

**Jesus said, “For where two or three are gathered in my name,
there am I among them.” – Matthew 18:20**

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church (LCMC)
Springfield, GA
Home Worship Bulletin
April 19, 2020 – 2nd Sunday of Easter**

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

The sign of the cross may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

In the name of the Father, and of the +Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Silence for reflection and self-examination.

Most merciful God, **we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen**

Almighty God, in his mercy, has given his Son to die for us and, for his sake, forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all our sins, in the name of the Father, and of the +Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

GREETING

Alleluia! Christ is risen. **Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. **Almighty God, we have celebrated with joy the festival of our Lord's resurrection. Graciously help us to show the power of the resurrection in all that we say and do; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen**

+LITURGY OF THE WORD+

FIRST READING

Acts 5:29-42

But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. ³⁰The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³²And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him." ³³When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. ³⁴But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. ³⁵And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. ³⁶For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. ³⁷After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. ³⁸So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; ³⁹but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!" So they took his advice, ⁴⁰and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. ⁴²And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 148

Praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord from the heavens;
praise him in the heights!
**² Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his hosts!**
³ Praise him, sun and moon,
praise him, all you shining stars!
**⁴ Praise him, you highest heavens,
and you waters above the heavens!**
⁵ Let them praise the name of the Lord!
For he commanded and they were created.
**⁶ And he established them forever and ever;
he gave a decree, and it shall not pass away.**^[a]
⁷ Praise the Lord from the earth,
you great sea creatures and all deeps,
**⁸ fire and hail, snow and mist,
stormy wind fulfilling his word!**
⁹ Mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars!
**¹⁰ Beasts and all livestock,
creeping things and flying birds!**
¹¹ Kings of the earth and all peoples,
princes and all rulers of the earth!
**¹² Young men and maidens together,
old men and children!**

¹³ Let them praise the name of the Lord,
for his name alone is exalted;
his majesty is above earth and heaven.
¹⁴ **He has raised up a horn for his people,
praise for all his saints,
for the people of Israel who are near to him.
Praise the Lord!**

Glory 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. Alleluia! Alleluia!

SECOND READING

I Peter 1:3-9

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.
The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

THE HOLY GOSPEL

John 20:19-31

The Holy Gospel according to St. John. **Glory to You, O Lord.**

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." ²⁰When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." ²²And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld." ²⁴Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe." ²⁶Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." ²⁸Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." ³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.
The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to You, O Christ.**

Today is the Second Sunday of Easter. Look with me at verse 19 of our Gospel text where we read, “On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’”

Last Sunday was Easter Sunday. On any given “normal” year, churches would have been crowded. Families and friends, occasional worshippers, newcomers and guests and along with those who never-miss-a-Sunday, would have been assembled for worship. Churches, no matter how big or how small, would have been filled to celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! Easter is “the High Sunday” of the church year. But this year, like today, we remain sheltered-in-place as we continue to worship as individuals or families.

Traditionally, today, the Second Sunday of Easter, is usually dubbed “the Low Sunday.” In past years in churches, today has brought plenty of elbow room. You had to look up and down the pews and see old friends as well as fellow members and perhaps a guest or two. You would have to walk a ways during the sharing of the peace to say, “The peace of the Lord be with you always” and hear the reply, “And also with you.”

On this Second Sunday of Easter, we need to remember the word of our Saviour, “Peace be with you.” Those words remind us that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Isn’t that exactly what the apostle wrote? When Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome, he penned these words, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).

The great truth for you and me today is this, Easter isn’t over! We need to remember that truth. We need to embrace that fact. Easter isn’t just one Sunday. Easter is a season of the church which lasts for fifty days. That’s ten days longer than Lent, and Lent always seems to go on forever. But somehow over the centuries the church seems to have gotten better at keeping Lent, than it has at keeping Easter.

That is why the Second Sunday is Easter is so important. It reminds us that we have peace with our God through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the peace of God which passes all understanding that Christ offers you and me today. So, with this in mind, let’s look a little more closely at our Gospel reading.

We need the peace of Christ to rule our minds. At dark last Easter Sunday I found myself tired. Lent had ended and so had the daily prayers and preparation that went into each one. I was pleased and satisfied that so many of you had told me how much you enjoyed our Lenten Journey each day. I was frustrated that we were not able to be together for our Sunrise service, breakfast, and 11:00 AM worship. Like you, Easter this year was radically different from any prior. It was a mixture of emotions.

The disciples come to their first Easter evening with a mixture of emotions as well. They were hiding. They were afraid, anxious, and locked behind closed doors.

Someone said the mind has a world of its own. Books that promise peace of mind are some of the best-selling books on the market. Conference speakers, psychologists, psychiatrists, and

“health and wealth” preachers all advocate the same thing. If we will only think the right thoughts, if we will only surround ourselves with positive energy – whatever that is – if we will meditate on the positive and put away the negative, we will find peace.

Yet, there is a major problem. We live in a fallen world; a sinful world. We live in a world where fear exists and it is real. No matter how much we may say, “I’m not afraid,” we all have our fears. The fear of Covid-19 runs rampant at this very moment but fear is more general. It haunts us in the night and stalks us in the day. We are terrified of violence, afraid of strangers, worried about the future, and uncertain about the economy.

We know what it is to be afraid and so did the disciples. At their most fearful hour, as they hid themselves wondering if they would be the next ones nailed to a cross, the risen Christ came to them. In their fear, doubt, and uncertainty, Jesus appeared and said, “Peace be with you.” Jesus conquered their fears. He came through the locked doors, the walls of isolation, and He spoke the word of peace. Today, we need to hear the words of the Gospel. We need to listen to the voice of Jesus as He speaks to our minds and frees our minds from fear.

We need the peace of Christ to rule in our hearts. Look at John 20:21, “Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.’” Jesus could have said, “What happened to your faith? I told you what was going to happen. Why are you hiding? Why do you doubt? Why are you so afraid? You really messed up this time!” But Jesus did not come to accuse. He came to invite. He came to give. He gave His fearful followers His peace.

The point for you and me is this: No matter who you are, no matter what you’ve done, no matter how far you have roamed away from home, Jesus still says, “Peace be with you.”

Garrison Keillor once said, “We always have a back stage view of ourselves. We let the audience see only the neatly arranged stage, but behind the curtain all kinds of things are lying around – doubt, fear, pain, heartache, failures, insecurities, hurts, guilt, and shame.”

It is into our world of pain that Jesus still comes to you and me offering His forgiveness., God’s remedy for a past we cannot change. He comes with forgiveness that is undeserved and free. By His grace in Christ, our sins are forgiven. The psalmist said it best, “¹Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. ²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! ... ¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. ¹¹Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me” (Psalm 51).

Look closely at verse 22, “And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’” Jesus breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” Now, this was not the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out but it was a special bestowing of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples to strengthen their faith, to overcome their fear, and to fortify their faith.

Jesus came through the isolation of His followers to speak the word of peace and He still does. We need to hear His word. We need to listen to His voice as He speaks to us and gives us clean hearts, renews a right spirit within us, and frees our hearts from fear.

We need the peace of Christ to rule in our world. John, concludes our Gospel reading for today with these words, “³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

Life, true life comes only in Christ. Jesus said, “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 14:27). The tragedy of the church is that we have too often turned our peace-making duties over to the government. We take our gospel from the news media, not the Bible. So, we find ourselves in a threatening world and a severely divided country. Maybe it’s time to look for peace not in society, the economy, politics, or a particular culture but in the Gospel and the word of Jesus, “Peace be with you.”

Did you know that Christians number about 2.2 billion people in the world? The core ethic of the Christian faith is love – love for God and love for one another. This love is expressed in the world through acts of peace and justice and deeds of service and ministry to the least of these. We pray for God’s kingdom to come on earth and pledge ourselves to work tirelessly toward this goal. The German Theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg once said, “The evidence of Jesus’ resurrection is so strong that nobody would question it except for two things. First, it is a very unusual event; and secondly, if you believe it happened, you have to change the way you live.”

Our Gospel reading on the Second Sunday of Easter calls to change the way we live. It calls to experience the peace of Christ – a peace that rules in our minds, in our hearts, and in our world. This is what we really mean as expressed in the Liturgy when we say, “The Peace of Christ be with you” and the reply comes, “And also with you.”

Truly, may the peace of Christ be with you! Amen.

APOSTLES’ CREED

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth,
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit,
And born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into hell.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again 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!**

THE PRAYERS

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people according to their needs.

Almighty God, You raised Jesus Christ from the dead and proclaimed Him Saviour, Lord, and King forever more! Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord Jesus Christ, empower us to live as witnesses to Your resurrection and grant us boldness to share Your Gospel with the world. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Holy Spirit, bless the Church. Fill us that in all our thoughts, words, and deeds we would reflect the hope and power of our new life in Christ. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the Church Universal and especially the LCMC. We pray for our sister churches, pastors and congregations. We pray for our partners in the Gospel: World Mission Prayer League, Mission on the Move, Treutlen House, Family Promise, Habitat for Humanity, God's Mission House, Tartu Theological Academy, St. Paul Lutheran Seminary, and all who faithfully serve You in proclamation of Your One True Gospel. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our nation and all of our elected and appointed officials and who serve in our courts. We pray for our nation's military and especially all who are deployed. Holy Father watch over and protect all of our First Responders, and all our medical workers as they labour against the Covid-19 virus and all other disease and sickness. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, we pray for so many in need. We pray those out of work and have families to support according to Your riches in glory. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Be with all our students and teachers and those who work in our educational institutions. Give to them diligence, wisdom, understanding, and motivation to complete their studies. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord Jesus Christ, pour out Your blessings upon our members and friends. Meet the needs of each one and our own needs as well. You know us better than we know ourselves. Visit us with Your healing hand and lift us up to serve and praise Your holy name. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious God, hear our prayers and receive them for the sake of the crucified and risen One, Your Son our Lord, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

As our Saviour taught us we are bold to prayer: **Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by 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.**

GREETING OF PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **And also with you.**

BLESSING

The Lord bless us and keep us. The Lord make His face shine on us and be gracious to us. The Lord look upon us with favor and give us peace. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Let us go in peace to serve the Risen Lord. **Hallelujah!**

