

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.

August 2, 2020

DIVINE SERVICE II

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... we love to toy with danger, not just physical danger but spiritual danger, tempting God and testing his patience.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we learn a hard lesson from the life of Samson - don't toy with sin and temptation; don't toy with God's grace and promise - it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. So let us turn from toying like Samson to living with Jesus!

OPENING HYMN

"Beautiful Savior"
Hymn 369

Beautiful Savior, King of creation,
Son of God and Son of Man!
Truly I'd love thee, Truly I'd serve thee,
Light of my soul, my Joy, my Crown.

Fair are the meadows, Fair are the woodlands,
Robed in flow'rs of blooming spring;
Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer;
He makes our sorr'wing spirit sing.

Fair is the sunshine, Fair is the moonlight,
Bright the sparkling stars on high;
Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines purer,
Than all the angels in the sky.

Beautiful Savior, Lord of the nations,
Son of God and Son of Man!
Glory and honor, Praise, adoration,
Now and forevermore be thine!

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.**

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

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.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, protector of all the faithful, you alone make strong; you alone make holy. Show us your mercy and forgive our sins day by day. Guide us through our earthly lives that we do not lose the things you have prepared for us in heaven; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

FIRST LESSON

Judges 16:4-21

Some time later, [Samson] fell in love with a woman in the Valley of Sorek whose name was Delilah. The rulers of the Philistines went to her and said, "See if you can lure him into showing you the secret of his great strength and how we can overpower him so we may tie him up and subdue him. Each one of us will give you eleven hundred shekels of silver."

So Delilah said to Samson, "Tell me the secret of your great strength and how you can be tied up and subdued."

Samson answered her, "If anyone ties me with seven fresh thongs that have not been dried, I'll become as weak as any other man."

Then the rulers of the Philistines brought her seven fresh thongs that had not been dried, and she tied him with them. With men hidden in the room, she called to him, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" But he snapped the thongs as easily as a piece of string snaps when it comes close to a flame. So the secret of his strength was not discovered.

Then Delilah said to Samson, "You have made a fool of me; you lied to me. Come now, tell me how you can be tied."

He said, "If anyone ties me securely with new ropes that have never been used, I'll become as weak as any other man."

So Delilah took new ropes and tied him with them. Then, with men hidden in the room, she called to him, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" But he snapped the ropes off his arms as if they were threads.

Delilah then said to Samson, "Until now, you have been making a fool of me and lying to me. Tell me how you can be tied."

He replied, "If you weave the seven braids of my head into the fabric on the loom and tighten it with the pin, I'll become as weak as any other man."

So while he was sleeping, Delilah took the seven braids of his head, wove them into the fabric and tightened it with the pin. Again she called to him, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" He awoke from his sleep and pulled up the pin and the loom, with the fabric.

Then she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when you won't confide in me? This is the third time you have made a fool of me and haven't told me the secret of your great strength." With such nagging she prodded him day after day until he was tired to death.

So he told her everything. "No razor has ever been used on my head," he said, "because I have been a Nazirite set apart to God since birth. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as any other man."

When Delilah saw that he had told her everything, she sent word to the rulers of the Philistines, "Come back once more; he has told me everything." So the rulers of the Philistines returned with the silver in their hands. Having put him to sleep on her lap, she called a man to shave off the seven braids of his hair, and so began to subdue him. And his strength left him. Then she called, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!"

He awoke from his sleep and thought, "I'll go out as before and shake myself free." But he did not know that the LORD had left him. Then the Philistines seized

him, gouged out his eyes and took him down to Gaza. Binding him with bronze shackles, they set him to grinding in the prison.

EPISTLE LESSON

Hebrews 10:26-31

If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

HOLY GOSPEL

Matthew 13:44-46

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it."

NICENE CREED

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is,
seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one being with the Father.**

Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary,
and became fully human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate.
He suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and
glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen

HYMN OF THE DAY

What Is the World to Me Hymn 477

What is the world to me With all its vaunted pleasure
When you, and you alone, Lord Jesus, are my treasure!
You only, dearest Lord, My soul's delight shall be;
You are my peace, my rest. What is the world to me!

The world seeks to be praised And honored by the mighty,
Yet never once reflects That they are frail and flighty.
But what I truly prize Above all things is he,
My Jesus, he alone. What is the world to me!

The world seeks after wealth And all that money offers,
Yet never is content Though gold should fill its coffers.
I have a higher good; Content with it I'll be;
My Jesus is my wealth -- What is the world to me!

What is the world to me! My Jesus is my treasure,
My life, my health, my wealth, My friend, my love, my pleasure,
My joy, my crown, my all, My bliss eternally.
Once more then I declare: What is the world to me!

SERMON

Judges 16 (select)

What were they thinking? When I said that: “What were they thinking?” something came to mind, didn't it? Maybe something you did; maybe something you saw someone do. I imagine we've all had our parents wondering: “What were you thinking?” I imagine most all of us have scratched our own head: “What was I thinking?” It's easy, isn't it? It's easy to go with the flow; easy to go with what feels good, isn't it?

So, what was he thinking? Samson falls in love with a woman named Delilah. Did he whisper sweet riddles in her ear? “**Out of the eater, something to eat; out of the strong, something sweet.**” I don't know what he said to woo her. But we do know how the leaders of the Philistines sweetened the pot. They offered Delilah 1100 pieces of silver each; enough silver to win her heart. All Delilah had to do was find out what made Samson strong and tell them the secret.

So Delilah puts the question out there for Samson: “Tell me the secret. What makes you so strong? Tell me how to tie you up and subdue you.” The alarms should have gone off for Samson: “Run! Run! Run!” Instead Samson lies, “**If anyone ties me with seven fresh bowstrings that have not been dried, I'll become as weak as any other man.**” Hearing that, the rulers of the Philistines supply fresh bowstrings. Delilah ties Samson up. Men hide in the next room. And Delilah springs the trap: “**Samson, the Philistines are upon you!**” But it didn't go as planned, did it? “**Samson snapped the bowstrings as easily as a piece of string snaps when it comes close to a flame.**”

Now if you're Samson, what do you do? Wisdom says: "Get out!" But not Samson. Samson stays. He gives Delilah another chance. And Delilah - she's no quitter - she takes it: **"You've made a fool of me; you lied to me. Come now, tell me how you can be tied."** Samson can't seem to help himself. He lies again: **"If anyone ties me securely with new ropes that have never been used, I'll become as weak as any other man."** So you know what Delilah did. She takes new ropes and ties Samson up. And just like the first time, with men hiding in the next room, she springs the trap: **"Samson, the Philistines are upon you!"** But, just like the first time, Samson snaps the ropes off his arms just as if they were threads.

What's the saying? "Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me." But Samson isn't good at feeling shame. He prefers to play the fool. And Delilah is willing to play him. She tries again: **"Until now, you have been making a fool of me and lying to me. Tell me how you can be tied."** Samson plays along: **"If you weave the seven braids of my head into the fabric on the loom and tighten it with the pin, I'll become as weak as any other man."** Did it work? Even with his hair woven into the fabric on the loom, Samson still had his strength.

Yes, Samson still had his strength, but not his smarts. Instead of calling three strikes and tossing Delilah out, Samson gave Delilah a fourth down. And Delilah goes for it: **"How can you say, 'I love you,' when you won't confide in me? Three times you have made a fool of me and haven't told me the secret of your great strength."** So she nagged him and nagged him and nagged him, day after day, until he was tired to death of the nagging. Finally, Delilah had him. He told her everything. **"No razor has ever been used on my head,"** he said, **"because I have been a Nazirite set apart to God since birth. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as any other man."**

You know what happens next. Delilah sends word to the Philistines. She lulls Samson to sleep, calls a man to shave off Samson's hair, and so begins the humiliation of Samson. Samson's strength leaves him. Delilah calls, **"Samson, the Philistines are upon you!"** Samson wakes and thinks: **"I'll do as I've always done and shake myself free."** Little did he know that the LORD had left him.

What was Samson thinking? "I won't let this go too far".... "I'll stop before" "Just one more" What was he thinking? "I've got this. I can handle her. No big deal." "I've got this. I can handle a thousand Philistines. No big deal."

What was he thinking? “It always works out.” Maybe even “God will get me out.”
What was he thinking?

What was he thinking? The same thing we’ve thought too many times. “I won’t let this go too far. I’ll stop before ...” The same thing we’ve thought before: “No big deal. I’ve got this; I can handle it.” The same things we’ve thought before: “Nobody will know.” “God will forgive me; he always does.” What was he thinking? The same thing we’ve thought before: “Just one more; just a little longer.”

What did Samson find out? Sin and temptation are nothing to toy with. God’s promises are nothing to toy with. Just because God loves us doesn’t mean that he gives us a pass or a license to go wherever we want and do whatever we want. Just because he forgives doesn’t mean that we’re forgiven and free to sin some more. Just because he let something slide yesterday doesn’t mean that he will let us slide today. Just because he let us get away with something yesterday doesn’t mean that he will let us get away with it today. Sin and temptation are nothing to toy with. God’s promises and grace are nothing to toy with. **“It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”**

What do we do with that? We could ignore it and keep on keeping on in our sin. We could get angry with God: “I don’t answer to you. How dare you tell me what to do.” That’s right, we can test God’s patience and dare God and tempt God to cut us off. Or, we can get off our high horse - we can get over ourselves - and stop imagining that we know better than God, and do some good, old-fashioned begging: **“God, have mercy on me a sinner.”** I know it might hurt for a bit, but a broken and contrite heart our God will not despise.

Instead, he invites us with our broken hearts ... he invites us no matter what our pasts, no matter what our struggles ... it doesn’t matter if we’ve been a Delilah, it doesn’t matter if we’ve been a Samson ... he invites us to join him - “I love you; I forgive you; I have a new life for you.” He tells you about his love for you. Not a Samson and Delilah kind of love, but the kind of love where Jesus took stepped in for us, took the blame for all we’ve done wrong, and paid the price for us, for you, and me, and the whole world, taking our place under God’s judgment and dying for us on the cross. With that kind of love for you, he invites you to live a new life with him. A new life where instead of toying with sin and temptation, instead of toying with dirtiness and shame, we get to live showing off the life and the love, the grace and the greatness of our God.

Today, we get to celebrate the greatness of God's grace. Today, we celebrate what Jesus has for us as beggars - his life, his love, his peace, himself. Amen.

HYMN

Rise, My Soul, to Watch and Pray

Hymn 472

Rise, my soul, to watch and pray; From your sleep awaken!
Be not by the evil day Unawares o'ertaken.
For the foe, Well we know, Is a harvest reaping
While the saints are sleeping.

Watch! Let not the wicked world With its lies defeat you
Lest with bold deceptions hurled It betray and cheat you.
Watch and see Lest there be Faithless friends to charm you
Who but seek to harm you.

Watch against yourself, my soul, Lest with grace you trifle;
Let not self your thoughts control Nor God's mercy stifle.
Pride and sin Lurk within, All your hopes to shatter;
Heed not when they flatter.

But while watching also pray To the Lord unceasing.
God protects you day by day, Strength and faith increasing,
So that still Mind and will Shall unite to serve him
And forever love him.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

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.

THE SACRAMENT

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)

M: The Lord be with you.

C: **(Spoken) And also with you.**

M: Lift up your hearts.

C: **We lift them up unto the Lord.**

M: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

C: **It is good and right so to do.**

M: It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who rose from the dead in glorious triumph to bring forgiveness to the world and everlasting life to all who believe. Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING †

M: Blessed are you, O God Almighty, who through Jesus Christ, your eternal Word, created all things and made mankind in your own image.

Blessed are you, O merciful Father, for when Adam sinned and lost your image, you did not forsake the people you had created. You sent your only begotten Son to take on human flesh through the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary. As our substitute, he fulfilled all of your laws in our place and died the death we deserve because of our sin.

Blessed are you, O God, our Savior, for you have gathered us here to remember Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf. In this meal you give us his true body and blood, which paid our debt to you and assures us of your forgiveness.

For all of your undeserved love toward us, we give thanks and praise to your living and life-giving name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

† Jesus took bread and *gave thanks* (Matthew 26:26).

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

M: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my † body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; this is my † blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

M: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: **Amen.**

DISTRIBUTION

M: We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet that you have given us to eat and to drink in this sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith, nourished our hope, and strengthened our love. By your Spirit help us to live as your holy people until that day when you will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, 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

On My Heart Imprint Your Image Hymn 319

On my heart imprint your image,
Blessed Jesus, King of grace,
That life's riches, cares, and pleasures
Have no pow'r to hide your face.
This the superscription be:
Jesus, crucified for me,
Is my life, my hope's foundation,
And my glory and salvation.

OFFERING

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