

**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).

**SERVICE OF THE WORD**

**IN OUR WORLD TODAY...** we see and experience different approaches to leadership and “making things right.”

**IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY...** we resume our look into the book of Judges to see what we can learn from the life and work of Samson.

**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.

- 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 live according to his will.

**C: Amen.**

#### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Lord God, you call us to work in your kingdom and leave no one standing idle. Help us order our lives by your wisdom and to serve you in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

#### **1<sup>ST</sup> LESSON**

Judges 13:1-5, 24-25; 14:1-3, 8-20; 15:1-8, 14-17, 20

Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, so the LORD delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years. A certain man of Zorah, named Manoah, from the clan of the Danites, had a wife who was sterile and remained childless. The angel of the LORD appeared to her and said, "You are sterile and childless, but you are going to conceive and have a son. Now see to it that you drink no wine or other fermented drink and that you do not eat anything unclean, because you will conceive and give birth to a son. No razor may be used on his head, because the boy is to be a Nazirite, set apart to God from birth, and he will begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines."

The woman gave birth to a boy and named him Samson. He grew and the LORD blessed him, and the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him ....

Samson went down to Timnah and saw there a young Philistine woman. When he returned, he said to his father and mother, "I have seen a

Philistine woman in Timnah; now get her for me as my wife.” His father and mother replied, “Isn’t there an acceptable woman among your relatives or among all our people? Must you go to the uncircumcised Philistines to get a wife?” But Samson said to his father, “Get her for me. She’s the right one for me.”

Some time later, when he went back to marry her, he turned aside to look at the lion’s carcass. In it was a swarm of bees and some honey, which he scooped out with his hands and ate as he went along. When he rejoined his parents, he gave them some, and they too ate it. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey from the lion’s carcass.

Now his father went down to see the woman. And Samson made a feast there, as was customary for bridegrooms. When he appeared, he was given thirty companions.

“Let me tell you a riddle,” Samson said to them. “If you can give me the answer within the seven days of the feast, I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty sets of clothes. If you can’t tell me the answer, you must give me thirty linen garments and thirty sets of clothes.”

“Tell us your riddle,” they said. “Let’s hear it.”

He replied, “Out of the eater, something to eat; out of the strong, something sweet.”

For three days they could not give the answer. On the fourth day, they said to Samson’s wife, “Coax your husband into explaining the riddle for us, or we will burn you and your father’s household to death. Did you invite us here to rob us?”

Then Samson’s wife threw herself on him, sobbing, “You hate me! You don’t really love me. You’ve given my people a riddle, but you haven’t told me the answer.”

“I haven’t even explained it to my father or mother,” he replied, “so why should I explain it to you?”

She cried the whole seven days of the feast. So on the seventh day he finally told her, because she continued to press him. She in turn explained the riddle to her people.

Before sunset on the seventh day the men of the town said to him, "What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?" Samson said to them, "If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle."

Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon him in power. He went down to Ashkelon, struck down thirty of their men, stripped them of their belongings and gave their clothes to those who had explained the riddle. Burning with anger, he went up to his father's house. And Samson's wife was given to the friend who had attended him at his wedding.

Later on, at the time of wheat harvest, Samson took a young goat and went to visit his wife. He said, "I'm going to my wife's room." But her father would not let him go in.

"I was so sure you thoroughly hated her," he said, "that I gave her to your friend. Isn't her younger sister more attractive? Take her instead."

Samson said to them, "This time I have a right to get even with the Philistines; I will really harm them." So he went out and caught three hundred foxes and tied them tail to tail in pairs. He then fastened a torch to every pair of tails, lit the torches and let the foxes loose in the standing grain of the Philistines. He burned up the shocks and standing grain, together with the vineyards and olive groves.

When the Philistines asked, "Who did this?" they were told, "Samson, the Timnite's son-in-law, because his wife was given to his friend." So the Philistines went up and burned her and her father to death.

Samson said to them, "Since you've acted like this, I won't stop until I get my revenge on you." He attacked them viciously and slaughtered many of them. Then he went down and stayed in a cave in the rock of Etam.

As he approached Lehi, the Philistines came toward him shouting. The Spirit of the LORD came upon him in power. The ropes on his arms became like charred flax, and the bindings dropped from his hands. Finding a fresh jawbone of a donkey, he grabbed it and struck down a thousand men. Then Samson said, "With a donkey's jawbone I have made donkeys of them. With a donkey's jawbone I have killed a thousand men." When he finished speaking, he threw away the jawbone; and the place was called Ramath Lehi [Jawbone Heights].

Samson led Israel for twenty years in the days of the Philistines.

#### GOSPEL LESSON

Matthew 11:1-6

After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee. When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?"

Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."

#### 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**

*"Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness"*

**Hymn 353**

Praise the one who breaks the darkness  
With a liberating light;  
Praise the one who frees the pris'ners,  
Turning blindness into sight.  
Praise the one who preached the gospel,  
Healing ev'ry dread disease,  
Calming storms and feeding thousands  
With the Father's word of peace.

Praise the one who blessed the children  
With a strong, yet gentle, word.  
Praise the one who drove out demons  
With the piercing, two edged sword.  
Praise the one who brings cool water  
To the desert's burning sand;  
From this well comes living water,  
Quenching thirst in ev'ry land.

Let us praise the Word incarnate,  
Christ, who suffered in our place;  
Jesus died and rose for victorious  
That we may know God by grace.  
Let us sing for joy and gladness,  
Seeing what our God has done;  
Let us praise the true Redeemer,  
Praise the one who makes us one.

## SERMON

Judges 13-15

Stronger than a lion, he could catch and tear a lion into two. Quicker than a fox, he caught and tied 300 fox; he turned the enemy countryside - their fields and food, their vineyards and groves - into burnt-up stubble and fire-charred wood. As a one-man army, he faced the enemy one-by-one; as a one-man army, he faced the enemy one against a thousand. In Samson, God raised up a hero to deliver his people.

God's people needed a hero. For forty years, the Philistines had been putting the squeeze on Israel, crushing, breaking, having their way with God's people. But God had a plan; God had a man in mind to free his people. With a miracle birth announced by the Angel of the LORD, Samson was a miracle man set apart by God from the time he was conceived. Set apart as a Nazirite, God's orders were clear - no wine, no beer, no cutting of the hair, no contact with the dead. Set apart by God, Samson was to get a start on what God's people were begging for, to get a start on what God was promising, to get a start on delivering God's people from their enemy.

When you hang with the wrong people, you should expect trouble, right? Well, Samson found trouble, and Samson made trouble. When the Philistines cheated him so he owed them 30 sets of clothes; he made them pay. As a one-man army, he killed thirty of the Philistines and took their clothes to pay off his debt. When his father-in-law jilted him, giving away his wife, he burned with anger and set fire to the Philistines' fields and food, their vineyards and groves. When the Philistines struck back, he came back as one-man army breaking the Philistines to pieces. When they kept coming after him - a thousand against one ... one against a

thousand, he struck them down with the jawbone of a donkey and piled them up dead - on Jawbone Heights. For twenty years, Samson was God's one-man army to deliver his people from the Philistines.

When we hear Samson stick it to the Philistines, we want to cheer, don't we? "He gave them what they had coming." And - make no mistake - whatever Samson gave them, they did have it coming.

Do you ever wish for a Samson? ... or to be a Samson? A champion to stand up for God's people against the godless bully, the godless world? An enforcer to knock the enemy down and put them in their place? Do you ever wish for a champion for the church, an enforcer willing to bare the knuckles, to bloody the knuckles, willing to bully the bully? Do you ever wish for a Samson? To be a Samson? Or wonder what a Samson could do for you? A Samson on the playground who could stand up for us and bully the bullies there. A Samson in the government who could stand up for us and bully the bullies there. A Samson at \_\_\_\_\_ could stand up for us and bully the bullies there. It can be easy to cheer for a Samson, to want a Samson, to want to be a Samson to make things right. Do you ever wish for a Samson? ... or to be a Samson?

Reading the exploits of Samson, I sometimes wonder: "What if Samson would have lived up to his calling?" What if instead of living as a demanding brat - "get me, give me what I want," what if Samson lived as a content and grateful child of God? What if instead of living driven by vengeance and vice, he lived driven by the love of God? What if instead of living to satisfy his own hormonal urges, he lived for the glory of God? What if Samson would have lived up to his calling?

Maybe instead of just tearing down the enemy, he could have built his people up to live as God's people. Maybe instead of facing the Philistines as an army of one, he could have led an army of thousands. Maybe instead of being best known for his hair-cut, best known as the foolish half of Samson and Delilah, he could have ... who knows?

That's right. "Who knows?" because Samson just had to have his way. His way instead of God's way. His way bullying his parents instead of God's way. His way with women instead of God's way. His way getting stupid with drink instead of God's way. His way with anger instead of God's way. Now, in all that, make no mistake, God was able to work his way. But what if Samson had lived up to his calling?

How often don't we settle for a Samson, thinking a Samson is the best God has for us? How often don't we settle for being a Samson, for doing the Samson thing, for ram-rodging our way instead of working God's way, thinking that ram-rodging our way is better than God's way?

When we settle for a Samson, thinking that a Samson is the best God has for us ... when we settle for being a Samson, thinking that living our way, and ram-rodging our way is the best God has for us ... what are we saying about what God has for us?

God didn't, he doesn't settle for giving us a Samson. And he doesn't settle for making us to be Samsons. Your God has promised more; he gave more. God has given us a Champion, a Judge, a Deliverer better than Samson. With a miracle birth announced by an angel, God has given us a Jesus. As an army of one, he took on the evil of this world. Not by striking out against any and all who crossed him, but by living life right. Jesus didn't boss and bully his Father; he obeyed his Father. He didn't live driven by vice and vengeance; he lived driven by love for God and love for you and me and the whole wide world out there. And in his love for you and me and the whole wide world out there, Jesus showed his greatest strength. He took, he carried our guilt as his own - your guilt, my guilt, the guilt of the whole wide world out there. He took our guilt as brats and bullies; he took our guilt for all our vices - public and private. He took our guilt, and instead of making us pay, he paid with his death on the cross, in the courtroom of God replacing our guilt with his goodness.

Why? To give us life made right, right with God, right with each other, right forever. Sounds good, doesn't it? But we don't see much of that around us, do we? We are surrounded by a world of hurt and heartbreak, injustice and wrong. The answer for that isn't just: "Wait for heaven." The answer for that - or at least part of the answer - is you! In your baptism, by his Word, God has called you. He has equipped you with his Holy Spirit. He has set you apart as his to live set apart from the world, not to live in a bubble never relating to the world, but to live in a way that is markedly different than the way of the world, to live holy, showing off and sharing the love of God.

We may not be stronger than a lion, quicker than a fox, an army of one like Samson. But we do have the Lion and his Spirit. Together with the Lion and his Spirit we can be a force that does more than fight the world; we can be God's force

to bring his life and love to the world. So don't settle with Samson; we have better with Jesus! Amen.

HYMN

*"Send, O Lord, Your Holy Spirit"*  
Hymn 545

Send, O Lord, your Holy Spirit  
On your servants now, we pray;  
Let them all be faithful shepherds  
That no lamb is led astray.  
Your pure teaching to proclaim,  
To adore your holy name,  
And to feed your lambs, dear Savior,  
Make their aim and sole endeavor.

You, O Lord, yourself have called them  
For your precious lambs to care;  
But to prosper in their calling,  
They the Spirit's gifts must share.  
Grant them wisdom from above;  
Fill their hearts with holy love.  
In their weakness, Lord, be near them;  
In their prayers, Good Shepherd, hear them.

Help, Lord Jesus, help them nourish  
Our dear children with your Word,  
That in constant love they serve you  
Till in heav'n their song is heard.  
Boundless blessings, Lord, bestow  
On your servants' work below  
Till by grace to them is given  
Their reward, the crown of heaven.

## 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

*“Oh, that the Lord Would Guide My Ways”*  
Hymn 462

Oh, that the Lord would guide my ways  
To keep his statutes still!  
Oh, that my God would grant me grace  
To know and do his will!

Order my footsteps by your Word,  
And make my heart sincere;  
Let sin have no dominion, Lord,  
But keep my conscience clear.

Assist my soul, too apt to stray,  
A stricter watch to keep;  
And should I e'er forget your way,  
Restore your wand'ring sheep.

Make me to walk in your commands -  
'Tis a delightful road -  
Nor let my head or heart or hands  
Offend against my God.

OFFERING

(Please fill out the friendship pads on the pews)

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



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