

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.

September 6, 2020

DIVINE SERVICE II

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... so many people are feeling empty and alone.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we see how our Lord has and does step in and step up for us.

OPENING HYMN

"I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say"

Hymn 338

I heard the voice of Jesus say, "Come unto Me, and rest;
Lay down, O weary one, lay down Your head upon My breast."
I came to Jesus as I was, Weary, and worn, and sad;
I found in Him a resting-place, And He has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say, "Behold, I freely give
The living water, thirsty one; Stoop down, and drink, and live."
I came to Jesus, and I drank Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived, And now I live in Him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say, "I am this dark world's Light;
Look unto Me; your morn shall rise And all your day be bright."
I looked to Jesus, and I found In him my Star, my sun;
And in that light of life I'll walk Till trav'ling days are done.

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

Lord, we pray that your mercy and grace may always go before and follow after us that, loving you with undivided hearts, we may be ready for every good and useful work; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON

Ruth 4 (select)

Meanwhile Boaz went up to the town gate and sat there. When the kinsman-redeemer he had mentioned came along, Boaz said, “[So-and-so], come over here and sit down.” So he went over and sat down. Boaz took ten of the elders of the town and said, “Sit here,” and they did so. Then he said to the kinsman-redeemer, “Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our brother Elimelech. I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line.”

“I will redeem it,” he said.

Then Boaz said, “On the day you buy the land from Naomi and from Ruth the Moabitess, I will acquire the dead man’s widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property.”

At this, the kinsman-redeemer said, "Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it." ... Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, "Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech, Kilion and Mahlon. I have also acquired Ruth the Moabitess, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from the town records. Today you are witnesses!" ...

So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. Then he went to her, and the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. The women said to Naomi: "Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a kinsman-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth."

Then Naomi took the child, laid him in her lap and cared for him. The women living there said, "Naomi has a son." And they named him Obed.

He was the father of Jesse, the father of David. This, then, is the family line of Perez: Perez was the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, Salmon the father of Boaz, Boaz the father of Obed, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David.

A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham:

Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram,

Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nashon, Nashon the father of Salmon,

Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David.

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**

SERMON

A REDEEMER EVEN BETTER THAN BOAZ

Empty and alone. I know some of you have been there. You're looking in the pantry and all you see are your kids' empty, hungry faces. Your refrigerator, your purse, your wallet, your bank book all on the edge of empty. And you wonder: "How are we going to make it?" Empty and alone. The room you're in isn't empty; you're not physically alone. But that someone you're with, that someone you love, what they just said leaves you feeling completely empty and alone. And you wonder: "Who can I turn to?" Empty and alone. You're waiting for the test results - "What if ...? What do I do if ...?"

Naomi felt empty and alone. She wasn't empty or alone, but she felt empty and alone. Ruth was there, on the edge of empty and alone - a stranger in a strange place, easy prey for troublemakers; hard-working, but living a hard, hard life - on the edge of empty and alone. And then there was Boaz - a good man with a good heart and some good money. You remember Naomi's plan? "Ruth, let's get you a husband. Tonight, after Boaz has had his supper, after he's had his drink, when he's sleeping out there under the stars, slide in under his blanket." Not just because Boaz was a good man with a good heart and good money. But because Boaz was their kinsman-redeemer.

Their kinsman-redeemer. “What’s a kinsman-redeemer?” you ask. A kinsman-redeemer is, first, a kinsman, a close relative. His job is to step in and step up for his family, for his relatives. Going back in time, if I were to go bankrupt and lose my home, my farm, it would be the job of my kinsman-redeemer to step in and step up for me - to buy back, to redeem my home, my farm, and so take care of the family. If I were in debt to the point I couldn’t pay and I had to sell myself into slavery - yes, that’s what people did back then - it would be the job of my kinsman-redeemer to step in and step up for me - to pay my debt, to redeem me, to buy me out of slavery. If I were murdered, it would be the job of my kinsman-redeemer to step in and step up, to avenge my death, to work justice for me and my family. It was the job of the kinsman-redeemer to step in and step up for his family, to step in and step up for the helpless and hopeless, the empty and alone, in his family.

Empty and alone, Naomi needed a kinsman-redeemer. On the edge of empty and alone, Ruth needed a kinsman-redeemer. Boaz was that kinsman-redeemer - a close relative, and a good man with a good heart and good money. But Boaz wasn’t the closest relative. There was a so-and-so who was closer. We don’t know much about this so-and-so, except this - he hadn’t stepped in and stepped up for Naomi and Ruth. When Boaz spoke up, this so-and-so was willing to add Naomi’s land to his land. But when he heard that he might not be able to keep that land This gets complicated. When he heard that Boaz intended on marrying Ruth ... when he realized that any son of Boaz and Ruth would be heir to Naomi and Ruth ... when he realized he could lose Naomi’s land ... that closer kinsman stepped back and stepped out. He wasn’t willing to risk what stepping in and stepping up might cost him.

Boaz knew the cost. But he wasn’t concerned about the cost; he wasn’t deterred by the cost; he wasn’t stopped by the cost. He cared for Ruth; he cared to do the right thing by Naomi and Ruth. He cared to do the right thing by God. And so - cost or no cost - Boaz stepped in and stepped up to make things right. He redeemed Naomi’s land; he paid the price so that Naomi’s family land could stay with Naomi and her family. He married Ruth to re-establish the family line. And God gave them a son!

Empty and alone - no more. A couple weeks ago, in the first verses of Ruth, we met Naomi. We heard how she lost her smile, her home, her husband, her sons; how she felt so empty and alone. But now in these last verses of Ruth, we see Naomi - she’s no longer empty and alone. She has her grand-baby on her lap, and a

smile on her face. If you haven't already done so, I hope you read through the whole book of Ruth. It's a beautiful story, beautifully told.

But when I hear how God worked things for Naomi and Ruth, I sometimes think: "Well, that's nice for them. What does that mean for me? It's nice to hear God can do nice things for his people, but how can I know that God will step in and step up for me? Because sometimes, like Naomi, I feel empty. Empty before God. Empty before you, empty before my family and friends, empty before the world. Empty and wrong. Empty with so little to offer. Empty and behind in a bind." When we're feeling empty and alone like that, oh, it's great to hear what God did for Naomi and Ruth, but what about today? What about us? What about me?

The answer is in the last verses of Ruth. "**Boaz the father of Obed, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David.**" Yes, that David, King David, in the line, the genealogy of Jesus Christ. The book of Ruth isn't just about God doing nice things for Naomi and Ruth. The book of Ruth is about God setting us up - about God setting you and me up - with a Savior.

For those times - when you feel empty and alone before God, when you feel empty and alone in the face of death; when you feel empty and alone in the hospital bed or the waiting room or at home because there's no doctor fix for what ails you; when you feel empty and alone staring at your bank statement; when you feel empty and alone wondering how in the world you're going to make it right with your family ... when you feel empty and alone and you need a Boaz, a kinsman-redeemer to step in and step up for you ... you get to know this - as great as Boaz was, you have better than Boaz.

You have Jesus Christ, the Son of God himself, stepping in and stepping up for you. He saw us empty and alone before God, guilty before God, helpless and hopeless to make ourselves right with God. He knew the cost, but he didn't just count the cost and turn away. No, he took on our flesh, he became one of us to be our brother. As kinsman-redeemer, he stepped in and stepped up for us to pay the price - the cost of the cross - to set you right with God. Today, before God, you have that Jesus speaking up for you - with the cross, he has you forgiven and covered. Today, you have that Jesus stepping in and stepping up for you with the riches of heaven to make sure you aren't left empty and alone. Today, you have

that Jesus stepping in and stepping up for you with the power of God to hold you safe with God. Yes, today and every day, you have that Jesus stepping in and stepping up for you. I can't promise you that your empty and alone times will work out as neatly as the book of Ruth. But I can promise you an even better ending, because your kinsman-redeemer promises you an even better ending - life with him in heaven, for you.

How do you get to know "for you"? Because Jesus isn't just a nice story for someone else. Jesus came for you! How do I know? The book of Ruth ends in and around Bethlehem, the same Bethlehem where Jesus was born, the same Bethlehem where the angel said to the shepherds: "**I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior is born. He is Christ the Lord.**" "For all the people." That means: "For you." Amen.

HYMN

"Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing"

Hymn 340

Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise,
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of His grace!

My gracious Master and my God,
Assist me to proclaim,
To spread through all the earth abroad,
The honors of your name.

The name of Jesus calms our fears,
And bids our sorrows cease;
'Tis music in the sinner's ears,
'Tis life and health and peace.

He breaks the pow'r of canceled sin,
He sets the pris'ner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean;
His blood avails for me.

See all your sins on Jesus laid;
The Lamb of God was slain;
His life was once an off'ring made
That you might live again.

Glory to God and praise and love
Be ever, ever giv'n
By saints below and saints above,
The Church in earth and heav'n.

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.**

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Thank you to Beth Rockwell and Greg Haak for playing the flute and recorder

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

"I Know that My Redeemer Lives"

Hymn 152

(After a one-verse musical introduction by Justin Wintrone...)

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 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 and grants me daily breath;
He lives, and I shall conquer death.
He lives my mansion to prepare;
He lives to bring me safely there.

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!"

OFFERING

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