

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost
August 20th, 2023

In Isaiah we hear that God's house shall be a house of prayer for all people and that God will gather the outcasts of Israel. The Canaanite woman in today's gospel is a Gentile, an outsider, who is unflinching in her request that Jesus heal her daughter. As Jesus commends her bold faith, how might our church extend its mission to those on the margins of society? In our gathering around word and meal we receive strength to be signs of comfort, healing, and justice for those in need.

Greeting – 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

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
who greets us in this and every season,
whose word never fails,
whose promise is sure.

Amen.

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God
and of our neighbors.

Merciful God,

we confess that we have sinned.

We have hurt our community.

We have squandered your blessings.

We have hoarded your bounty.

In the name of Jesus,

forgive us and grant us your mercy.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Righteous God,

we confess that we have sinned.

We have failed to be honest.

We have lacked the courage to speak.

We have spoken falsely.

In the name of Jesus,

forgive us and grant us your mercy.

Silence is kept for reflection.

God is a cup of cold water when we thirst.

God offers boundless grace when we fail.

Claim the gift of God's mercy:

you are freed and forgiven

in the name of † Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Gathering Hymn

“All Are Welcome”

#641 vs. 1,2,3

Prayer of the Day

God of all peoples, your arms reach out to embrace all those who call upon you. Teach us as disciples of your Son to love the world with compassion and constancy, that your name may be known throughout the earth, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Reading: Acts 9: 1-19

Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³ Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” ⁵ He asked, “Who are you, Lord?” The reply came, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ⁶ But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.” ⁷ The men who were traveling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing;^[a] so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹ For three days he was without sight and neither ate nor drank.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Children's Message

Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew 15:21-28

²¹Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²²Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." ²³But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." ²⁴He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." ²⁵But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." ²⁶He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." ²⁷She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." ²⁸Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly.

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

Sermon

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN.

In our text from Acts we hear of Saul who is breathing threats against and murder against the disciples of the Lord. Just a quick update on last week's reading, remember Stephen? One of the Seven Chosen? Of whom there is a visitation ministry named for? Our introduction in our devotional tells us how that went for him.

"Saul (eventually Paul) vehemently fought against the early followers of Jesus. He stood by in approval as people stoned Stephen to death and did all that he could to stamp out the followers of Jesus."

Turns out being one of the Seven Chosen wasn't such a glorious calling. Or maybe it was, but it was dangerous. And Saul thought that what he was doing was right and just. "He thought his actions were faithful to God, but God had other ideas on the road to Damascus."

But God in Jesus Christ changes him.

On a mission to seek out any more followers, and his mission was known among people, he had a reputation, he is blinded by a light. In the blinding the light there is a voice. Jesus asked him, "Saul, why do you persecute me?"

Now, throughout this process we've seen many different ways in which these biblical characters are encountered by God. And, while many of them are a touch extreme, imagine just for a moment that you are blinded by a light and Jesus calls out to you, "why do you persecute me?"

Yikes.

Those who were walking with Saul saw nothing but heard it all happen, and from there they led him to Damascus.

What follows, and what isn't included in the reading for this week, has me wonder if this is a story about the call of Saul, who becomes Paul, or if it is the call narrative of Ananias. It would do us well to ask that very question as we wonder how this relates to us as people of faith.

Ananias is a follower of Jesus who lives in Damascus. The Lord comes to him in a vision and sends him to find this well known murderer of Jesus followers. He knows that you are coming. You are to lay your hands on him and restore his sight.

Ananias responds, "are you nuts? I know full well what he has done and what authority has been given to him to continue to do it."

The Lord responds, “Yes, I am fully aware, but I have chosen him to bring my name before people who would have previously denied. Fear not, I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.”

So Ananias went. Ananias went into this place to this man whom he feared for good reason, he placed his hands on him, and he was filled with the Holy Spirit. And in that moment scales fell from his eyes, his sight was restored, he got up, and he was baptized.

Wow.

As church (meaning the whole church – much larger than *just* Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd) we have been both of these characters. It would be naïve to think that as church we haven’t done damage to the Body of Christ. We want to think that we haven’t, but if we are being honest, we have. Perhaps not explicitly, but it has happened.

Also, as church, we have told ourselves that there are places, people, and lives that we have told ourselves that we absolutely cannot go to. Cracks that we can’t fill and spaces we can’t fit into. We’ve said time and time again that there are minds that we can’t change and hearts that we can’t soften.

But.

God came to Saul who had persecuted Christians and ensured Ananias that Saul was someone he needed to go to.

AND IT WORKED!

So, People of God, where are those places and spaces and lives and hearts and minds?

Where are we telling ourselves that we can’t go? What have we told ourselves we cannot do?

And, why? Why have we said that we cannot go into that place, fill that space, reach that person or persons, or offer that embrace?

God in Jesus Christ through this conversion of Saul story calls us into a both/and.

We are called to both repent from the harm that we have caused, both intentionally and unintentionally, known and unknown...

AND

Seek to mend the fences that have been broken.

Cross the barriers that we have told ourselves we can’t.

Fill the cracks that we’ve deemed unfillable.

And love the ones we’ve deemed unlovable.

Because, when that happens, the Body of Christ is filled with the Holy Spirit. It gets up, it eats, and it is given strength

Thanks be to God.

AMEN

Apostle's Creed

Prayers of Intercession

Confident that God receives our joys and concerns, let us offer our prayers for the church, those in need, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

O God, your Spirit gathers the church. Shepherd those who are newly baptized and newly ordained in the proclamation of the gospel, breathe life into ecumenical and inter-religious endeavors, and support missionaries throughout the globe. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You created the earth and all its inhabitants and declared it good. Clean polluted skies, seas, and soil, provide nourishment to plants and animals, and make us aware of our impact on the environment. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You call leaders to bridge differences and practice generosity. Inspire all in authority to protect people in harm's way, deliver those in bondage, support fair elections, provide care for military personnel and veterans, and show mercy to those for whom they have responsibility. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You provide for those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit. Embrace people who have been rejected because of difference, heal trauma caused by racism or prejudice, shield any who are persecuted, console the dying, and heal the sick (*We pray especially for Peyton, Matt, David, Verna, Irene, Clarice, Steve, Kathy, Val, Jacob, Cherri, Keith and JoJo, Bob and Joanne, Bill and Bonnie, Frank and Heather, Bob and Sonja, Bill and Betty, Tom and Kay, Sherm and Mary, Verne and Kathy, family of Sandy Johnson*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

O God, you journey with us in all of life's transitions. Guide those preparing for baptism, marriage, and retirement. Guide our church council and committees in their visioning and ministry (*especially name/s of specific ministries*). Safeguard those who travel. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We give you thanks for those who now rest from their labors (*especially Bernard of Clairvaux, whom the church commemorates today*). Motivate us by their lives of dedication to the gospel, until that day when we join with them in our eternal home. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, in the name of the one who reconciled all creation to himself, Jesus Christ our Savior.

Amen.

Offering

Offertory Prayer

God of field and forest, sea and sky,

you are the giver of all good things.

Sustain us with these gifts of your creation,

and multiply your graciousness in us,

that the world may be fed with your love,

through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Words of Institution

Lord's Prayer

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

Communion Hymns #471 & #483

Prayer

We thank you, generous God,
for the refreshment we have received
at your banquet table.

Send us now to spread your generosity into all the world,
through the one who is our dearest treasure,
Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Blessing

The God who calls across the cosmos
and speaks in the smallest seed
✠ bless, keep, and sustain you
now and to the end of the age.

Amen.

Sending Song “All Are Welcome”

#643 vs. 4,5

Dismissal

Go in peace. Share the harvest.

Okay! We will! Thanks be to God!

And all of Good Shepherd said...

AMEN!

August Financial Snapshot

Your generosity in action:

Because of YOUR giving to our Mission Offering during the second quarter of previous years, we were able to send 8 campers to Luther Park Bible Camp with minimal cost to their families. There is not much better influence on a child's life of faith than Bible Camp.

THANK YOU!!

Through August 16

Total Revenue **\$12,637**

2 more Sunday Offerings to Come

Total Expenses **\$9,392**

Last August: \$17,023

Difference to date:

\$3,245



Lutheran Church of the
GOOD SHEPHERD
KNOWN · SEEN · LOVED

Strong Again Summer Appeal

Boiler Loan = \$2,047.27 **ELIMINATED**,
Youth Room Remodel = \$3,000 **COVERED**
Line of Credit = \$10,259.19 **PAID OFF**
Towards a Fall Cushion = \$9,031
and **GROWING STRONGER**

Generosity	\$2,000 Lead Gift
Breakdown	\$10,00 match met = \$20,000
	\$24,334 total

**THE GOOD SHEPHERD
STRATEGIC PLAN LEAD TEAM**

Cordially Invites You

TO A TIME OF FELLOWSHIP FOLLOWING
WORSHIP THIS SUNDAY, AUGUST 20TH



Welcome Back Weekend 2023 September 9-10

Saturday, September 9 - Work and Play
Property Clean-up, inside and out
Clean out the garages
BYO Picnic Lunch
Supper on the Grill

Sunday, September 10 - Worship and Play
Worship at 9 am
Blessing of Backpacks
Fall Faith Formation Kickoff
Delicious Treats!

