

Home worship service during time of isolation and social distancing.

The Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 10, 2020

An Easter Salutation *adapted from 2 Timothy 1:10 & Psalm 118*

- L** Christ is risen! Alleluia!
- C** **Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**
- L** Christ has destroyed death. Alleluia!
- C** **And has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. Alleluia!**
- L** The Lord is my strength and my song. Alleluia!
- C** **He has become my salvation. Alleluia!**
- L** I will not die, but live. Alleluia!
- C** **I will proclaim what the Lord has done. Alleluia!**
- L** Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;
- C** **as it was in the beginning is now and will be forever. Amen.**

The Church's One Foundation Lutheran Service Book 644, Lutheran Worship 289, The Lutheran Hymnal 473



1 The Church's one foun-da-tion Is Je-sus Christ, her Lord;
2 E-lect from ev-'ry na-tion, Yet one o'er all the earth;
3 Though with a scorn-ful won-der The world sees her op-pressed,
4 Through toil and trib-u-la-tion And tu-mult of her war



She is His new cre-a-tion By wa-ter and the Word.
Her char-ter of sal-va-tion: One Lord, one faith, one birth.
By schisms rent a-sun-der, By her-e-sies dis-tressed,
She waits the con-sum-ma-tion Of peace for-ev-er-more



From heav'n He came and sought her To be His ho-ly bride;
One ho-ly name she bless-es, Par-takes one ho-ly food,
Yet saints their watch are keep-ing; Their cry goes up, "How long?"
Till with the vi-sion glo-rious Her long-ing eyes are blest,



With His own blood He bought her, And for her life He died.
And to one hope she press-es With ev-'ry grace en-dued.
And soon the night of weep-ing Shall be the morn of song.
And the great Church vic-to-rious 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 blessed heav'nly chorus!
Lord, save us by Your grace
That we, like saints before us,
May see You face to face.

L In the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

L O Lord, open my lips,

C and my mouth will declare your praise.

L Make haste, O God, to deliver me;

C make haste to help me, O Lord.

Introit Psalm 30:1–5; antiphon: Psalm 149:1

L Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song,
his praise in the assembly of the godly!

C I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up
and have not let my foes rejoice over me.

L O Lord my God, I cried to you for help,
and you have healed me.

C O Lord, you have brought up my soul from Sheol;
you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.

L Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints,
and give thanks to his holy name.

C For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime.
Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.
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.

L Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song,
his praise in the assembly of the godly!

Kyrie

C Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Collect of the Day

L Let us pray: O God, You make the minds of Your faithful to be of one will. Grant that we may love what You have commanded and desire what You promise, that among the many changes of this world our hearts may be fixed where true joys are found; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Acts 6:1-9; 7:2a, 51-60

¹Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. ²And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. ³Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. ⁴But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." ⁵And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. ⁶These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

⁷And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

⁸And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. ⁹Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen. ^{7:2}And Stephen said: "Brothers and fathers, hear me. . . ⁵¹"You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you

always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. ⁵²Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, ⁵³you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.”

⁵⁴Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. ⁵⁵But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” ⁵⁷But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. ⁵⁸Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” ⁶⁰And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Psalm 146

L ¹Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul!

C ²**I will praise the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.**

L ³Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.

C ⁴**When his breath departs he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish.**

L ⁵Blessèd is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God,

C ⁶**who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, who keeps faith forever;**

L ⁷who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free;

C ⁸**the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous.**

L ⁹The LORD watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

C ¹⁰**The LORD will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations.**

Praise the LORD!

1 Peter 2:2-10

²Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation— ³if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

⁴As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶For it stands in Scripture:

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone,
a cornerstone chosen and precious,
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

⁷So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,

“The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone,”

⁸and

“A stone of stumbling,
and a rock of offense.”

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

⁹But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

- L** This is the Word of the Lord.
- G** **Thanks be to God.**

Verse of the Day Romans 6:9; John 14:23

- L** Alleluia. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. Alleluia.
- G** **Alleluia. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Alleluia.**

John 14:1-14

- L** The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the fourteenth chapter.
- G** **Glory to You, O Lord.**

¹[Jesus said:] “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ²In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. ⁴And you know the way to where I am going.” ⁵Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” ⁶Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

⁸Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” ⁹Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

¹²“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. ¹³Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

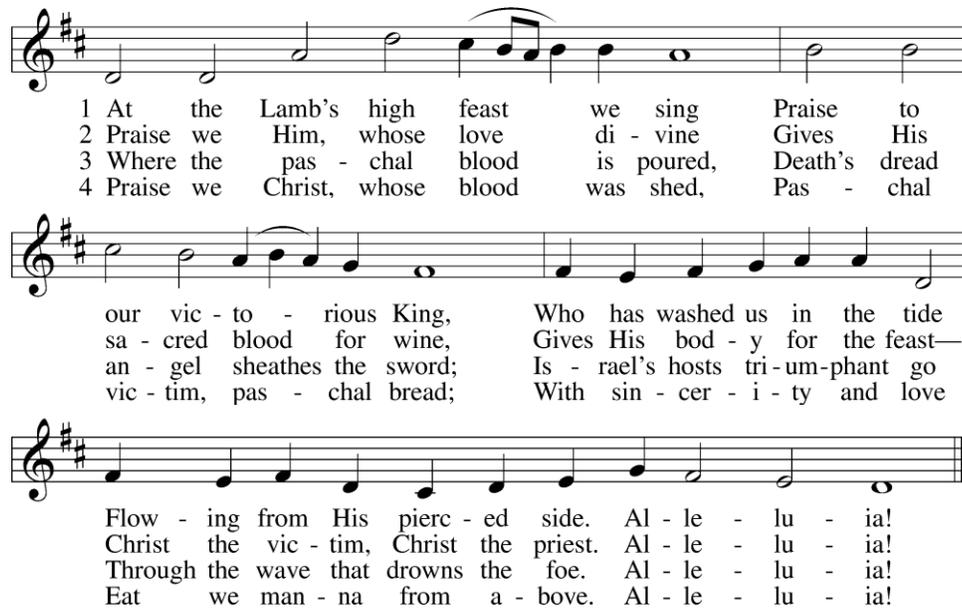
- L** This is the Gospel of the Lord.
- G** **Praise to You, O Christ.**

G **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.**



1 At the Lamb's high feast we sing Praise to
 2 Praise we Him, whose love di - vine Gives His
 3 Where the pas - chal blood is poured, Death's dread
 4 Praise we Christ, whose blood was shed, Pas - chal

our vic - to - rious King, Who has washed us in the tide
 sa - cred blood for wine, Gives His bod - y for the feast—
 an - gel sheathes the sword; Is - rael's hosts tri - um - phant go
 vic - tim, pas - chal bread; With sin - cer - i - ty and love

Flow - ing from His pierc - ed side. Al - le - lu - ia!
 Christ the vic - tim, Christ the priest. Al - le - lu - ia!
 Through the wave that drowns the foe. Al - le - lu - ia!
 Eat we man - na from a - bove. Al - le - lu - ia!

Public domain

Devotional thoughts:

“Let not your hearts be troubled,” are some of Jesus’ most treasured words. Even in the best of times, trouble seems to be all around us. Distress and danger appear to be just around the corner. Now in this time of an extended pandemic, we cannot escape the risks and perils of everyday life when even a visit to the grocery store can put you in jeopardy.

Yet these words of Jesus are heard most often when death is near, at hospitals, funerals, and gravesides. These are particularly appropriate occasions because Jesus first spoke these words when His death was near. In the moments leading to these words of comfort, Jesus revealed to His disciples that one of them would betray Him. It is no wonder that their hearts would be distressed.

So what is the solution to a troubled heart, especially a heart troubled and distressed by death? Is it a large bank account and a balanced budget? Is it lots of friends and personal fame? Is it the sweet smell of spring? Is it quiet time and mindfulness? Is it a healthy lifestyle and diet? These things can bring a temporary sense of well being. They may help you live longer but none of them cure a troubled heart brought on by the distress of death.

So what is the answer? Jesus quickly gives it, “Believe in God; believe also in me.” Faith is the answer! Trusting God in times of uncertainty and distress is always the real answer. It is absolutely the only answer when hearts are troubled by death.

You notice that Jesus is very clear. He is not just talking about a generic faith in a generic God. He is very specifically talking about faith in himself! Let us not be confused, Jesus makes this abundantly clear when He answers Thomas’ concern about not knowing the way. Jesus says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” There is no mistaking these words. Jesus is not just “a” way but He is the ONLY way. No one can come to the true God, except through Him.

Faith is difficult. In fact, faith is impossible if we look to our own reason and strength. It is only through the working of the Holy Spirit that unbelieving hearts can be comforted by faith. Therefore, it is no surprise that at the end of this very chapter Jesus promises the gift of the Holy Spirit when He says, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid” (John 14:26-27).

Jesus also knows that an essential element to peace and calm for trouble hearts is the knowledge that “In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you.”

These words of Jesus bring to mind Jaroslav Vajda's beloved Christmas hymn, "Where Shepherds Lately Knelt." He writes in the first stanza:

I come in half-belief,
a pilgrim strangely stirred,
but there is room and welcome there for me,
but there is room and welcome there for me.

There is a place in Jesus' Father's house for you! There is room and welcome for each of us pilgrims who wander through this time of distress and troubled hearts!

"Let not your hearts be troubled." Jesus personally goes to prepare a place for you! This preparation meant going to the cross to pay for your sins and the sins of the whole world.

We live in a time when the concept of "sin" is belittled and denied. Yet in the hour of death, our personal failings and regrets become all too real. Yes, I can find some whom I regard to be a "worse sinner" than I am. Dale Carnegie pointed out that even the most hardened criminal considers himself a basically good person.

This is not good enough. A holy God requires perfection! Jesus went to the cross to make you holy! He bore your sins and removed them from you as far as the east is from the west. He prepared a place for you in His Father's house by making you worthy through the forgiveness of sins! We are reminded of this truth each time we sing, "Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world; grant us peace."

In these times of social isolation, we can glimpse the loneliness that many people experience in life. From the very beginning, God has made it clear that it is not good to be alone (Genesis 2:18). The specter of loneliness and losing a loved one is troubling indeed. Spending eternity alone is a thought more than we can bear. Jesus' calms our troubled hearts by assuring us that we will spend eternity with Him in His Father's house when He says, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."

The essence of heaven is spending eternity with Jesus. When the thief on the cross begged, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom," Jesus calmed his troubled heart with the promise, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

Some may weary of Easter celebrations and find themselves ready to move on to the next holiday. For Christians, Jesus' resurrection is our daily comfort for troubled hearts in times of danger and distress. He has prepared a place for us in His Father's house. He will come again and take us to be there with Him for all eternity.

He lives to silence all my fears;
He lives to wipe away my tears;
He lives to calm my troubled heart;
He lives all blessings to impart.

He lives and grants me daily breath;
He lives, and I shall conquer death;
He lives my mansion to prepare;
He lives to bring me safely there.

I Know That My Redeemer Lives, stanzas 5 & 7
Lutheran Service Book 461
Public Domain

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7).

God's richest blessings to you in Christ.

L Let us pray. O Lord Jesus, You are the Son of God. We thank You that you went to Your Father's house to prepare a place for us. Grant that we find calm and peace for our troubled hearts in Your sacrifice on the cross and Your resurrection from the dead. Guard and protect our family and friends, especially those who are separated far from us. Protect all who attend to our needs during this time of national emergency and pandemic for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

L Gracious God, You have established the home and blessed those who show us Your love. Bless all mothers and the children in their care. Bless all families and make their homes places of blessing and love, where Your Word is spoken, forgiveness reigns and love is displayed. Give us good examples to inspire youth to all that is good and pure, and to seek after these things.

C Amen.

C I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

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.

L Let us bless the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

L The Lord bless us, defend us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

C Amen.

At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing Lutheran Service Book 633, Lutheran Worship 126, The Lutheran Hymnal N/A

5 Mighty Victim from the sky,
Hell's fierce pow'rs beneath You lie;
You have conquered in the fight,
You have brought us life and light.
Alleluia!

6 Now no more can death appall,
Now no more the grave enthrall;
You have opened paradise,
And Your saints in You shall rise.
Alleluia!

7 Easter triumph, Easter joy!
This alone can sin destroy;
From sin's pow'r, Lord, set us free,
Newborn souls in You to be.
Alleluia!

8 Father, who the crown shall give,
Savior, by whose death we live,
Spirit, guide through all our days:
Three in One, Your name we praise.
Alleluia!

Public domain

Service Notes:

One person may serve as Leader or this may be shared with a number of individuals.

Read one or more of the lessons. Hymns may be sung or read. Use as much or little of this service as you would like.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Some liturgical portions are adapted from Lutheran Service Book © 2006 Concordia Publishing House. Lutheran Service Book License: 10002731 Christ Lutheran Church, Stevensville, Michigan

Hymns are in the public domain.

The remainder of this work including adaptations and the Devotional thoughts © 2020 Philip G. Quardokus. All rights reserved.

Enhancing Your Worship

Meditating on God's Word and Works

I will meditate on your wondrous works. Psalm 119:27
My eyes are awake through the night watches,
That I may meditate on Your word. Psalm 119:148 NKJV

The Week of the Fourth Sunday of Easter

Good Shepherd Sunday

May 11 - May 16

Introduction

Most modern forms of mediation turn a person inward. Biblical meditation turns a person outward toward what God has said and done especially what He has said and done through Jesus for our salvation.

Each Sunday has its own special theme directing us to meditate on God's word and actions. This theme is found in the Propers of the Day (the parts of the service that change week to week). From Advent through the Easter season these themes focus our attention on the life of Jesus from His birth to His death and resurrection. There is always much more in the propers than can be covered in any Sunday service. God willing, I will use the propers for Sunday to provide you with a devotion each day to help you mediate on what God has done for you.

Monday

At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing – 1

At the Lamb's high feast we sing
Praise to our victorious King,
Who has washed us in the tide
Flowing from His pierced side.
Alleluia!

Public domain

L Christ is Risen!

C He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

L Alleluia. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. Alleluia.

C Alleluia. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Alleluia.

(Romans 6:9; John 14:23)

Introit Psalm 30:1–5; antiphon: Psalm 149:1

- L** Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song,
his praise in the assembly of the godly!
- C** **I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up
and have not let my foes rejoice over me.**
- L** O Lord my God, I cried to you for help,
and you have healed me.
- C** **O Lord, you have brought up my soul from Sheol;
you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.**
- L** Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints,
and give thanks to his holy name.
- C** **For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime.
Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.
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.**
- L** Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song,
his praise in the assembly of the godly!

Have you ever experienced a time when someone was angry with you but you didn't know the reason? I don't think that this is too uncommon. Some people are easily offended even when no offense was intended.

In the early days of my ministry and in my confirmation classes, I remember pastors teaching me about the difference between "giving offense" and "taking offense." It can be very frustrating when someone near to you all of a sudden becomes cold and distant for no apparent reason. Often this can be the result of "taking offense" when no real offense was given.

During this time while we are under a stay at home order, my wife, Valerie, and I have found ourselves watching many hours of the Hallmark channel. It doesn't take very long before you notice that most of the movies are simply variations on the same recurring themes. One of those themes is a misunderstanding of an overheard conversation and a misinterpreted message. It usually happens when someone only hears one side of a phone call or walks in during the middle of a dialogue. Large portions of the plots are dedicated to these kinds of misunderstandings between romantically inclined individuals.

Of course, the solution to these misunderstandings is open and clear communication. This is how most of these movies eventually resolve difficulties for starry-eyed lovers.

There is another kind of offense that should be noted. This is when a real offense is given but the offender is ignorant of the fact. This also seems to be common between men and women but it happens in all kinds of relationships. It can happen in the family, at work, or at school. It occurs frequently between races and cultures.

Does communication help here? It certainly may but something more is needed. What is needed is confession and forgiveness. When real offense is given, repentance and confession is the only solution!

Through the years, God has granted me the opportunity to teach many people from a variety of backgrounds. Some are well versed in Scriptures and we have the opportunity to dig deeply into every verse of the Bible and as I often say, "Squeeze every drop from the lemon."

Others are new to the Christian faith or only marginally acquainted with it. These people often have only a minimal knowledge of God's law and His requirement of perfection (Matthew 5:48). In these situations, I have often observed great joy in learning of God's grace and complete forgiveness. However, as weeks pass and they learn more about God's holy law, they become dismayed at how short of perfection their lives have been.

I remember a time when a young couple attended a new member class I was teaching. The husband was a sincere and eager learner but his language was foul and full of profanities. Without extending the story too long, I noticed that after several weeks of studying God's law, he no longer used such vulgar speech. I had

never confronted him on this issue. Rather, until this study of God’s law, he had never realized how sinful his speech had become. He simply believed it was the normal way to communicate. When he became aware of how offensive his language was to God, he corrected the situation.

The psalmist praises and extols God. There is no greater reason to praise and extol God than the gift of forgiveness, life, and salvation won for us by Jesus on the cross. When we honestly and openly confess our sins to Him and repent of even the sins we do not know and feel in our heart, He restores us to the joy of salvation.

“For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime.

Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning” (Psalm 30:5)

Prayer: O Lamb of God, You have washed us in the tide flowing from Your pierced side. Move us to true repentance and confession of all that we have done to break Your holy law. Grant that we would always rejoice in the forgiveness that You have won for us on the cross. Amen.

Tuesday

At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing – 2

Praise we Him, whose love divine
Gives His sacred blood for wine,
Gives His body for the feast—
Christ the victim, Christ the priest.
Alleluia!

Public domain

L Christ is Risen!

C He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

L Alleluia. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. Alleluia.

C Alleluia. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Alleluia.

(Romans 6:9; John 14:23)

Collect of the Day

L Let us pray. O God, You make the minds of Your faithful to be of one will. Grant that we may love what You have commanded and desire what You promise, that among the many changes of this world our hearts may be fixed where true joys are found; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen

Without much happening in the world during our current “stay at home, stay safe” order, we may naturally be drawn to our TV screens. Some watch old films, others binge-watch new series. One area of interest is the daily updates on Covid-19 and possible treatments.

Yet when searching for signs of hope, it is more and more disheartening to watch politicians casting blame and insulting each other. For our own mental health, it may be wise to limit such exposure.

Never-the-less, this discouraging disunity is a reminder of how unfortunate it is that even Christian people find it hard to be of one mind and one will. Arguing and bickering (One of my grandmother Quardokus’ favorite words) among the faithful is displeasing to God.

In His High Priestly Prayer, Jesus prays, “Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me,

that they may be one, even as we are one” (John 17:11). In this time of national distress, unity of mind and spirit among believers is especially important.

Pray that God would bring us to repentance where we have contributed to disunity through our sinful words and actions. Remember that God grants us one will and one mind through the working of His Holy Spirit.

Pray that God would grant us true love for His commandments and a desire for holy living. Pray that our faith in His promises of forgiveness and salvation would increase.

Finally, Pray that during this time of change and anxiety, that our hearts would be fixed on Jesus where true joy is found.

Prayer: O Lamb of God, You were both the Victim and the Priest during Your sacrifice on the cross. Grant us true repentance and forgiveness that we may be of one mind with our fellow believers. During this time of uncertainty and danger let us fix our eyes on the cross and resurrection remember the ultimate joy that awaits us in eternity. Amen.

Wednesday

At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing – 3

Where the paschal blood is poured,
Death's dread angel sheathes the sword;
Israel's hosts triumphant go
Through the wave that drowns the foe.
Alleluia!

Public domain

L Christ is Risen!

C He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

L Alleluia. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. Alleluia.

C Alleluia. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Alleluia.

(Romans 6:9; John 14:23)

Psalm 146

L ¹Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul!

C ²I will praise the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

L ³Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.

C ⁴When his breath departs he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish.

L ⁵Blessèd is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God,

C ⁶who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, who keeps faith forever;

L ⁷who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free;

C ⁸the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous.

L ⁹The LORD watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

C ¹⁰The LORD will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations.

Praise the LORD!

The unemployment numbers are staggering. Those who struggle in the best of times are facing difficulties that no one could have predicted. Even some who had been successful are overwhelmed during this time of national crisis.

Where is God? People have been asking this question in times of distress throughout the centuries. You may recall that the Children of Israel asked a similar question as they wandered in the wilderness. They were hungry and all they could do was remember the food that they ate when they were still in slavery in Egypt. In answer to their plea, God sent manna from heaven.

God answers our prayers in a variety of ways. Sometimes He may answer them with a miracle just as He did when He fed the Children of Israel in the wilderness. Most of the time, He answers our prayers through His servants practicing their vocations.

When we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," God answers not by sending manna but by sending sunshine and rain. He answers by sending farmers and field hands. He answers by sending truckers and food processors. He answers by sending grocers and chefs. He answers by giving us jobs and incomes.

The Lord "upholds the widow and the fatherless" (Psalm 146:9). When widows and orphans are in need, He answers their prayers by sending compassionate people. This has been true of the Christian people since earliest times. We learn from the Bible that the first Christians made sure that their widows were cared for (Acts 6:1-7).

Today, when people around us are in need, He calls upon the faithful to be His hands and feet. He answers their prayers through the generosity of the saints.

Take My Life and Let It Be

1 Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

2 Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love;
Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.

3 Take my voice and let me sing
Always, only for my King;
Take my lips and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee.

4 Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold;
Take my intellect and use
Ev'ry pow'r as Thou shalt choose.

5 Take my will and make it Thine,
It shall be no longer mine;
Take my heart, it is Thine own,
It shall be Thy royal throne.

6 Take my love, my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store;
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee.

Public domain

Prayer: Our Father, Who art in heaven, thank you for upholding the widow and the fatherless. Grant that we may be Your hands and feet in caring for those in need during this time of national crisis. Amen.

Thursday

At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing – 4

Praise we Christ, whose blood was shed,
Paschal victim, paschal bread;
With sincerity and love
Eat we manna from above.
Alleluia!

Public domain

L Christ is Risen!
C He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C Amen.

L Alleluia. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. Alleluia.

C Alleluia. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Alleluia.

(Romans 6:9; John 14:23)

Acts 6:1-9; 7:2a, 51-60

¹Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. ²And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. ³Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. ⁴But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." ⁵And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. ⁶These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

⁷And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

⁸And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. ⁹Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen. ^{7:2}And Stephen said: "Brothers and fathers, hear me. . . ⁵¹"You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. ⁵²Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, ⁵³you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it."

⁵⁴Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. ⁵⁵But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." ⁵⁷But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. ⁵⁸Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Life is always a matter of managing priorities. What comes first in life? Most of us go through a time when fun and games are first in life. I remember a time in my teenage years when I must have complained to my father that I wasn't having fun. He said to me, "There is more to life than having fun."

I am sure that those words must have rolled off me like water off a duck's back. Yet they must have struck a chord with me because I remember them all these years later.

They were important words coming from a man who had been through unimaginably difficult times in the Korean War. He had witnessed his friends be wounded and die around him. He narrowly escaped capture and death on multiple occasions. He led men from danger behind enemy lines. He was once fleeing the enemy where everyone in the line behind him was captured or killed. He experienced hunger and cold beyond which I have ever imagined. He certainly knew that there are things in life more important than having fun.

During this time of social distancing, I am frustrated with but understand that there are people who only think of fun and merrymaking. For them, social distancing is a great evil. Still, this is an important opportunity for us to examine our own priorities.

In our reading from Acts, we learn that the highest priority for the Apostles was preaching the Word of God. Serving tables was important but not as important as proclaiming salvation through faith in Christ. Food for the soul is more important than food for the body. As Jesus clearly spoke to Satan, “Man does not live on bread alone.”

Stephen and the first deacons of the church had set their priorities on serving the Lord by caring for widows. This was and is an important task. Stephen knew that his highest priority was faithfulness to God. This faithfulness cost him his life. For him, there were things more important in life than having fun.

Service can be and often is difficult. It is difficult for those serving in the armed forces. It is difficult for those serving in law enforcement or medical professions. It is difficult for fathers and mothers caring for children. But these are all priorities more important than having fun.

I pray that during this time of national distress that we will set our priorities on being faithful to God and faithful in our service to others. When we do this we will often find that God grants us joy and fulfillment in our vocations.

Prayer: O Lord, thank you for people who serve us in this life. Thank you for those who like the Apostles have dedicated their lives to proclaiming your holy word of forgiveness through faith in Christ. Thank you for those who like Stephen have dedicated their lives to serving those in need. Keep us from being stiff-necked people. Grant that faith in Jesus would move us to lives of service to widows and orphans and to those in any kind of need. Amen.

Friday

At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing – 5

Mighty Victim from the sky,
Hell's fierce pow'rs beneath You lie;
You have conquered in the fight,
You have brought us life and light.
Alleluia!

Public domain

L Christ is Risen!

C He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

L Alleluia. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. Alleluia.

C Alleluia. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Alleluia.

(Romans 6:9; John 14:23)

1 Peter 2:2-10

²Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation— ³if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

⁴As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶For it stands in Scripture:

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone,
a cornerstone chosen and precious,
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

⁷So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,
“The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone,”

⁸and

“A stone of stumbling,
and a rock of offense.”

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

⁹But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Our epistle for this week contains the words of the introit from Quasimodogeniti Sunday, “Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk.” Peter goes on to tell us that this pure spiritual milk is the message about Jesus, the “living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious.”

No one likes to be rejected. Acceptance by friends and society is something that we all crave. Bullies in school seek to have their victims rejected by classmates and friends. Manipulative individuals seek to use acceptance as a way to control people.

But for us Christian people, Peter reminds us that Jesus was rejected by the world. He endured this rejection all the way to the cross to make us His own chosen people called out of darkness into His marvelous light.

We, who follow Jesus, can expect no less from the world. Honesty, integrity, morality, and truthfulness are often belittled and rejected. Yet in Christ, we endure this rejection because we have become living stones being built up as a spiritual house. This rejection is only a temporary and light annoyance on our spiritual journey to eternity with the Savior.

Prayer: O Chief Cornerstone, thank you for enduring rejection by men for our sake. Grant that we may fully live as living stones in your marvelous light proclaiming love and salvation through Your name. Amen.

Saturday

At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing – 6, 7, 8

6 Now no more can death appall,
Now no more the grave enthrall;
You have opened paradise,
And Your saints in You shall rise.
Alleluia!

7 Easter triumph, Easter joy!
This alone can sin destroy;
From sin’s pow’r, Lord, set us free,
Newborn souls in You to be.
Alleluia!

8 Father, who the crown shall give,
Savior, by whose death we live,
Spirit, guide through all our days:
Three in One, Your name we praise.
Alleluia!

L Christ is Risen!
C **He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!**

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C **Amen.**

L Alleluia. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. Alleluia.
C **Alleluia. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Alleluia.**

(Romans 6:9; John 14:23)

Gradual

L Christ has risen from the dead.
C **God the Father has crowned him with glory and honor,**
L He has given him dominion over the works of his hands;
C **he has put all things under his feet.**

(adapt. from Matt. 28:7; Heb. 2:7; Ps. 8:6)

“Easter triumph, Easter joy!” These words have echoed in the minds and hearts of God’s people throughout the centuries. Sometimes Christians have celebrated Easter in prisons or catacombs. Sometimes Christians have celebrated Easter in hospitals and nursing homes. Sometimes Christians have celebrated Easter in times of persecution and suffering. This year, we celebrated Easter in our own homes.

Still nothing can steal from us the joy of knowing our risen and ascended Lord who sits at the right hand of God. We were once no people but now we are His people. Once we had not received mercy but now we have received mercy.

Sin, death, and the devil have been thoroughly and completely defeated. We have the victory of life and salvation in Jesus’ name.

Last week the 75th anniversary of VE day went by mostly unnoticed. But for those who can remember or those who have seen pictures of the celebration in Times Square, London, and around the world, few earthly joys can compare. Yet this is nothing compared to the joy that it ours because of Jesus Easter resurrection from the grave. May this joy always be ours. Nothing can dim our ongoing celebration of life in Jesus’ name.

Prayer: O Lord God, our heavenly Father, thank You for the mansion that Jesus has prepared for us in eternity with You in Your house. Thank you for making us Your people and welcoming us into Your family. Grant that we may always place you first in our lives as we live lives of Easter triumph and Easter joy. Amen.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Enhancing Your Worship © 2020 Philip G. Quardokus. All rights reserved.