

THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 10, 2020

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, FALLS CHURCH, VA

DIVINE SERVICE ONE



THE ENTRANCE RITE

PRELUDE *Jesus Lives! The Victory's Won* Setting: Anton Wilhelm Leupold

WELCOME

Alleluia! Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

ENTRANCE HYMN #490 *Jesus Lives! The Victory's Won*

1 Jesus lives! The vict'ry's won!
Death no longer can appall me;
Jesus lives! Death's reign is done!
From the grave will Christ recall me.
Brighter scenes will then commence;
This shall be my confidence.

2 Jesus lives! To Him the throne
High above all things is given.
I shall go where He is gone,
Live and reign with Him in heaven.
God is faithful; doubtings, hence!
This shall be my confidence.

3 Jesus lives! For me He died,
Hence will I, to Jesus living,
Pure in heart and act abide,
Praise to Him and glory giving.
All I need God will dispense;
This shall be my confidence.

4 Jesus lives! I know full well
Nothing me from Him shall sever.
Neither death nor pow'rs of hell
Part me now from Christ forever.
God will be my sure defense;
This shall be my confidence.

5 Jesus lives! And now is death
But the gate of life immortal;
This shall calm my trembling breath
When I pass its gloomy portal.
Faith shall cry, as fails each sense:
Jesus is my confidence!

In the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

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 on God's Word and for self-examination.

Let us then confess our sins to God our Father.

Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. 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. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. 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.

In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for His sake God forgives us all our sins. To those who believe in Jesus Christ He gives the power to become the children of God and bestows on them the Holy Spirit. May the Lord, who has begun this good work in us, bring it to completion in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ

Amen.

KYRIE

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above and for our salvation let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God, and for the unity of all let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort and defend us, gracious Lord.

Amen.

HYMN OF PRAISE

This is the feast of victory for our God.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose blood set us free to be people of God.

This is the feast of victory for our God.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Power, riches, wisdom and strength, and honor, blessing, and glory are His.

This is the feast of victory for our God.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Sing with all the people of God, and join in the hymn of all creation.

Blessing, honor, glory, and might be to God and the Lamb forever. Amen.

This is the feast of victory for our God.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

For the Lamb who was slain has begun His reign. Alleluia.

This is the feast of victory for our God.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

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 live and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen.



THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST LESSON Acts 6 & 7 (6:1–10; 7:54–60)

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. 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. 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. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." 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. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

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.

And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. 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. But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.

Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. 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. And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. 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. And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 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. (ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

**1 By all Your saints in warfare,
For all Your saints at rest,
Your holy name, O Jesus,
Forevermore be blest!
For You have won the battle
That they might wear the crown;
And now they shine in glory
Reflected from Your throne.**

**7 Praise for the first of martyrs
Who saw You ready stand
To help in time of torment,
To plead at God's right hand.
Like You, our suff'ring Savior,
His enemies he blessed,
With "Lord, receive my spirit,"
His faith, by death, confessed.**

**3 Then let us praise the Father
And worship God the Son
And sing to God the Spirit,
Eternal Three in One,
Till all the ransomed number
Fall down before the throne,
Ascribing pow'r and glory
And praise to God alone.**

Text: Public domain

SECOND LESSON 1 Peter 2:1–10

So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, 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. 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.”

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,”

and

“A stone of stumbling,
and a rock of offense.”

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

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. 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. (ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

ALLELUIA VERSE

Alleluia.

Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life.

Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL John 14:1–14

The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 14th chapter

Glory to You, O Lord.

[Jesus said:] "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 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? 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. And you know the way to where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." 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'? 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. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

"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. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. (ESV)

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ

SERMON

St. Peter uses 3 different metaphors in his exhortation to the Church that is today's 2nd lesson: **First**, he uses cleansing your house (of yeast) before Passover as a picture for rooting out evil thoughts and desires from our lives. "**Rid yourselves of all malice and guile (vs 1)!**" What is important in this Passover idea is the thorough cleaning, the brushing, sweeping and scrubbing every corner of your life until it is washed clean. **Second**, he uses a building metaphor to picture for God's Church. "**Come to Him, a living stone.....See, I am laying in Zion...a cornerstone (vs 4-6).**" In this metaphor, Jesus is Himself one of the stones -- a living stone -- in fact, the cornerstone, which holds the whole building

together. But you and I are also stones, each one needed, and each fit into its place, so that the whole Church is a well built building, with inter-connected parts held together by the cornerstone. And **Finally**, he uses the OT priesthood to picture of our life together; **“let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices (vs 4-5).”** We sacrifice for each other, intercede for the needing, and we proclaim the God Who raised Jesus from the dead.

Three metaphors, resulting in one very lovely image: a living, vibrant community that does its mission together, taking care of the needing, interceding for each other and the world, and above all, proclaiming Jesus, risen from the dead: a chosen race, a royal priesthood, God’s own people, built together to proclaim our God to all the world.

Lest we think such living is easy, lest we become, like the lawyer we heard during Lent, who tried to parse away the Torah’s call to love his neighbor, the Church calls us to hear the story of her first martyr. Stephen was one of seven men called into divine service as Deacons, to help care for the poor so the Apostles could focus on preaching. Almost as soon as he was set apart as a deacon, however, Stephen found himself preaching about Jesus too. Luke never really explains how Stephen could go from distributing food to the hungry, to being arrested and tried as one who preached Jesus. He does say (Acts 6.8) that Stephen was full of grace and did great wonders (as Jesus was!). Stephen's miraculous work won such a following that the church's enemies sought false witnesses against him (also like Jesus). In his great reply to those false charges in Acts 7, Stephen interpreted all of OT history as pointing to Jesus (as Jesus had done for the Emmaus disciples). As they began to stone him, he prayed for forgiveness for those who were killing him (also as Jesus had done at the cross). Lest we think that rooting evil out of our lives is easy, or that being part of the Body of Christ is without cost, the Church reminds us that sometimes martyrdom is the cost.

How can anyone love Jesus enough to lay down his life for the privilege of confessing the Divine Name? One of our modern hymns compares the costly witness of the early heroes to what it calls **“the casual way we wear his name,”** (LSB 853, vs 3) and the comparison is not intended to be complimentary. Do we love Jesus like Stephen did? Are we scrubbing our lives of the evil that could infect our whole way of life as Peter exhorts? You only can answer such questions, but as for myself, I must admit that **“fitting in”** and **“getting along”** has marked me too often. Leading to what the same hymn calls **“By our faults (we) obscure Your power to cleanse and cure.”**

Luther taught us to rise each morning as baptized lambs of the flock of God and begin the day by drowning all the evil I have done, and then go to the cross for forgiveness (Baptism IV). Forgiven, I go forward into the new day by the power of Christ's resurrection. Luther meant for me to do as Peter exhorts today, to scrub out the evil in my life and bring it to the cross. Then go at life as a risen-in-Christ lamb of God’s flock.

Which brings me to Thomas, and today’s Gospel. Thomas asked a straight forward question, **“Lord, we don’t know where you are going. How can we know the way?”** It’s the question any of them could have asked (a question they may have all been thinking). After all Jesus went from Capernaum in the north, south to Bethany, back north and east to the region of the Geresenes, then into Samaria, south to Jerusalem, then north to Galilee again. Jesus didn't sit still. So which place, new or old, was He talking about? **Until we know that, Thomas said, how can we know the way?**

But Jesus was also speaking in metaphor, his going to a place was really about his imminent suffering and death; it included His resurrection and ascension, and the promise to bring His disciples to the **“place” which He will build** for them. Again, a building metaphor, faithful to His earlier promise **to build His Church**. But in this text He especially promises a place in His coming Kingdom. **“I go to prepare a place for you.”** And nestled in His building metaphor is the greater promise, **“...so that where I am, you may also be.”** However hard it was to grasp what Jesus was talking about, and the confusion of the disciples tells us it was hard, this is the promise upon which we anchor our hope both

in life and death. Stephen didn't doubt what was next. He could already see Jesus' sitting enthroned, and he could see the place that Jesus had built for him. **"I am the Way and the Truth and the Life."** He is the means by which we are made right with God. So right that we can go with Jesus to the Father. The thing I love about this **"I AM"** saying of Jesus, is that very clearly Jesus is everything: He is the path my life takes (**Way**), the content of my living on that path (**Truth**) and the goal toward which this path leads (**Life**). St. Stephen stands near us today to remind us that though this is a hard path, it is the only path that leads to eternal life.

This is Mother's Day, and it is one like none before in my lifetime. You can't take Mom out for dinner; I guess you can still send her flowers because FTD is still delivering. Yet at its heart this has always been a day to be aware of Mom's sacrifices, and to say thank you. And since Grandma is a Mom too, your staying home and keeping a safe distance protects most especially Mom's who in the at risk group. Jesus pictures His love for His wayward children as a hen gathering her chicks under her wings. It is a tender imagine, a good reminder that Mom was a protector, even a fierce defender. We need lots of Mom in these tough days, and we might all wish that as in so many other cases, Mom could make it all better. For all the times that she did, say thank you this weekend. And as a fitting Mother's Day gift, pay it forward by making it all better for someone else. Your love for your Mom will shine that way.

As I wrote this sermon, our nation was in an uproar about getting life back to normal. Demonstrations, some of them armed!! And as if my right to have normal days trumped your right to be kept safe. Because we are, even separate, gathered in the good arms of Jesus, I urge you, my brothers and sisters to do good to all as you are uniquely gifted to do. Assured that the One Who is "Way, Truth and Life" goes with you and is in you. Assured that He has created you as His living Body for good in exactly days like these. And assured that not one of these days, and not one of these unknowns, is beyond His loving care. Go and be the people of God. Like Mom gathering her children. Assured that He is with us, even in dark days like these.

HYMN OF THE DAY #526 You Are The Way; through You Alone

1 You are the way; through You alone

**Can we the Father find;
In You, O Christ, has God revealed
His heart and will and mind.**

2 You are the truth; Your Word alone

**True wisdom can impart;
You only can inform the mind
And purify the heart.**

3 You are the life; the empty tomb

**Proclaims Your conqu'ring arm,
And those who put their trust in You
Not death nor hell shall harm.**

4 You are the way, the truth, the life;

**Grant us that way to know,
That truth to keep, that life to win
Whose joys eternal flow.**

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

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

OFFERING *You Are the Way; through You Alone* Setting: Stephen Gabrielson

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

As newborn infants who long for the pure spiritual milk, so let us come before the Lord seeking His mercy with confidence that His grace will be sufficient for all our needs. *Brief silence*

Almighty Father, everlasting God, Your Son has revealed You to us as a merciful Lord. Give to us Your Holy Spirit, that we may believe in Him whom You have sent and do the greater works He has told us we will do in His name. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, You have promised to build up Your Church to be a holy priesthood, that Your people might offer the spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving acceptable to You. Bless Your Church and sustain it, especially during this time of distancing. Continue to provide it with the leadership, wisdom, effort and support that it needs, and let it be a source of hope and spiritual care to many as it faithfully proclaims your Word and reflects the love of your Son. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Holy God, Your power brought all things into being and still You preserve what You have made. Bless our nation and all its leaders that we may honor You and Your purpose as we work to establish order and justice, virtue, and protection. Give to our leaders wisdom and moderation in carrying out their tasks, especially in this time of anxiety and change. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O merciful Father, You have compassion upon the sick and those in need and have promised not to ignore them in their afflictions. Turn back the pandemic across the globe and give us relief. Bless the sick with healing, those who suffer with strength and patience, and the dying with peace. Hear us on behalf of those who have requested our prayers [*especially _____*]. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious God, You have established the home and family as a means to share love. Bless all mothers and the children in their care. Bless all families and make their homes places of goodness and love where Your Word is spoken, forgiveness reigns and love is displayed. And give us good examples to inspire us to all that is right and pure, that we may seek after these things. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Compassionate Father, You are not aloof from the needs of this body and life, and You have called us to love our neighbor in need and give aid to the poor. Give us courage and faith, that we may not fear sharing the resources You have supplied with those who live in want, especially the widow, the orphan

and the unemployed. Let love be perfected among us to drive out selfish fears. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Eternal Father of an eternal mercy, You have raised up witnesses in every age and blessed us with those who endured suffering and even death in faithfulness to Christ. We give You thanks for these faithful saints and martyrs, and we pray You to make us strong when we face the day of test, that at length we may be brought with them into the joy of Your presence and the glory of everlasting life. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We praise You, God, for Your goodness in hearing the prayers of Your people and granting us confidence to approach Your throne of mercy. Hear us now in the name of and for the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, through whom, with whom and in whom, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory is Yours, almighty Father, both now and forevermore. **Amen.**

THE 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.**

BENEDICTION

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

SENDING HYMN LBW#145 Thine Is the Glory

**1 Thine is the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son;
endless is the vict'ry Thou o'er death hast won.
Angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,
kept the folded grave-clothes where Thy body lay.**

Refrain:

Thine is the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son;
endless is the vict'ry Thou o'er death hast won.

2 Lo, Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb.

Lovingly He greets us, scatters fear and gloom;
let His church with gladness hymns of triumph sing,
for the Lord now liveth; death hath lost its sting. *Refrain*

3 No more we doubt Thee, glorious Prince of life!!

Life is nought without Thee; aid us in our strife;
make us more than conqu'rors, through Thy deathless love;
bring us safe through Jordan to Thy home above. *Refrain*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE *Thine Is the Glory* Setting: Emily Maxson Porter

Acknowledgments

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