

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

June 28, 2020

Cross of Glory Lutheran Church
Brooklyn Center, MN

PRELUDE

I Want Jesus to Walk with Me

Keith Williams

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

#641

All Are Welcome

verses 1, 3 and 4

1 Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:

3 Let us build a house where love is found
in water, wine and wheat:
a banquet hall on holy ground
where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus,
is revealed in time and space;
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us:

Refrain

Refrain

All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.

4 Let us build a house where hands will reach
beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger
bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger: **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 **Pages 98-99**

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 **page 101**

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.

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

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.

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

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

O God, you direct our lives by your grace, and your words of justice and mercy reshape the world. Mold us into a people who welcome your word and serve one another, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

PSALM 89:1-4, 15-18

¹Your love, O LORD, forever will I sing;
from age to age my mouth will proclaim your faithfulness.

²**For I am persuaded that your steadfast love is established forever;
you have set your faithfulness firmly in the heavens.**

³I have made a covenant with my chosen one;
I have sworn an oath to David my servant:

⁴**I will establish your line forever,
and preserve your throne for all generations.’”**

¹⁵Happy are the people who know the festal shout!
They walk, O LORD, in the light of your presence.

**¹⁶They rejoice daily in your name;
they are jubilant in your righteousness.**

¹⁷For you are the glory of their strength,
and by your favor our might is exalted.

**¹⁸Truly, our shield belongs to the LORD;
our king to the Holy One of Israel.**

ROMANS 6:12-23

¹²Do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. ¹³No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. ¹⁴For sin will have no dominion over you since you are not under law but under grace.

¹⁵What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!

¹⁶Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, ¹⁸and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification.

²⁰When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. ²²But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. ²³For the wages of sin are death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ANTHEM

Mark Trease

GOSPEL Matthew 10:40-42

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

[Jesus said to the twelve:] ⁴⁰“Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. ⁴¹Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; ⁴²and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Birds of a Feather...

Keith Williams

May the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing to our God.

I am pleased to have been asked to return to the pulpit, but it is difficult to follow Pastor Lee’s preaching.

We've all likely heard this saying: "Birds of a feather flock together."

Today, I want to revisit that old aphorism.

Where I grew up in Wisconsin, those sayings were widely known, but I find that few of my current students have heard them.

I have also found that many don't know the word "aphorism". So every class also becomes an English and vocabulary class to increase our shared experiences.

Yes. My students pay tuition to learn words like "aphorism", along with clay techniques or art history.

We strive in class to agree upon knowledge, and experiences. It helps to create a civil society.

I hate to be the guy who says, "Back in my day..." – but – Back in my day my culture had shared experiences. There were 4 television channels.

In school, we read classic European and American, mostly male, writers.

There was one rock/pop radio station - one country station and classical music was on public radio.

The selection of superheroes, and comic book characters was white. The black character Franklin was only introduced to the Peanuts strip in 1968 amid great controversy.

Everyone learned essentially one historical narrative: Chris Columbus discovered this. George Washington led that. Tom Jefferson wrote this. Tom Edison invented that. And, since I was born into the heart of the Cold War, we knew that MADAME Curie discovered radiation.

Also, everyone we knew was Christian. Mostly... but more on that later...

As birds of a feather, it was pretty easy to flock together, (unless someone routed for a team other than the Packers).

I am grateful for my childhood, there was much good, but I wouldn't return to those simpler times.

From my youth, I miss the great flocks of birds undulating across the sky in their dusk murmurations.

Now there are many fewer songbirds in our lives.

I don't long for a return of those old cruel jokes deriding fat people, or Polacks, or women drivers.

But, I do miss the stunning quantity of butterflies and moths that used to fill my summers as I collected them. On summer night drives our windshield would be covered with bug juice. It was a mess, but when I drive those long drives now, there are very few of those lost, little guys. Our desire to eliminate bugs with pesticides is also eliminating diverse, abundant food sources for our birds and frogs...

Finally from before, I don't want the arts defined as just 'the Great Masters'. Now more people, and more micro-cultures, are able to express their ideas to us in a wide range of styles. The diversity is exhilarating to my profession.

I could go on listing what my village shared, but I really wanted to use that to examine the concept of "birds of a feather..."

Through a modern Christian lens, I struggle with the first half of this aphorism, because it reveals a very old way of thinking.

"Birds of a feather" recalls the 18th C. scientific practice of identifying and classifying. It was very appropriate during the age of discovery, or the scientific enlightenment. It even supported Christianity by suggesting that if God had created our home, and had asked us to be its steward, shouldn't we learn about it and wouldn't that then give us a better understanding of our loving Creator? Great concept. Science supporting faith.

But that scientific practice boils down to: how is this **different** from that? And if it's different enough it gets classified into another category. So, in biology we have the taxonomy order: Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus, Species. In geology, we have classifications of rocks depending on formation. Etc.

While this practice makes sense in the hard sciences, think of how much damage **defining the world through difference** can do when it spills over into human interactions...

We are Capitalists. You are Socialists. We're different.

This group is Straight. That group is Rainbow. DIFFERENT.

These believers are Christian. Those are Muslim, or Buddhist, or Sikh. DIFFERENT.

Conservative. Liberal. DIFFERENT.

White. Black. DIFFERENT.

What happens when we conclude that we are not birds of a feather? Should birds, perceived as having different feathers, flock apart? Should we only keep to our own? And then, what happens

when we discover more subtle differences in our own flocks? Do we separate out again, and form even smaller flocks?

Fortunately, today's Gospel gives us a very clear answer!

Matthew 10:40 "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me."

The emphatic message from Jesus is to ignore differences and to be actively welcoming.

He illustrated this many times throughout his time on earth. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, and in his actual encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well, he held up **Samaritans** as worthy of God's gifts and capable of serving God.

Samaritans worshipped the same God of Abraham as the Jews, but were reviled enemies of the Jews because they were **too** different. (Incidentally, modern Muslims and Christian worship that same God of Abraham.)

The "huge" differences in *THE WAY* they worshipped God made these two groups implacable enemies. They couldn't even reconcile when invaded by a common enemy, the Romans, during Jesus' day. Their feathers just **seemed** too different.

Enemies are enemies, after all – **Except to Jesus...**

In Jesus' heart, these groups both belonged to God - could share in God's love and work - and most important could equally receive God's gifts.

Just a couple weeks back we spent time on Jesus' Great Commission. "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations..." - All nations... - All.

All people and peoples share human limitations in understanding our God and creation. *Therefore*, all can receive the gift of forgiveness and the greatest grace we can ever know. No one faith earns it through worshipping the right way, or saying the right words, or doing good, while pointing out the wrongs of others.

Instead, **God does the work** of loving and forgiving us in grace – all of us – created and accepted as God's **one** flock.

We spend too much time discovering whether, or not, we are 'birds of a feather'.

In truth, God has already answered that question for us. We are - all of us - 'birds of a feather'. We are all a part of God's kingdom. No further taxonomy is required.

Whether Samaritan, or Jew, or Roman, or Muslim, or Christian, or Animist, we belong to God's flock. So then - what could it mean to 'flock together'?

Do you remember, I said that in my youth everyone shared a historical narrative, and were Christian? Well, not everyone: You see, there were two Native American families in my, otherwise, all white school district. They came from significant poverty, and they likely didn't agree on what Columbus did.

For them, Columbus and the Europeans claimed the continents using foreign laws and Christianity... Jesus' Great Commission was wielded by these new people as an excuse to appropriate lands, (what a polite word), make slaves, and attempt to eliminate their own people's cultural practices and languages.

Did you know that more First Nation people were enslaved in the Americas than imported Africans, in support colonial European economies?

Those natives, in my school, weren't really treated as peers. My ancestors' flock valued conquering lands and extracting resources from it. Their ancestors literally valued the feathers that emerged from understanding how to live **with the land**.

The natives came to class less and less, and didn't finish school with the rest of us.

They were welcome in school. BUT, they weren't welcomed.

Nobody wanted to hear THEIR history, THEIR stories, or see THEIR art. THEY didn't fit well in the shared narrative being presented in school. They weren't **welcomed** as part of OUR flock.

To merely welcome others is a passive stance that has some virtue, but it also implies that the flock is already defined.

To be **welcoming** is active. This recalls the active language of Micah who implores us not to simply wait for justice, but to "**do** justice".

My Concordia students' schooling has encouraged them to actively welcome stories from across the world; to see art from across time, culture, and gender; to hear world music expressing cultures

other than their own. This lack of shared experience, and single-viewpoint narrative enhances their worldview.

I have no doubt that our congregation will actively welcome Ali Tranvik as our new pastor.

It is my hope and prayer that she helps us to become actively welcoming to the richly diverse community in which we find ourselves. I know that Cross of Glory still has the energy and heart to be an active agent of God's work.

You see,

Some flocks are like our Canadian Geese friends flying V-shaped overhead in loud, honking efficiency. As one lead goose tires - another takes her place to lead the group. All wing along, sharing the energy of the group for the long flight. The strong leader doesn't do all the work, but both helps - **and - is - helped** - in the task.

This is how I see the work of Cross of Glory with Pastor Ali flying into that lead position.

How I see God's true flock is more like a great murmuration of multi-feathered birds stretching across the landscape, flowing in cross-current directions – responding to God's differing impulses and motivations - all participating in God's gifts of forgiveness, and freedom in flight.

HYMN #656 Blest Be the Tie that Binds verses 1, 2, 3 and 4

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| 1 Blest be the tie that binds
our hearts in Christian love;
the unity of heart and mind
is like to that above. | 2 Before our Father's throne
we pour our ardent prayers;
our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
our comforts and our cares. |
| 3 We share our mutual woes,
our mutual burdens bear,
and often for each other flows
the sympathizing tear. | 4 From sorrow, toil, and pain,
and sin we shall be free;
and perfect love and friendship reign
through all eternity. |

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 Let us join in praying for the whole people of God.

And God, we continue our ongoing prayers to you by thanking you deeply for the opportunities you give us to serve your will despite our limitations. What an honor it is to participate with you in your work, not to somehow earn your favor, but rather to partner with you. We cannot fully understand a God so willing to love, that we are accepted and included in your work. Please accept our humble thanks. Lord in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

And Lord, you know our many needs for healing. Our frail bodies are susceptible to the Covid virus, to cancers, to heart conditions, and more. We are also sometimes hurt by depression, loneliness, feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt – even to the point of having suicidal thoughts. Please send healing as you will, but also feelings of acceptance of our conditions, and knowledge that you have assured us

we are acceptable in your sight. By sending feelings of inclusion we can better love you, our neighbors, and ourselves. Lord in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

And dearest Savior, we know that we ask for much, but you have watched our society divide and divide again in unhealthy ways. You witness our racial tensions, our economic injustice, our polarized politics, our challenged world relationships. We know that we will not truly be a single flock until your time, but help us to see as many similarities as we see differences, so as to begin to build and rebuild more supportive relationships between peoples. Lord in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

And Lord, you know that we are thankful for the ongoing work of the people of Cross of Glory, the ministries of W/ELCA and the Quilters, and Building and grounds, and the musicians, and the staff and so many more. At the same time we pray for those who are struggling with health issues limiting their participation in our community. We pray for **Bev Hoium, Gil Hartlage, Marcy Hartlage, Terry Stejskal, Vicky Jacobson, and Nancy Hengel.**

Keep them in our hearts and close to you. Lord in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Into your generous hands and care we offer all of our prayers, spoken and felt, knowing that you will receive them with benevolence. **Amen.**

OFFERTORY RESPONSE

Come as You Are

Worship Team

Come out of sadness from wherever you've been
Come broken-hearted let rescue begin
Come find your mercy O sinner come kneel
Earth has no sorrow that Heaven can't heal
Earth has no sorrow that Heaven can't heal

There's hope for the hopeless
And all those who've strayed
Come sit at the table come taste the grace
There's rest for the weary
Rest that endures
Earth has no sorrow that Heaven can't cure

(So) Lay down your burdens lay down your shame
All who are broken lift up your face
O wanderer come home
You're not too far
So lay down your hurt lay down your heart
Come as you are

Come as you are
Fall in His arms
Come as you are

There's joy for the morning O sinner be still
Earth has no sorrow that Heaven can't heal
Earth has no sorrow that Heaven can't heal

Come as you are
Come as you are
Come as you are

OFFERING PRAYER

God of goodness and growth, all creation is yours, and your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens. Water and word, wine, and bread: these are signs of your abundant grace. Nourish us through these gifts, that we might proclaim your steadfast love in our communities and in the world, through Jesus Christ, our strength, and our song. Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Lord remember us in your kingdom and teach us always to pray. **Our father who art....**

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

Sing for Joy

Worship Team

If we call to Him, He will answer us;
If we run to Him, He will run to us.
If we lift our hands, He will lift us up;
Come now praise His name all you saints of God.

O sing for joy to God our strength;
O sing for joy to God our strength, our strength.

Draw near to Him, he is here with us;
Give Him your love, He's in love with us.

O sing for joy to God our strength;
O sing for joy to God our strength, our strength.

If we call to Him, He will answer us;
If we run to Him, He will run to us.
If we lift our hands, He will lift us up;
Come now praise His name all you saints of God.

Draw near to Him, he is here with us;
Give Him your love, He's in love with us.
He will heal our hearts, He will cleanse our hands;
If we rend our hearts He will heal our land.

O sing for joy to God our strength... our strength.

DISMISSAL

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

THANK YOU for the awesome drive-by farewell last Wednesday evening! I was truly surprised. I appreciate your cards, gifts and kind words. I am so glad that I at least got to see you folks before I left. To see you smiling faces through your car windows was absolutely awesome. I will always remember you! -- *Pastor Lee*