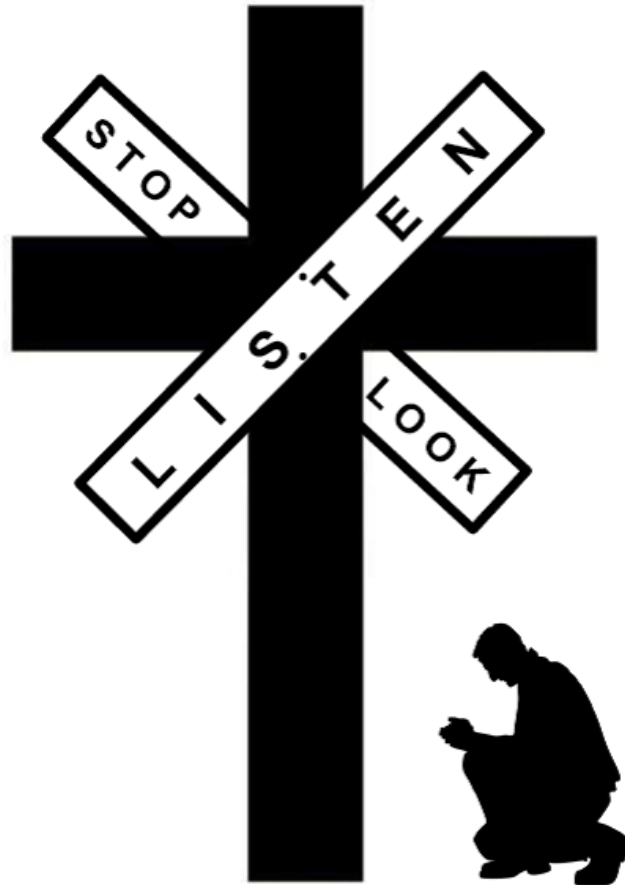


# St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church

*A Family Connecting in Christ*



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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](http://www.wels.net).

October 11, 2020

## DIVINE SERVICE II

**This month in worship ... Stop! Look! Listen! It's Time for a Check-Up!**

**IN OUR WORLD TODAY ...** we've been experiencing 6 months of COVID-time changing our habits, our schedules, our lifestyles, and what else?

**IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ...** we give ourselves a check-up. How are we doing? Do we find ourselves distracted, settling, regressing, stagnant, stuck in a rut? Do we find ourselves growing with Christ, shining and reaching out with the love of Jesus? What changes do we need to reverse? What changes do we want to accelerate or build on?

**OPENING HYMN**

*"In Hopelessness and Near Despair"*

**Hymn 738**

In hopelessness and near despair, I cry to you, my Savior!  
My guilt is more than I can bear. I have not earned your favor.  
You know me as I really am: How much is truth, how much is sham;  
Why should you heed my pleading?

I see my heart's condition now, My heart's diverse affections.  
Why do I love the things you loathe; I'm torn in two directions:  
Now prodigal, now Pharisee. O God, be merciful to me;  
Who else but you can help me?

I tremble as I feel your hand, Expecting retribution,  
Yet hear no curse or reprimand, But grace and absolution:  
With you there is forgiveness, Lord, You speak the sweet, consoling Word,  
And I am sure you love me!

Forgiven, free of guilt and shame, Grant me some time to render  
A gift to glorify your name, Love to reflect your splendor:  
This world must know what I have learned, That you bestow what none  
has earned: The joy of full forgiveness!

*This hymn is a recasting of Martin Luther's great penitential hymn "From Depths of Woe I Cry to You."*  
Text: Jaroslav J. Vajda, 1919–2008 © 1987 Concordia Publishing House. All rights reserved. Used by  
permission.

#### INVOCATION

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

C: **Amen.**

#### CONFESSION

M: Dear friends, let us approach God with a true heart and confess our sins,  
asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.

C: **Lord of life, I confess that I am by nature dead in sin.**

**For faithless worrying and selfish pride,**

**For sins of habit and sins of choice,**

**For the evil I have done and the good I have failed to do,**

**I deserve to be cast away from your presence forever.**

**O Lord, I am sorry for my sins. Forgive me, for Jesus' sake.**

#### ABSOLUTION

M: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. In his great mercy,  
God made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in our sins. Hear the  
word of Christ through his called servant:

I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of  
the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

## LORD, HAVE MERCY †

### *Kyrie*

M: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

For the well-being of all people everywhere, that they may receive from you all they need to sustain body and life, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: For the spread of your life-giving gospel throughout the world, that all who are lost in sin may be brought to faith in you, hear our prayer, O Christ.

C: **Christ, have mercy.**

M: For patience and perseverance in this life, that we may not lose the hope of heaven as we await your return, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: Lord of life, live in us that we may live for you.

C: **Amen.**

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Amen. (Psalm 139:23-24)

## FIRST LESSON

Galatians 5:16-26

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

† Kyrie is the Greek word for Lord. The expression "Lord, have mercy" is one of the oldest worship responses in the Christian church.

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

## HOLY GOSPEL

Matthew 13:1-9; 18-23

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. He who has ears, let him hear."

“Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

#### HYMN OF THE DAY

*“Forgive Us, Lord”*

**Hymn 482**

Forgive us, Lord, for shallow thankfulness,  
For dull content with warmth and sheltered care,  
For songs of praise for worldly wealthiness,  
While of your richer gifts we're unaware.

Teach us to thank you, Lord, for love and grace,  
For life and vision, for a purpose clear,  
For Christ, your Son, and for each human face  
That shows your message ever new and near.

Forgive us, Lord, for selfish thanks and praise,  
For words that speak at variance with deeds.  
Forgive our thanks for walking pleasant ways,  
Unmindful of a broken brother's needs.

Open our eyes to see your love's intent,  
To know with minds and hearts its depth and height.  
Let thankful days in loving labor spent  
Reflect the truly Christ-like life and light.

## 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.**

## SERMON

Galatians 5:16-26

Does your doctor do what my doctor does? He doesn't just ask me: "How you doing?" He checks to see if I'm telling the truth; he checks to see if there's something I'm not telling him, perhaps something I don't even know. He looks in my eyes and ears, and down my throat. He listens to my heart and lungs. He whacks me on the knees. He asks me about my diet and exercise. He reads the results of my blood tests - some good, some not so good. And then just when I think I'm about to get out of there without dropping my drawers, he says those dreaded words: "Loosen your belt."

That's what we're going to do today. No, I won't ask you to loosen your belt, but I will ask you to lower your guard. How are you doing? Taking care of yourself? Eating



right? Exercising? Getting enough sleep? If you don't think those are good pastor questions, let me put them this way: How are you doing at taking care of God's temple? How are you doing at setting yourself up - body and soul - to show God's love and his love? How are you doing? Is COVID-time becoming grazing time out in the pasture, feed-lot time in front of the TV or computer? Or this - is COVID-time turning you into a hamster on the hamster-wheel running, running, running and getting nowhere? Will COVID-time be the year you get in shape? Or will COVID-time be the year you got cell-phone thumb from too much time with your cell phone? God has made us for more; God has made us for better, hasn't he?

In our lesson, Paul gives us something of a different check-up check-list. He doesn't just ask us about diet, exercise, sleep; he goes deeper, a whole lot deeper. So get ready to loosen .... No, get ready to lower your guard. You get to be the eyes and ears listening in to your heart and conscience, looking in the mirror and checking the evidence.

Where does Paul start with his check-up check-list? It's like he knows our world; he starts with sex - "**sexual immorality, impurity.**" With people so much at home and alone, stressed out and alone - what happens? People go looking where they shouldn't go looking. And people are finding, finding all sorts of excuses and devil-talk cheerleaders telling them they can do whatever they want with whomever they want. Are you looking where you shouldn't be looking? Are you buying into excuses that better fit the heart of the devil than the heart of God? These are dangerous times in which we live, dangerous for our hearts and souls.

What's next on Paul's check-up checklist? "**Idolatry and witchcraft.**" It's easy to skip over those; no problem there, right? Except what? How many times don't we bump God out of our way to do our own thing? How many times don't we bump Bible study or worship or working with Jesus because it just isn't convenient for my specialness? How many times don't we worship our excuses - "oh, I don't like masks ... oh, I don't like video church" - how many times don't we worship our excuses - whatever they may be - as more important than God's Word? I don't need a golden calf to be guilty of idolatry, do I?

What's next? Paul has quite a list - "**hatred, discord (not getting along), jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions (dividing people up, us against them), factions (more dividing people up), and [finally] envy.**" When life is good and we're getting what we want, we might think it easy to pass that test. But cooped up with COVID-time, we don't always get what we want, do we? Things don't always go our way. We get stressed, anxious, impatient. The people around us get stressed, anxious, and impatient. When things aren't going your way, when you're not getting what you want, when people aren't doing what you want the way you want, do you find yourself

biting at the people around you? Or bringing them together and building them up? COVID-time doesn't make getting along easy, does it?

And how does Paul close out his list? “**Drunkenness, drinking parties, and the like.**” So, are you drinking more now than you were before? Turning more to drugs, more cannabis, more sleeping pills, more pain pills not just for the pain? More importantly, are you taking them or are they taking control of you? Are they part of your life as a good gift from God? Do they help you see God more clearly? Or are they taking over your life and blurring your mind to God? I'll say it again: COVID-time can be a dangerous time for hearts and souls.

Why? Listen to what Paul says: “**I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.**” Did you catch what Paul said? “**Those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.**” It's easy to think that all we need is a little self-improvement, a little help from God, a little shine and polish and we'll be good. The difference between that list and Paul's next check-list - the fruit of the Spirit - **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control**; the difference between those two check-lists isn't just a little self improvement or a little help from God. The difference isn't a little shine and polish; the difference is like night and day. That second list, the fruit of the Spirit - **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control** - that takes a whole new life.

And that is what God has for you in Jesus. Jesus took our old lives - our old, disgusting, filthy, grumpy, grudgy, bitter, bitey, self-centered, wasted old lives - he took it all as his own, to the cross. Our guilt, God's judgment - he took them all and paid the price we had coming. But that's not all; Jesus doesn't just give us a clean slate. With his perfect life of **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control**, he covers you and calls you his saints, his holy ones, right for God and right for heaven.

What does that get to mean for you? It means more than forgiveness and heaven; it means a new life here and now! With Jesus, we don't need to live driven by guilt, eaten up by guilt - guilty, angry, taking it out on ourselves, taking it out on others. We don't have to live defensive - guilty, angry, biting back at others. Yes, we have failed ourselves; yes, we have failed each other; more importantly, we have failed God. But that guilt doesn't have to define who you are; that guilt doesn't have to mix up and mess up our relationships. With Jesus, you are forgiven! With Jesus, our past doesn't need to rule our present; our fear of failure doesn't need to rule us going forward. With Jesus we get to live in a place of peace.

That's right, with Jesus, we don't need to live afraid, anxious, worried - "what's going to go wrong?" With Jesus, God sees you right by him; he sees you as his child to hold safe and secure; he sees you as people of his promise - "No matter what happens in this world, I've got you covered!" Think about what that means - we don't have to live like we're the only ones looking out for ourselves. We don't have to live like it all depends on us. We have God looking out for us!

Oh, that fits with last week, doesn't it? Jesus inviting: "**Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.**" It fits with the week before: Covered with Jesus in your baptism, your Father in heaven says to you: "**You are my son, my daughter whom I love, with you I am well-pleased.**" Put that together with the Holy Spirit living in you - and you have a new life - a life of **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.** Sounds good doesn't it? Amen.

HYMN

*"Church of God, Elect and Glorious"*

**Hymn 774**

Church of God, elect and glorious, Holy nation, chosen race;  
Called as God's own special people, Royal priests and heirs of grace:  
Know the purpose of your calling. Show to all his mighty deeds;  
Tell of love that knows no limits, Grace that meets all human needs.

God has called you out of darkness Into his most marv'ulous light,  
Brought his truth to life within you, Turned your blindness into sight.  
Let your light so shine around you That God's name is glorified  
And all find fresh hope and purpose In Christ Jesus crucified.

Once you were an alien people, Strangers to God's heart of love;  
But he brought you home in mercy, Citizens of heav'n above.  
Let his love flow out to others; Let them feel a Father's care;  
That they too may know his welcome And his countless blessings share.

Church of God, elect and holy, Be the people he intends;  
Strong in faith and swift to answer Each command your master sends:  
Royal priests, fulfill your calling Through your sacrifice and prayer;  
Give your lives in joyful service—Sing his praise, his love declare.

*This hymn emphasizes how Christians naturally fulfill what God has created and called them to be in Christ Jesus.*

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### **PRAYER OF THE CHURCH**

**O Lord, you search us and you know us. By your Spirit, give us the wisdom and courage to search ourselves, to be honest with ourselves, and to see what we need to see. By your Spirit then, work in us to repent where we need to repent, and to live the new lives that you have for us.**

**O Lord, as we live and age in this old world, some days we long for a taste, and some days we long for the full banquet of heaven. As you know best, grant healing to Marilyn Hasbrouck with her debilitating back issues; grant recovery to our 101 year-old Harold after a very serious gall bladder surgery; and grant your relief to our so many family and friends who are hurting in body and soul during this difficult time. We ask in Jesus' name . 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.

## BLESSING

M: 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

*"Take My Life and Let It Be"*  
Hymn 469

Take my life and let it be  
Consecrated, Lord, to thee.  
Take my moments and my days;  
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands and let them move  
At the impulse of thy love.  
Take my feet and let them be  
Swift and beautiful for thee.

Take my voice and let me sing  
Always, only for my King.  
Take my lips and let them be  
Filled with messages from thee.

Take my silver and my gold;  
Not a mite would I withhold.  
Take my intellect and use  
Ev'ry pow'r as thou shalt choose.

Take my will and make it thine;  
It shall be no longer mine.  
Take my heart — it is thine own;  
It shall be thy royal throne.

Take my love, my Lord, I pour  
At thy feet its treasure store.  
Take myself, and I will be  
Ever, only, all for thee.

## OFFERING

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