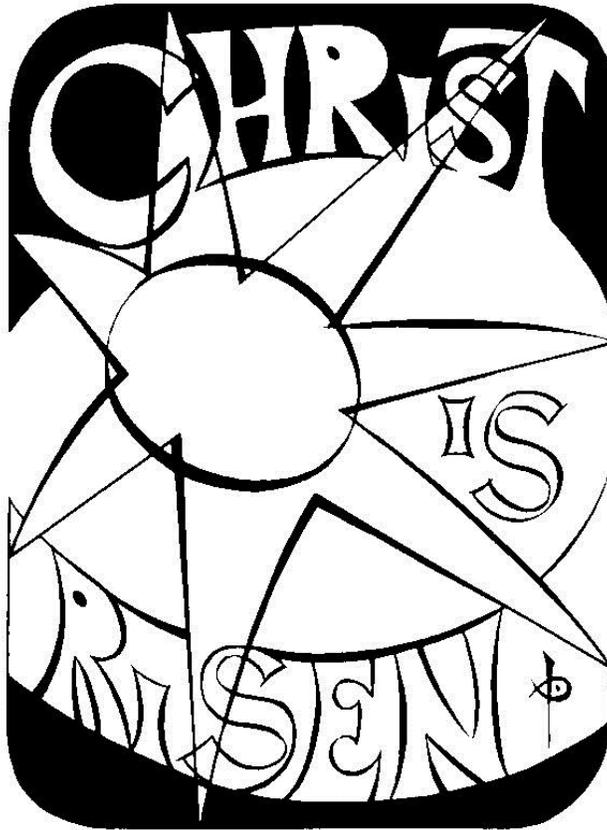


St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church
A Family Connecting in Christ



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IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... we are torn in two directions (at least!). We want to get out and get going. We have people to see, things to do, now! And we hear: "Wait. People are still getting sick; people are still dying. For you, for the people around you, wait!" Questions swirl – "What are we supposed to do? When?" We live like we're first learning to drive – stop, go, stop, go, lurching and jerking and bouncing everybody around. So, what are we supposed to do?!

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we stop, look, and listen to the One who knows the future and rules over all things for the good of his Church. He won't give us all the answers we want today, but he will give us the best of what we need.

OPENING HYMN

"At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing"
Hymn 141 (1-3)

At the Lamb's high feast we sing
Praise to our victorious King,
Who has washed us in the tide
Flowing from his piercé side. Alleluia!

Mighty Victim from the sky,
Hell's fierce pow'rs beneath you lie.
You have conquered in the fight;
You have brought us life and light. Alleluia!

Now no more can death appall,
Now no more the grave enthrall;
You have opened paradise,
And your saints in you shall rise. Alleluia!

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.**

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

HYMN

“Easter Triumph, Easter Joy”

Hymn 141 (vs. 4-5)

Easter triumph, Easter joy!
This alone can sin destroy;
From sin's pow'r, Lord, set us free,
Newborn souls in you to be. Alleluia!

Father, who the crown shall give,
Savior, by whose death we live,
Spirit, guide through all our days,
Three in One, your name we praise. Alleluia!

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O risen Lord, you rule over all things for the good of your Church. For our good, you have stopped so much of the world around us. Help us to use this time to look and listen to you, and to the world around us, so we can know how best to serve your world with your peace and promise - for your glory and the good of your Church, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

FIRST LESSON

JAMES 4:13-17

Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.” As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.

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."

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SECOND LESSON

Philippians 1:19-26

I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and

be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.

CHOIR

Christ Is Risen

Refrain

Christ is risen! Hallelujah, hallelujah! Christ is risen, risen indeed!
Hallelujah!

Love's work is done; the battle is won. Where now, O death is your sting?
He rose again to rule and to reign, Jesus, our conquering King.

Refrain

Lord over sin, Lord over death, At his feet Satan must fall!
Ev'ry knee bow; all will confess Jesus is Lord over all!

Refrain

Tell it abroad, "Jesus is Lord!" Shout it and let your praise ring!
Gladly we raise our songs of praise; Worship is our offering.

Refrain

HOLY GOSPEL

John 21:18-25

"I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper

and had said, “Lord, who is going to betray you?”) When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?”

Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.” Because of this, the rumor spread among the brothers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?” This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.

Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

M: Christ is risen!

C: He is risen indeed!

THE CREED

The Second Article Explanation by Martin Luther

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord.

He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death.

All this he did that I should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he has risen from death and lives and rules eternally.

This is most certainly true.

When Jesus came from Nazareth, he walked beside the sea.
He saw four fishermen and called, "Come, follow, follow me!
Come, follow, follow me!"

He led them over unknown ways whose end they could not see
And, when they faltered, called again, "Come, follow, follow me!
Come, follow, follow me!"

We make our vows, O Christ, today to serve you faithfully.
For you have called us each by name, "Come, follow, follow me!
Come, follow, follow me!"

Lord, grant us grace to walk your way and, falling, rise again
Restored, forgiven, hearing still, "Come, follow, follow me!
Come, follow, follow me!"

Good Shepherd, risen from the grave, in death our comfort be:
Call out, from heav'n, where you have gone, "Come, follow, follow me!
Come, follow, follow me!"

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SERMON

JAMES 4:13-17

Petty - that's not a pretty word, is it? I fear this might sound petty - I don't like this. I don't like this not knowing. Not knowing what's coming. Not knowing what to do. Not knowing when we get to I don't like this not knowing. I imagine you don't like it either. You have things you want to know,

things you want to do, things you want to plan. You and me, both. That said, I should like this; I should like not knowing, not being able to make plans. Why? So often my plans crash and burn; more often my plans sputter and fizzle. So often making plans forces my brain to go in ways my brain just doesn't want to go. I should like this. But I don't.

James tells me one reason I don't like this. All this not knowing, all these broken plans, all this reminds me of who and what I am. I am but a mist that appears for a little while and then disappears. Mist, like the steam coming off last night's supper - now you see it, now you don't. Today we're here; tomorrow, who knows? That doesn't do much for our pride, does it? We like to think we're a force to be reckoned with - we're going to cure cancer, change the climate, elect the president who will fix America. But instead of thinking how great we are, now we get to think about how small we are. Take coronavirus - you can't even begin to see it with a magnifying glass, and yet what is it doing to us? As smart, as strong as we like to think we are, a little too much of that virus and we're left a gasping mess and our world is left sputtering.

Why would God let this happen? No, let me dial that up. Why is God doing this to us? Why? God is judging the world for the way we think our plans are smarter than his plans, for the way we make our plans without checking with him, without even thinking of him, for the way we put our plans in place of his plans.

And we do that, don't we? Sometimes without thinking, we make our plans without checking his plan. Bad idea, isn't it? At home if we do that, if we make plans without checking the master plan, that sure can lead to trouble, right? So for us to make plans without checking God's master plan, how smart does that sound?

Now sometimes, we already know God's plan (for example, the plan he gives us in the Ten Commandments), but we decide to write our plans over God's plan. What would you think if next time you came into church you saw

the Bibles ripped up and torn around, graffiti written over the altar, graffiti spray-painted over the face of Jesus? You'd want those punks taught a lesson, right? That's why, today, we see our world with all its plans crashing and burning, sputtering and fizzling. God is teaching me, he's teaching us a lesson, a lesson on who and what we would be without him.

Why? He knows how the plans of this world will crash us and burn us in the fires of hell. And he knows the far better plans he has for you. You've heard him say it: **"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."** God's plan for us isn't just to make us happy, healthy, wealthy, and wise. He has something far better in store for us - a future planned for you before the beginning of time, a future together with him today and forever.

That future, that life with God is yours in the life and work, the death and resurrection of his Son Jesus. Without Jesus, without Jesus and all he's done, without Jesus in our hearts, we don't have that future. But we don't have to be without Jesus. You know the promise: **"God so loved the world he gave his one and only Son"** God gave his Son to work his plan, and that's what Jesus did. Jesus didn't do the squirrel thing, chasing here and there, around and around. No, Jesus focused, he stuck with God's plan, and he did what God gave him to do in life and in death. He lived the holy, loving life we need to fit in with God. Then he took our sin and died the death we deserve - in our place! Look at the cross, that's how much he loves you! And now he lives, still working God's plan, the plan God had for you from before the beginning of time. Even today, he is working God's plan to connect you together with God.

You see, in God's plan, with Jesus, you aren't just mist, here today and tomorrow who knows. In God's plan, with Jesus, baptized into Jesus, you are his people, his family, his children. No, I'm not looking at someone else; I'm looking at you. With Jesus, you are God's child, the son, the daughter he loves; the son, the daughter he delights in! For you, God has a life in heaven where there will

be no viruses to worry about, no Stay at Home orders, no lay-offs, no plans sputtering, fizzling, crashing, or burning. Instead, God has a life for you in heaven where you will get to enjoy life and love, freedom and peace, forever! Sounds good, doesn't it? That's why Paul said: "To die is gain!"

But don't sell God short on what he has for you today. I'm not just talking about his promise to feed our insides and cover our outsides. No, don't sell God short on the purpose he has for you today. In your world today, what do you see? People wondering and worrying about the virus. People wondering and worrying about their jobs. People feeling alone. People hurting because of the jerks and the brats they're cooped up with. People feeling guilty for being those jerks and brats; people feeling guilty for wondering and worrying. You have what they need! Forgiveness, love, peace, and hope! You have what they need with Jesus and all that Jesus has given you!

At home, it's easy for me to look outside and see half a dozen squirrels doing the squirrel thing - chasing here and there, up and down, hunting and hoarding. And at home, it's easy to become a squirrel - an internet squirrel, a TV squirrel, a video game squirrel, chasing here and there, up and down, hunting and hoarding. We don't have to live the life of a squirrel. And we don't have to live the life of a wolf, snarling and tearing into others. And we don't have to live the life of a guppy stuck floating in a make-believe world, staring out at the world through a piece of glass or a screen or a TV. No, we get to live the life of a child of God, as the eyes and ears, the hands and feet of God, as the heart and smile of God - looking out, reaching out, helping out with the love of God.

We don't need to know the future to be able to do that right now. It's easy to get caught up - "I don't know this; I don't know that." It's easy to stop up our heart thinking that way. We don't need to know the future, we don't need to have some great plan - to pick up our Bible, to soak it up, and put it into practice. We don't need to know the future, we don't need to have some great plan - to pick up pen and paper to write a note, to pick up a phone to text, or even better,

to talk. We don't need to know the future or have some great plan to find a way to share the love of God.

We don't need to know the future. We don't need to have some great plan. But our God does love a good plan. He loves working his plans for you. And he loves blessing the plans you make with him. So where do you see yourself in God's plan? Where do you see God in your plans? How are you, how will you answer Jesus' call: "Follow me"? If you're not sure, give me a call and let's talk about it.

Last week I snagged someone else's famous words - "Don't let a good crisis go to waste." With that I said, "Now is the time to pray, to plan, to practice our new life with God." Can you think of a better time? For months, I've been trying to think of a better time. For months, I've been trying to think of a better time to stop, to look, to listen. It seems that God just might be giving us a pretty good time right now to stop, to look, to listen - and to live the life he has for us - "For to me to live is Christ!"

Let's join together -

"Brothers, Sisters, Let Us Gladly Give to God, Our All, Our Best!"

HYMN

"Brothers, Sisters, Let Us Gladly"

Hymn 484

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.

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

Lord, God, give me strength and willingness to say with your Son, "Not my will, but your will be done." Make me cheerful and trusting to bear whatever you let happen to me. From your hand I am willing to take the good and the bad, the joy and the sorrow. Keep me from sin, gracious Father, and comfort me with your kind Word. 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.

C: **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN

"I Know that My Redeemer Lives"
Hymn 152 (1,3,4,5,8)

I know that my Redeemer lives;
What comfort this sweet sentence gives!
He lives, he lives, who once was dead;
He lives, my ever-living Head!

He lives to bless me with his love;
He lives to plead for me above.
He lives, my hungry soul to feed;
He lives to help in time of need.

He lives to grant me rich supply;
He lives to guide me with his eye.
He lives to comfort me when faint;
He lives to hear my soul's complaint.

He lives to silence all my fears;
He lives to wipe away my tears.
He lives to calm my troubled heart;
He lives all blessings to impart.

He lives, all glory to his name!
He lives, my Jesus, still the same.
Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives:
"I know that my Redeemer lives!"

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