

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

- **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.

April 11, 2021

THE HANDS OF THE PASSION
EASTER HANDS PASSING THE BATON/KEYS

IN OUR WORLD TODAY...we see so many hurting hearts and hurting relationships in need of peace and hope.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY...we are given the keys to share the peace and hope our world needs - peace and hope in Jesus!

OPENING HYMN

“Christ the Lord Is Risen Today; Alleluia”
Hymn 150

Christ the Lord is ris'n today; Alleluia!
Christians, hasten on your way; Alleluia!
See the place where he was laid; Alleluia!
Praise him for the ransom paid. Alleluia!

For the sheep the Lamb has bled, Alleluia!
Sinless in the sinners' stead. Alleluia!
“Christ is ris'n,” today we cry; Alleluia!
Now he lives, no more to die. Alleluia!

Christ, the victim undefiled, Alleluia!
God and sinners reconciled. Alleluia!
While, in strange and awefull strife, Alleluia!
Met together death and Life. Alleluia!

Christ, who once for sinners bled, Alleluia!
Now the first-born from the dead, Alleluia!
Throned in endless might and pow'r, Alleluia!
Lives and reigns forevermore. Alleluia!

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

C: **Amen.**

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.

HYMN

"Like the Golden Sun Ascending"

Hymn 147 (Stanzas 2-4)

Thanks to you, O Christ victorious! Thanks to you, O Lord of life!
Death has now no power o'er us, You have conquered in the strife.
Thanks because you did arise And have opened paradise!
None can fully sing the glory Of the resurrection story.

You have died for my transgression; All my sins on you were laid.
You have won for me salvation; On the cross my debt was paid.
From the grave I shall arise And shall meet you in the skies.
Death itself is transitory; I shall lift my head in glory.

Grant me grace, O blessed Savior, And your Holy Spirit send
That my life and my behavior May be pleasing to the end,
That I may not fall again Into death's grim pit and pain,
Whence by grace you have retrieved me
And from which you have relieved me.

PRAYER

M: O risen Lord, you came to your disciples and took away their fears with your word of peace. Come to us also by Word and sacrament, and banish our fears with the comforting assurance of your abiding presence; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

FIRST LESSON

2 Corinthians 5:11, 14-21

Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience.

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Psalm 118

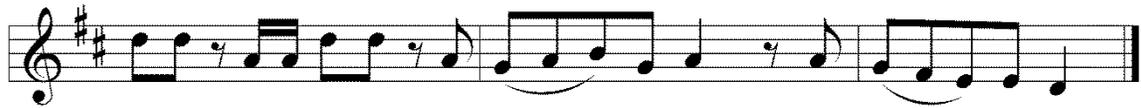
Refrain



Al - le - lu - ia! Al-le-lu - ia! Give thanks to God. He

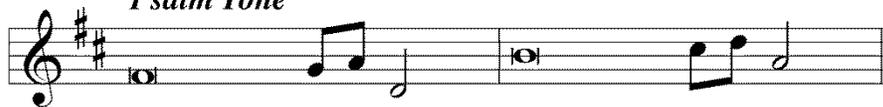


gives us the vic - to-ry through Je - sus Christ our Lord. Al - le -



lu-ia! Al-le-lu-ia! Give thanks to God. Give thanks to God.

Psalm Tone



The LORD is my strength and my song;
he has become my salvation.

“The LORD’S right hand is lifted high;
the LORD’S right hand has done mighty things!”

I will not die but live,
and will proclaim what the LORD has done.

Refrain

I will give you thanks, for you answered me;
you have become my salvation.

The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone;
the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

This is the day the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,**

**as it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

Refrain

GOSPEL**John 20:19-23**

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

HYMN*"Awake, My Heart, with Gladness"***Hymn 156**

Awake, my heart, with gladness! See what today is done;
Now, after gloom and sadness, Comes forth the glorious sun.
My Savior there was laid Where our bed must be made
When to the realms of light Our spirit wings its flight.

The Foe in triumph shouted When Christ lay in the tomb.
But lo, he now is routed; His boast is turned to gloom.
For Christ again is free; In glorious victory
He who is strong to save Has triumphed o'er the grave.

This is a sight that gladdens--What peace it does impart!
Now nothing ever saddens The joy within my heart.
No gloom shall ever shake, No foe shall ever take
The hope which God's own Son In love for me has won.

Now I will cling forever To Christ, my Savior true;
My Lord will leave me never, Whate'er he passes through.
He rends death's iron chain; He breaks through sin and pain.
He shatters hell's dark thrall; I follow him through all.

He brings me to the portal That leads to bliss untold,
Whereon this rhyme immortal Is found in script of gold:
“Who there my cross has shared Finds here a crown prepared;
Who there with me has died Shall here be glorified.”

SERMON

John 20:19-23

Down the street, on the way to Culver’s, somebody has a really nice-looking motorcycle. Part of me says: “I’d like a motorcycle like that.” A smarter part of me says: “Bad idea, Kevin. Bad idea.” On my computer, I see screen-saver images; part of me sees waters I want to kayak, mountains I want to climb, places I want to hike, cities and villages around the world I was to see and visit. Another part of me says: “Culver’s is closer; custard is smoother, and quicker, and easier.” And so I’m torn.

What do I know? If I go to Culver’s ... as good as Culver’s is ... if I set out to live the Culver’s life - sitting back to enjoy life smooth, easy, and full of friendly - sooner or later I’m going to get antsy. Antsy for something more than sitting back; antsy for something more than smooth, easy, and full of smiles. Sooner or later I’m going to get antsy to do something worthwhile, something more worthwhile than just sitting back, living life smooth and easy. And here’s something else I know. If I go kayaking, and hiking, and climbing, and walking the streets of Europe - as good as that is for my body and for my mind - sooner or later I’m going to get antsy. Antsy for something more than fun, antsy for something more than relaxing, antsy for something more than adventure. Antsy to do something worthwhile - antsy to do something that will matter.

*How long does it take you to get antsy?
Are you too quick or too slow to get antsy?
What do you do with your antsiness?*

In our lesson today, Easter Sunday evening, the disciples weren’t there yet. They weren’t getting antsy yet. They were more of what we talked about last week - stressed, afraid, riddled with guilt, especially afraid. So Jesus doesn’t step in and say: “Let’s get going.” No, Jesus steps in and says: “**Peace be with you.**”

Do we know when to command when to calm, when to “should” and when to soothe? What traps do we want to avoid?

Peace for what? Peace for their guilt. They had doubted him, bailed out on him. And so they had given Jesus, God himself, plenty of reasons to doubt them, to bail out on them, to write them off. Instead, Jesus says: “**Peace be with you.**” And when Jesus showed himself and the disciples saw that it really was Jesus, they were overjoyed. Jesus was back! And he wasn’t back with a scowl to write them off; he was back with a smile - “**Peace**” - peace and forgiveness for their guilt. And that meant ... peace and forgiveness for their guilt meant peace for their fear. They didn’t need to be afraid. Jesus was back! Whoever was against Jesus couldn’t get rid of him; whatever they did to Jesus couldn’t stop him. Sin, death, the devil - Jesus had beaten them all. And now he was back. So all the people, all the things the disciples were afraid of - they didn’t need to fear any more. Jesus was back - “**Peace be with you!**”

It may feel easier to share peace for people in their fear than to share peace for people in their guilt. What traps or dangers does that present?

You’ve been there, haven’t you - afraid, stressed - your life a mess, trouble everywhere? We’ve all been there, riddled with guilt - guilt for failing someone we love, guilt for failing God. We’ve all been there, haven’t we? Just as sure as Jesus said to those disciples “**Peace be with you,**” Jesus says to you: “**Peace be with you.**” He takes his word and promise here [in the Bible] and he give it to you in Baptism (“**your sins are washed away**”); he gives it to you in his Supper (“**my body given for you, my blood shed for the forgiveness of sins**”). Yes, Jesus says to you: “**Peace be with you.**” Peace and forgiveness for your guilt. Peace and his promise and presence in all your troubles.

What if, after Jesus said “**Peace be with you,**” what if Jesus would have said: “Go home, go back to your old life - BC-before Christ. I’ll catch up with you on the other side.” How long do you think it would have taken for the disciples to get antsy - “I’m supposed to go home and just go back to life the way it was?” How long do you think it would have taken for the disciples to get antsy, wanting to do something with Easter, wanting to do something with Jesus, wanting to do something for the people around them who didn’t know about Jesus or Easter?

And if they didn’t get antsy? What if they went home and settled into, let’s say, the Culver’s-life, smooth and easy and all full of smiles? What if they decided they had already done their thing and figured it was time to live the vacation life? What if they just went back to living life the way it was, the same as anybody and everybody else, like Jesus and Easter didn’t change anything? What if they didn’t get antsy to do something with Jesus or for Jesus or for the people around them who didn’t know Jesus or Easter? If they didn’t get antsy to do something with Jesus and with Easter, what would you think

of those disciples? We'd think Jesus really didn't mean much to them, that they really didn't get what Easter is about, right?

Answer that (2nd) last question: "What if the disciples wouldn't have gotten antsy to do something with Jesus?" What would that say about the disciples?

If we don't get antsy to do something with Jesus, what does that say about us?

What about us? What about you? Has Easter worn off and you're content looking for life smooth and easy with nothing but smiles? Has Easter worn off and you're looking for life to be fun and exciting without any real responsibilities? Has Easter worn off and you're ready to live the life of the world as if Jesus and Easter never happened? That doesn't seem right, does it?

And it sure isn't the Easter life that Jesus gives us, is it? Right after Jesus shows himself to his disciples, right after he says: "**Peace be with you,**" Jesus also says: "**Just as the Father sent me, I am sending you.**" Jesus didn't send his disciples back to live the life of the world. And he doesn't send us out to live the life of the world. Instead he sends us into the world to work the love of God and to share the heart of God.

"Just as the Father sent [Jesus]." What is ominous in those words? What is comforting in those words? What is exciting in those words?

How? A couple days earlier, Jesus had told them: "**Love one another.**" How? A couple days before that, Jesus had told the parable of the sheep and goats. And who is invited into heaven? His sheep, and what had they done? They had taken care of the poor and the hungry; they had taken in strangers, looked after the sick, went out of their way to visit the imprisoned. Now, on this Easter evening, Jesus focuses on something else. "**Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.**" Jesus gives his disciples the keys.

Why is it important to remember the breadth of Jesus' commission (as described in this previous paragraph)?

Do you remember your first key? Chances are it was an old key, a key to an old lock, a key that didn't matter any more - it wouldn't matter if it got lost, or stolen, or if it were never used. Then at some point, you were trusted with some real keys, was it the key to the house or the key to the car? Either way, a big deal, right? On Easter Sunday evening Jesus gave his disciples ... he gave his church ... the keys to heaven. Not just to handle and hold as neat and shiny, not just to use in case of emergency, but to lock or to

loose the sin that would keep a sinner out of heaven, to lock or to open the way to heaven.

That's right. Jesus has given you the key that locks sin, that locks the way to heaven. We might think: "I don't want to do that; I don't want to lock somebody out of heaven." You using, our using the locking key doesn't keep someone out of heaven. Telling the truth about sin doesn't keep someone out of heaven. It's the sinner's sin, the sinner's refusal to repent that locks them out of heaven. So what does the locking key do? It announces the truth of God's Law - "**the soul that sins, it will die**; the soul that holds on to their sin, will die without Jesus; the soul that lives without Jesus, will die without Jesus."

Why would we, why would you say that? Well, why do you warn people that the stove is hot? Why do you tell people of the storm, the tornado that is coming? To warn them and save them from the danger. Not sounding the warning doesn't make the tornado go away, does it? Not sounding the warning doesn't make the stove cool to the touch, does it? In the same way, taking the easy way out, and not sounding the warning of sin and hell, doesn't make sin safe.

When is sin safe? Who determines the safety of sin?

There is no way to make sin safe. There is a way to make sin go away. For those who want to be free from their sin.... Note - I didn't say: "For those who want to be free from sin...." I said, "For those who want to be free from their sin," Jesus has given us the loosing key, the forgiving key. The loosing key is the Good News of sins forgiven in Jesus. The loosing key frees from guilt; it frees the heart to live in step with God; it opens the way to heaven. In other words, the locking key tells the hard truth of Judgment Day and hell; the loosing key tells the beautiful truth of Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter, the beautiful truth of life with God in heaven.

Whose gospel is "You are forgiven and free to sin"?

Whose gospel is "You are forgiven and free to do what you want"?

Whose gospel is "You are forgiven and free for life with Jesus"?

Earlier I talked about getting antsy. If there is anything that should get us antsy, it's the thought of a loved one, family, friend, neighbor, or anyone, dying in their sin without Jesus, dying in their sin without a warning. We don't like to think about that, do we? So think about this. Think of how great it would be to see that someone close to you, that someone growing farther and farther from Jesus, think of how great it would be

for them to turn from their sin, to turn back from living the life of the world, and turn back to life with Jesus. Imagine sharing “Peace” with them and hearing “Peace” back. Imagine how great it would be to celebrate Easter together with them - in heaven together! Sounds good, doesn’t it? And Jesus doesn’t just send us to family and friends, does he? Think of how great it is when anyone gets to know Jesus, when they turn from their old life to live with Jesus. You get to be part of that. Makes us antsy to do something with Jesus, doesn’t it? Amen.

What is the difference between a life that is smooth, easy, and empty; and a life that is smooth, easy, and meaningful?

What is the difference between a life that is adventurous and empty, and adventurous and meaningful?

HYMN

“I Hear the Savior Calling” Hymn 560 (Stanzas 1, 2, 3, 5)

I hear the Savior calling! The gospel comes to me.
My eyes once closed in blindness Are opened now to see
That I myself was helpless To live eternally
But, dying, Christ did save me, And now he calls for me!

I hear the Savior calling! He leads a soul to me,
A soul in bitter anguish, One needing to be free.
The gift I have to offer Is Christ, my Lord’s decree
That all have been forgiven - My Savior calls for me!

I hear the Savior calling! He gives this charge to me:
To serve the best I’m able, Whate’er the call may be.
Thus hand in hand with others Who share the gospel key
We spread the gospel tidings - My Savior calls for me!

I hear the Savior calling! His call has urgency!
Each moment souls are dying; Soon comes eternity.
And so, my precious Savior, This is my humble plea:
Prepare me for my mission For you are calling me!

EASTER PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

M: O Lord God, our strength, our song, and our salvation, you fulfilled your promises by the resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ, from the dead.

C: Thanks be to God! You give us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

M: In your compassion you sent Christ, the Good Shepherd, who laid down his life to rescue the lost.

C: Drive out all doubt and gloom that we may delight in your glorious triumph.

M: Lift our eyes heavenward to see him who lives to make intercession for the saints, and grant us the confidence in the greatness of his power. Keep before us the vision of your redeemed people standing before your throne and singing the song of victory:

C: Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive wisdom and power and honor and glory and praise.

M: Make us instruments of your peace as we bring the good news of hope and new life to those around us. Guide us in the use of all that you have entrusted to us: our time, our talents, and our treasures.

C: Risen Lord, live in us that we may live for you.

M: Merciful Lord Jesus, grant healing to the sick, and strengthen the faith of the suffering and the dying. Assure them of your abiding presence, and comfort them with the hope of eternal life.

Special prayers and intercessions may follow.

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

Silent prayer.

M: Gracious Father, you have restored to us the joy of your salvation. With happy hearts, we come before you and say:

All: Alleluia! Thanks be to God! Amen.

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.

CLOSING PRAYER

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: 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

"Christ the Lord is Risen Today"
Hymn 149

"Christ the Lord is ris'n today!"
Saints on earth and angels say;
Raise your joys and triumphs high;
Sing, O heav'ns, and earth, reply.

Love's redeeming work is done,
Fought the fight, the battle won;
Lo, our sun's eclipse is o'er;
Lo, he sets in blood no more.

Vain the stone, the watch, the seal;
Christ has burst the gates of hell.
Death in vain forbids his rise;
Christ has opened paradise.

Lives again our glorious King!
Where, O death, is now your sting?
Once he died our souls to save;
Where your victory, O grave?

Soar we now where Christ has led,
Foll'wing our exalted head.
Made like him, like him we rise;
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies!

Hail the Lord of earth and heav'n!
Praise to you by both be giv'n!
God has now fulfilled his Word;
Praise the resurrected Lord!

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"Because He Lives" by the Gaithers

God sent His son, they called Him, Jesus;
He came to love, heal and forgive;
He lived and died to buy my pardon,
An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives!

Chorus:

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow,
Because He lives, all fear is gone;
Because I know He holds the future,
And life is worth the living,
Just because He lives!

How sweet to hold a newborn baby,
And feel the pride and joy he brings;
But
greater still the calm assurance:
This child can face uncertain days because He Lives!

Repeat Chorus

And then one day, I'll cross the river,
I'll fight life's final war with pain;
And then, as death gives way to victory,
I'll see the lights of glory and I'll know He lives!

Repeat Chorus 2x