

**St. John's Lutheran Church (LCMS)**

**8948 N 1900 Ave Geneseo, IL 61254**

**309-949-2516**

**June 6, 2021**

**Second Sunday after Pentecost**

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*The order of worship is based upon Divine Service Setting Three, Lutheran Service Book p. 184.*

**Confession and Absolution**

**Hymn of Invocation: 768 To God the Holy Spirit Let Us Pray**



1 To God the Ho - ly Spir - it let us pray  
2 O sweet - est Love, Your grace on us be - stow;  
3 Tran - scen - dent Com - fort in our ev - 'ry need,  
4 Shine in our hearts, O Spir - it, pre - cious light;



For the true faith need - ed on our way  
Set our hearts with sa - cred fire a - glow  
Help us nei - ther scorn nor death to heed  
Teach us Je - sus Christ to know a - right



That He may de - fend us when life is end - ing And from  
That with hearts u - nit - ed we love each oth - er, Ev - 'ry  
That we may not fal - ter nor cour - age fail us When the  
That we may a - bide in the Lord who bought us, Till to



ex - ile home we are wend - ing. Lord, have mer - cy!  
strang - er, sis - ter, and broth - er. Lord, have mer - cy!  
foe shall taunt and as - sail us. Lord, have mer - cy!  
our true home He has brought us. Lord, have mer - cy!

*Stand*

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

**P** In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C** Amen.

**P** Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

**P** Our help is in the name of the Lord,

**C** who made heaven and earth.

**P** I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,

**C** and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.

*Silence for reflection on God's Word and for self-examination.*

**P** O almighty God, merciful Father,

**C** I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.

**P** Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C** Amen.

**Service of the Word**

**Introit**

*Psalm 28:7-9; antiphon: v. 6*

Blessèd be the Lord!

For he has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy.

**The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped;**

**my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him.**

The Lord is the strength of his people;

he is the saving refuge of his anointed.

**Oh, save your people and bless your heritage!**

**Be their shepherd and carry them forever.**

Blessèd be the Lord!

For he has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy.

**Gloria Patri**

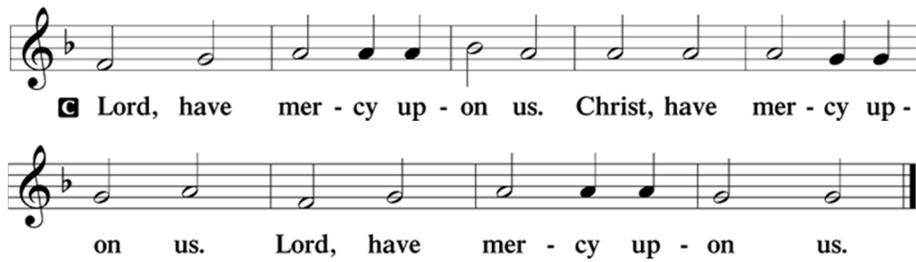


**G**lo - ry be to the Fa - ther and to the Son and to the Ho - ly Ghost;



as it was in the be - gin - ning, is now, and ev - er shall be, world with - out end. A - men.

## Kyrie

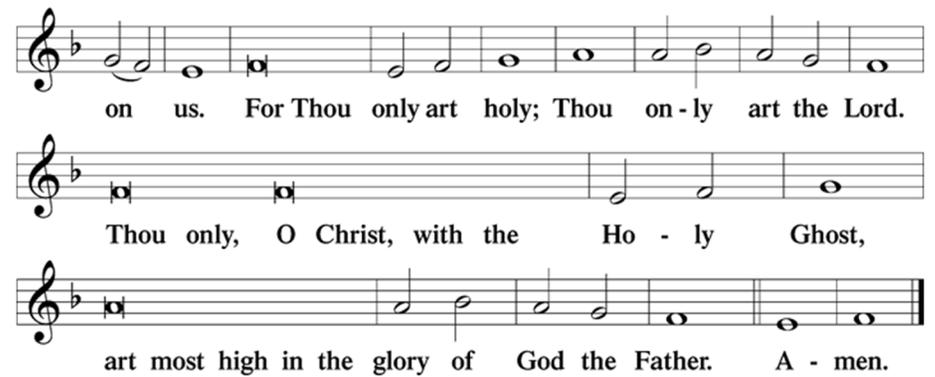


**C** Lord, have mer - cy up - on us. Christ, have mer - cy up -  
on us. Lord, have mer - cy up - on us.

## Gloria in Excelsis



**P** Glory be to God on high: **C** and on earth peace, good - will toward  
men. We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we wor - ship Thee,  
we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee, for Thy great glory.  
O Lord God, heav'n - ly King, God the Fa - ther Al - mighty.  
O Lord, the only begotten Son, Je - sus Christ;  
O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,  
that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy up - on us.  
Thou that takest away the sin of the world, re - ceive our prayer.  
Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy up -



on us. For Thou only art holy; Thou on - ly art the Lord.  
Thou only, O Christ, with the Ho - ly Ghost,  
art most high in the glory of God the Father. A - men.

## Salutation and Collect of the Day

**P** The Lord be with you.



**C** And with thy spir - it.

**P** Let us pray.

Almighty and eternal God, Your Son Jesus triumphed over the prince of demons and freed us from bondage to sin. Help us to stand firm against every assault of Satan, and enable us always to do Your will; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.



**C** A - men.

## *Sit* Old Testament Reading

*Genesis 3:8-15, on back of bulletin*

- A** This is the Word of the Lord.
- C** Thanks be to God.

## Gradual

*Psalm 145:3, 5b, 6b*

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised,  
and his greatness is unsearchable.

**On your wondrous works, I will meditate,  
and I will declare your greatness.**

## Epistle

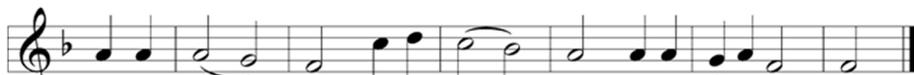
*2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1, on back of bulletin*

**A** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

*Stand*

## Alleluia



**C** Al-le - lu - ia. Al-le - lu - ia. Al-le - lu - ia.

## Holy Gospel

*Mark 3:20-35, on back of bulletin*

**P** The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the third chapter.



**C** Glo - ry be to Thee, O Lord.

*After the reading*

**P** This is the Gospel of the Lord.



**C** Praise be to Thee, O Christ.

## Nicene Creed

**C** I believe in one God,  
the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth  
and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the only-begotten Son of God,  
begotten of His Father before all worlds,  
God of God, Light of Light,  
very God of very God,  
begotten, not made,  
being of one substance with the Father,  
by whom all things were made;  
who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven

and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary  
and was made man;  
and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.  
He suffered and was buried.  
And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures  
and ascended into heaven  
and sits at the right hand of the Father.  
And He will come again with glory to judge both the living  
and the dead,  
whose kingdom will have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the Lord and giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and  
glorified,  
who spoke by the prophets.  
And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church,  
I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins,  
and I look for the resurrection of the dead  
and the life  $\dagger$  of the world to come. Amen.

*Service continues on next page with the Hymn of the Day.*



**Hymn of the Day: 668 Rise! To Arms! With Prayer Employ You**

1 Rise! To arms! With prayer em-ploy you, O Chris-tians, lest the  
 2 Cast a - far this world's vain plea - sure And bold - ly strive for  
 3 Wise - ly fight, for time is fleet - ing; The hours of grace are

foe de-stroy you; For Sa - tan has de-signed your fall.  
 heav'n-ly trea - sure. Be stead-fast in the Sav - ior's might.  
 fast re - treat - ing; Short, short is this our earth - ly way.

Wield God's Word, the weap - on glo - rious; A - gainst all foes be  
 Trust the Lord, who stands be - side you, For Je - sus from all  
 When the Lord the dead will wak - en And sin - ners all by

thus vic - to - rious, For God pro-pects you from them all.  
 harm will hide you. By faith you con-quer in the fight.  
 fear are shak - en, The saints with joy will greet that day.

Fear not the hordes of hell, Here is Em - man - u - el.  
 Take cour - age, wea - ry soul! Look for - ward to the goal!  
 Praise God, our tri - umph's sure. We need not long en - dure

Hail the Sav - ior! The strong foes yield To Christ, our shield,  
 Joy a - waits you. The race well run, Your long war won,  
 Scorn and tri - al. Our Sav - ior King His own will bring

And we, the vic - tors, hold the field.  
 Your crown shines splen - did as the sun.  
 To that great glo - ry which we sing.

**Sermon**

**Offertory**

**C** Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re -  
 new a right spir - it with - in me. Cast me not a -  
 way from Thy pres - ence, and take not Thy Ho - ly Spir - it  
 from me. Re - store un - to me the joy of Thy sal - va -  
 tion, and up - hold me with Thy free spir - it. A - men.

**Presentation of the Offering**

**Prayer of the Church**

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

*After each petition:*

**P** Lord, in Your mercy,  
**C** hear our prayer.

*The prayers conclude:*

**P** ...one God, now and forever.  
**C** Amen.

**Service of the Sacrament**

**Preface**

**P** The Lord be with you.

**C** And with thy spir - it.

**P** Lift up your hearts.

**C** We lift them up un - to the Lord.

Musical notation for the first system, featuring a treble and bass clef with a key signature of one flat. The lyrics are: We lift them up un - to the Lord.

**P** Let us give thanks unto the Lord, our God.

**C** It is meet and right so to do.

Musical notation for the second system, featuring a treble and bass clef with a key signature of one flat. The lyrics are: It is meet and right so to do.

**P** It is truly meet, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who on this day overcame death and the grave and by His glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:

### Sanctus

**C** Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of Sab - a - oth;

heav'n and earth are full of Thy glo - ry. Ho - san - na,

ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless-ed is He,

Musical notation for the Sanctus, featuring a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics are: Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of Sab - a - oth; heav'n and earth are full of Thy glo - ry. Ho - san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless-ed is He,

bless-ed is He, bless - ed is He that com-eth in the name of the Lord.

Ho-san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.

Musical notation for the third system, featuring a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics are: bless-ed is He, bless - ed is He that com-eth in the name of the Lord. Ho-san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.

### Lord's Prayer

**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.

### The Words of Institution

**P** Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My  $\text{✠}$  body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me."

In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My  $\text{✠}$  blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

### Pax Domini

**P** The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**C** A - men.

Musical notation for the Pax Domini, featuring a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics are: A - men.

## Agnus Dei



O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that tak - est a-way the sin of the



world, have mer - cy up - on us. O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that



tak - est a-way the sin of the world, have mer - cy up - on us.



O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that tak - est a-way the sin of the



world, grant us Thy peace. A - men.

## Distribution

*After the Communion has been received by all communicants:*

**P** The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you in body and soul to life everlasting. Depart † in peace.

**G** Amen.

## Nunc Dimittis



**G** Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant de - part in peace ac-



cord - ing to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation,



which Thou hast pre - pared be - fore the face of all people,



a light to light - en the Gen - tiles and the glo - ry of Thy



peo - ple Is - ra - el. Glo - ry be to the Father and



to the Son and to the Ho - ly Ghost; as it was in the beginning,



is now, and ev - er shall be, world with - out end. A - men.

## Thanksgiving

**P** O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good,



**G** and His mercy endureth for - ev - er.

**P** Let us pray.

We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.



**G** A - men.

## Salutation and Benedicamus

**P** The Lord be with you.



**G** And with thy spir - it.

**P** Bless we the Lord.



**G** Thanks be to God.

## Benediction

**P** The Lord bless you and keep you.  
 The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you.  
 The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and  $\text{✠}$  give you peace.



**G** A-men, a-men, a - men.

## Hymn to Depart: 917 Savior, Again to Thy Dear Name We Raise



1 Sav - ior, a - gain to Thy dear name we raise  
 2 Grant us Thy peace up - on our home - ward way;  
 3 Grant us Thy peace, Lord, through the com - ing night;  
 4 Grant us Thy peace through - out our earth - ly life,



With one ac - cord our part - ing hymn of praise;  
 With Thee be - gan, with Thee shall end, the day.  
 Turn Thou for us its dark - ness in - to light.  
 Our balm in sor - row and our stay in strife;



Once more we bless Thee ere our wor - ship cease,  
 Guard Thou the lips from sin, the hearts from shame,  
 From harm and dan - ger keep Thy chil - dren free;  
 Then, when Thy voice shall bid our con - flict cease,



Then, low - ly bend - ing, wait Thy word of peace.  
 That in this house have called up - on Thy name.  
 For dark and light are both a - like to Thee.  
 Call us, O Lord, to Thine e - ter - nal peace.

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*Today we receive the gift of Holy Communion. Communion is an expression of faith and agreement. If you're our guest this morning, we don't want to place you in a position of agreement with our beliefs before you've had opportunity to study them. Therefore, if you're not a member of a Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod congregation, we invite you to speak with our pastor about this special opportunity, and request that you not partake of communion today. Thank you.*

## Acknowledgements

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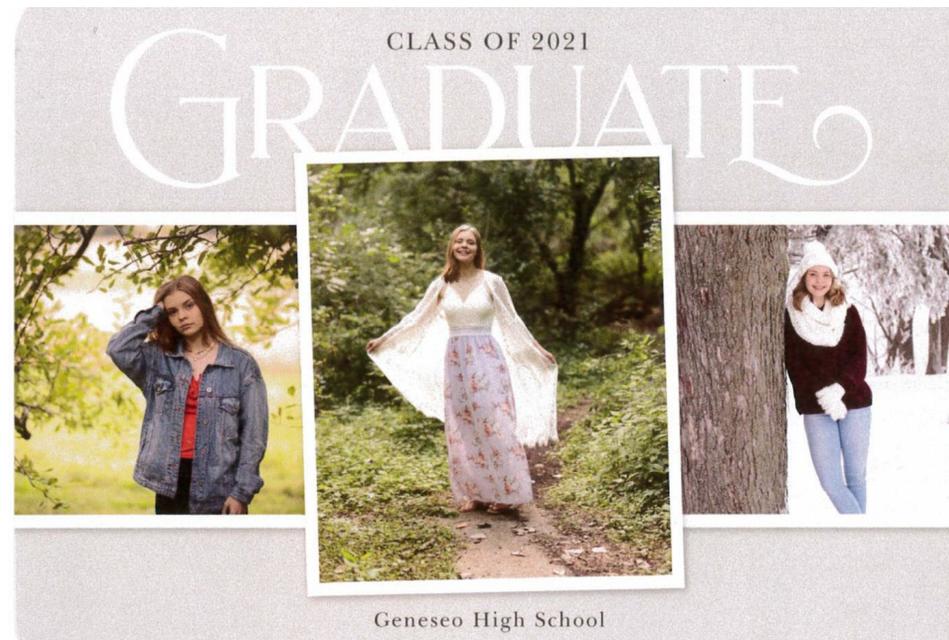
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**Open House**  
 Sunday June 20, 2021  
 1:00-4:00 pm

St. John's Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall  
 (All are invited to join our celebration of Sarah's High School Graduation)



**ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH-LCMS**

churchoffice@stjohnsgeneseo.org  
Website: www.stjohnsgeneseo.org  
https://www.facebook.com/St.Johns.Geneseo  
https://www.facebook.comSt.JohnGLY

**HEARING ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE**

**Rev. Timothy Nerud**

309-949-2516 (Office)  
309-949-2517 (Home)  
612-940-8138 (Cell)

**Pastor**

**+In God's Grace—In God's Service+**

Elder: Carl Freeman  
Videographer: Joel Werling  
Ushers: Cole Freeman  
Organist: John Neumann

Today's Readings: Old Testament Reading: Genesis 3:8-15  
Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1  
Holy Gospel: Mark 3:20-35

**WE PRAY:** Jesus Christ, in whose power all creation subsists, keep us from ever being hedged in by Your humanity and thus losing our salvation, but by the Spirit's mighty power hold our eyes on Your deity and our promised eternity with You; who with the Father and the Holy Spirit are one God with dominion over us forever. Amen.

**WELCOME TO ALL!**

We are anxious to share with you the Christ-centered ministry at St. John's. Our Liturgy follows closely the pattern of Word and Lord's Supper handed down from the ancient Church. It is our hope that you will make the Church's life of prayer your own. If you have difficulty following our order of service, please ask someone sitting near you for assistance. We pray that you will receive rich spiritual blessings from your presence here. May the peace and power of our risen Christ be yours always.

**IF YOU DESIRE** a visit or call from Pastor Nerud, please contact the church office (309-949-2516).

**OFFICE HOURS**

Terri's hours (Monday—Friday) 8 am—12 pm  
Pastor's hours (Monday, Pastor's day off)  
(Tuesday) 9 am—12 pm  
(Thursday) 9 am—12 pm & 1 pm—4 pm  
(Wednesday & Friday) please call ahead.

**LIVE STREAMED SERVICES** are available on St. John's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/St.Johns.Geneseo/> and posted on Monday on the church website: [www.stjohnsgeneseo.org](http://www.stjohnsgeneseo.org) found under the 'Sermon' tab.

**ATTENDANCE LAST SUNDAY**

Sunday school—7 Adult Bible Class—12 Worship—47

**OFFERING**

Offering last week \$2,279.00  
Weekly Budget needed \$3,967.56

**THIS WEEK AT ST. JOHN'S**

Today 8:45 am SS/Adult w/Youth Bible Study  
10:00 am Divine Worship/Communion  
Tuesday 1:00 pm LWML  
6:30 pm Council meeting  
Next Sunday 8:45 am SS/Adult w/Youth Bible Study  
10:00 am Divine Worship

*One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and seek him in his temple. Psalm 27:4*

**MARK 3:35** – “Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.” Doing the will of God starts with trusting in His Son Jesus Christ. Once we have faith in Him and have been reborn as new creatures through Holy Baptism, we strive to grow in this faith and in a life that agrees with our faith. We should strive to grow in generosity, in kindness, and in love across our callings, which include the home, church, and society while growing in the family of God. For all who do His will are his brothers, and sisters, and mothers.

**PLEASE CHECK** the attendance sheet for you and your family members, marking each one attending the worship service. Thank you for your help.

**ANNIVERSARY THANK OFFERING**—Since worshiping in this building, it has been our custom to give our offering from this first Sunday of June, as a ‘Thank Offering’ for all the blessings God has poured out upon us. These gifts will continue to help those congregations and fellow Christians during times of disasters.

**LWML is meeting** this Tuesday, June 8, at 1 pm. All ladies are invited to join us for Bible Study, a short meeting and time of fellowship.

**LWML INGATHERING**—We are wrapping up this project. If you still wish to contribute, please bring your items ASAP. Place your gifts in the box found in the coat room. **Items we are collecting: light-weight bath-size towels (between 20”x40” & 52”x27”) dark colors recommended, 2 or 3 bath size bars of soap in original wrapping, adult-size toothbrush in original wrapper, sturdy comb, and nail clippers.** Your help is greatly appreciated. Monetary gifts are also acceptable and will be used to purchase item.

**MINISTRY to the ARMED FORCES**—Please read through the special insert in your bulletin today. An offering plate is at the back for those who wish to

help with this ministry. We will receive your gifts today & next Sunday.

### PRAYER MINISTRY

*Remember God's work in the Dominican Republic as you pray:*

**MISSION**—Pray for the seminary students who will enter the seminary this fall, that they would be able to acquire their student visas and other documentation needed to study in the Dominican Republic.

**ST. JOHN'S—Mrs. Marilyn Woods**—We offer before You our common request for the well-being of Your church throughout the world that it may be so guided and governed by Your good Spirit that all who profess themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth and hold the faith in unity of spirit in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life. Specifically, we pray for Marilyn and ask your blessing on her.

**ST. JOHN'S FAMILY**—O Lord, You are the great Physician of soul and body. We pray that You would show mercy to Your servants:

<b>Drew Schillinger</b>	<b>Jim Rahn</b>	<b>Paula Chapa</b>
<b>Arlyn Helke</b>	<b>Lois Esterlein</b>	<b>Lynne Johnson</b>
<b>Derek Helke</b>	<b>Lillian Hock</b>	<b>Jim Dahl</b>
<b>Betty Firch</b>	<b>John Erdman</b>	<b>Carolyn Werner</b>
<b>Linda Aper</b>	<b>Marilyn Woods</b>	

**Don Eggers** (son of a friend of Marilyn Woods)  
**Mike Miller** (friend of Bob & Sherry Wechsler)  
**Jodi Martins** (daughter of Gary & Darla Johns)  
**Jon & Anita Clausing** (missionaries in Kenya)  
**Marilyn Potts** (wife of Cal Potts, former St John Laborer For Christ)  
**Pam Bennett** (friend of Dan/Roselyn Maeltzer)  
**Karen Wright** (wife of Pastor Gary Wright)  
**Virginia Miller** (mother of Jamie Werling)  
**Kelly Wechsler** (cousin of Bob Wechsler)  
**Joseph Baamonde** (Friend of Paula Mooney)  
**Jim Neumann** (father-in-law of Brad Gehn's son)  
**Harley Hepner** (cousin of Sarah Hock)  
**Delores Gonion** (mother of Michele Barry)  
**Glenn McAdam** (friend of Bob & Sherry Wechsler)  
**Lonnie Anderson** (employee of Brad Gehn)  
**Laurie Sanford** (sister of Jan Dahl)

**MILITARY**—We pray for those serving in our military and their families:

**Mandy & Richard Davila** (daughter & son-in-law of Dale & Linda Aper)  
**Brittany Loenser** (daughter of Gabe & Shandel Loenser)  
**Luke & Nicole Thompson** (son & daughter-in-law of John & Kindra Thompson)  
**Ken Willeford** (husband of Alicia Willeford)  
**Karl Flynn** (son of Mr. & Mrs. Paul Flynn)  
**Zachary & Tiffany Gardner** (nephew & wife of Bob & Lois Esterlein)  
**Casey Powers Jr.** (step son of Lisa Powers)

### LUTHERANS FOR LIFE

“The boundaries He establishes serve not to forbid any of sexuality’s blessings but to gather its goodness into a single setting so that nothing deprives the marriage bed of its rightful delight.” *Pastor Michael Salemink, Executive Director of Mission and Ministry, Lutherans For Life – A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • lutheransforlife.org*



# ENCHILADA SALE FUNDRAISER! \$15 PER DOZEN

**2 Flavors: Chicken or Beef**

**SATURDAY JUNE 26TH, 2021**

**PICK UP FOOD TO GO: 1-2PM**

**CHRIST THE KING LUTHERAN CHURCH**

**1301 19TH ST. EAST MOLINE, IL**

**60 dozens available**

**Jose Nunez (309) 373-1788**

Proceeds: Christ the King Lutheran Church

Second Sunday after Pentecost

June 6, 2021

Sermon Text: Mark 3:20-35 (Gospel)

Other Texts: Genesis 3:8-15 (Old Testament); 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1 (Epistle)

### **“The Will of God”**

Grace, mercy, and peace, be yours from God our Father through faith in Jesus the ascended Lord.

Our dear Lord humbled Himself greatly for our sakes. Of course, we rightly highlight and consider His ultimate humiliation, being crucified as the lowest of criminals. Yet, His life was not glory until the cross, but was full of humility. So it is then that in today’s Gospel we hear of our Lord’s humility as He, the Son of God and Israel’s Messiah, endures being called crazy by His family and is attacked as being in league with Satan by the religious scholars and leaders.

Let’s get the setting. Jesus has returned to Capernaum where He had already established His “home base” for His Galilean ministry. After hearing Jesus had returned, the crowd gathered around the house He was staying in, demanding His time, making it so that He and the apostles could not even take time to eat. When hearing this, His family, no doubt out of great concern for Him, declared, “He is out of his mind”<sup>i</sup> and were actually going to attempt restraining Him if necessary. But before they can fully act, a new situation develops.

St. Mark records that some scribes came down from Jerusalem, traveling all the way to Capernaum, and it quickly becomes quite obvious that it wasn’t to learn from Jesus. These scholars of Scripture, many likely connected to the party of the Pharisees, have shown up to lend their weight to the local religious establishment in their opposition to Jesus, working desperately to get the multitudes to reject Him. And while the opinion of Jesus’ well-meaning but mistaken family is anything but flattering, such does not compare with the scribes’ venomous attacks, “‘He is possessed by Beelzebul,’ and ‘by the prince of demons he casts out demons.’”<sup>ii</sup>

Certainly the world hasn’t improved much concerning its opinion of Christ. His name is still reviled whether in a general sense that so many have towards religion (though Christianity often seems to still be the favorite target) or by actual persecutors of the Church. Thus whole nations, whether Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, or Communist show their hatred for Christ by their suppression of churches and their violence and harassment towards believers. And whole educational systems, from preschool through post-secondary levels, arrogantly mock the Bible and those who believe it, dogmatically promote their atheistic and evolutionary philosophies, narrow-mindedly refuse to allow that which supports the Bible to be discussed, and work to marginalize and silence Christians in every way possible, especially in those bastions of “open-thinking and tolerance” called universities.

But so also those who claim to be Jesus’ brothers and sisters still treat Him as if His thinking is a bit off, or perhaps way off, and so feel the need to restrain Him so He doesn’t embarrass Himself in front of people. So individuals, congregations, and whole denominations will embrace women’s ordination, homosexuality, and the various forms of gender confusion and dysfunction as good even as those faithful disciples, congregations, and denominations that speak what Jesus

speaks in His Word are condemned as legalistic, hateful, and even unchristian. And so Isaiah's warning is applicable not merely to the unbelieving world, but even more so to these who claim Christ's name,

Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!<sup>iii</sup>

Truly we see the activity of the two beasts Satan has raised up to wage his war on Christ's holy bride, the Christian Church. The first beast, from the sea, representing human institutions that suppress the Gospel, and the second beast, that from the earth, symbolizing false religions and philosophy, which includes the great prostitute who signifies the apostate church.<sup>iv</sup> These beasts, serving their ruler Satan, represent what we call "the world," when we speak of our enemies, the devil, *the world*, and our sinful nature.

And so it is necessary for us to know this, to see that these things which surround us are being used by Satan to destroy our faith. Being thus warned we will not be surprised by the world's hostility to the true Christ Jesus and, therefore, the true Christian faith and Church. And while not seeking it out, we will not we avoid this hostility at all costs, for we know that such is betraying our confirmation vows, our loyalty to the Lord. More, we will not be blind to the lies which the world tells us, taken in by them, for we see the serpent's forked tongue behind them, beguiling us with his temptations that he might strike us with his deadly venom. For Satan is a liar and a murderer, and it is primarily by lies that he murders, for they deceive us, taking us away from Christ by directing us away from His Word, and so kill eternally.

But we must be careful, lest we forget that third enemy already mentioned, our sinful nature. I say this because while it is essential for us to recognize the enemies without, it is equally, yes, even more crucial to recognize the enemy within. For we too may be like Jesus' family and, yes, even like the scribes.

Of course, we have a knee-jerk reaction to such a statement. Like Peter saying that he would never deny Jesus, we too say we would never do such a thing.<sup>v</sup> But perhaps we should be more like the disciples after Jesus said one of them would betray Him, asking, "Is it I?"<sup>vi</sup> For dear Christians, *why* would Scripture warn us so earnestly to put to death our old self with all of its thinking and passions and exhort us so strongly to put on the new self which is being renewed in the image of our Creator *if doing such was not actually needed and essential for our continuing survival as a Christian?*<sup>vii</sup>

Remember, what we think of *Christ's Word* is what we think of Him. So when are some of Jesus' teachings considered wicked, of the devil? Some think that it is unfair, yes, evil, to say that all people, from conception, are sinners, and so under God's wrath. Some think that a God who condemns people to eternal hell is evil. Some think that there is some saving truth in all religions, so there being *only one way* to salvation, faith in the crucified and risen Jesus, is wicked. Some think that good, honest, hard-working people, those who have been faithful parents and citizens, especially those who have honorably served their nation in the military or in public service, risking their lives for others, whether they are Christians or not, will go to heaven,

and to say otherwise is evil. Also others of Jesus' teaching are claimed to be evil by some. We ask, "Is it I?"

Perhaps more likely is our being Jesus' "well-meaning family members." That is, having a sincere love, yet one, like His family of old, is erring, misapplied, as we too think He is a bit out of His mind on certain issues. So where might we find Jesus a bit out of His mind. Is it when He says, "Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you, turn the other cheek"?<sup>viii</sup> Might we respond, "Yes, Jesus, sure, how nice. Of course, in *the real world* it just doesn't work. So just let us do what we need to do, Jesus, but don't worry, we still *love* you."

How about when Jesus teaches that not only is marriage between one biological man and one biological woman, but also, that it is the only place for sexual activity, and that any other, whether it be "free loving" or within a "dedicated living together," remains a filthy sin that brings His wrath. How about when He says, "Let ever person be subject to the governing authorities"<sup>ix</sup> and the only exception to that is when they would have us go against His Word? How about when He says that we must be willing to lose our relationships with our dearest family members if such is required to remain a faithful disciple? How about when He says to pick up our cross and suffer for His name and, more, even to rejoice in our sufferings?

"Yes, yes Jesus, these sure sound like great ideas. But clearly You cannot really mean what You're saying since these are not realistic?" But why are these not realistic? Is it perhaps our sinful nature finds them to be such? Is it not actually because our fear of God's wrath is at an all-time low, and that *we* are defining faith and love by how we think and feel, and not by the Lord's definition? Dear Christians, on what issue, or issues, do you give Jesus a nice little pat on the head, tell Him how much you believe in Him, love Him, trust Him, but then just go and limit or even reject what He says?

"Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."<sup>x</sup> Dear Christian friends, our Lord really could not be any clearer. He tells us His will in His Word. While some parts of Scripture can be tricky, when it comes to what is sin and what is holy, it is simple. We make it tricky, difficult, when we don't like what it says and so distort it to make it say what we want. Each of us must find these in ourselves and repent of them, which means letting God be God and Christ be Lord and King by thinking according to His Word. For to fail to do such is to go down the path of the unforgivable sin, blaspheming the Holy Spirit, for it is resisting the Spirit's work in your heart and mind. His work to keep your faith alive *by keeping your repentance over sin alive as well!*

But know this as well. Our Lord's will could not be any clearer, His Word quite simple. Out of love and grace that can only come from the heart of God, His Son willingly humbled Himself, suffering insult, injury, and death, that your sins too would be paid for and forgiven. So yes, repent, turning from your ways to Christ's ways in His Word, but be confident that His way begins with forgiving you and saving you. So go forth and boldly and joyfully live in the ways of your God and Savior. For truly any other way is crazy, in fact, of the devil.

God help us do so. Amen!

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<sup>i</sup> Mark 3:21. All quotes are from *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

<sup>ii</sup> Mark 3:22.

<sup>iii</sup> Isaiah 5:20.

<sup>iv</sup> Revelation 13 and 17.

<sup>v</sup> Mark 14:29, 31.

<sup>vi</sup> See Mark 14:19.

<sup>vii</sup> E.g. Colossians 3:1ff.

<sup>viii</sup> Matthew 5:39, 44.

<sup>ix</sup> Romans 13:1.

<sup>x</sup> Mark 3:35.