

**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
May 10, 2020 – the 5th 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.**

SALUTATION

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. **O God, form the minds of your faithful people into a single will. Make us love what you command and desire what you promise, that, amid all the changes of this world, our hearts may be fixed where true joy is found; 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 6:1-9; 7:2a, 51-60

Now 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. ² And 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. ³ Therefore, 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. ⁴ But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." ⁵ And 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. ⁶ These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. ⁷ And 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. ⁸ And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. ⁹ Then 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. ⁵² Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, ⁵³ you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it." ⁵⁴ Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. ⁵⁵ But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶ And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." ⁵⁷ But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. ⁵⁸ Then 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. ⁵⁹ And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰ And 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.

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

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 146

- ¹ Hallelujah! Praise the LORD, O my soul! I will praise the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.
- ² **Put not your trust in rulers, nor in any child of earth, for there is no help in them.**
- ³ When they breathe their last, they return to earth, and in that day their thoughts perish.
- ⁴ **Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their help, whose hope is in the LORD their God;**
- ⁵ who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that is in them; who keeps his promise forever;
- ⁶ **who gives justice to those who are oppressed, and food to those who hunger.**
- ⁷ The LORD sets the prisoners free; the LORD opens the eyes of the blind; the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;
- ⁸ **the LORD loves the righteous; the LORD cares for the stranger; he sustains the orphan and widow, but frustrates the way of the wicked.**
- ⁹ The LORD shall reign forever, your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. | Hallelujah!

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 2:2-10

² Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— ³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. ⁴ As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵ you 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. ⁶ For 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.” ⁷ So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” ⁸ and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. ⁹ But 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. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

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

THE HOLY GOSPEL

John 14:1-14

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

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ² 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? ³ 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. ⁴ And you know the way to where I am going.” ⁵ Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” ⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” ⁸ Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” ⁹ Jesus 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’? ¹⁰ Do 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. ¹¹ Believe 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. ¹³ Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.”

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to You, O Christ.**

THE SERMON

Dr. James Cavanah

Jesus said, “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.”

Today we come to a well known text from the Gospel of John. It is a passage that we normally hear at funerals or memorial services or perhaps during Holy Week. In this text, we find words of comfort from the lips of Jesus that speak to our hearts in our greatest times of need. But I don't think Jesus intended His words to be meant only for funerals. I think the words of Jesus have a much broader meaning; a much more important application. I think these words are

not so much about death as they are about life. After all, Jesus said, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).

You know the setting. Jesus is assembled with His disciples in the Upper Room. It is the Passover and Jesus has just shared the ancient Jewish meal with His followers. As they were eating, Jesus revealed Himself to them in the elements of the Passover meal as the Lamb of God. Jesus explained to them that this bread is His body that will be broken for them and this cup is His blood that will be shed for them – as well as for you and me.

Knowing that His betrayal, arrest, trial, crucifixion, and death were at hand, Jesus turned to His followers and said, “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.” Jesus told the Apostles that He was about to leave them. He knew His hour was drawing near. He knew the Apostles would be filled with worry, fear, and anxiety. Jesus knew just how powerful and paralyzing these emotions could be so He said, “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.”

In the verses immediately preceding today's Gospel, Peter told Jesus that he would follow Him no matter where He went. Jesus answered, “Where I am going, you cannot follow Me now.” Peter replied, “Lord, why can't I follow You now? I will lay down my life for You.” Jesus replied, “Lay down your life for Me? I tell you most solemnly before the cock crows, you will have disowned Me three times” (John 13:36-38). Then, right in the middle of this stunning exchange, Jesus says to Peter and those gathered in the Upper Room, “Do not let your hearts be troubled! Believe in God and believe in Me!”

When was the last time you worried? Be honest. When was the last time you worried? Was it this morning, all during the night, yesterday afternoon, perhaps the day before? When was the last time you worried about something? It really hasn't been all that long as has it? You could have been thinking about the past, the present, the future or any combination of all of these. The question that comes straight at you and me today is, when was the last time you worried?

None of us worry when everything is going our way. In times like those we feel like we are in control. We feel invincible. There is nothing that can harm us or stand in our way. At least, that is how we feel. Then comes the unexpected. Then enters that which causes us to worry and worry we will even though no amount of worry can change anything.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious (worrisome) about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious (worrisome) can add a single hour to his span of life?” (Matthew 6:25-34).

Have you ever heard of “worry beads”? In Greek and Cypriot culture they are called “kompoloi”. They are strings of beads that are manipulated with one's hands to pass the time. According to some traditions, the beads serve as an amulet to guard against bad luck. It should come as no surprise that worry beads are a hot topic of conversation these days. Worry is all around us. Our society, our nation, our world is worried; worried about what the future will bring. We worry what our post Covid-19 lives will be like. We worry about so many things that the list seems almost endless.

Yet, in spite of our world and our worries, Jesus said: “Do not be anxious (worrisome) about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious (worrisome) for itself. Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day” (Matthew 6:34). Jesus is telling you that He will support and sustain you. Jesus is telling you that He can “master the demons of worry” if you trust in Him and abide in His Word. He is telling you to leave yesterday's guilt and tomorrow's fears to Him. Jesus promises, I will help you live today. “Do not let your heart be troubled! Believe in Him.” We need to trust in Him and remember that He is the One who is in control.

One day a woman visited her pastor. She was filled with anxiety and fear. The pastor said this woman was “worried almost out of her senses.” It seems that she had suffered a minor heart attack a few months earlier and, even though she had made a good recovery, she was overwhelmed by the fear that she might die at any moment. She kept talking about this fear until, finally, her pastor held out his hand, palm up, and said, “Put it there!” The woman replied, “Put what there?” The pastor said, “Your problem. Put it here. Place it right here in the palm of my hand.” The woman hesitated even smirked. Then she reached out and placed her hand in his. At that point the pastor got up, walked over to the window, opened it, and made a gesture as if he were throwing the woman’s fear out of the window. Then, he said, “Your problem is no longer with you. It’s gone. Now, you need to fill your heart and mind with the peace that Jesus Christ promises to give you. Then you will find that His words are stronger than your worry and stronger than your fear.”

The pastor’s action of throwing the woman’s fear of death out the window was only symbolic. We’d all love to be able to throw out all our troubles in some miraculous way but we don’t possess the power. What we do possess is the ability, with God’s help, to fill our hearts and minds with the presence of the One who does possess such power. Jesus said, “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.” He has the power to help us believe and to strengthen our against all worry.

The most important decision you or I will ever make is to trust body and soul to the promise and power of the Living God. He created us and He sustains us. He loves us and He provides for us. He has promised to be with us and to never leave us nor forsake us. As Jesus said, “If God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?” (Matthew 6:30). Those are the words of Christ, the Incarnate God; those are divine words of God Himself to you and to me.

A newspaper columnist once did a feature story about a man named Gordon McLaurin. Now Gordon lived in Dillon, South Carolina. He was a lawyer by profession and was one-hundred-three-years-old. In her story the columnist wrote, “Mr. McLaurin shows up at his office every weekday at 9:00 am, then goes home at lunchtime and stays there, until his secretary calls him at 3:15 and asks, “Are you all right?” When he answers, he always says he is. Then one day his secretary got too busy and forgot to call, so he called her. “Are you all right?” were his first words to his secretary.

Jesus wants us to know that we are all right. It may not feel like we are all right to us. At times we will even wonder what the next second will bring. But Jesus knows you and me. He loves and cares for us; He always has and He’s not about to stop now. The same was true of His relationship to His disciples. He had called them one by one. He knew them. He knew their strengths and their weaknesses. He knew Peter would deny Him, Thomas would doubt His resurrection, all of them, with the exception of John, would desert Him. Yet, He loved and called them anyway. Just like He loves and calls you and me today.

Jesus said, “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.” He wants you to know that no matter who you are or what age you are, what you have done or what you have not done, everything is going to be all right – because He cares for you. He is with you, this day, and every day. Moreover, the Gospels tell us that Jesus wants us to see all our brothers and sisters in that same light: God cares for them. He is with them, this day and every day even when we worry about those things that we have no control over.

The words of Jesus remind us that He is always in control and if He is in control, and He is, then everything is going to be okay. We don’t have to worry. We don’t have to fear. Instead, we can get on with life as Jesus intended.

According to legend, Martin Luther was once asked what he would do if he believed the world would end tomorrow. Dr. Luther responded by saying, “I would plant a tree today.” We

should be as confident of God's love and as sure of God's promises. The message of the cross and the resurrection is about God's promise of life both in this world and in the world to come. You see our text really is more about life than death. John wrote to give us strength to live and to encourage us with hope to keep moving forward. We can't allow worry to steal our joy and rob us of God's promises. Our Heavenly Father has bestowed upon you the gift of faith and the power that comes with that gift. He has given you the power to believe and the power to trust. The power to place your worries in the nail scarred palms of His to hands and watch as He throws them far from us.

Today, the words of Jesus call us to faith and life. They call us to put aside worry, fear, and doubt. How appropriate for our times. Even as we remain sheltered in place, perhaps we are even "worried" about when we can assemble in worship again or what tomorrow will bring. We find that now is the time to fix our hearts and minds upon the never ending promise of our Saviour who continues to say to you and me, "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me." Thanks be to God!

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 know Him who gave Himself for us and grant to us the boldness to make Him known to others. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Holy Spirit, bless the Church. Fill us with Your presence and wisdom; give us a love for the church, the Gospel, and the world, Conform us to the image of Christ. May all our thoughts, words, and deeds reflect the hope and power of our new life in Christ. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious God, we pray for Your Holy Catholic (Universal) Church. We pray especially for the LCMC, for our sister churches, pastors and congregations. We pray for our partners in the work of 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.**

Almighty Father, 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 for Dustin and 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.**

We pray for 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.**

Heavenly Father, we pray for so many in need: for our members Carol, Elizabeth & Fulton, Loretta, Mary Will, Charles, Margaret, Brenda & Carl, Patricia, Doris, Harper, Preston, Angie, Debbie, and Dawn; for our extended family and friends Becky, Darwin, Pr. Robert, Merry, Elizabeth, Bobby, Raymond, Steve, Christopher, Tracy, Alice, Shirley, Jim, Monteen, Charlene; Fran, and Izzy for our homebound Betty Jo, Linda, Eva Belle; and for those serving in the military, Dustin and Marcus. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Most Holy and Loving God, our compassionate Heavenly Father, on this day, as our nation celebrates Mother's Day, we thank You and praise Your name of all godly mothers. We praise You that in so many ways, our mothers represent to us Your pure and sacrificial love. Your boundless patience, Your forgiveness, Your comforting arms, and selfless spirit. Receive our praise and thanksgiving on this Mother's Day for Your provision bestowed to each of us 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!