

# ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Aitkin, Minnesota

May 21, 2023

The Seventh Sunday of Easter

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*

I will sing of steadfast love and | justice;\*

to you, O LORD, I will make | music.

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, | all the earth!\*

Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence  
with | singing!

Know that the LORD, | he is God!\*

It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his  
people, and the sheep of his | pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his | courts with  
praise!\*

Give thanks to him; | bless his name!

For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures for- |  
ever, \*

and his faithfulness to all gener- | ations.

**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.**

I will sing of steadfast love and | justice;\*

to you, O LORD, I will make | music.

## Collect of the Day

*Easter 7*

P Let us pray.

O King of glory, Lord of hosts, uplifted in triumph far  
above all heavens, leave us not without consolation  
but send us the Spirit of truth whom You promised  
from the Father; for You live and reign with Him  
and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

## First Reading

*Acts 1:12–26*

Then [the apostles] returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said, "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry." (Now this man bought a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) "For it is written in the Book of Psalms,

"May his camp become desolate,  
and let there be no one to dwell in it';

and

"Let another take his office.'

So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.” And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

## **Epistle**

*1 Peter 4:12–19; 5:6–11*

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And

“If the righteous is scarcely saved,  
what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”

Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will  
entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing  
good. . . .

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty  
hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt  
you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares  
for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary  
the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking  
someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith,  
knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being  
experienced by your brotherhood throughout the  
world. And after you have suffered a little while, the  
God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory  
in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and  
establish you. To him be the dominion forever and  
ever. Amen.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

## **Holy Gospel**

*John 17:1–11*

When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his  
eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come;  
glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you  
have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal  
life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal  
life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus  
Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth,  
having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.

And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

“I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.”

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 – Acts 1:12-26      Theme – Waiting**

Our text for today tells us what the Church did in the time between Jesus' ascension into heaven and the day He sent the Holy Spirit. Last Thursday, by the way was Ascension Day. This coming Sunday will be Pentecost. What did the Church do in that time? They waited. That's what Jesus had told them to do. He told them to wait in Jerusalem **"until [they were] clothed with power from on high"** (Luke 24:49). Ten days they waited. Sometimes waiting is not an easy thing to do because most of the time we want what we want when we want it.

Oftentimes, though, God makes His people wait. God made Abraham wait 25 years for his promised son, Isaac to be born. God made the children of Israel wait 400 years in Egypt before He brought them up out of that land of slavery. God waited thousands of years before He sent His own Son to fulfill the promise made at the time of Adam and Eve that the offspring of a

woman would crust their temper's head. Jesus is the One who brings us out of our slavery to sin.

What God does in these times of waiting is to prepare His people for what He is about to do. If you think about it then, the ten days Jesus' disciples had to wait until they were **"clothed with power from on high"** doesn't sound so bad when you compare it to 25 years, 400 years, or thousands of years that others had to wait.

So, what was the Church doing in those ten days of waiting? Our text tells us that they devoted **"themselves to prayer"** (Acts 1:14). In those days, the prayer book of the Church was the book of Psalms. Through His Word, God was preparing the Church in their time of waiting for what was about to happen.

It is obvious that the Church was making use of the book of Psalms in this time, for it was the book of Psalms that told them that Judas' place would **"become desolate"** (Psalm 69:25 & Acts 1:20) and it was the book of Psalms that told them that another should **"take [Judas'] place"** (Psalm 109:8 & Acts 1:20).

The work of the Church would go on. God was not giving up on them even though the other eleven had done things which were in His eyes just as bad as what Judas had done. Peter had denied; Thomas had doubted; James and John had sought glory; all of the eleven had struggled to believe. God could still use them, though, just as He can still use people who are sinful and flawed to fill the office of ministry.



So, the Church filled the office left vacant by Judas. They prayed to God asking Him to show them which of the two candidates God had **“chosen”** (Acts 1:24) to fill that office. We are told that the Church **“casts lots ... and the lot fell on Matthias”** (Acts 1:26).

It almost sounds as though they flipped a coin or drew straws to see which of the two should be the 12<sup>th</sup> disciple. I have to tell you, there is some debate among Bible scholars about this. Some make the argument that the Greek can also mean that a vote was taken and the one who got the most votes was Matthias.

That roughly parallels the way a congregation chooses the pastor they want to call. In my role as Circuit Visitor, these past 26 years, I have helped the congregations of the Brainerd Circuit work through 30 different call processes. In some of these the congregations waited six months before they got a new pastor; in couple of these, the congregation had to wait four years before they got a new pastor. What was God doing in these times of waiting? He was preparing His people for what He was about to do.

Like the Church in our text, the Church today is waiting. We are not waiting to be clothed with the Holy Spirit. That happened on Pentecost and that happens whenever anyone is baptized. What we are waiting for is Jesus to come again.

He came the first time to suffer, die, and rise again to free us from the guilt of sin. He is going to

come a second time to raise up all the dead and give eternal life to all believers.

So, what is the Church to do in this time of waiting? The example of early Church would be a good one to follow. We are to make use of God's Word and prayer. It is the Word of God that the Holy Spirit uses to keep us in the faith. And, when we pray, we do as Peter tells us to do in our epistle less for today. We are **"casting all [our] anxieties on him, [who] cares for us"** (1 Peter 5:7).

That is something we will want to do especially when experience the **"fiery trials"** that our epistle lesson talks about. They come to **"test"** us (1 Peter 4:12).

In those times, the Word of God will be there to encourage us and to strengthen us. In those times we can take it to the Lord in prayer. And we can **"rejoice insofar as [we] share Christ's sufferings, that [we] may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed"** (1 Peter 4:13). When His glory is revealed all our waiting will be over. AMEN

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

C **Amen.**

### **Prayer of the Church**

Lord God, Ruler of all, protect and defend Your Church from every attack of the devil who prowls and seeks to devour. Where he tempts, strengthen Your people to resist his seductions and terrors; where he gains a foothold with false teaching or ungodly living,

call to repentance and holiness; and where he incites enemies against Your Word and Church, preserve Your saints in the faith, that they may rejoice to share in the sufferings of Christ.

Lord, bless the work of our missionaries. Bring forth Your harvest from the seeds they sow. Support those who endure fiery trials for Your name. As they shine the light of the Gospel into hostile darkness, guard them with the sign of Your cross. Let them rejoice that in tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril or sword, they share in Your very sufferings

Lord, You hold the might of man in Your hand and can destroy all things by Your mighty power. Bless our nation and all the peoples of the world. Where war and violence threaten, bring peace and justice. Where oppression reigns, bring liberty. Watch over those who defend us, especially the men and women of our armed forces and those who protect within our communities.

Lord, You have saved us by Your grace. We pray for the sick, the distressed, those whose hearts are heavy, those whose lives are burdened, those who mourn and all who are in any need [*especially* \_\_\_\_\_]. Grant them healing according to Your will, strength and mercy according to their needs, and the peace that passes understanding.

Heavenly Father, as the first Christians devoted themselves to prayer and worship following Christ's glorious ascension, preserve us in the same until we are raised with all the saints to Your heavenly kingdom; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and

reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and 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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