

THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 30, 2020

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

SERVICE OF WORD AND PRAYER



*PRELUDE*    *Come, Thou Bright and Morning Star*    Setting: Philip Gehring

*WELCOME*

*ENTRANCE HYMN*    #872    *Come, Thou Bright and Morning Star*

- 1    **Come, Thou bright and Morning Star,  
      Light of Light without beginning;  
Shine upon us from afar  
      That we may be kept from sinning.  
Drive away by Thy clear light  
Our dark night.**
- 2    **Let Thy grace, like morning dew  
      Falling soft on barren places,  
Comfort, quicken, and renew  
      Our dry souls and dying graces;  
Bless Thy flock from Thy rich store  
Evermore.**
- 3    **May Thy fervent love destroy  
      Our cold works, in us awaking  
Ardent zeal and holy joy  
      At the purple morn's first breaking.  
Let us truly rise ere yet  
Life has set.**
- 4    **Ah! Thou Dayspring from on high,  
      Grant that at Thy next appearing  
We who in the graves do lie  
      May arise, Thy summons hearing,  
And rejoice in our new life,  
Far from strife.**
- 5    **Light us to those heav'nly spheres,  
      Sun of grace, in glory shrouded;  
Lead us through this vale of tears  
      To the land where days unclouded,  
Purest joy, and perfect peace  
Never cease.**

*CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION*

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

God of all mercy and consolation, come to the aid of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that, attentive to your Word, we may confess our sins, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.  
Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.  
*(Silence for reflection and self-examination)*

Gracious God,  
**have mercy on us. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things done and left undone. Uphold us by your Spirit so that we may live and serve you in newness of life, to the honor and glory of your holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life. Amen.

#### *KYRIE*

In peace let us pray to the Lord:  
**Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.**

For the gift of divine peace and of pardon, with all our heart and with all our mind, let us pray to the Lord:  
**Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.**

For the holy Christian church, here and scattered throughout the world, and for the proclamation of the Gospel and the calling of all to faith, let us pray to the Lord:  
**Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.**

Help, save, comfort and defend us, gracious Lord.  
**Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.**

#### *HYMN OF PRAISE*

**To you on high be glory and peace to all the earth;  
Goodwill from God in heaven proclaimed at Jesus' birth!  
We praise and bless You, Father; Your holy name, we sing –  
Our thanks for Your great glory, Lord God our heavenly King.**

**To you, O sole begotten, the Father's Son, we pray;  
O Lamb of God, our Savior, You take our sins away.  
Have mercy on us, Jesus; receive our heartfelt cry,  
Where You in power are seated at God's right hand on high.**

**For You alone are holy; You only are the Lord.  
Forever and forever, be worshiped and adored;  
You with the Holy Spirit alone are Lord Most High,  
In God the Father's glory. "Amen!" our glad reply.**

#### *THE PRAYER OF THE DAY*

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

Let us pray. Almighty God,

**Your Son willingly endured the agony and shame of the cross for our redemption. Grant us courage to take up our cross daily and follow Him wherever He leads; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**



*FIRST LESSON*    Jeremiah 15:15–21

O LORD, you know;  
remember me and visit me,  
and take vengeance for me on my persecutors.  
In your forbearance take me not away;  
know that for your sake I bear reproach.  
Your words were found, and I ate them,  
and your words became to me a joy  
and the delight of my heart,  
for I am called by your name,  
O LORD, God of hosts.  
I did not sit in the company of revelers,  
nor did I rejoice;  
I sat alone, because your hand was upon me,  
for you had filled me with indignation.  
Why is my pain unceasing,  
my wound incurable,  
refusing to be healed?  
Will you be to me like a deceitful brook,  
like waters that fail?  
Therefore thus says the LORD:  
“If you return, I will restore you,  
and you shall stand before me.  
If you utter what is precious, and not what is worthless,  
you shall be as my mouth.  
They shall turn to you,  
but you shall not turn to them.  
And I will make you to this people  
a fortified wall of bronze;  
they will fight against you,  
but they shall not prevail over you,  
for I am with you  
to save you and deliver you,  
declares the LORD.  
I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked,  
and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless.”

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*PSALM 26*

Vindicate me, O LORD,  
for I have walked in my integrity,  
and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering.

Prove me, O LORD, and try me;  
test my heart and my mind.

For your steadfast love is before my eyes,  
and I walk in your faithfulness.

I do not sit with men of falsehood,  
nor do I consort with hypocrites.

I hate the assembly of evildoers,  
and I will not sit with the wicked.

I wash my hands in innocence  
and go around your altar, O LORD,  
proclaiming thanksgiving aloud,  
and telling all your wondrous deeds.

O LORD, I love the habitation of your house  
and the place where your glory dwells.

Do not sweep my soul away with sinners,  
nor my life with bloodthirsty men,  
in whose hands are evil devices,  
and whose right hands are full of bribes.

But as for me, I shall walk in my integrity;  
redeem me, and be gracious to me.

My foot stands on level ground;  
in the great assembly I will bless the LORD.

**Glory be 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.**

*SECOND LESSON* Matthew 16:21–28

From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life? For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## CHILDREN'S SERMON

### ALLELUIA VERSE

**Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.**

**These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.**

**Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.**

### SERMON TEXT Romans 12:9–21

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be conceited. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Praise to You, O Christ**

### SERMON

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ:

In these verses of today's text just read, Paul continues the topic he had introduced at the beginning of the chapter. There he had said: "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." In earlier chapters Paul had gone into great detail about God's mercy toward his people. Now, in this chapter, he is teaching them about living the Christian life.

As Paul expounds on his subject, he encourages the hearers to be transformed by God and not conformed to the world. And he explains that this means using one's gifts for the good of others. We covered these teachings in the sermon last week.

Now, in today's verses, Paul is ready to move on from the teaching about gifts. And as he did in his first letter to the Corinthians Christians – when moving from chapter twelve to thirteen – Paul now mentions the subject of love.

To the Corinthians he devoted a whole chapter to the subject. Here it just gets a quick mention at the beginning. And yet many suggest that all the teaching which follows in this chapter flows from this idea of love. The NIV Bible labels this section "love in action." And we remember that when Jesus summarized the teaching of the law, he used the notion of love to do it – citing the Old Testament commands to love the Lord your God and love your neighbor as yourself. Paul will do this himself in the next chapter. And here he also uses the definite article, making it "the love." The love that is found in

believers is the essential and supreme fruit of justifying faith. As he told the Corinthians: “the greatest of these is love.”

Love does indeed inform and make possible everything the Christian does. And yet each of these commands of Paul in this text has its own purpose. And each presents its own challenge.

Paul therefore inserts the definite article for each of the next nine commands – to emphasize their necessity within the church. Although it would be awkward to translate it this way in English, the feel would be something like this: As for the love – not hypocritical. As for the brotherly love – affectionate. As for the honor – leading each other. As for the diligence – not slow. As for the spirit – fervent. Etc.

The terse, emphatic presenting of these characteristics is like a film which flashes on the screen one picture of the Christian life after another. All of them together form a whole, with each one serving as an important view. This is how the lives of Christians look when they have been justified by faith.

In many ways the commands which Paul gives are like the Beatitudes of Jesus. They are poetic and memorable in their presentation. They describe a life that is selfless and beautiful, and challenging too. Many of the same character descriptions are given in each list – including lowliness of spirit, mourning, peace-making and the enduring of persecution. The Beatitudes are different in that they are worded in a such a way that makes them less commands and more promises. But they both seek to describe the life of faith.

In reading through this list by Paul, one is filled with a longing for its accomplishment. If only we could live this way, life would be so much better. There would be peace among us. And love would prevail.

This longing, however, also leads to frustration, for we quickly realize that it is impossible for us to follow these commands. We have tried and failed many, many times. Reading these expectations of the Christian reminds us of how poorly we live up to them.

Lest these commands become a burden to us, we must recall that they come after all that Paul has shared about the way of faith. Our justification before God, Paul has explained, comes by faith, not by works. The righteousness that we need is given to us, not earned. It is accomplished by Jesus, not by us. If we don't keep this past teaching in mind, we will easily be overcome by the messages in this chapter. Who can live them? None of us.

Still, we are to try. And we are to give it our best shot. Life will go better when we do. We are to seek growth in our ability to do them – all the while giving thanks for God's forgiveness when we fail.

The ESV Bible heading for this section says: “marks of the true Christian.” I would adjust that and say: “marks of the Christian life as it is meant to be lived,” for one only becomes a true Christian when they place their faith in Christ as Savior.

Having addressed Paul's list as a whole, let us now spend some time looking at its individual commands.

We don't have time to examine each command in depth here, so I commend them to you for your own personal study. But even more than this, I commend the list to you as a tool for your own personal assessment. Reading it should cause you to ask questions, such as: Which of these commands of the Lord might come easy for you? Which are especially difficult? Upon which do you most need to improve?

Paul's first command for the Christian is: “let love be genuine.” We've mentioned the importance of love already. Note that here we are specifically warned not to fake our love. Paul uses a word here that

comes from the stage, where actors wore masks so that they could become someone different. From this word we get our word hypocrite. True Christian love will not be hypocritical. It will be honest. And it will be shown in our actions. We recall 1 John 3:18 which says: “let us not love in word nor tongue, but in deed and in truth.” Paul gives further commentary on this love by saying: “Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.” Love will always maintain a moral bearing. It is not simply acceptance.

Then Paul adds: “Love one another with brotherly affection.” This is a different kind of love. The first love is “agape” – the one shown us by God – the one which gives, sacrifices, and expects nothing in return. This second love is “philon” – a friendly love, and here a brotherly love, with the related idea of “affection.” This love calls us to build our relationships and enjoy one another.

Next Paul says: “Outdo one another in showing honor.” Honor always has to do with one’s relationship to others, including one’s relationship to God. “Honor your father and mother,” says the commandment of Moses. Jesus used the word “honor” often, especially in warning us against being like those who seek honor for themselves. We are to show honor, not seek it. We are to do the honorable thing, which shows our care for other people and our appreciation of what is right.

“Do not be slothful in zeal,” he says next. Or we could say “do not lag in zeal.” Zeal is enthusiasm. Passion. The Christian life is to be lived with energy and purpose. We do not simply exist. Once we are pointed in the right direction and placed on the path of God, we are to pursue the goals of that path with all our heart. The next two commands of Paul reinforce this pursuit, calling us to be “fervent in spirit and serve the Lord.”

As we do this, we also “rejoice in hope.” Christians have the greatest of all hopes – a future with God in the new creation where we will live in the eternal home which he has prepared for us. And we have hope for this life too, for we know God brings healing and restoration according to his gracious will. These hopes lead us to rejoice – even if our rejoicing needs to be muted, as it does in these days. We may not be able to raise our voices and gather in the usual ways right now. But we continue to rejoice. For God’s promises remain.

“Be patient in tribulation. Be constant in prayer.” Paul has mentioned both teachings earlier in his letter, and they are frequent topics in the scriptures. To the Thessalonians he famously said: “pray without ceasing.” Last week we heard Jesus praise a woman for her persistence – reminding us of our need for patience in our prayer.

“Contribute to the needs of the saints. And seek to show hospitality.” Christians are to contribute to all people, as they can. But here Paul teaches us to have a special eye on our family of faith. We can contribute to them in many ways, including hospitality – a word which has its origins in the ancient practice of opening one’s home to travelers.

“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.” Here we find those thoughts found also in the Beatitudes of Jesus, as well as some found also in the wisdom writings of the Old Testament. Which ones stood out to you?

I was struck by the command: “live in harmony with one another.” Perhaps that’s because we don’t seem to be doing this very well as a nation right now. Paul suggests that the church has a special calling to promote peace and harmony. And he’s not unrealistic either. Notice that he says: “If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.” Paul knows we shouldn’t always make peace just for the

sake of peace. But the world needs our skills in peace-making. "Blessed are the peacemakers," said Jesus.

These thoughts then lead Paul to teach on what to do with those who make trouble. And here he reaches the conclusion of this chapter.

He begins by saying: "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." Here Paul quotes Deuteronomy 32:39. The Lord God sees the injustices of this world, and he will deal with them.

And then, after telling us what not to do, Paul tells us what we should do. "To the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." This is a quote from Proverbs 25:21-22. The burning coals seem to represent contrition. The thought is that your good deeds in the face of injustice will cause a person to repent. We don't always see this happen, of course. But it opens the path. And it is far better than revenge. Jesus had similar things to say when he counseled us to turn the other cheek.

The Proverb Paul quotes ends by saying: "and the Lord will reward you." Paul may have left this part out simply for the sake of brevity. Or, he may have figured that it was covered in his final summary statement, where he says: "Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good." There is promise in these words. Good will overcome evil. God guarantees it. We may not always see it. But it will happen. According to God's plans.

We know this because that's what happened to Jesus. Jesus seemed to have been overcome by evil when he died on the cross. But God raised him from the dead. His goodness overcame the evil. And so it will be for us.

The Christian life is not easy. In fact, it is the way of the cross. But it is also the way of goodness. And God will bless it.

Paul's words direct and challenge us. Which is what we need.

May God give us the strength and faith to live them. Amen.

*HYMN OF THE DAY #531 Hail, Thou Once Despised Jesus*

- 1 Hail, Thou once despised Jesus!  
Hail, Thou Galilean King!  
Thou didst suffer to release us;  
Thou didst free salvation bring.  
Hail, Thou universal Savior,  
Bearer of our sin and shame!  
By Thy merit we find favor:  
Life is given through Thy name.**
- 2 Paschal Lamb, by God appointed,  
All our sins on Thee were laid;  
By almighty love anointed,  
Thou hast full atonement made.  
All Thy people are forgiven  
Through the virtue of Thy blood;  
Opened is the gate of heaven,  
Reconciled are we with God.**



- 3 Jesus, hail! Enthroned in glory,  
There forever to abide;  
All the heav'nly hosts adore Thee,  
Seated at Thy Father's side.  
There for sinners Thou art pleading;  
There Thou dost our place prepare,  
Ever for us interceding  
Till in glory we appear.
- 4 Worship, honor, pow'r, and blessing  
Thou art worthy to receive;  
Highest praises, without ceasing,  
Right it is for us to give.  
Help, ye bright angelic spirits,  
All your noblest anthems raise;  
Help to sing our Savior's merits,  
Help to chant Immanuel's praise!

#### *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 Hail, Thou Once Despised Jesus* Setting: Paul Soulek

#### *PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH*

Knowing the will of God that all would come to the knowledge of Your Son and find salvation in Christ, let us pray on behalf of our parish community and for all people according to their needs.

#### *Brief silence*

For our faith and faithfulness, especially for those persecuted for the cause of Christ; and  
For our strength in time of trial and for us to persevere in grace in the day of trouble, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the Church, Jerusalem on high, our mother in Christ until Christ is fully formed in us;  
For the pastors who serve us, that they may be faithful stewards of God's mysteries; and  
For those at home and abroad, who bring the message of salvation to those who have not heard, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For Donald, our president; Ralph, our governor; and all legislators and civil servants;  
For those who must render judgment and impose punishment upon lawbreakers; and  
For those who work for peace among the nations, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For favorable weather and for those who tend the soil and harvest its fruits;  
For business and industry, service workers and artisans;  
For generosity toward those in need; and  
For the unemployed and underemployed, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those married, that they would live in fidelity to their vows and promises;  
For parents as they teach their children to know and love the Lord;  
For single adults, that they may find fulfillment in their service to others; and  
For our lives together showing the love of Christ one to another, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For grace to take up the cross and follow the Lord wherever He leads;  
For courage in the face of challenge and adversity; and  
For compassion and harmony in our life together, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For holy lives of faith;  
For faith to receive the Lord's gift of His flesh and blood in the Holy Sacrament; and  
For this holy assembly, that we may present ourselves as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God,  
let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For our remembrance of the saints and grace to follow their example of faith;  
For God to grant us a place with them in their fellowship; and  
For our eternal life in God's kingdom without end, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

Almighty God, You have forgiven our sins and delivered us from death through our Lord, Jesus Christ.  
Continue to pour out Your mercy upon us, and grant to us all good things needful to this body and life  
and keep from us all things harmful. From You, through You and to You are all things, O Lord, holy  
Father, mighty God; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, whom with the Holy Spirit, You are one Lord, one  
God, 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 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.

*SENDING HYMN #706 Love in Christ Is Strong and Living*

- 1 Love in Christ is strong and living,  
Binding faithful hearts in one;  
Love in Christ is true and giving.  
May His will in us be done.**
  
- 2 Love is patient and forbearing,  
Clothed in Christ's humility,  
Gentle, selfless, kind, and caring,  
Reaching out in charity.**
  
- 3 Love in Christ abides forever,  
Fainting not when ills attend;  
Love, forgiving and forgiven,  
Shall endure until life's end.**

*ANNOUNCEMENTS*

*DISMISSAL*

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

*POSTLUDE Trumpet Tune by John Stanley*

Altar Flowers: "In loving memory of Phyllis Behrens" By Mark & Victoria B.

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