

# Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

July 19, 2020

Cross of Glory Lutheran Church  
Brooklyn Center, MN

## PRELUDE

## WELCOME

## CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, whose steadfast love is everlasting, whose faithfulness endures from generation to generation. **Amen.**

Trusting in the mercy of God, let us confess our sin.

Reconciling God,

**we confess that we do not trust your abundance, and we deny your presence in our lives. We place our hope in ourselves and rely on our own efforts. We fail to believe that you provide enough for all. We abuse your good creation for our own benefit. We fear difference and do not welcome others as you have welcomed us. We sin in thought, word, and deed. By your grace, forgive us; through your love, renew us; and in your Spirit, lead us; so that we may live and serve you in newness of life. Amen.**

Beloved of God, by the radical abundance of divine mercy we have peace with God through † Christ Jesus, through whom we have obtained grace upon grace. Our sins are forgiven. Let us live now in hope. For hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

## GATHERING HYMN #401 Gracious Spirit, Heed Our Pleading verses 1, 3, and 5

**1** Gracious Spirit, heed our pleading,  
fashion us all anew.  
It's your leading that we're needing,  
help us to follow you.

**Refrain** Come, come, come, Holy Spirit, come.  
Come, come, come, Holy Spirit, come.

**3** Guide our thinking and our speaking  
done in your holy name.  
Motivate all in their seeking,  
freeing from guilt and shame. **Refrain**

**5** Keep us fervent in our witness;  
unswayed by earth's allure.  
Ever grant us zealous fitness,  
which you alone assure. **Refrain**

## 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.**

## 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, amen.**

## **HYMN OF PRAISE**

**Refrain:** This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

**Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose blood set us free to be people of God. Power and riches, wisdom and strength, and honor and blessing and glory are his. Refrain**

**Sing with all the people of God, and join in the hymn of all creation: Blessing and honor, glory and might be to God and the Lamb forever. Amen. Refrain**

**For the Lamb who was slain has begun his reign. Alleluia. Refrain**

**This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.**

**PRAYER OF THE DAY** The Lord be with you. **And also with you.** *Let us pray . . .*

**Father God, you adopt us as your children, making us heirs with Christ. Fill us with your Holy Spirit, that we may live in hope, even for that which we do not yet see, through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

## **READING: Romans 8:12-25**

<sup>12</sup>So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—<sup>13</sup>for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup>For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. <sup>15</sup>For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” <sup>16</sup>it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup>and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

<sup>18</sup>I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup>For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; <sup>20</sup>for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup>that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup>We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; <sup>23</sup>and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup>For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? <sup>25</sup>But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **SPECIAL MUSIC**

**God Will Make a Way**

**Keith Williams**

## **GOSPEL: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43**

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>24</sup>[Jesus] put before [the crowds] another parable: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field;<sup>25</sup>but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. <sup>26</sup>So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. <sup>27</sup>And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?’ <sup>28</sup>He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The slaves said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ <sup>29</sup>But he replied, ‘No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. <sup>30</sup>Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”

<sup>36</sup>Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.” <sup>37</sup>He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; <sup>38</sup>the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, <sup>39</sup>and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. <sup>40</sup>Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. <sup>41</sup>The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, <sup>42</sup>and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. <sup>43</sup>Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!”

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

## **SERMON**

***Pastor Ali Tranvik***

When I was in seminary, I had the opportunity to take a class at the NC Correctional Institution for Women, a women’s prison in Raleigh. Every Thursday night, I’d drive 40 minutes to the outskirts of NC’s capital city, empty my pockets, and walk through a maze of metal detectors until I finally arrived to our classroom.

During our time together each week, me and my fellow classmates—half of whom were women from Duke Divinity School like myself, and half were women who were incarcerated—read scripture, sang hymns, and had lively discussions about the texts we were reading. We shared stories and poetry and art, prayed for each other, and pondered what it means that we have a God who also was arrested.

Those Thursday nights in the prison included not only some of the most engaging conversations I’ve been a part of, but also some of the most formative moments for my faith. I’m sure I’ll share more stories as time goes on, but today, I want to share with a story about Kelli.

Kelli, one of my incarcerated classmates, began writing songs in prison. Once a while in class, she’d share a song she wrote. A couple years later, Kelli was released, but she kept on singing those songs. She and a few of our other classmates ended up forming a band, “The Conviction Band,” they called themselves. Comprised of formerly incarcerated women, The Conviction Band now travels throughout NC sharing their music—all songs they had written while living behind bars. Some of their songs are praise songs, songs about joy or gratitude or freedom, but many are songs of lament. They are, we might say, “the blues.” The Conviction Band led worship at my former church this past year, and I wanted to share one song with you that Kelli shared with us that day (I will not be singing the song. Singing the kyrie is enough public singing for me for one day. I’ll be reading the lyrics). It’s a blues song called “Weary.”

*Watch me cause I’m weary  
Deep down in my bones  
Look out now, I’m weary  
My heart is made of stone  
I’ve been chained up so long now  
Lord please let me go home*

My God I'm so weary  
Hang my head in shame  
God help me I'm weary  
And I've got no one to blame  
There's blood on my hands  
God help me understand  
Why I'm weary  
So weary

Black liberation theologian James Cone talks about how the blues have a deep tradition of telling the stories of suffering, especially of the African-American community. "Lament," he writes, "is a central theme in the blues. It was not possible for black people to experience the disappointment of post-Civil War America and not know the meaning of lament. "But," Cone continues, "lament is not the whole picture. For underneath lament there is also a firm hope...a belief that one day things will not be like what they are today."

Lament and hope. Hope and lament. You can't have one without the other in the blues—nor in the life of faith, Paul seems to be suggesting in today's text from Romans. Let's take a closer look... On the one hand, we have lament. Paul laments the "suffering of the present times," (8:18), and describes a world that is "*groaning*" in labor pains (8:22). Does this groan resonate with you right now? One person at Bible Study this week said, "It's like this passage was written last month." Like Paul's world, our world is groaning today too, gasping for breath:

We are groaning because of Covid-19. For those infected with the virus, this gasping is quite literal; doctors describe patients' primary symptoms being difficulty breathing and shortness of breath. But even those of us who haven't been infected are gasping and groaning—groaning in loneliness from being cut off from physical connection and community. Groaning in exhaustion from constant parenting and strained marriages, wondering how in the world we'll get through the fall if schools don't reopen. Groaning from jobs lost, missed rent or mortgage payments, having to dig into a savings account that doesn't exist. Groaning for physical touch, for not being able to hug our parents and grandparents, or our kids and grandkids. Groaning in grief over not being able to gather for the funeral of a loved one, or over the thought that no one may be able to gather at our own funerals, for fear of dying alone. Groaning for being forced to risk our lives for the economy and being called a "hero" while not being paid like one, or groaning for being seen as "disposable" because we can no longer contribute to the economy at all. **"We can't breathe."**

We heard this same cry a few weeks ago in the streets of Minneapolis, when George Floyd groaned under the weight of a police officer's knee. "I can't breathe," Mr. Floyd said over 20 times while he was pinned to the ground for 8 minutes and 46 seconds, echoing the same groan for breath as Eric Garner, Bryon Williams, and numerous other black men and women whose breath has been stolen by a system of white supremacy—"the old and ongoing pandemic beneath the current pandemic" (Wallis). Black folks are not only gasping for air literally, but are rendered breathless from racial disparities in every American institution from healthcare to housing, education to economics. We lament that this is not only injustice, but unnecessary injustice, unjustified suffering, avoidable death that happens because of our own sins, active or passive. Mr. Floyd's final words have now become a rallying cry in the demonstrations that have risen up across the city and world, a global groaning of our black brothers and sisters: **"We can't breathe."**

We hear this same groan from creation itself. From oceans choked with islands of plastic trash, to air strangled by pollution and burning of rising temperatures, to land rendered barren from our insatiable consumer demands, all of creation is "in bondage to decay" (8:21). Creation itself is groaning, **"We can't breathe."**

As much as we groan, as much decay and death as there is to lament, we also lament our inability to lament! For some of us, this looks like denial, sidestepping lament altogether by denying the very real death caused by the coronavirus, or racism, or climate change. For others of us—for myself, I will confess—this looks like discomfort, an immediate move to downplay death ("things aren't that bad") or offer quick fixes ("things will get better"). I have struggled with thinking that if I dwell

on death, I am not being “positive” enough, or “strong” enough, or “faithful” enough. For all that there is to lament and for all the ways we fail to lament it, we groan.

And yet—just like blues music, today's text contains a word of hope amidst the groans: “The sufferings of this time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us,” Paul writes, when “creation will be set free from its bondage to decay” (Rom 8:18, 21). And so in the face of a groaning world, we live as people of hope. Not a cheap, happily-ever-after kind of hope. Not a hope that denies suffering, but rather a hope that draws us more deeply into it, moving us toward the sounds of groaning, towards our neighbors who are out of breath. It's a hope that tries to downplay or “fix” pain but rather looks it in the face and defiantly insists that new life is being born out of these labor pains, even those we can't yet see it. It's a hope still drenched in despair, but a hope that, like James Cone said about the blues, “one day things will not be like what they are today.”

But you don't need me to tell you that that day has not yet come. That there is still a pandemic. That George Floyd is still dead. That the earth is still suffocating on poisoned water and air. We wait for the redemption to come, but what hope is there for life in the meantime? Is there any hope at all?

Let's read one more verse further in Romans 8, for there is a word of hope for here and for now.

When we can't breathe, Paul says, “the Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words” (8:26). We have a God, in other words, *who is with us* in the midst of our lament, who groans with us when we groan, sighs in us when we can't find the words, breathes in us when **“we can't breathe.”** A God who was executed by the Roman empire for breathing with the wrong people in the wrong places and at the wrong times, who knows breathlessness, but whose breath could not be stopped. A God's who is still breathing in you, and maybe even in me.

I want to share with you one more song that Kelli from The Conviction Band wrote. It's another blues song of sorts, but a song of defiant hope that bears witness to the new thing being born in the midst of lament. This one's called “Griever Turned Believer.”

*A broken child found not breathing,  
A mother overcome with feeling,  
The family stares on unbelieving,  
The devil all along deceiving.*

*Griever finding hope  
In the midst of her despair,  
Griever with tears like rain,  
Drying on the window pane.*

*Griever turned believer,  
Hearts on fire for my redeemer,  
Griever turned believer,  
I'm not bound by the deceiver  
...I'm not bound anymore*

May it be so for us, too. Amen!

#### Sources:

- Cone, James H. *The Spirituals and the Blues* (Maryknoll: Orbis Press, 1991).
- Julie Polter, “Reviving Common Life in World Struggling to Breathe,” *Sojourners*, 2020.
- Mike Baker, Jennifer Valentino-DeVries, Manny Fernandez, and Michal LaForgia, “Three Words. 70 Cases. The Tragic History of ‘I Can't Breathe,’” *The New York Times*, 2020.
- Neumark, Heidi B. *Breathing Space: A Spiritual Journey in the South Bronx* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003).
- The Conviction Band, *Worship St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Durham, NC*, 2019.

## **HYMN        In Labor All Creation Groans**

In labor all creation groans till fear and hatred cease,  
Till all can breathe more easily, in Christ alone is peace.

In labor all creation groans till prejudice shall cease,  
Till every gender, race, and tongue knows justice and knows peace.

In labor all creation groans till war and violence cease,  
Till hearts are opened, lives transformed, and Christ is this world's peace.

In labor all creation groans till sin and suffering cease,  
Till all our hopes are met in Christ, for Christ he is our peace.

## **CONFESSION OF FAITH        Apostles' Creed**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's 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 to the dead. On the third day he  
rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will  
come to judge the living and the dead.**

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

## **PRAYERS of the PEOPLE**

And now may the Holy Spirit sigh in us as we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

God of lament, your whole creation groans in labor pains. We lament the groans of hunger, homelessness, racism, disease, addiction, grief, loneliness, depression, job loss, war and violence, and ecological devastation. And we lament the ways we have failed to lament, or for the ways we've caused or contributed to creation's groan, knowingly or unknowingly.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of hope, as we await your coming glory, send your Spirit to be a living hope in us here and now. Breathe in us, that we might be moved toward our neighbors who are most breathless.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of the harvest, we give you thanks for all those who labor in the fields. For the work of all those here at Cross of Glory. For the work of local faith communities, especially our Wildfire partners. For the work of teachers and bus drivers, healthcare workers and grocery store workers, parents who care for children, and children who care for parents. For the work that is uncompensated or unrecognized. Through all our labor, bring forth wheat, that it might provide nourishment and sustenance in this life together we share.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God our Father, as your adopted and beloved children, we give you thanks for families of all kinds. We pray for families physically separated by COVID-19, for those whose relationships are strained, broken, or abusive, for those awaiting adoption and those in the foster care system, for those struggling with infertility, those who are grieving the loss of family members, and for this church family at Cross of Glory, especially for Bev, Gil, Terry, Vicky, Nancy, and Laura.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For these prayers and all those too deep for words, may your Spirit now intercede; through Jesus Christ our life and hope. **Amen.**

## OFFERTORY RESPONSE

## Is He Worthy?

Do you feel the world is broken, We do  
Do you feel the shadows deepen, We do  
But do you know that all the dark  
Won't stop the light from getting through, We do  
Do you wish that you could see it all made new  
We do

Is all creation groaning, It is  
Is a new creation coming, It is  
Is the glory of the Lord  
To be the light within our midst, It is  
Is it good that we remind ourselves of this  
It is

Is anyone worthy, Is anyone whole  
Is anyone able to break the seal and open the scroll  
The Lion of Judah who conquered the grave  
He is David's Root  
And the Lamb who died to ransom the slave  
Is He worthy, Is He worthy  
Of all blessing and honor and glory  
Is He worthy of this, He is

Does the Father truly love us, He does  
Does the Spirit move among us, He does  
And does Jesus our Messiah  
Hold forever those He loves, He does  
Does our God intend to dwell again with us  
He does

Is anyone worthy, Is anyone whole  
Is anyone able to break the seal and open the scroll  
The Lion of Judah who conquered the grave  
He is David's Root  
And the Lamb who died to ransom the slave  
From ev'ry people and tribe every nation and tongue  
He has made us a kingdom and priests  
To God to reign with the Son  
Is He worthy, Is He worthy  
Of all blessing and honor and glory  
Is He worthy, Is He worthy  
Is He worthy of this, He is

Is He worthy, Is He worthy  
He is, He is

## OFFERING PRAYER

**God of Life, you give us these gifts of earth, these resources of our life and labor. Take them, offered in great thanksgiving, and use them for the sake of your redeeming work in this groaning world; through Jesus Christ or Lord. Amen.**

## LORD'S PRAYER

Lord remember us in your kingdom and teach us always to pray.

**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

*Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. God, the creator, † Jesus, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the comforter, bless you and keep you in eternal love. Amen.*

**SENDING FORTH SONG            Your Love Feeds My Soul**

Father in a world filled with heartache and sorrow  
I have found Your love feeds my soul  
Father when I'm feelin' I just can't face tomorrow  
I have found Your love feeds my soul

I have found Your love feeds my soul  
I have found Your love feeds my soul  
It's better than life so I'll glorify You  
Spirit within me cry out Your name  
I have found Your love feeds my soul

Father when the stresses of this life weigh upon me  
I have found Your love feeds my soul  
Father when my dreams are laid in ruin before me  
I have found Your love feeds my soul

When darkness is wielding the sword of despair  
I cry out to God hear my prayer  
And suddenly joy rises up from within  
In the knowledge You'll always be there

**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Christ is with you.  
**Thanks be to God.**

**Community Announcements:**

**Bible Study continues to meet on Tuesday mornings at 9:30 on Zoom. All are welcome. If you would like be added to the email list or are having trouble accessing the link, email Pastor Ali at [atranvik@crossofglory.us](mailto:atranvik@crossofglory.us).**

**Church Council meets today after worship.**

**Thanks to those who have signed up for a meet-and-greet with Pastor Ali. There is still availability for 7/26 at 10:45am on Zoom, 7/26 at 3:00pm at Linda Knudsen's, and 8/4 at 7:00pm at Erik Haugland's Please call or email Sue in the church office to RSVP!**