us in Your truth.

Almighty God, protect and defend our nation from its enemies. Support our leaders, and preserve them from temptation. Through the work of all civil authorities, enable us to live a quiet and peaceable life according to Your Word.

Father, in our weakness we are strong for the sake of Christ, whose grace is sufficient for every need. Give comfort to those whose pain is chronic, whose suffering is unknown, who wrestle with difficult thorns in body or mind, or who are tempted to despair. [*Intercede also on behalf of \_\_\_\_\_.*] In weakness, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities, let us boast in Christ and His cross, by which we and our sufferings are sanctified.

All these things and whatever else You know that we need, grant us, Father, for the sake of Him who died and rose again and now lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God forever. **Amen.**

### **Lord's Prayer**

**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**

*LSB 202*

**P** The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make His face shine upon you and be  
gracious unto you.  
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give  
you peace.

**C** **Amen.**

### **Acknowledgments**

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