

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church



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WELCOME TO ST. JOHN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

At this time our services are for people wearing masks and social distancing!

Please know that even as we experience this awkwardness, your Good Shepherd holds you close to his heart and goes with you to share his love!

To Our Guests

- We pray that you receive a warm welcome and are blessed by the message of God's Word in our lessons and hymns. If you have questions, please ask!
- Our service is designed to focus us on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit does that by exposing our need for Christ and by showing us the wonders of God's grace in Christ – forgiveness and peace, help and hope for life in this world, and life forever with God in heaven.

Our Communion Practice

We practice close communion, the Biblical and ancient practice of the church.

We invite our congregation members and visitors from sister WELS or ELS congregations to join us, but ask Christians from other denominations to kindly respect our practice. Further explanation is in the pew racks or from our pastor.

We Care about Your Children

We love to have children with us in worship.

- If your children are crying loudly, our nursery, Gathering Area (back of church), and downstairs Fellowship Hall are audio-equipped for you and your young children. When your children are ready, come back so we can worship together.

We Care about Your Special Needs

- **Large Print** Service Folders are available from an usher.
- **Hearing Assistance** for those with hearing aids is provided through our Hearing Loop or personal hearing devices available at the "sound table."
- A **wheelchair lift** is available for your assistance; please ask an usher.



Our Facilities

Restrooms are in our Fellowship Hall, downstairs and to the right of the kitchen.

Our Ministry

St. John offers an excellent preschool-8th grade school program. We are members of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) - www.wels.net.

GATHERING RITE ON THE WORD OF GOD

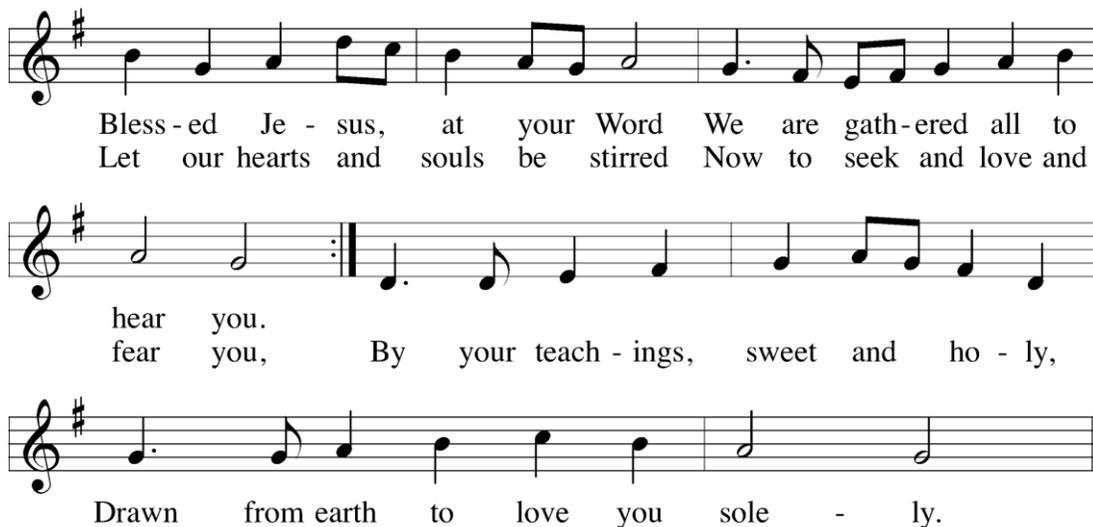
IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... with plans asunder we wonder: "What's next? How long?"

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we look at our theme verse for this school year:

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD,
plans to give you peace, not disaster,
plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11 (EHV)

M: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.



Bless - ed Je - sus, at your Word We are gath - ered all to
Let our hearts and souls be stirred Now to seek and love and
hear you.
fear you, By your teach - ings, sweet and ho - ly,
Drawn from earth to love you sole - ly.

M: Oh, how I love your law!

C: **I meditate on it all day long.**

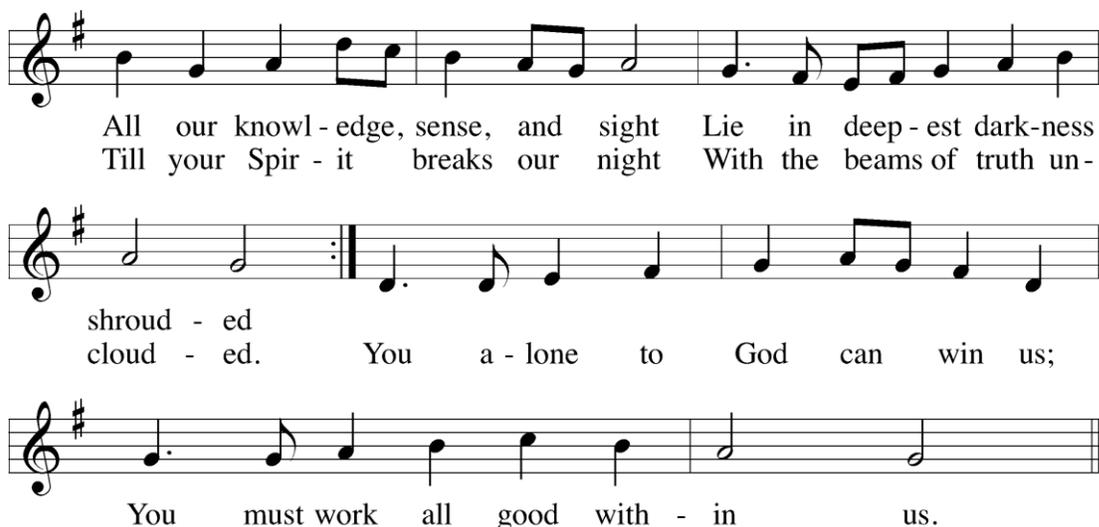
M: Your commands make me wiser than my enemies,

C: **for they are ever with me.**

M: I have more insight than all my teachers,

C: **for I meditate on your statutes.**

M: How sweet are your words to my taste,
C: **sweeter than honey to my mouth!**



All our knowl - edge, sense, and sight Lie in deep - est dark-ness
Till your Spir - it breaks our night With the beams of truth un-
shroud - ed cloud - ed. You a - lone to God can win us;
You must work all good with - in us.

M: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking,
correcting and training in righteousness,
C: **so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good
work.**

M: Yet so often we have despised God's Word and failed to gladly hear and
learn it. For this and all our sins, we bow before God and humbly ask his
forgiveness.

C: **Holy and merciful Father, I confess that I am by nature sinful and that I
have disobeyed you in my thoughts, words, and actions. I have done
what is evil and failed to do what is good. For this I deserve your
punishment both now and in eternity. But I am truly sorry for my sins,
and trusting in my Savior Jesus Christ, I pray: Lord, have mercy on me,
a sinner.**

Gra-cious Sav - ior, good and kind, Light from Light, from God pro-
 O - pen now our heart and mind; Help us by your Spir-it's
 ceed - ing,
 plead - ing. Hear the cry your peo - ple rais - es;
 Hear and bless our prayers and prais - es.

M: God gave his Word so “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (*John 20:31*). The Scriptures testify about Jesus, who lived a perfect life for you, died on the cross to pay for all your sins, and rose again to assure you of your salvation. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly Ghost, Praise to you and ad - o -
 Grant that we your Word may trust, Con - fi - dent of our sal-
 ra - tion!
 va - tion, While we here be - low must wan - der,
 Till we sing your prais - es yon - der.

PRAYER OF THE DAY (*spoken together*)

Almighty God, you have committed to your Church the task of making disciples of all nations. Enlighten with your wisdom those who teach and those who learn, that, rejoicing in the knowledge of your truth, we may worship and serve you from generation to generation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FIRST LESSON

Jeremiah 29: 10-14 (EHV)

This is what the LORD says. After seventy years have passed in Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious word to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to give you peace, not disaster, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come to pray to me, and I will listen to you. When you seek me, you will find me, when you will seek me with all your heart. I will let you find me, declares the LORD, and I will bring you back from your exile. I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have sent you as exiles, declares the LORD. I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

SECOND LESSON

2 Timothy 3:14-17

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

GOSPEL

Matthew 7:24-27

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

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.**

Speak, O Savior; I am list'ning,
As a servant to his lord.
Let me show respect and honor
To your holy, precious Word,
That each day, my whole life through,
I may serve and follow you.
Let your Word e'er be my pleasure
And my heart's most precious treasure.

Oh, what blessing to be near you
And to listen to your voice!
Let me ever love and fear you;
Let your Word still be my choice.
Many hardened sinners, Lord,
Flee in terror at your Word,
But to all who feel sin's burden
You give peace and words of pardon.

Lord, your words are waters living
Where I quench my thirsty needs.
Lord, your words are bread life-giving;
On your words my spirit feeds.
Lord, your words will be my light
Through death's cold and dreary night;
Yes, they are my sword prevailing
And my cup of joy unfailing.

As I pray, dear Jesus, hear me;
Let your words in me take root.
May your Spirit e'er be near me
That I bear abundant fruit.
May I daily sing your praise,
From my heart glad anthems raise,
Till my highest praise is given
In the endless joy of heaven.

SERMON

Jeremiah 29:11

God knows his plans for us: do we know his plans for us?

What's next? How long? How long will I have to wear this mask? How long will this go on? What's next? Will I get the virus? Or worse, will I pass it on to someone else? What's next? How long?

The exiles in Babylon wanted to know much the same thing - "What's next? How long? Why, God? Why me?" When I said: "The exiles in Babylon," did that leave you a bit dazed? To get to where we are this week in Jeremiah, we need to fast-forward from where we were last week in Ruth; we need to fast-forward about 700 years. Fast-forward through the time of the Judges - Gideon, Samson, Samuel. Fast-forward through the time of the Kings - Saul, David, Solomon, and 19 more. Fast-forward from the time when David and Solomon ruled over their neighbors to a time when their neighbors - Egypt, Assyria, Babylon - ruled over them. Fast-forward and see Jerusalem built up to be a great and glorious home of kings with a great and glorious Temple as the home of God. And then fast-forward and see Jerusalem and the Temple of God ransacked, pillaged, looted. And see God's people - most anybody and everybody who was a somebody - people like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego - see them ripped from their homes and families forced into exile hundreds of miles away in Babylon.

Now you've just been fast-forwarded 700 years in one week. If that leaves you in a daze, imagine yourself in Babylon - You're foreigners in a foreign land. Your homes are hundreds of miles away. You wonder: "What's going on? How long? What's next? Why God? Why are you doing this to us, God?"

Into that daze of questions, Jeremiah writes to you: "**I know the plans I have for you,**" declares the LORD, "**plans to give you peace and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.**" Sounds good, doesn't it? "**I know the plans I have for you, plans**

to give you peace and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Some people hear that and imagine God as their banker, their butler, their fixer, their servant, their guy to step in and do for them what they want and make life right for them. They hear the promise of peace and they think that God will give them whatever they want. They hear the promise of peace and they think they can do whatever they want.

That’s not what God is promising. Some people, like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, some people, like the prophet Ezekiel, got it. But so many others were in their daze - “Why, God? How long, God? What’s next, God? Why are you doing this to me, God?” God had already answered all those questions, but they weren’t paying attention to God. They weren’t paying attention to God because they weren’t on board with God. Some were lost in their hurt, feeling hopeless and helpless. Some were angry with God, fighting against God. Some hardly ever even thought of God - answering to God, walking with God just wasn’t a part of their thinking.

But they were still a part of God’s thinking. For the helpless and hopeless, God was thinking help and hope. Looking past his anger, God was thinking peace. So God writes through Jeremiah: **“I know the plans I have for you, plans to give you peace and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”** How? When? Not with a snap of his fingers, God doing whatever they wanted, but by the power of his Word and Spirit calling his people back, bringing them back to him, to live his life, to live the hope and future he had for them.

Do you hear Arguing Adam? Arguing Adam doesn’t like God’s way to peace. Arguing Adam thinks the way to peace should be God accepting us the way we are, doing what we want when we want. Arguing Adam likes to think that he knows better than God, that his ways and his plans are better than God’s ways and God’s plans. It was that kind of thinking that put the people on the wrong side of God; it was that kind of thinking that got them sent off into exile - homeless, helpless, and hopeless. And today, it’s that same kind of thinking - thinking we know better than God - it’s that same kind of thinking that has us plagued by COVID, wondering: “What’s next?” and “How long?”

God knows the plans he has for us. Thankfully, his plan is not to settle and accept this world as it is - thank God, right? Thankfully, his plan is not to settle and accept our thinking as better than his thinking. That voice in us that says: “I know better than God; my way is better than God’s way; I know what I need to know; I know the plans I have for me, and they’re better than God’s plans” - we all have that voice inside us, don’t we? In God’s courtroom, that voice has been ruled out of order. Instead, God is listening for another voice: “God, have mercy on me a sinner.” When God hears that voice, he opens his heart and his hands: “I forgive you.” When he sees us, hears us begging to be close to him, he reaches out and holds us close to him. When we stop insisting on living “my life, my way,” he gives us life with him, a life, a hope, a future better than anything we could make for ourselves.

When he says: **“I know the plans I have for you, plans to give you peace and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future,”** God isn’t promising the easy life, just like that [snap of finger]. No, the life God has for us isn’t always easy. But even on the worst of days, we don’t have to go through life empty and alone thinking God is against us - we have Jesus. You have the Jesus who loves you so much, who loves this world so much, he died on the cross to take away the sins of the world! That means, even after our worst of days, even after our worst of ways, with Jesus, God forgives you. With Jesus, you have God saying to you: **“I know the plans I have for you, plans to give you peace and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”** Even when it seems that everything is going wrong and it seems “this couldn’t possibly be God’s plan,” know this - God still knows his plans for you, he knows his plans for his church, and with Jesus he will work his plans all the way to heaven. Heaven, where there will be no more empty and alone times, heaven where there will be no more dazed and confused times, heaven where there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain. That’s the hope and future, that’s the life God has for you.

Sounds pretty good, doesn’t it? Let me tell you something - the more you dig into God’s plan, the better it will sound. The more you dig into God’s plan, the more you soak in it, the better it will look - not just on paper, not just in your minds, but the better it will look and sound in your lives. I see that again and again in you. I see it and hear it in you who read your Bibles at home. I see it and hear it in our children who have home devotions. I see it and hear it in our Bible Studies. I see and I hear the Spirit of Jesus working in you. Working his peace in you. Working his life and love in you. Working his victory in you.

That’s why we have Bible study - zooming on Monday evenings. That’s why we have our Lutheran school, and our Sunday School. Sunday school is different this year - online and at home. God-parents, grandparents, friends - check in on your family and friends - it’s too easy to let each other become disconnected. Check in, check up, encourage each other. Why? Listen to what God has for us: **“I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to give you peace and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”**

Speak, O Lord, as we come to you
To receive the food of your Holy Word.
Take your truth, plant it deep in us;
Shape and fashion us in your likeness
That the light of Christ might be seen today
In our acts of love and our deeds of faith.
Speak, O Lord, and fulfill in us
All your purposes for your glory.

Teach us, Lord, full obedience,
Holy reverence, true humility.
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
In the radiance of your purity.
Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see
Your majestic love and authority.
Words of pow'r that can never fail,
Let their truth prevail over unbelief.

Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds;
Help us grasp the heights of your plans for us.
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time,
That will echo down through eternity.
And by grace we'll stand on your promises,
And by faith we'll walk as you walk with us.
Speak, O Lord, as your Church is built
And you fill the earth with your glory.

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PRAYER OF THE CHURCH AND 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.**

M: Almighty God, we thank you for teaching us the things you want us to believe and do. Help us by your Holy Spirit to keep your Word in pure hearts that we may be strengthened in faith, guided in holiness, and comforted in life and in death, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

BLESSING

M: Brothers and sisters, go in peace. Live in harmony with one another. Serve the Lord with gladness.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and † give you peace. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

“Go, My Children, with My Blessing”

Hymn 332

Go, my children, with my blessing, Never alone.
Waking, sleeping, I am with you; You are my own.
In my love’s baptismal river I have made you mine forever.
Go, my children, with my blessing — You are my own.

Go, my children, sins forgiven, At peace and pure.
Here you learned how much I love you, What I can cure.
Here you heard my dear Son’s story; Here you touched him, saw his glory.
Go my children, sins forgiven, At peace and pure.

Go, my children, fed and nourished, Closer to me;
Grow in love and love by serving, Joyful and free.
Here my Spirit’s power filled you; Here his tender comfort stilled you.
Go, my children, fed and nourished, Joyful and free.

I the Lord will bless and keep you And give you peace;
I the Lord will smile upon you And give you peace;
I the Lord will be your Father, Savior, Comforter, and Brother.
Go, my children; I will keep you And give you peace.

OFFERING

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