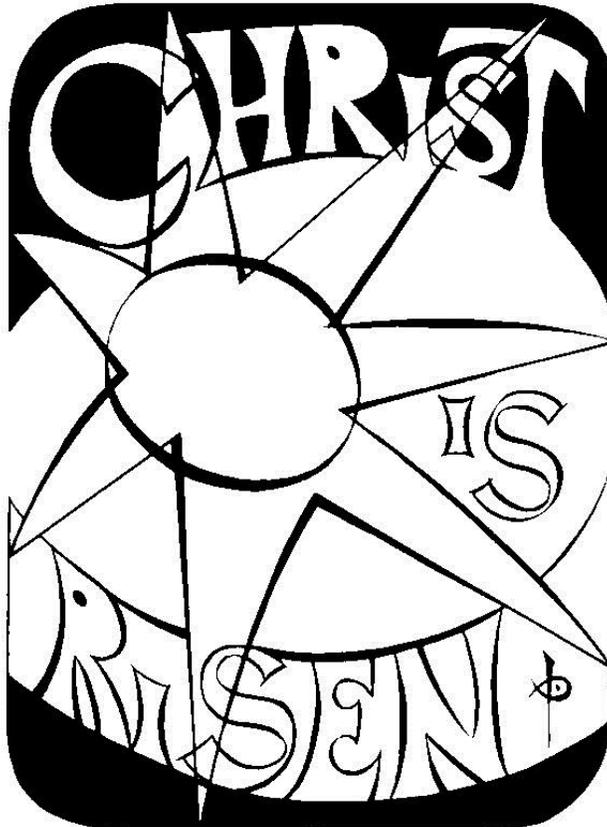


**St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
*A Family Connecting in Christ*



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## WELCOME TO ST. JOHN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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June 21, 2020

### DIVINE SERVICE II

**IN OUR WORLD TODAY ...** we see spirit-crushing injustice and oppression, and we hear calls to action.

**IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ...** we go back in time to earlier eras of injustice and oppression, and we hear God’s call to action. And what comes first?

#### OPENING HYMN

*“Let Us Ever Walk With Jesus”*

**Hymn 452**

Let us ever walk with Jesus,  
Follow his example pure,  
Flee the world which would deceive us  
And to sin our souls allure.  
Ever in his footsteps treading,  
Body here, yet soul above,  
Full of faith and hope and love,  
Let us do the Father's bidding.  
Faithful Lord, abide with me.  
Savior, lead; I follow thee.

Let us suffer here with Jesus,  
To his image e'er conform;  
Heaven's glory soon will please us,  
Sunshine follow on the storm.  
Though we sow in tears of sorrow,  
We shall reap in heav'nly joy,  
And the fears that now annoy  
Shall be laughter on the morrow.  
Christ, I suffer here with thee;  
There, oh, share thy joy with me.

Let us also die with Jesus.  
His death from the second death,  
From our soul's destruction, frees us,  
Quickens us with life's glad breath.  
Let us mortify, while living,  
Flesh and blood and die to sin,  
And the grave that shuts us in  
Shall but prove the gate to heaven.  
Jesus, here I die to thee,  
There to live eternally.

Let us gladly live with Jesus;  
Since he's risen from the dead,  
Death and grave must soon release us.  
Jesus, thou art now our head.  
We are truly thine own members;  
Where thou livest, there live we.  
Take and own us constantly,  
Faithful Friend, as thy dear brethren.  
Jesus, here I live to thee,  
Also there eternally.

## INVOCATION

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

C: **Amen.**

## FIRST LESSON

Judges 6:1-10

Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, and for seven years he gave them into the hands of the Midianites. Because the power of Midian was so oppressive, the Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in mountain clefts, caves and strongholds. Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples invaded the country. They camped on the land and ruined the crops all the way to Gaza and did not spare a living thing for Israel, neither sheep nor cattle nor donkeys. They came up with their livestock and their tents like swarms of locusts. It was impossible to count the men and their camels; they invaded the land to ravage it. Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the LORD for help.

When the Israelites cried to the LORD because of Midian, he sent them a prophet, who said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I brought you up out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. I snatched you from the power of Egypt and from the hand of all your oppressors. I drove them from before you and gave you their land. I said to you, 'I am the LORD your God; do not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live.' But you have not listened to me."

## 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

## SECOND LESSON

Judges 6:11-16 (select)

The angel of the LORD ... appeared to Gideon [and] said, "The LORD is with you, mighty warrior." "But sir," Gideon replied, "if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our fathers told us about when they said, 'Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and put us into the hand of Midian." The LORD turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have

and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?" "But Lord," Gideon asked, "how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family." The LORD answered, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites together."

### 3RD LESSON

Judges 6:22-32

When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the LORD, he exclaimed, "Ah, Sovereign LORD! I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face!" But the LORD said to him, "Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die." So Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and called it The LORD is Peace. ...

That same night the LORD said to him, "Take the second bull from your father's herd, the one seven years old. Tear down your father's altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it. Then build a proper kind of altar to the LORD your God on the top of this height. Using the wood of the Asherah pole that you cut down, offer the second bull as a burnt offering."

So Gideon took ten of his servants and did as the LORD told him. But because he was afraid of his family and the men of the town, he did it at night rather than in the daytime.

In the morning when the men of the town got up, there was Baal's altar, demolished, with the Asherah pole beside it cut down and the second bull sacrificed on the newly built altar! They asked each other, "Who did this?" When they carefully investigated, they were told, "Gideon son of Joash did it." The men of the town demanded of Joash, "Bring out your son. He must die, because he has broken down Baal's altar and cut down the Asherah pole beside it."

But Joash replied to the hostile crowd around him, "Are you going to plead Baal's cause? Are you trying to save him? Whoever fights for him shall be put to death by morning! If Baal really is a god, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar." So that day they called Gideon "Jerub-Baal," saying, "Let Baal contend with him," because he broke down Baal's altar.

HYMN

*"My God, My Father, Make Me Strong"*

Hymn 468

My God, my Father, make me strong,  
When tasks of life seem hard and long,  
To greet them with this triumph song:  
Your will be done.

Draw from my timid eyes the veil  
To show, where earthly forces fail,  
Your pow'r and love must still prevail--  
Your will be done.

With confident and humble mind  
In service freedom I will find,  
Praying through ev'ry toil assigned:  
Your will be done.

What seems impossible I dare;  
Yours is the call and yours the care.  
Your wisdom shall the way prepare--  
Your will be done.

Heav'n's music chimes the glad days in;  
Hope soars beyond death, pain, and sin;  
Faith shouts in triumph, Love must win--  
Your will be done!

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

### 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 OF THE DAY

*"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 (select)

He was infected. His family infected. His neighbors infected. Infected by the Baal-virus, the Asherah-virus. Baal and Asherah were Canaanite gods of life, love, fertility, sex. And the way to make the gods happy was to give them a sex-show. As you can imagine, the Baal-virus and Asherah-virus were highly contagious, almost impossible to eradicate. Time and again the numbers did look good for God's people - infection rates down, recovery rates up. But God's people just couldn't stay away. And the Baal-virus and Asherah-virus would come back with deadly force. God had a way to treat the A-virus, a way to treat the B-virus out in the world - carriers needed to be quarantined, killed. But God's people didn't have the stomach to execute that treatment. Instead they became infected, carriers themselves.

God didn't have it in his heart to wipe out his people, so to fight the virus in them, to fight the virus in his infected people, God used another treatment. He put the squeeze on them. At the time of our lesson, God used the Midianites to put the squeeze on his people. They squeezed and they crushed so hard, looting and pillaging, that God's people had to hide out in caves and ravines and hill-country hide-outs. They cry out to the LORD: "LORD, have mercy." And God has mercy - a broken and contrite heart he will not despise.

And so, the Angel of the LORD appears to Gideon. I'm not sure what to think of Gideon. His family owns land, cattle, and servants. At the same time Gideon says his family is the smallest in the tribe, and he's the weakest in his family. Gideon knows about God, how God delivered his people out of Egypt. At the same time, he wonders why God handed them over to the Midianites. Gideon doesn't know what to think. He's unsure of himself, unsure of God. Doesn't sound like prime judge material, does he?

Gideon is unsure, unsure of himself, unsure of God. Ever feel that way? Small, smaller, less, less than, at a disadvantage, that you don't have what they have, so you just don't have what it takes? Ever feel unsure about God and what God is up to in your life? "What's he doing?" "Why is he doing it?" Even though we don't have the Midianites looting and pillaging and chasing us out of our homes up into the hills, we've had a taste of the Gideon life, unsure of self, unsure of life, unsure of God, haven't we?

And in the middle of that, in the middle of feeling unsure, unsure of ourselves, unsure of life, unsure of God, what happens? Some guy in white (the preacher) taps you on your shoulder, looks into your camera eyes and says: "The LORD says: 'Step in and step up. Don't let this COVID-time go to waste. Step in and step up.'" And if you ever felt unsure before, unsure of yourself, unsure of God, it can be easy to feel even more unsure: "Who? What? Me? Why me?"

But before he taps you, before he calls your name, before he calls you, he says something that just boggles the mind. "**The LORD is with you, mighty warrior.**" And what so easily comes to mind? "Really?! I'm not feeling it; with all that's going on, what I'm feeling is small, too small. So whatever you have in

mind for me to do, I'm not up for it." "I'm not up for it." Ever feel that way? But the LORD doesn't buy that you are too small; he doesn't accept that you don't have what it takes. He's sure; he's more than sure; he's more sure than you are unsure; and he says to you: **"The LORD is with you, mighty warrior." "Go in the strength you have, step in, step up. Am I not sending you?"**

Gideon didn't get it. He didn't get what God was offering him, promising him. At least, not at first. Gideon was too busy thinking of himself - smaller, less than, that he didn't have what it would take. Why? Gideon was thinking of the wrong "I." He was thinking of the "I" in "me, myself, and I." Meanwhile, the Angel of the Lord was pointing Gideon to a different "I" - God's "I" - **"I will be with you."** Think about it. When God taps you on the shoulder, when he calls you to step in and step up, when he says: **"Go in the strength you have,"** he's not talking about your strength; he's talking about his strength. He's giving you his strength to be your strength.

But God's strength can't be your strength if you're holding on to some other strength. I can't be plugged in and connected with God, receiving God's power, if I'm plugging in and connecting with the gods of the world. What did that mean for Gideon? Gideon couldn't be and wouldn't be strong with God's power as long as he was plugging in and connecting with Baal and Asherah. For Gideon to face the Midianites, for Gideon to do what needed to be done for his people, for Gideon to step in and step up with God, for Gideon to be strong with the Lord, Gideon first needed to cut his ties to Baal and Asherah.

I wish I could tell you that Gideon picked up his trusty ax, and, in front of everybody, axed the Baal altar and Asherah pole. But that's not what Gideon did; he was too afraid, too unsure, too unsure of himself, too unsure of God, so he did what God gave him to do in the dark. And when people found out, instead of speaking up, Gideon needed his dad to cover for him.

Baby steps. First steps. We've all had to take them, haven't we? And we've all needed someone to cover for us. Thank God he has given us someone to cover for us. Someone to cover for us when we've done the wrong thing. Someone to cover for us when we're doing the right thing, God's thing, and the

world is against us. Someone to cover for us when we're in between, stumbling, struggling, trying to do the right thing. Thank God for Jesus. He covers for us when we've done the wrong thing. And he covers for us when we stumble in doing the right thing. He covers for us and covers our guilt with his innocent blood, his right life and death. He covers our baby steps with his steps big and bold. He covers our unsure wavering with his sure confidence. He covers for us so that God sees you right with him as his pure and precious people, his mighty warriors. And when we do the right thing, God's thing, and the world wants to bury us, again and always, he covers for us and keeps us safe with God.

What does that mean for us? What God wanted Gideon to know. We can do this. When we put first things first, when we put God first, we can do what God gives us to do. We can step in and step up with God. He's got us covered! Amen.

#### HYMN

*"With the Lord Begin Your Task"*

**Hymn 478**

With the Lord begin your task;  
Jesus will direct it.  
For his aid and counsel ask;  
Jesus will perfect it.  
Ev'ry morn with Jesus rise,  
And, when day is ended,  
In his name then close your eyes;  
Be to him commended.

Let each day begin with prayer,  
Praise and adoration.  
On the Lord cast ev'ry care;  
He is your salvation.  
Morning, evening, and at night  
Jesus will be near you,  
Save you from the tempter's might,  
With his presence cheer you.

With your Savior at your side  
Foes need not alarm you;  
In his promises confide  
And no ill can harm you.  
All your trust and hope repose  
In the mighty master,  
Who in wisdom truly knows  
How to stem disaster.

If your task is thus begun  
With the Savior's blessing  
Safely then your course will run,  
Naught your soul distressing.  
Good will follow ev'rywhere  
While you here must wander;  
You at last the joy will share  
In the mansions yonder.

### **PRAYER OF INTERCESSION**

*Let us pray, brothers and sisters, for the holy Church of God throughout the world,  
that God the almighty Father gather and guide it so that we may worship him in  
peace and tranquillity:*

**M:** Almighty and eternal God, you have shown your glory to all nations in  
Jesus Christ. Guide the work of the Church. Help it to persevere in faith,  
proclaim your Word, and bring salvation to people everywhere. Lord, in your  
mercy,

**C:** Hear our prayer.

**M:** Let us pray for our pastors and teachers and all leaders of the Church, and for all the people of God:

Almighty and eternal God, your Spirit guides the Church and makes it holy. Strengthen and uphold all who serve you and your people. Keep them in health and safety for the good of the Church. Help each of us to do faithfully the work to which you have called us. Lord, in your mercy,

**C:** Hear our prayer.

**M:** Let us pray for those who do not believe in Christ, that the light of the Holy Spirit may show them the way to salvation:

Almighty and eternal god, enable those who do not acknowledge Christ to receive the truth of the gospel. Help us, your Church, to grow in love for you and for one another, so that we become more perfect witnesses of your love for all people. Lord, in your mercy,

**C:** Hear our prayer.

**M:** Let us pray for those who serve in public office, that God may guide their minds and hearts, so that all of us may live in true peace and freedom:

Almighty and eternal God, graciously direct those who have been set in positions of authority among us, so that people everywhere may enjoy justice, peace, freedom, and a share in the goodness of your creation. Lord, in your mercy,

**C:** Hear our prayer.

**M:** Let us pray that God, the almighty and merciful Father, may heal the sick, comfort the dying, give safety to travelers, and free those unjustly deprived of liberty:

Almighty and eternal God, you give strength to the weary and new courage to those who have lost heart. In your mercy hear the prayers of all who call on you in any trouble, that they may have the joy of receiving your help in their need. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. 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**

*"Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus"*  
**Hymn 474**

Stand up, stand up for Jesus,  
Ye soldiers of the cross!  
Lift high his royal banner;  
It must not suffer loss.  
From vict'ry unto vict'ry  
His army shall he lead  
Till ev'ry foe is vanquished  
And Christ is Lord indeed.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus!  
The trumpet call obey;  
Forth to the mighty conflict  
In this his glorious day!  
Ye that are brave, now serve him  
Against unnumbered foes;  
Let courage rise with danger  
And strength to strength oppose.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus!  
Stand in his strength alone.  
The arm of flesh will fail you;  
Ye dare not trust your own.  
Put on the gospel armor;  
Each piece put on with prayer;  
Where duty calls or danger,  
Be never wanting there.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus!  
The strife will not be long;  
This day the noise of battle,  
The next, the victor's song.  
To him that overcometh  
A crown of life shall be;  
He with the King of glory  
Shall reign eternally.

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