

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.

SERVICE OF THE WORD

IN OUR WORLD TODAY... it is easy to see ourselves out-numbered, empty, at a disadvantage, not having what it takes.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY... we see what our God can do for and with an out-numbered, dis-advantaged people!

OPENING HYMN

“How Great Thou Art”
Hymn 256

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works thy hands hath made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
Thy pow’r throughout the universe displayed.

Refrain

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee,
“How great Thou art! How great Thou art!”
Then sings my soul, my Savior God to thee,
“How great Thou art! How great Thou art!”

When through the woods and forest glades I wander,
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze,

Refrain

And when I think that God, his Son not sparing
Sent him to die, I scarce can take it in,
That on the cross my burden gladly bearing
He bled and died to take away my sin.

Refrain

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!
Then I shall bow in humble adoration
And there proclaim: "My God, how great Thou art!"

Refrain

M: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

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 love according to his will.

C: **Amen.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, protector of all the faithful, you alone make strong; you alone make holy. Show us your mercy and forgive our sins day by day. Guide us through our earthly lives that we do not lose the things you have prepared for us in heaven; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Now all the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples joined forces and crossed over the Jordan and camped in the Valley of Jezreel. Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him. He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, calling them to arms, and also into Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali, so that they too went up to meet them. ...

Early in the morning, Gideon and all his men camped at the spring of Harod. ... The LORD said to Gideon, "You have too many men for me to deliver Midian into their hands. In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her, announce now to the people, 'Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.' " So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained.

But the LORD said to Gideon, "There are still too many men. Take them down to the water, and I will sift them for you there. If I say, 'This one shall go with you,' he shall go; but if I say, 'This one shall not go with you,' he shall not go." So Gideon took the men down to the water. There the LORD told him, "Separate those who lap the water with their tongues like a dog from those who kneel down to drink." Three hundred men lapped with their hands to their mouths. All the rest got down on their knees to drink. The LORD said to Gideon, "With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the other men go, each to his own place."

So Gideon sent the rest of the Israelites to their tents but kept the three hundred Dividing the three hundred men into three companies, he placed trumpets and empty jars in the hands of all of them, with torches inside. "Watch me," he told them. "Follow my lead. When I get to the edge of the camp, do exactly as I do. When I and all who are with me blow our trumpets, then from all around the camp blow yours and shout, 'For the LORD and for Gideon.' "

Gideon and the hundred men with him reached the edge of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just after they had changed the guard. They blew their trumpets and broke the jars that were in their hands. The three companies blew the trumpets and smashed the jars. Grasping the torches in their left hands and holding in their right hands the trumpets they were to blow, they shouted, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!"

While each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled. When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the LORD caused the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords. The army fled ... but [Gideon] pursued them and captured them, routing their entire army.

2ND LESSON

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

HYMN

"God Moves in a Mysterious Way"

Hymn 420

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He has a smiling face.

Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan his work in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain.

You fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds you so much dread
Are big with mercy and will break
In blessing on your head.

GOSPEL LESSON

Matthew 9-10 (select)

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. ... These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep. ...

"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. "Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for

it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”

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

“O Christ, Who Called the Twelve”

Hymn 770

O Christ, who called the Twelve To rise and follow you,
Forsaking old, familiar ways For ventures bold and new:
Grant us to hear your call To risk security
And, bound in heart and will to you, Find perfect liberty.

O Christ, who taught the Twelve The truth for ages sealed,
Whose words and works awakened faith, The ways of God revealed:
Instruct us now, we pray, By your empow'ring Word.
True teacher, be for all who seek Their light, their life, their Lord.

O Christ, who sent the Twelve On roads they'd never trod
To serve, to suffer, teach, proclaim The nearer reign of God:
Send us on ways where faith Transcends timidity,
Where love informs and hope sustains Both life and ministry.

O Christ, th'apostles' Lord, The martyrs' strength and song,
The crucified and risen King To whom the saints belong:
Though generations pass, Our tribute still we bring,
Our hymns a sacrifice of praise, Our lives an offering.

This hymn leads us to consider the cost of discipleship and to pray for Jesus' guidance and strength to fulfill his will.

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SERMON

Judges 6-8 (select)

“It worked!” We love to hear that, don’t we? Gideon stepped in, stepped up. He called his family, his tribe, his neighbors in the north. And they answered! His family stepped up; his tribe stepped up; his neighbors stepped in and stepped up! It worked! An army of 32,000 answered Gideon’s call to war, to drive out the attacking Midianites and Amalekites - 32,000 stepped in and stepped up.

But there was a problem. The enemy army was 130,000 strong. So what do you do? Do you take your 32,000 up against the 130,000? What does wisdom say? “You’re too small; you don’t have what it takes; you don’t stand a chance.” What does the LORD say? Not “You’re too small.” Not “You don’t have what it takes.” Not “You don’t stand a chance.” No, the Lord says: “You have too many.” That’s right, he doesn’t say: “Call in more volunteers.” He doesn’t say: “Wait for better odds.” No, he says: “You have too many.” “Send home any who are afraid.” If you’re an army of 32,000 up against an army of 130,000, who isn’t afraid? So more than 2/3 of Gideon’s army goes home. Now, you’re only 10,000 up against 130,000. But what does the LORD say: “You still have too many. ...”

“You still have too many, so here’s what we’re going to do. Take your men down to the water and I will sift them for you.” “Whoever gets a drink lapping the water with his hand; he stays. Whoever kneels to get a drink; he goes.” What’s the thinking? I remember one of my grade school teachers saying: “Those lapping the water, they were on the ball, they were alert, they were ready to fight.” Josephus, a Jewish historian from about the time of Jesus, saw things differently - those lapping the water with their hands, they were in such a tizzy and afraid that they couldn’t even get a drink right. Those were the men God chose for Gideon. Which way was it? Why the lappers and not the kneelers? The best answer is “only God knows.”

And that left Gideon with an army of 300. 300 against 130,000, 433 to one in favor of the enemy. Impossible! Gideon and his army didn’t stand a chance. And that’s just the way God wanted it. Why? God knew the real danger on the battlefield. The real danger wasn’t the Midianites. God knew he could handle them without any problem. God knew the real danger was inside the hearts and minds of God’s people - that when God would give them the victory, they would claim the credit for themselves, thinking they did it on their own without God. So God worked to make it clear - it wasn’t Gideon’s strength; it wasn’t the Israelite’s strength. God would make it clear - it would be his strength that would work the victory.

And that, my friends, is something to stop and think about. It’s his [Jesus’] strength that works the victory! When David stepped in, stepped up, and stood up against the giant Goliath, do you remember what David said? **“The battle is the LORD’s!”** And you know what Paul said about his strength - **“I am strong for all things, through him who gives me strength.”** And when Paul wanted to be stronger, what did God say? **“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”** Which led Paul to say: **“Therefore I will boast all the more about my weaknesses, for when I am weak, then I am strong.”**

It’s good for me to soak in that a while. Why? When things go well, it’s so easy to think godlessly: “I’m getting it!” And then when things go wrong, it’s so easy to keep thinking godlessly: “I can’t. It’s no use. I don’t have what it takes.” So God keeps reminding us, showing us - our strength, our power, our potential, our victory isn’t found in us and what we do for ourselves. Our strength, our power, our potential, our victory is found in God and in what we can do with him. Or is it this? - what he can do with us. (Sounds like a good question for Bible class.)

Either way, it’s a good reminder for this COVID-time, isn’t it? Instead of living small in fear, instead of living big in our own strength (“I’ve got this!”), we get to step into the unknown with God’s strength. That means, we get to step in and step up to do God’s thing with God’s grace. A good reminder for this time of protesting. Instead of just finger-pointing and judging “they and them,” instead of just thinking “our might will

make right,” we can dare to add some grace from God and trust his love to do what white might or black might or green might can’t do. Our strength, our power, our potential, our victory is found in God and what he can do with us. A nice reminder for us when we look around here in church, and what do we see? Doesn’t look like much of an army, does it? And yet, what does our Lord love to do? He loves to work with broken hearts; he loves to make the weak strong; he loves to make the wrong right; he loves to bring outsiders in.

I could go on trying to put some nice-sounding words together. Instead, let’s take a moment to look at him [Jesus.] Who would have thought it a good idea to send a baby into the world against Satan? Who would have thought it a good idea to send one man up against all the evil of this world? Who would have thought it a good idea to have the Son of God, God himself, die for the likes of you and me?

But that is exactly what God did in Jesus. In Jesus, God stepped in and stepped up against Satan and put him in his place. How? Jesus stepped in and stepped up with the strength of God and his Word - “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” In Jesus, God stepped in and stepped up for the hurting and the heartbroken, for the victims of this world’s evil and injustice. How? Jesus stepped in and stepped up - oh, we love to see him work his miracles, we love to hear him shut up his enemies, don’t we? but even better - Jesus worked healing for the hurting and heartbroken, he worked justice for the victims of this world’s evil and injustice - how? He opened the way to the peace and healing and hope of heaven. Not with the snap of a finger right here, right now. Not with a show of might to make right. But he took our place as victims of evil, he took our place as perpetrators of evil, he took our place and on the cross he paid the price for our evil, for all evil.

Now with Jesus, in our guilt we get to hear God say: “I forgive you.” In our failing and flailing against God, we get to hear God say: “Peace.” In our hurt and heartache, we get to hear God say: “Welcome home! Welcome home to my heart. Welcome home to my heaven.” That might sound too good to be true, like 300 up against an army of 130,000. But your God makes the “too good to be true” true.

So, what happened with the 300 up against the 130,000? Gideon divided his 300 - his 300 misfits, his 300 heroes, whatever they were. He divided his 300 into 3 groups on different sides of the enemy camp. And in the dark of night, they woke up the enemy with a crash and a shout and a flash of light from all sides. In the dark, in the confusion, in the work of the Lord, the enemies of God who had so terrorized God’s people, in terror they turned on each other, and they cut themselves down to size. Who would have thunk it? The Lord knows what he’s doing. He knows how to work his victory.

And today, what will happen with all that we have going on? Let me just say this - the Lord knows what he's doing. He knows how to work his victory. Amen.

HYMN

"Onward, Christian Soldiers"

Hymn 537

Onward Christian soldiers, Marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus Going on before.
Christ, the royal master, Leads against the foe;
Forward into battle See his banners go!

Refrain

Onward, Christian soldiers,
Marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus
Going on before.

Like a might army Moves the Church of God;
Brothers, we are treading Where the saints have trod.
We are not divided, All one body we,
One in hope and doctrine, One in charity.

Refrain

Crowns and thrones may perish, Kingdoms rise and wane,
But the Church of Jesus Constant will remain.
Gates of hell can never 'Gainst that Church prevail;
We have Christ's own promise, And that cannot fail.

Refrain

Onward, then, ye faithful; Join the happy throng,
Blend with ours your voices In the triumph song:
Glory, laud, and honor Unto Christ the King;
This through countless ages Saints and angels sing.

Refrain

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

M: O Lord God, we thank you for the blessing of being able to worship you in peace and joy. Bless those who are gathering together here at church and bless those who are gathering in their homes. We ask you to bless our spirit with your Spirit to be humble and strong with you. We ask you - as you know best - to bless our bodies so that we can serve you in health. We ask you to bless our bodies and souls with wisdom and love so that we worship and serve you and your people in a way that is good for your Church.

O Lord, as we enter a new phase of dealing with COVID, we thank you and ask that you bless us with wisdom and health so that we can be good for each other. As our lives may be returning closer to normalcy, keep our hearts and senses open for those who may be struggling. Help us to be aware and to be there for the people you put into our lives. Bless us to be blessings.

M: Hear us, Lord, as we bring you our private petitions.
Silent prayer.

M: Help us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Keep us faithful even to the point of death, that we may receive the crown of life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C: **Amen.**

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: O Lord God, our heavenly Father, pour out the Holy Spirit on your faithful people. Keep us strong in your grace and truth, protect and comfort us in all temptation, and bestow on us your saving peace, 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.

CLOSING HYMN

“On Eagles’ Wings”

Hymn 440

You who dwell in the shelter of the Lord,
Who abide in his shadow for life,
Say to the Lord: “My refuge,
My rock in whom I trust!”

Refrain

And he will raise you up on eagles’ wings,
Bear you on the breath of dawn,
Make you to shine like the sun,
And hold you in the palm of his hand.

Snares of the fowler will never capture you,
And famine will bring you no fear;
Under his wings your refuge,
His faithfulness your shield.

Refrain

For to his angels he's given a command
To guard you in all of your ways;
Upon their hands they will bear you up,
Lest you dash your foot against a stone.
Refrain

OFFERING

(Please fill out the friendship pads on the pews)

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



Acknowledgments

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