

## Sermon followed by Service

June 11, 2023

“It’s just not possible! You expect the impossible! They expect the impossible! God expects the impossible! Life is just plain too impossible!” Ever feel that way? In our lesson today, we meet some people going through some just impossible times, and what do we see? Impossible Faith for Impossible Times.

It’s about 870 years BC, before Christ is born. Life is getting impossible for God’s people in Israel. Why? God is angry. King Ahab and his wicked wife Jezebel were leading the country into Baal worship; in fact, we’re told: **“Ahab did more to provoke the LORD to anger than did all the kings of Israel before him.”** Ahab had taught the people to worship Baal; now God is teaching Israel the consequences of rejecting him. God sent a famine on the land; for three years no rain, not even dew on the ground. The crops failed; the rivers and streams dried up. The people are running out of food. Even God’s prophet Elijah didn’t have anything to eat. And things were little better for the widow of Zarephath.

Imagine what she must be thinking. She has just a handful of flour and little oil – barely enough for one last meal for her and her son. She’s picking up sticks for the fire to cook that one last meal. Her plan is simple – to cook and eat, then starve and die, while she watches her son starve and die. What an impossible spot to be in. And then this guy Elijah comes up - to her a stranger - Elijah comes up and asks her for her food. If you’re that widow, what are you thinking? “You gotta be kidding! Impossible!!!” Right? Wrong!

The Lord had a plan and a promise to make the impossible possible. Elijah tells the widow - “Don’t worry. This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: `the jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD gives rain on the land.” And what happened? God kept his promise! “There was food every day. The jar of flour was not used up. The jug of oil did not run dry. Just as the LORD had said.”

Notice what Elijah didn’t say. He didn’t say, “Don’t worry; here’s a wagon-load of flour. Don’t worry; here’s a barrel of oil.” God didn’t provide a

warehouse of food up front; no, he provided their daily bread, day by day. God didn't give the widow the chance to think, "I don't need to worry because I've got a pantry full of food." But God helped her believe: "I don't need to worry because the Lord will provide." What a lesson! "I don't know how; I can't see how; it doesn't make any sense to me how; but God will take care of me!"

What a great lesson for us! We may have our savings accounts, our retirement accounts, our insurance, our emergency funds. And they can be good. In Proverbs, God our Provider tells us it is a wise thing to save and be prepared. Or the way that we look after our savings accounts and retirement accounts, our insurance and emergency funds - if we put them first before God - they can be as evil as worshiping Baal and Asherah. It can be so easy to love the stuff of this world more than we love God; it can be so easy to think that the key to our well-being, the key to our contentment, the key to our comfort is in our planning and the size of our accounts, rather than in the plan and promise, the heart and power of the Lord. But all the savings accounts and emergency funds and insurance in the world can't take the place of "Don't worry, your Father's got you; don't worry, the Lord will provide."

The LORD provides. We see it in our lesson – the Lord provided the impossible. How? Did he work the miracle in the pantry? Did he work the miracle in the spoon? We don't know. We don't need to know how. We know what matters - the LORD provided. And he still provides today. Every day the sun shines on the earth. How? We could talk about hydrogen burning, but finally we have to say, "The Lord provides." Every year we have rain and snow. How? We could talk about temperature and humidity and condensation, but finally we have to say, "The Lord provides." Crops grow and people grow. How? We could talk about food and water, but again the final answer has to be, "The Lord provides." Whether it's the flour and oil in the widow's pantry or the crops in the fields, or the food in the grocer's freezers, "The Lord provides."

Not always everything I want. Not always as much as I want. Not always when I want. And so sometimes I worry; sometimes I grumble; sometimes I envy. Why? Because I have a two-year-old inside me who always wants more, who thinks I know better, who thinks I should have my way. Like two-year-olds, we can be really mixed up on wants and needs, what's good for us, who knows best. Like two-year-olds, we can show our smarts and our wants in some really

ugly, painful ways - “If you don’t give me what I want, I want a different daddy.” We might not say it, but how often don’t we live it?

But we don’t have to. We don’t have to stay stuck on our wants and our smarts thinking that life is impossible if we don’t get our way and get what we want. I think of the Apostle Paul, locked up in prison chains: “**I have learned the secret of contentment.**” It’s a secret that is learned best when we don’t have everything we want, when we don’t have everything we think we need. When we don’t have all we want, when we don’t have all we think we need, we find out what it means to have Jesus: “**I am strong for all things through him who gives me strength. ... My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.**”

Our Lord meets all our needs. At times and in ways impossible for us to understand. Like on the cross. We needed something more impossible than a never-empty pantry; we needed an always-perfect life. We needed something more impossible than buying all the food in the world; we needed our sin paid for. And there on the cross the Lord provided the impossible. There in obedience to his Father, Jesus gave his always-right life for you. There as payment for your sin, Jesus died for you. With Jesus, no matter what you have done - you are forgiven; your sin is gone! With Jesus, no matter how wrong things go for you, you are right with God. How can you know? Not because of your comfort level, but because God says so! Does that seem impossible? Look at Easter. You have a God who did and does the impossible! You have a God who will meet your every need.

Don’t you love that promise? It goes with this promise: “**Seek first the kingdom of God and all these other things, clothing and food and right down the list, all these other things will be given to you as well.**” “Seek first ....” That sounds like Elijah and God’s promise to that mom in Zarephath - first take care of God’s business, and God will take care of you - no matter how impossible it seems.

Sometimes with God’s impossible promises, it might seem like a good idea to hedge our bets. Common sense might have told the widow to hold back, to see if God would come through on his promise and then offer Elijah that piece of bread. But God didn’t give the widow a chance to settle into a half-hearted

faith. She lived in hard times; she needed impossible blessings; she needed a whole-hearted faith to make it. So God raised the bar; a half-hearted faith wouldn't do; he set the widow up to give her an impossible faith. He has Elijah ask: "First make a cake for me; and then make something for yourself." First for God, and then for yourself. No half-hearted faith allowed; put it all, all your needs, all your trust in God's hands. Give God a chance to show what he can do.

When we look at our lesson we might think, "God really put that widow on the spot." But really God put himself on the spot. With his promise He put himself on the line to be tested. And God proved himself faithful. As we go through life, God will test our faith also. He will test us with hardship that seems impossible to overcome; he will test us with expectations that seem impossible to meet. But as we see today - our God makes the impossible possible. So when life seems impossible ... when God seems impossible ... remember the widow of Zarephath – remember – the Lord provides the impossible – the Lord makes the impossible possible. Amen.

June 10 & 11, 2023

## NEW MORNING PRAISE

**IN OUR WORLD TODAY ...** we hear the tempting calls: “Be true to yourself.”  
“You need to put yourself first.” If you don’t take care of you, who will?”

**IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ...** we see an **Impossible Faith for Impossible Times** –  
an Impossible Faith based on an “Impossible” Promise - “Seek first the kingdom of  
God and his righteousness, and all these things (everything you need) will be  
given to you as well.”

### OPENING HYMN

*“O God, Our Help in Ages Past”*

Hymn 820

O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come,  
our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home:

Under the shadow of your throne your saints have dwelt secure;  
sufficient is your arm alone, and our defense is sure.

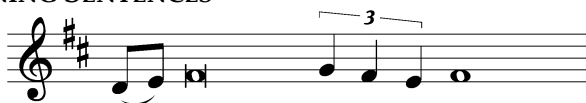
Before the hills in order stood or earth received its frame,  
from everlasting you are God, to endless years the same.

A thousand ages in your sight are like an evening gone,  
short as the watch that ends the night before the rising sun.

Time, like an ever-rolling stream, soon bears us all away;  
we fly forgotten, as a dream dies at the opening day.

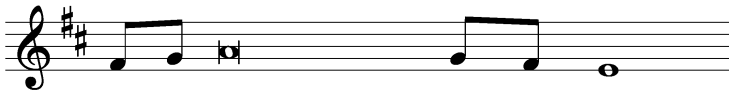
O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come,  
still be our guard while troubles last and our eternal home!

### OPENING SENTENCES



The musical notation is on a single staff in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The notes are: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), D5 (quarter), E5 (quarter), F#5 (quarter), G5 (quarter), A5 (quarter), B5 (quarter), C6 (quarter), D6 (quarter), E6 (quarter), F#6 (quarter), G6 (quarter), A6 (quarter), B6 (quarter), C7 (quarter). A fermata is placed over the last three notes (F#6, G6, A6), and a '3' above the fermata indicates a triplet.

O Lord, o-pen my lips.



**And my mouth shall de - clare your praise.**



Hasten to save me, O God.



**O Lord, come quickly to help me.**

### CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION OF SINS

**M:** We have come into the presence of God, who created us to love and serve him as his dear children. But we have disobeyed him and deserve only his wrath and punishment. Therefore, let us confess our sins to him and plead for his mercy.

**C:** **Merciful Father in heaven, I am altogether sinful from birth. In countless ways I have sinned against you and do not deserve to be called your child. But trusting in Jesus, my Savior, I pray: Have mercy on me according to your unfailing love. Cleanse me from my sin, and take away my guilt.**

**M:** God, our heavenly Father, has forgiven all your sins. By the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, he has removed your guilt forever. You are his own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to his will.

**C:** **Amen.**



Give glory to God, our light and our life.



**Come, O come, let us wor - ship.**

# COME, O COME, LET US SING TO THE LORD



Come, O come, let us sing to the Lord,



let us shout with joy to our sav - ing Rock;



come, en - ter in with our songs of praise,



come, en - ter in with thanks - giv - ing.



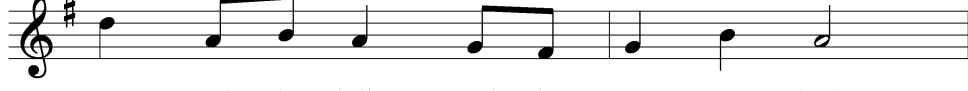
1 You are a great and a won - drous God,

2 Come, let us wor - ship and, bow - ing low,



cup - ping in your hands all the depths of earth.

kneel be - fore the One who has made us all.



You made the hills and the moun - tains high,

You are the God whom we call our own,



you made the seas and the dry land.

we are the flock that you shep - herd.

*Refrain*

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty and ever-living God, you have given exceedingly great and precious promises to those who trust in you. Grant us so firmly to believe in your Son Jesus that our faith may never be found wanting; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

## FIRST READING

*1 Kings 17:7–16*

Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land. Then the word of the LORD came to him: “Go at once to Zarephath in the region of Sidon and stay there. I have directed a widow there to supply you with food.” So he went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, “Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?” As she was going to get it, he called, “And bring me, please, a piece of bread.”

“As surely as the LORD your God lives,” she replied, “I don’t have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die.”

Elijah said to her, “Don’t be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD sends rain on the land.’ ”

She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah.

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**



**HYMN**

*“My Soul Finds Rest in God Alone”*

**Hymn 818**

My soul finds rest in God alone, my rock and my salvation;  
a fortress strong against my foes, and I will not be shaken.  
Though lips may bless and hearts may curse,  
and lies like arrows pierce me,  
I'll fix my heart on righteousness, I'll look to him who hears me.

*Refrain*

O praise him, hallelujah, my delight and my reward;  
everlasting, never failing, my Redeemer, my God.

Find rest, my soul, in God alone amid the world's temptations;  
when evil seeks to take a hold, I'll cling to my salvation.  
Though riches come and riches go, don't set your heart upon them;  
the fields of hope in which I sow are harvested in heaven. *Refrain*

I'll set my gaze on God alone and trust in him completely;  
with ev'ry day pour out my soul, and he will prove his mercy.  
Though life is but a fleeting breath, a sigh too brief to measure,  
my king has crushed the curse of death and I am his forever. *Refrain*

**SECOND READING**

*2 Corinthians 8:1-9*

And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.

For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us. So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part.

But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**VERSE OF THE DAY**

*1 Corinthians 8:9*

Alleluia. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. Alleluia.

**GOSPEL**

*Mark 12:38-44*

As he taught, Jesus said, “Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely.”

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.

Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise be to you, O Christ!**

## APOSTLES' CREED

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

**I believe 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 is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there 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.**

## HYMN

*"All Depends on Our Possessing"*  
Hymn 807

All depends on our possessing God's abundant grace and blessing,  
though all earthly wealth depart. They who trust with faith unshaken  
in their God are not forsaken and will keep a dauntless heart.

He who to this day has fed me and to many joys has led me  
is and ever shall be mine. He who ever gently schools me,  
he who daily guides and rules me, will remain my help divine.

Many spend their lives in fretting over trifles and in getting  
things that have no solid ground. I shall strive to win a treasure  
that will bring me lasting pleasure and that now is seldom found.

When with sorrow I am stricken, hope anew my heart will quicken;  
all my longing shall be stilled. To his lovingkindness tender  
soul and body I surrender, for on God alone I build.

Well he knows what best to grant me; all the longing hopes that haunt me,  
joy and sorrow, have their day. I shall doubt his wisdom never;  
as God wills, so be it ever; I commit to him my way.

If my days on earth he lengthen, he my weary soul will strengthen;  
all my trust in him I place. Earthly wealth is not abiding,  
like a stream away is gliding; safe I anchor in his grace.

## SERMON

## HYMN

*"I Leave All Things to God's Direction"*

**Hymn 799**

I leave all things to God's direction; he loves me both in joy and woe.  
His will is good, sure his affection; his tender love is true, I know.  
My fortress and my rock is he: what pleases God, that pleases me.

God knows what must be done to save me; his love for me will never cease.  
Upon his hands he did engrave me with purest gold of loving grace.  
His will supreme must ever be: what pleases God, that pleases me.

God gives me help in all temptation, his loving goal my soul to save.  
Calm in the face of life's frustration, all earthly trouble I will brave.  
His will be done eternally: what pleases God, that pleases me.

My God has all things in his keeping; he is my ever-faithful friend.  
He gives me laughter after weeping, and all his ways in blessings end.  
His love endures eternally: what pleases God, that pleases me.

## PRAYER

*Brief intercessory prayers may be added in a fitting place.*

Lord God, from whom all blessings flow, we praise you for everything you provide to sustain our lives. Lead us every day to be thankful for your gifts and content with what you have given. Today we pray that you would guide us to manage your blessings wisely for the good of your kingdom.

**As we use your gifts to meet our needs, move us also to support the ministry of the gospel with our offerings.**

Before your Son ascended to your throne, he called us to preach the good news to every creature. In grace you created the public ministry so that we may answer his call by sending others in our place.

Impress on us the immense importance of the task you have given us to proclaim your Word to the world.

**In our words and in our offerings, move us to be faithful witnesses of your grace.**

Work in our hearts so that our gifts do more than support a cause or meet a need. Move us to give out of love for you, our King and Redeemer.

**Lead us to bring our gifts first to honor you, the Giver of all things.**

Teach us to give as an ongoing part of life since the work of the gospel continues every day. Forgive us for the sins of apathy and carelessness and for giving that reacts only to urgent pleas or crises.

**Help us see the wisdom of planning our offerings as a regular routine of our faith.**

Teach us determine our offerings in view of your blessings to us. The widow's coins were meager, but they were all she had. Move us to believe that to whom much is given, much is also expected.

**Give us courage to bring gifts that reflect your gifts to us.**

Teach us to give our offerings as a cheerful response of our faith in you and your Son. Spare us all feelings of obligation or resentment as we give. Help us to see our offerings as the vehicle that carries the gospel to the lost, and lead us to rejoice with the angels of heaven over every sinner who repents.

**Help us to balance our duty to give with the joy of giving.**

Hear us, Lord, as we pray in silence.

*Silent prayer*

Precious Lord, all our blessings come from you. Lead us again and again to thank you and then move us to be wise and faithful stewards of your gifts.

May our gifts and offerings bring souls here and far away to the gracious gift of Jesus and his love.

**Lord, hear us and grant us this blessing. Amen.**

### 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.**

M: O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, you have brought us safely to this new day. Defend us with your mighty power, and grant that this day we neither fall into sin nor run into any kind of danger; and in all we do, direct us to what is right in your sight, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

### BLESSING



The Lord bless and keep you.



A - men.



The Lord's face ev - er shine up - on you.



A - men.



The Lord grant you peace for all your days.



A - men.

## CLOSING HYMN

## *“Brothers, Sisters, Let Us Gladly”*

Hymn 748

Brothers, sisters, let us gladly give to God our all, our best:  
service hearty, thorough, honest, with a living love impressed.  
All our duty, all our striving, all our time to him belong;  
praise him, then, with true devotion, come before him with a song.

By his mercy, by his bounty, by the gift of Christ, his Son,  
what great goodness he has shown us, what high marvels he has done!  
Let us to him promptly, freely, yield our bodies and our souls,  
thankful that his love protects us, that his wisdom all controls.

Gracious Lord, accept our service for the sake of Christ, your Son;  
lo, our hope abides now only in the righteousness he won.  
Bless and save us, help and guide us, watch to comfort and restore,  
till in heav’n we rest rejoicing, praising you forevermore.

## OFFERING

*If you prefer online giving, you may scan this code with  
your mobile device.*



Acknowledgements: Created by Christian Worship: Service Builder © 2023 Concordia Publishing House. Texts and music covered under OneLicense.net #A-712373 and CCLI Copyright License 11194382, CCLI Streaming License CSPL059933 Scriptures taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. [www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com) The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™ *New Morning Praise Opening Sentences* Tune: © 1995, 1996 GIA Publications, Inc. *Come, Oh, Come, Let Us Sing to the Lord* Text and tune: © 1995, 1996 GIA Publications, Inc. *Blessing* Text and tune: © 1995, 1996 GIA Publications, Inc. *My Soul Finds Rest in God Alone* Text: © 2007 Thankyou Music, admin. [CapitolCMGPublishing.com](http://CapitolCMGPublishing.com)

## Summer 2023 Events

### **LIBERTYVILLE DAYS - JUNE 16-18**

- Friday – Sunday – St. John Booth, Contact Nic Holter to sign up for a shift
- Friday – St. John Family Sing – meet at 12, sing at 12:15 p.m., Monica Wintrone
- Saturday – Parade, meet at Metra Station by 9:45 a.m.

### **VBS: STELLAR - SHINE JESUS' LIGHT**

If you are interested in attending or volunteering, please reach out to Ms. Brooke Behl at [brooke.behl@stjohnslib.com](mailto:brooke.behl@stjohnslib.com).

**Where: St. John Lutheran School**

**When: Monday, June 19 – Thursday, June 22, 9-11 a.m.**



### **FELLOWSHIP OUTING TO KINGFISH GAME! - JUNE 23, 6:35 P.M.**

#### **WELS NIGHT AT THE BREWERS - FRIDAY, JULY 7**

Join the WELS family for an evening at the ballpark to watch the Brewers take on the Reds. Group tickets can be purchased by contacting Jason Fry, [Jason.Fry@brewers.com](mailto:Jason.Fry@brewers.com).

Individual tickets can be purchased at [BREWERS.COM/WELS](https://BREWERS.COM/WELS).

#### **ARBOR DAY - JULY 15, 9 A.M. - NOON**

#### **WELS NIGHT AT GUARANTEED RATE FIELD - FRIDAY, AUGUST 11**

Join your Chicagoland WELS family on Friday, August 11, for a night of fun, fellowship, and baseball. The Chicago White Sox take on the Milwaukee Brewers starting at 7:10 p.m. Contact Rose Schanmier or Kim L'Esperance with questions. Sign-up sheets with more details are located on the bulletin boards in the Narthex and the Fellowship Hall.

#### **ARBOR DAY - AUGUST 12, 9 A.M. - NOON**

#### **2023-2024 SCHOOL OPENING SERVICE - AUGUST 20**