

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.

July 5, 2020

SERVICE OF THE WORD

IN OUR WORLD TODAY... we are celebrating July 4th weekend, a holiday celebrating freedom, independence, and the greatness of America. As we see in our country today, it can be really easy to get really confused about freedom, independence, and our greatness.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY... we are shown the real path to national greatness.

OPENING HYMN

"Before the Lord We Bow"
Hymn 618

Before the Lord we bow,
 The God who reigns above
And rules the world below
 In boundless pow'r and love.
Our thanks we bring;
 In joy and praise
Our hearts we raise
 To heav'n's high King.

The nation you have blessed
 May well your love declare,
From foes and fears at rest,
 Protected by your care.
For this fair land,
 For this bright day
Our thanks we pay -
 Gifts of your hand.

May ev'ry mountain height,
 Each vale and forest green,
Shine in your Word's pure light
 And its rich fruits be seen!

May ev'ry tongue
 Be tuned to praise
And join to raise
 A grateful song!

Earth, hear your Maker's voice;
 Your great Redeemer own.
Believe, obey, rejoice,
 And worship him alone.
Cast down your pride!
 Your sin deplore
And bow before The Crucified!

And when in pow'r he comes,
 Oh, may our native land
From all its rending tombs
 Send forth a glorious band,
A countless throng,
 And, joyful, sing
To heav'n's high King
 Salvation's song!

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, keep this nation under your care. Bless the leaders of our land that we may be people at peace among ourselves and a blessing to other nations of the earth. Help us elect trustworthy leaders, contribute to wise decisions for the general welfare, and serve you faithfully in our generation to the honor of your holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

1ST LESSON

Romans 13:1-7

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.

This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

GOSPEL LESSON

Matthew 22:15-22

Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. "Teacher," they said, "we know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are. Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin used for paying the tax." They brought him a denarius, and he asked them, "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?"

"Caesar's," they replied. Then he said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.

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

"God of Grace and God of Glory"
Hymn 523

God of grace and God of glory,
On your people pour your pow'r;
Crown your ancient Church's story;
Bring its bud to glorious flow'r.
Grant us wisdom; grant us courage
For the facing of this hour, For the facing of this hour.

Lo, the hosts of evil round us
Scorn the Christ, assail his ways.
From our fears that long have bound us,
Free our hearts to faith and praise.
Grant us wisdom; grant us courage
For the living of these days, For the living of these days.

Cure your children's warring madness;
Bend our pride to your control;
Shame our wanton, selfish gladness,
Rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage
Lest we miss your kingdom's goal, Lest we miss your kingdom's goal.

Save us from weak resignation
To the evils we deplore;
Let the gift of your salvation
Be our glory evermore.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
Serving you whom we adore, Serving you whom we adore.

SERMON

Proverbs 14:34

Righteousness Exalts a Nation:
Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people.

What makes a country great? What makes America great? Is it the amber waves of grain, the purple mountain majesty of *America the Beautiful*? Is it the broad stripes and bright stars of the flag, the free and the brave that make America great? Is it imprinting "In God We Trust" on our coin? What makes a country great? Is it GDP, a strong military, rich natural resources? Listening to some, freedom is what makes America great ... if we just get rid of this, that, and the other law, America will be great again. Listening to others, if we just make the right laws, America will be great again. So what makes a country great?

God has a different answer from all that. He says: "**Righteousness exalts a nation; sin is a disgrace to any people.**" The sad thing is, no matter how great I think America is, no matter how great I want America to be, what are we doing? In this America the Beautiful ... this land of the free and home of the brave, we take God's Word: "**Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people**" and we turn it upside down: "Sin exalts a nation and righteousness is a disgrace."

That doesn't sound right, does it? But what do we hear? If it weren't for COVID and the protests, we'd be hearing that sexual diversity is what makes America great. Now we hear: from one corner - what's right for America is to judge and bash police. From another corner - what's right for America is to judge and bash the people of color tired of being judged and bashed because of the color of their skin. What's right for America? What's right for America

sometimes seems to have less to do with what's good and right than what's right for me and mine. For example, when it's our guy, what's right for America is to sling mud. When it's good for our bottom line, what's right for America is to let business lie and cheat and roll over the small guy.

In so many ways, what God says is wrong, that's what's people claim is right for America. ... which is just like saying: "sin exalts a nation." In our world today, it can be so easy to point fingers: "guilty, guilty, guilty." In our world today, it can be so easy to see ourselves as victims or future victims. What isn't so easy to see is where we have been guilty. Not because we are so guilt-free, but because we prefer to see their guilt. And instead of seeing our guilt for what it is, we prefer to compare our guilt with their guilt, to hide our guilt behind their guilt, to hide our guilt behind our rights as Americans. But before we pull a muscle wagging our righteous fingers, or get a cramp wringing our victim hands ... before we feel too righteous in ourselves, it's good to remember that old saying: "people get the government they deserve."

And it's not just a government and politics thing. How many of us excuse our sin: "but it's good for me, it makes me happy, it makes my life better"? How many of us haven't thought: "doing things God's way just won't work"? That's the same thing as saying: "Sin exalts a nation and righteousness is a disgrace."

So what's the answer? How do we get back to: "**Righteousness exalts a nation; sin is a disgrace to any people**"? We start here: "God, have mercy on me a sinner." And instead of thinking that our might and our right will fix things, we look to Jesus: "**The LORD Our Righteousness.**" God has given us "**a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.**" In a world gone wrong, Jesus stood in and stood up for us. He did right by God; he didn't re-define God's Word to make wrong right, and right wrong; he did right by God. He did right by the government, and Pilate and the centurion watching over Jesus' crucifixion knew it. He did right by the little guy getting stepped on by the big guy. Jesus did right by the helpless and the hopeless. And for doing what was right, he was killed. It doesn't sound right does it? But Jesus wasn't killed just for doing right. Jesus was killed and crucified for our wrong. Even as Jesus lived right, God put your guilt and my guilt on Jesus and made Jesus pay in our place. It doesn't sound right, but for all our self-righteous finger-pointing,

for the way we play the victim card instead of standing up for victims, for our weakness in heart and our weakness in mind, for not living up to the heart and mind that God gives us - in a great sacrifice of justice, Jesus paid the price for it all, for us all, for them all. And the way he stood up and stands up and spoke up and speaks up for the guilty and hurting and heartbroken, the way he loved and loves the unlovable, the way he forgave and forgives the unforgivable, the way he gave and gives himself for the likes of this world - all that Jesus puts on you as yours as the LORD our Righteousness.

What does that mean for us? Jesus has forgiven your sin, erased your disgrace, exalted you to be right by God, saints and citizens of heaven, healed and whole, exalted to judge and rule with Christ in heaven.

But what about here and now? We don't just sing: "God Bless America." We live "God bless America." We don't just sing: "America the Beautiful," we live "America the Beautiful." **"Righteousness is what exalts a nation";** righteousness is what makes a nation great ... so we lift up America with righteousness. We live by the Word of our God with the heart of our God. Instead of re-defining life, we treasure and care for life ... not just our own but our neighbor's. Instead of re-defining family, we treasure and care for family; we show people how God's family plan works. Instead of looking out for number one, we look out for and care for the least and last one. Instead of bashing government, we pray and honor and obey. Instead of looking for someone else to make our lives better, we put our hearts and our hands to making life better for others. Instead of pointing fingers and judging "they and them," we pull the plank out of our own eyes, we open our hearts and our minds to share the love of God. We look to live in a way that if all our neighbors followed our example, America would be beautiful and blessed.

How do we do that? How do we look out for our neighbor's life - not just our suburban neighbor, but our urban neighbor where the bullets fly? How do we look out for the last and the least? Some would say charity, some church, some government and taxes. The righteous can debate that; but the righteous won't just fight to get their way in that debate. The righteous will work to see that the last and the least are cared for. And how do we pray for our government? Not just "God, get rid of ..." or "God, I can't stand ...," but we pray

for those in government and politics as people and gifts from God to be blessed by God. How? How about this - every time we see or hear them in the news we ask God, no we beg God: "God help them." Not necessarily to do what they want, or we want, but to do what God wants. "**Righteousness exalts a nation**"; so what right thing can you do ... what right heart can you show to lift up America?

What is it that makes a country great? The answer might seem out of our control, out of our power. Maybe it is. But it's not out of God's power and control. So instead of just pointing fingers or wringing our hands, let's give God a reason to bless America. Amen.

HYMN

"Christ, by Heavenly Hosts Adored"
Hymn 617

Christ, by heav'nly hosts adored,
Gracious, mighty, sov'reign Lord.
God of nations, King of kings,
Head of all created things,
By the Church with joy confessed,
God o'er all, forever blest -
Pleading, at your throne we stand:
Save your people, bless our land.

On our fields of grass and grain
Send, O Lord, the kindly rain;
O'er our wide and goodly land
Crown the labors of each hand.
Let your kind protection be
O'er our commerce on the sea.
Open, Lord, your bounteous hand;
Bless your people, bless our land.

Give us rulers who will be
Known for love and honesty;
Let the pow'rs that you ordained
Be in righteousness maintained.
In the people's hearts increase
Love of piety and peace.
Thus united, we shall stand
One wide, free, and happy land.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

M: Almighty God, we acknowledge with thanks that all we have and enjoy is a gift from your gracious hand. We come before you today in heartfelt appreciation for our nation and its people.

C: We thank you for enabling us to worship you in freedom and to serve you without fear.

M: You have enriched us with the bounties of farm and factory, the beauty of forest and mountain, and the marvels of medicine and science.

C: For all these blessings, we praise and glorify you.

M: Look with favor upon our nation, and preserve our cherished liberties. Enable our leaders to govern with wisdom, honesty, courage and justice. Protect those who serve in the armed forces and those who maintain peace and safety in our communities.

C: Give us willingness to obey our nation's laws and to work for the common good.

M: Secure our financial institutions and strengthen our economy for all people. Bless our fields that they may produce abundant harvests. Guard us from calamities of nature and accident, and spare our land from the ravages of disease and epidemic.

C: Teach us not to worry but to cast all our cares on you.

M: Strengthen the homes of our nation. By your Spirit lead husbands and wives to love each other, parents to nurture their children, young adults to assume responsibility, and children to show respect.

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

To you, O Lord, we bring our thanks and our requests.

C: Hear our prayers for Jesus' sake. 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

“God Bless Our Native Land” Hymn 619

God bless our native land!
Firm may she ever stand
Through storm and night!
When the wild tempests rave,
Ruler of wind and wave,
Do thou our country save
By thy great might.

For her our prayers shall rise
To God above the skies;
On him we wait.
Thou who art ever nigh,
Guarding with watchful eye,
To thee aloud we cry,
God save the state!

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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