



HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH

A Member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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Pastor: Reverend Patricia Hughes

September 28, 2020

The first Sunday of Fall brought another sunny Sunday where we could enjoy God's creation and worship outdoors in and around the courtyard at Holy Cross Lutheran Church. It has been an enriching experience this year to have church outside surrounded by fellow members in Christ. This opportunity might have passed us by had it not been necessitated by COVID-19. Maybe we would have thought to meet once or twice out in the courtyard with the nice weather, but doubtful it would have been every other week for three months!

It can be the tendency of people to dwell on the negative and 2020 has brought its share of bad news. When you look at it a bit differently you can spot some positive and rewarding things that change has brought us since March.

As society has slowed down, we have spent much more time at home (too much for some), allowing us to learn new skills or reinforce old ones. Cooking, crafts, music and reading, along with household cleaning and finally getting to long delayed projects, are a few of the benefits of the extra time at home.

Summer brought unrest and protests, but also allowed us time to examine our feelings and history in America. We reflected on what really divides us and whether those differences really matter. Conversations were started and people were engaged to make real change.

The perfect storm of late summer's dry conditions and strong winds turned small wildfires into raging mega-fires that forced evacuations and loss of homes and lives. These events brought forth the best of humanity when people pulled together to fight side by side to stem the fiery onslaught, bring relief and provide needed materials to those displaced.

Even the fact that school has started with remote distance learning has presented opportunities for parents to connect with their children as they learn and for organizations around town to offer space and volunteers to help kids with technology and mentorship in completing schoolwork.

God has presented us with a changing world in 2020. We have been given many opportunities to show care and concern for the well-being of others, take the time to slow down and relate to what is going on in the communities around us.

So, pause for a moment, relax and breathe. Contemplate where God is leading you and your church as you complete your journey through this year of 2020. Think of the things your hands can do working in his name and dig in. Fall has just started, winter is coming, but there will be growth in the spring!

Your servant in Christ, Bryan Struve

Bible study at Holy Cross – Every Thursday!

In Person (Verse by Verse) meets at 12 noon (in the gym for proper spacing) Masks required, social distancing required.

Join us on Zoom for Bible Study at 5pm

Topic: What is God Saying today?

Time: October 1, 2020 05:00 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Weekly:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/tZAtcuyorzMqGtxkui9AsVV9vE_P9mKoFH50/ics?icsToken=98tyKuGsrj4vGtWdsBmPRpwIAo_4Z_TzmFxfjbdFlwrsWgFAVDWvIMd9AutyO9f2](https://us02web.zoom.us/join/https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/tZAtcuyorzMqGtxkui9AsVV9vE_P9mKoFH50/ics?icsToken=98tyKuGsrj4vGtWdsBmPRpwIAo_4Z_TzmFxfjbdFlwrsWgFAVDWvIMd9AutyO9f2)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84055018008?pwd=SlJHN0lkcWhlUVF3aWE4MkEzV1BRdz09>

Meeting ID: 840 5501 8008

Passcode: 569519

Here's our topics for the next few weeks:

October 1 – Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20 (The Ten Commandments)

October 8 - Exodus 32:1-14 (The Israelites forge a golden calf)

October 15 - Exodus 33:12-23 (The glory of God revealed to Moses)

October 22 - John 8:31-36 (Jesus says, Continue in my word and you will know the truth)

Beginning with Reformation Sunday, Oct 25, we will move to studying the Gospel for the coming week. It's been fun to use the semi continuous readings during the summer, so we could stay focused on one story – the founding of Israel as a people and eventually as a nation. Focusing on the Gospel for the school year is a great way to listen for "What God is Saying Today".

Sermon for Sunday Sept 27, 2020. I'd like to begin with a story. I purchased some things from a store one day, it was only me and the owner in the shop. He asked if that was all I needed, and I said, Yes, sir that's it. He grimaced, and said sir, don't call me sir. And I said, well I'm from the south, and we talk like this. He said, well, just don't call me sir. So, I said, As I said I'm from the south, I've got sir or ma'am. Which one do you want? He looked at me and said, "Well, we have a smart alecky customer". Well, yes, of course I'm smart alecky. But besides that – it does seem that we often reduce life to 2 choices – left or right – up or down, conservative or liberal. And sometimes we see two choices in the Bible – Good or bad. Sin or righteousness. And I think both of our passages today are pointing us to see more than the simple on or off of the dichotomy of life – this way or the other way. Let's start with Moses. We've been reading Exodus for several weeks. Moses is a man with a problem. Millions of them – the Hebrews who complain about everything he does. Why did you bring us out of Egypt to die? They asked that last week, too and the one before, when they were crossing the Red sea on dry land only to see the Egyptians drowned on the same journey. The Hebrews might be said to have only two choices – stay in Egypt or go and risk it all by leaving. But there are lots of other choices, too. The choice to grumble about it and about Moses at each moment, or to find a way to be excited or even energized by new possibilities. There's a song from the 80s – should I stay or should I go? Life is more nuanced than that – there are a whole spectrum of choices, some of which deal with attitude more than circumstance. So let's look at the Gospel for today - Matthew 21, Jesus enters the temple, and immediately people in charge come up to badger him - "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" ²⁴Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. Stop right here – what Jesus is doing here is more important than what he is saying. – he's pointing out this adversarial choice from the temple leaders – its gotta be right or left, up or down, you're with us or against us. Well, I call bull on that whole argument. And so does Jesus. We're in a pandemic right now. We have also been in a horrific wildfire situation the last few weeks. And there was a fatal shooting a few blocks away from Holy Cross last week. And it was the 100th birthday of somebody wonderful. And my garden is pouring out tomatoes right now like nobody's business. The world is way more varied and nuanced my friend, and reducing our lives and our world to right and left – correct and wrong is just plain stupid. That's what the gospel says to me today - ²⁸"What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.'²⁹He answered, 'I will not'; but later he changed his mind and

went. ³⁰The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, 'I go, sir'; but he did not go. ³¹Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. ³²For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him." Jesus let's the leaders of the church have it between the eyes – Even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him. The point of the Christian life isn't about knowing what is right -its about doing what is right. And that's a lot more nuanced than memorizing the right scriptures. Back to our Moses story of the exodus - before we pile on the Hebrews too severely, we should note that they are not only on a journey through the wilderness, they are also on a journey of the soul—being transformed from an earlier existence as an enslaved people to that of an independent nation. Moses stood before the people with his rod in his hand – the rod that God gave him, a rod that was something to lean on, at one point his rod turned into a serpent in the presence of Pharaoh, and devoured the serpents of the other wise men, the rod was something to hold firmly and open the path in the red sea. When God works in our lives, God expects us to adapt – to weigh the fact, to discern the possibilities. The Authority that God gives each of you is different every breath – God is transforming each of us from an earlier existence as enslaved to sin to that of independent thinkers who can change the world. God is giving you each God's authority today and always, and we are all entranced by the way God works that out in each of you, in each of us. May we see beyond the two choices that humanity would force on us, and instead reach out in new ways to each new situation – in Christ's love. Amen.

Praying together at Holy Cross – October 4, 2020

A season of “God’s Work: Our Hands”

With open hands and open hearts, let us pray for the needs of all the world.

Generous Provider, renew the strength, energy and courage of your church. Through our acts of service, may your love overflow and your grace be proclaimed for us, for our neighbors and for all the world. God of abundant grace,

Open your healing hands.

Generous Provider, we celebrate your creation. As you bring about a new season, show us your wonders in rain, in foliage and in your weather changes. Teach us to follow the rhythm of your entity. God of abundant grace,

Open your healing hands.

Generous Provider, be within the leaders of ours and all nations, inspiring them to good works, and choices that benefit all. God of abundant grace,

Open your healing hands.

Generous Provider, show us how to be good stewards of your abundance, and good ‘gifters’ of that abundance to all in need. God of abundant grace,

Open your healing hands.

Generous Provider, be with all the suffering, whether it be from illness, accident or poverty. Train us up to be your hands and feet to care for all who suffer. God of abundant grace,

Open your healing hands.

Generous Provider, your love holds us in life and in death. Give us the inspiration of the lives of all people, no matter their station in life. May their lives be a witness to us of living closer to you every day.. God of abundant grace,

Open your healing hands.

We commend these and all things to your gracious care, trusting in Christ Jesus, our Savior. **Amen.**



WORSHIPPING AT HOME WITH HOLY CROSS
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2020 – EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the Holy Trinity, One God, who creates, redeems and sustains us and all of creation. **Amen.**

Faithful God, have mercy on us. We confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We turn from your loving embrace and go our own ways. We pass judgment on one another before examining ourselves. We place our own needs before those of our neighbors. We keep your gift of salvation to ourselves. Make us humble, cast away our transgressions, and turn us again to life in you through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen

God hears the cries of all who call out in need, and through his death and resurrection, Christ has made us his own. Hear the truth that God proclaims: Your sins are forgiven in the name of Jesus Christ. Let by the Holy Spirit, live in Freedom and newness to do God's work in the world with our own hands.

GATHERING HYMN – If You But Trust in God to Guide You ELW 769

- 1 If you but trust in God to guide you
with gentle hand through all your ways,
you'll find that God is there beside you
when crosses come, in trying days.
Trust then in God's unchanging love;
build on the rock that will not move.

- 2 What gain is there in anxious weeping,
in helpless anger and distress?
If you are in your Savior's keeping,
in sorrow will he love you less?
For Christ who took for you a cross
will bring you safe through ev'ry loss.

- 3 The Lord our restless hearts is holding,
in peace and quietness content.
We rest in God's good will unfolding,
what wisdom from on high has sent.
God, who has chosen us by grace,
knows very well the fears we face.

- 4 Sing, pray, and keep God's ways unswerving,
offer your service faithfully.
Trust heaven's word; though undeserving,
you'll find this promise true to be.
This is our confidence indeed:
God never fails in time of need.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Beloved God, from you come all things that are good. Lead us by the inspiration of your Spirit to know those things that are right, and by your merciful guidance, help us to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

READINGS AND PSALM

Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20

The commandments given at Sinai

Psalms 80:7-15

Look down from heaven, O God; behold and tend this vine. (Ps. 80:14, 15)

Philippians 3:4b-14

Nothing surpasses the value of knowing Christ

Matthew 21:33-46

The parable of the vineyard owner's son

APOSTLES' CREED

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's 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 to the dead.*
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

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

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION (see attached prayers)

OFFERING PRAYER

Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. You have set before us these gifts of your good creation. Prepare us for your heavenly banquet, nourish us with this rich food and drink, and send us forth to set tables in the midst of a suffering world through the bread of life, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Christ, our strength and our song. **Amen.**

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

When our congregation gathered for the celebration of Holy Communion, we heard again the story of God's mighty acts and of the love shown us in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. With thanksgiving we remembered that "in the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me. Again, after supper, he took the cup gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me."

The people of our congregation were given assurance of our Lord's presence through the gift of his Holy Spirit. As you worship in your homes, we remember the gift of communion that we share.

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me shall never hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."

At this time, you may remember the gift of holy communion with your own bread and cup.

Communion Blessing The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in His grace. **Amen**

COMMUNION BLESSING

God of the welcome table,
in this meal we have feasted on your goodness
and have been united by your presence among us.
Empower us to go forth sustained by these gifts
so that we may share your neighborly love with all,
through Jesus Christ, the giver of abundant life. **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**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.**

BLESSING

The God of compassion, hope and joy,
Our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer,
Bless your feet to carry you into places of need.
Bless your lips to proclaim love and mercy.
Bless your heart to love and listen to those you encounter.
Bless your hands to care for the needs of your neighbors.
Bless you to be a blessing to others.
Now and always.

Amen.

