**Emmanuel Lutheran Church**

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**At Home Worship August 9, 2020**

**WE GATHER**

**Confession and Forgiveness**

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 won 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.**

**HYMN What A Fellowship / Leaning On the Everlasting Arms**

<https://blogs.elca.org/worship/files/2020/08/What-a-Fellowship-What-a-Joy-Divine-Leaning-on-the-Everlasting-Arms.pdf>

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray.
**O God our defender, storms rage around and within us and cause us to be afraid. Rescue your people from despair, deliver your sons and daughters from fear, and preserve us in the faith of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

**WE HEAR THE WORD**

**First Reading: 1 Kings 19:9-18**

**Psalm 85:8-13**

**Second Reading:** **Romans 10:5-15**

**Gospel: Matthew 14:22-33**

**SERMON:** *(see last page)*

**REFLECTION:** In the story, Elijah is in trouble, threatened with death. Peter is in trouble too, drowning in the chaos of the sea. Let the stories reflect our times. We and all our world also know the threat of death and chaos. But then, listen. God comes to Elijah not in wind, earthquake or fire, but in the sound of sheer silence and in a voice that gives him a mission. Those sounds may be little in the world, but they are the very presence of God. And Jesus comes to the storm-tossed disciples with a word of comfort, “Here I AM; do not be afraid.”  He comes as the very presence of God, the one named “I AM” in the scripture. As Paul says, this life-giving word from God is not far away, but here, now, in this time of prayer, on our lips and in our hearts. With the Psalmist, let us say, “I will listen to what the Lord God is saying.” God in Christ is speaking peace to us right now. Then let us undertake the mission to speak that peace also to our neighbors.

**Discussion Questions:**

1 Kings: Theophany: A visible manifestation of the deity. Check two theophanies: Exodus 3:3-6 and 19:16-25. What are some common characteristic of these two and Elijah’s experience? What is different about Elijah’s theophany?

Romans: What is the faith that Paul says will bring a new righteousness, in verses 8-11? What comfort would these verses give to a Christian who wonders if his or her faith is firm and strong enough to connect with God?

Matthew: Looking at this miracle as a whole, (1) what does it say about Jesus?, (2) what impression does it give about the disciples?, (3) what would it have said to a Christian toward the end of the first century?, and (4) what message does it have for Christians today?

-Lutheran Bible Ministries: Light on the Lessons <http://www.bibleministries.org/>

**HYMN**: Eternal Father Strong To Save

 <https://blogs.elca.org/worship/files/2020/08/Eternal-Father-Strong-to-Save.pdf>

<https://youtu.be/bDjwUzUnNpU>

**WE RESPOND**

**APOSTLE’S CREED:**

We confess our shared faith with the words of the Apostle’s 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**

Confident of your care and upheld by the Holy Spirit, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need, responding to each petition with the words “Save us, we pray.”

For your church throughout the world, we pray: Strengthen the faith of all who believe. Speak to us through your word of power and mercy. Abide with those Christians who are isolated from others. Give wisdom and stamina to all preachers who bring your good news to the world. Hear us, holy God: **Save us, we pray.**

For the well-being of your creation, we pray. Protect waterways, forests, lands, and wildlife from exploitation and abuse. Tame the storms that threaten human habitations. Maintain the health of pets. Hear us, holy God:
**Save us, we pray.**

For the leaders of nations, we pray. Inspire those who govern to keep peace with their neighbors and to maintain justice for their citizens. Calm the world’s violence. Strengthen the world’s democracies and keep autocrats in check. Uphold a free press around the globe.

Hear us, holy God:
**Save us, we pray.**

For those in need we pray. For those who are unemployed, or homeless, or hungry, or hospitalized; for those whose money has run out; for those who are fearful of the future; and for those we name before you now: Hear us, holy God:
**Save us, we pray.**

For the world facing the coronavirus we pray. Sustain medical workers for their arduous tasks. Assist our Congress and governors in legislating wisely during the pandemic. Give wisdom to educators as they plan the fall semester. Give us kindness with one another and patience for ourselves. And we beg: give us a vaccine.

Hear us, holy God:
**Save us, we pray.**

For the end to racial injustice we pray. Frustrate all prejudices between peoples that are based on ethnic origin or skin color. Unite into one body politic all who share this land.

Hear us, holy God:
**Save us, we pray.**

For ourselves, we pray. Reach out your hand to us; save us when we are sinking; and receive now the petitions of our hearts.  Hear us, holy God:
**Save us, we pray.**

We praise you, O God, for all who have died in the faith, for martyrs, for leaders in the struggle for civil rights, for victims of COVID-19, for those dear to us. Especially this week we glorify you for Mary, the mother of our Lord. Bring us at the end with all your saints into your everlasting life. Hear us, holy God:
**Save us, we pray.**

In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
**Amen.**

**HYMN**: When Peace Like A River (It Is Well With My Soul) <https://blogs.elca.org/worship/files/2020/08/When-Peace-like-a-River-It-Is-Well-with-My-Soul.pdf>

<https://youtu.be/AHe_qmo3gX4>

**WE ARE SENT**

**Benediction**

Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless you now and always. Amen.

Parts of our Worship Service are curated from the following sources:

Reflection material: Gordon Lathrop. Intercessory Prayer: Gail Ramshaw

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**Reminder! Our Zoom Fellowship time is Every Sunday at 11:30 am.**

Use any phone to call in at this number: 1-253-215-8782

Input the Meeting ID: 835 8040 7323

And Password: 394440

You can also use the Zoom Website or App and put in the above Meeting ID and Password.

**Sermon August 9, 2020 Rev. Arianna Arends**

In my wanderings through social media since March I’ve noticed a lot of cozy blanket forts. Whether that was to satisfy the urge to have a small, cozy place away from the crazy world, or a spot for an individual to go away from potentially frustrating relatives forced to live on top of each other, or a safe nest where the dangers and sorrows of everyday life don’t reach. Whatever the reason people of all ages have been making blanket forts, draping quilts over furniture, raiding all the household’s pillows, and swaddling themselves in the cozy, dark spaces. In the hopes of keeping dining room chairs at the table for meals some parents have even bought small indoor tents. Purple Unicorns and Ninja Turtles now shelter anxious children whose lives have turned upside down as much as the adults in their lives.

I think Jesus needed a blanket fort.

Last week’s Gospel lesson had Jesus reacting to the news of the death of John the Baptist, his cousin and distant partner in ministry. Jesus tried to escape the crowds who followed him and get time alone. As any human would when faced with the death of someone close, Jesus wanted time to collect himself, pray, possibly weep and lament the violent loss.

However, the crowd pursued. And Jesus had compassion. And he gave up his retreat and healed their sick and multiplied loaves and fishes to feed their hunger.

But Jesus still needed to take care of his own needs. He sends the crowds away and sends the disciples off in a boat promising to meet them on the other side. And Jesus is able to rest, and pray.

And then, like it does even today, a storm springs up. I’ve heard from several folks who have traveled to the Holy Land that it’s common for winds to whip up quite out of the blue. Trees bending from the force, neglected items scattered on the shore, and whitecaps on the sea. Wind storms were and are sudden and frequent, a characteristic feature of the weather pattern for that region.

In Matthew’s version, opposed to the other Gospels, the disciples don’t seem afraid of the storm. The fishermen would be used to the common weather pattern. Jesus doesn’t actually rebuke the winds in this passage. He just shows up. But then what are they so afraid of? They think Jesus is a ghost, some sort of otherworldly evil spirit, and that would probably scare me, too.

But it’s just Jesus. Walking to the place he said he’d meet the disciples. Not worried about wind and wave. But again Jesus hears a need – the need of the disciples for reassurance. He has compassion on them. And speaks to them, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.”

Take heart. In the original Greek it would be better translated, “Be warmed inside to have courage”. But even our word courage has heart in it – couer is French for heart. And really, Jesus didn’t say, “It is I” But “I AM” the holy name for God.

Can you imagine the disciples emotional rollercoaster? Traveling across the sea after witnessing a miracle, enduring a storm, seeing a ghost, having it speak to you to have courage, stating that he, Jesus, is God, and to not be afraid! Sheesh! I’d probably be more terrified! Bet if they had blankets to wrap over themselves to hide in, they’d have done that as well.

But Jesus sees their needs. Just like he goes out of his way to heal and feed the crowds, he stops to encourage, rebuke, to have compassion upon, to exhort the disciples. And can we expect any less of him today?

Though we are not gathering in the same space together, though we are not seeing each other face to face, though we are buffeted by winds of political, economic, social change, though ghostly figures approach with unknown futures, representing unknown dangers. God hears our need. God can not NOT reach out to us in our hardship. God can’t not respond to human need

When Elijah had followed his call to proclaim truth to power, he was running for his life. He went to the wilderness, away from all human civilization and influence, and hid himself in a cave. He needed a small shelter to get away. He could have used a blanket fort! He felt that the whole world was against him. And he certainly was not shy about showing his need either. He proclaimed his hardship for God to hear.

And maybe we can take inspiration from him, too. We have a great tradition of lament, we should use it. We have such a close relationship with our creator, redeemer, sanctifier that we can speak of the horrors we witness, the injustice we face, the terrors that haunt us. And God can’t not respond to human need.

So share your pain, your loneliness, your grief, your frustration, your fears. God is present. God is near.

And remember that though God can’t not respond to human need, it often happens in unexpected ways. Because God was not in the wind, God was not in the earthquake, God was not in the fire. God was not in the seemingly powerful, overwhelming force. God was in the silence. God was in the quiet.

The disciples were looking for Jesus to be the big political leader of the Jewish people. But God was not in the zealot revolutionaries. God was not in the temple locked in with the priests. God was not overthrowing the Roman imperial, colonizing, occupying force. God was in the figure walking on the water. God was answering the need of the sick, poor, hungry, frightened, downtrodden.

God was answering our need by dying on a cross.

God was in the silence of Holy Saturday.

God was in the dark waiting for rebirth.

God is in the blanket fort with you where you need to shelter from the troubles of the world.

So whether you need shelter from fear, peace from anger, hope in despair, comfort in grief.

So whether that blanket fort is metaphorical, or you’ve used your grandma’s quilt, the Ninja Turtles or Purple Unicorns. God is with you. Share your needs with God. God can’t not answer your need.

May the God of hope keep you in all joy and peace in believing so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.