

Sermon followed by Service - John 14:1-6 - VBS - June 29, 25

Ever get lost? I find it easy to get lost. Back in the days before GPS and maps on our phones, I was driving south from Boulder, Colorado, to Denver. I didn't have directions or a map, but I had the mountains. As long as I could keep the mountains on my right, I would be heading in the right direction, south. But then I found myself driving in mountain cloud fog. When I got out of the fog, I found the mountains on my left; instead of heading south toward Denver, I had gotten myself completely turned around, heading north. Another time I was mountain hiking with some pastor and teacher friends. Pastors and teachers are supposed to be smart, supposed to know the way. We had maps and compasses to show us the way. But the trail-heads and much of the trails were still under snow. We thought we knew where we were; we thought we knew where we were going. Nope. I find it easy to get lost.

I find it easy to get lost. So I find it amazing that people can use the stars to find their way. Look up into the sky at night, find the Dipper - is it the Big Dipper or the Little Dipper? - follow the pointer stars at the end of the bowl, and there you have the North Star. There you might have the North Star. Me, I find it easy to get lost. This past week in VBS we talked about the North Star, about Jesus as our North Star.

When I heard that (Jesus as our North Star), I thought: "What does that mean?" So I looked it up in the Bible. I found Jesus as the Morning Star, the star telling us a new day, a better day is coming. We like that - don't we? - a better day is coming.

I found Jesus as the Sun of Righteousness, the star that give us a new day, a new day of healing, a new day with life made right. But I couldn't find Jesus as our North Star. So I googled it. And what did I find?

For some people, Jesus as our North Star means: Jesus gives us direction; he guides us, tells us the way to go. Sounds good, doesn't it? In a world with so many different people telling us so many different things about right and wrong, so many people telling us: "Do this; don't do that," ... in a world where it can be so easy to be confused and lost ... it is so good to have Jesus as a North Star guiding us, giving us directions, showing us where to go and how to live. Last week, Jesus told us: "Love one another" A couple weeks ago, we heard Jesus give us direction, a purpose in life - "You will be my witnesses."

When Jesus gives us direction, what do we know? His directions are good and wise, even better, Jesus' directions are godly and right. We don't have to worry about Jesus giving us wrong directions, or Jesus leading us the wrong way. Jesus' directions on what to do might be different from the directions we hear from our friends. Jesus' directions on how to live life might be way different from what we hear out in the world. Jesus' directions might be hard; they might seem impossible; we might not like what Jesus has to say. But because Jesus' directions are God's directions, we know that Jesus' directions are good for us, that Jesus won't lead us into getting lost.

What else do we know? I find it easy to get lost. When Jesus says, "Go right," time and again, I go left. When Jesus

says, “Go forward,” time and again, I get stuck, or go backward. I need more than Jesus telling me what to do and which way to go - otherwise, I will surely be lost. Not just lost in the clouds driving north in the fog when I should be driving south. Not just lost wandering in the woods. But lost in myself, lost following the ways of the world, lost in thinking my way instead of thinking God’s way, lost in going the world’s way instead of going God’s way; lost in sin, my sin, the world’s sin; lost and leaving God, arguing against God, fighting against God. In all that, we might think we’re going the right way, until that hard day we find out we’re lost and guilty before God, lost and damned before God, lost and headed for hell.

Lost and leaving God. That can’t be fixed with a new set of directions. There is a part of us that will fight against God’s directions, Jesus’ directions, until the day we die. And even if we could follow Jesus’ directions perfectly the rest of our lives - which we can’t - there’s no way we can fix what we’ve already broken, no way we can make right what we’ve already done wrong. What does that mean for us? We need Jesus to be more than a North Star that guides us; we need Jesus to do more than just guide us and direct us and show us the way to go. If all Jesus did for us was guide us and direct us and show us the way to go we would be lost.

Today, we thank God Jesus did more; Jesus is more than just a guiding North Star. In our lesson, Jesus’ disciples were on edge, in the dark, they were feeling a bit lost in what was going on, lost in what was coming up. They knew trouble was coming. Jesus had already told them he would be arrested and crucified. Now, that night, he was telling them they would betray him, deny

him, abandon him. The disciples knew trouble was coming, but they felt lost not knowing what to think or do.

So what did Jesus do? He didn't just give his disciples a set of directions; instead, Jesus gave his disciples a promise. Instead of letting his disciples stay stuck in the darkness of their confusion, Jesus pointed them away from themselves, away from this world; he pointed them to himself and to a place far, far above the North Star we see in the sky. **“You trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. ... I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”**

Jesus isn't just a nice guy or a good friend pointing us to a better life; Jesus is the Son of God who will take us to be with him in heaven. How? Not by giving us directions. Not by guiding us. Not by showing us the way. No, Jesus is the way.

Think of Jesus when he was a school-age child. When Jesus listened to his mom and dad and obeyed them, when Jesus went to church and to Temple, Jesus wasn't just showing us what to do, Jesus was living for us, in our place, as our substitute. When Jesus healed the sick and fed the hungry, Jesus wasn't just showing us to be nice to people, take care of people, Jesus was living for us, in our place, as our substitute. When Jesus taught his disciples and the crowds - **“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength,”** and **“Love your neighbor as yourself,”** when Jesus shared God's invitation and promise: **“Come to me all you who are**

weary and burdened and I will give you rest,” Jesus wasn’t just showing us how to say good and godly things, Jesus was living for us, in our place, as our substitute. And when Jesus went to the cross and was crucified, it wasn’t just because some people didn’t like Jesus; Jesus went to the cross for us, in our place, as our substitute. Then, when Jesus rose back to life on Easter Sunday, God didn’t raise Jesus to life just for Jesus’ sake, God raised Jesus to life for us, to give his life to us.

How does he do that? In baptism, God covers you and connects you with the perfect life of Jesus. At the same time, in baptism, God covers you and connects you with the death of Jesus. But that’s not all; in baptism, God connects you with the Easter life of Jesus, a life that will last forever into heaven. Using the Word of God and baptism, the Holy Spirit makes you alive with Jesus. Now, through faith in Jesus, you are forgiven. Through faith in Jesus, you have God’s promise to look out for you and take care of you. Through faith in Jesus, you have heaven ahead of you. How? Why? Not because Jesus shows us the way, but because Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

I told you I find it easy to get lost. So you can be sure I’m not here because I found Jesus. No, I’m here because Jesus found me. And Jesus has found you and chosen you - not just to follow Jesus as your guiding North Star, but to see Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life - the Star who gives you life. Amen.

NEW MORNING PRAISE

IN OUR VBS THIS PAST WEEK ... we learned about trusting in Jesus. Our world is filled with feelings of doubt, worry, loneliness, and fear but we do not have to be afraid because we have Jesus! He lived a perfect life, died on the cross, and rose from the dead to save us from sin, death, and the devil! What a friend we have in Jesus!

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we see Jesus, not just as our guiding star, but as the Way, the Truth, and the Life!

OPENING HYMN

"How Great Thou Art"

Hymn 612

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
consider all the works thy hand hath made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
thy pow'r throughout the universe displayed;

Refrain

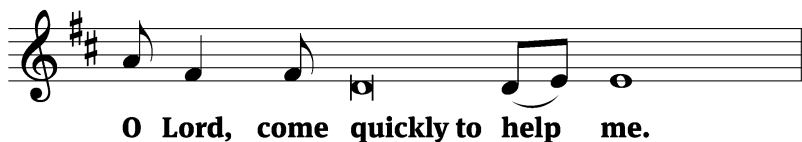
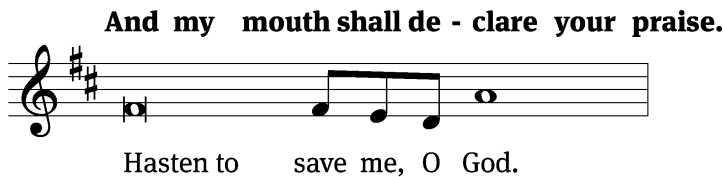
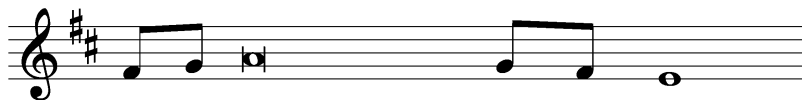
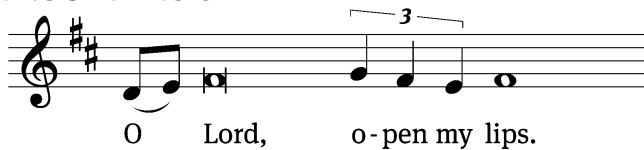
Then sings my soul, my Savior-God, to thee,
How great thou art! How great thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Savior-God to thee,
How great thou art! How great thou art!

When through the woods and forest glades I wander
and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
when I look down from lofty mountain grandeur
and hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze; *Refrain*

And when I think that God, his Son not sparing,
sent him to die, I scarce can take it in,
that on the cross my burden gladly bearing
he bled and died to take away my sin; *Refrain*

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!
Then I shall bow in humble adoration
and there proclaim: "My God, how great thou art!" (*Refrain*)

OPENING SENTENCES



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.



Give glory to God, our light and our life.



Come, O come, let us wor - ship.

COME, O COME, LET US SING TO THE LORD



Come, O come, let us sing to the Lord,



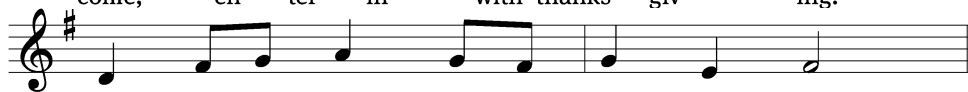
let us shout with joy to our sav - ing Rock;



come, en - ter in with our songs of praise,



come, en - ter in with thanks - giv - ing.



1 You are a great and a won - drous God,
2 Come, let us wor - ship and, bow - ing low,

cup - ping in your hands all the depths of earth.
 kneel be - fore the One who has made us all.

You made the hills and the moun - tains high,
 You are the God whom we call our own,

Refrain

you made the seas and the dry land.
 we are the flock that you shep - herd.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, you have prepared joys beyond understanding for those who love you. Pour into our hearts such love for you that, loving you above all things, we may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

VBS CHILDREN SING (SUNDAY)

"Let's Trust in Jesus"

*From the mountain high to the valley low,
 from the things we see to the great unknown,
 He is our true north, He is our way home,
 He is our guide in this world that's so wild.*

Let's trust in Jesus. Let's trust in Jesus wherever he leads us. Let's trust in Jesus.

*When you feel alone and you're powerless, when you need some hope,
 Just remember this: He holds the seas,
 He names the stars, and he's always with you wherever you are, so*

*Let's trust in Jesus. Let's trust in Jesus wherever he leads us. Let's trust in Jesus.
 O-oh, oh O-oh, oh O-oh, oh O-oh, oh
 Let's trust in Jesus. Let's trust in Jesus wherever he leads us. Let's trust in Jesus.*

"This Is the Day"

*This is the day, this is the day
That the Lord has made, that the Lord has made.
We will rejoice, we will rejoice and be glad in it, and be glad in it.*

*This is the day that the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.
This is the day, this is the day That the Lord has made.
The day, this is the day. The day, this is the day.*

*These are my friends, these are my friends
That the Lord has made, that the Lord has made.
We will rejoice, we will rejoice. And be glad in it, and be glad in it.*

*These are my friends that the Lord has made.
We will rejoice and be glad in it. These are my friends, these are my friends
That the Lord has made. This day, this is the day. This day, these are my friends.*

*This is the day, this is the day. This day, these are my friends.
This is the day, this is the day. This day, these are my friends.
This day, this is the day. This day, these are my friends.
This day, this is the day. This day, these are my friends.*

FIRST READING

Philippians 4:4–9, 13, 19

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

HYMN

“Do Not Let Your Hearts Be Troubled”

Hymn 809

Refrain

Do not let your hearts be troubled; have faith in God and faith in me.
I will go forth to prepare a place for you;
then I'll come back to take you with me,
that where I am, you may also be.

In God's house there are many places
for you to dwell in peace and safety.
You know the way to where I'll lead you;
if you are lost, I will show the way. *Refrain*

I am the way, the truth, and the life;
only through me can you know what I know.
If you knew me, you would know the Father;
if you see me, you see your God. *Refrain*

The words I speak are not only of myself;
it is your God who lives within me.
If you believe that your God and I are one,
I will provide when you call my name. *Refrain*

GOSPEL

John 14:1–6

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.”

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Revelation 21:1-5

Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

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 Loved the World So That He Gave"

Hymn 570

God loved the world so that he gave his only Son the lost to save
that all who would in him believe should everlasting life receive.

Christ is the solid rock of faith, who was made flesh and suffered death.
All who confide in him alone are built on this chief cornerstone.

God would not have the sinner die; his Son with saving grace is nigh.
His Spirit in the Word declares that we in Christ are heaven's heirs.

Be of good cheer, for God's own Son forgives the sins that you have done.
You're justified by Jesus' blood; baptized, you are a child of God.

If you are sick, if death is near, this truth your troubled heart can cheer:
Christ Jesus saves my soul from death; this is the anchor of my faith!

Glory to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Three in One!
To you, O blessed Trinity, be praise now and eternally!

SERMON

John 14:1-6

HYMN

"In Christ Alone"

Hymn 510

In Christ alone my hope is found; he is my light, my strength, my song;
this cornerstone, this solid ground,
firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
when fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My comforter, my all in all; here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone, who took on flesh, fullness of God in helpless babe;
this gift of love and righteousness, scorned by the ones he came to save.
Till on that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied;
for ev'ry sin on him was laid; here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground his body lay, light of the world by darkness slain;
then bursting forth in glorious day, up from the grave he rose again!
And as he stands in victory, sin's curse has lost its grip on me;
for I am his and he is mine, bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the pow'r of Christ in me;
from life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny.
No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man can ever pluck me from his hand;
till he returns or calls me home, here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand.

OFFERING

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PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

M: O Lord, our God, you are wise and powerful, good and gracious. Your mercies are new every morning. Each day you open your hand and provide for the needs of your children on earth.

C: **We praise you for every grace and blessing.**

M: Strengthen your Church in all the world. Let your comforting message of salvation in Christ Jesus be proclaimed to troubled souls everywhere.

C: **Use our ministries and offerings to extend your healing and your hope.**

M: We bring you our requests for the various structures of our society. Bless our national, state (provincial), and local governments.

C: **Grant us civil servants who are worthy of honor and respect.**

M: Grant prosperity to our businesses and industries. Give employers a sense of fairness toward their workers, and employees a feeling of joy and pride in their workmanship.

C: **Help us find satisfaction in all work well done.**

M: Invigorate the schools of our land. Give success to every effort that helps students read, think, and communicate in ways that will promote an informed and responsible citizenry. Arouse curious minds to discover the wonders of your created order.

C: Give us teachers and students who pursue excellence.

M: Strengthen the families of our country. Give fathers and mothers a renewed commitment to be good parents. Give children and young people the wisdom to regard their parents as your representatives.

C: Lead us to love one another as you have loved us.

Special prayers and intercessions may follow.

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

Silent prayer.

M: Gracious Father, we pray boldly as Jesus taught, with the confidence that you will hear and with the faith that you will respond for our welfare.

C: Amen.

PRAYER AND 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, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, you have brought us safely to this new day. Defend us with your mighty power, and grant that this day we neither fall into sin nor run into any kind of danger; and in all we do, direct us to what is right in your sight, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. **Amen.**

BLESSING



The Lord bless and keep you.



A - men.



The Lord's face ev - er shine up - on you.



A - men.



The Lord grant you peace for all your days.



A - men.

CLOSING HYMN

“Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow”

Hymn 617

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise him, all creatures here below; praise him above, ye heav'nly host;
praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

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St. John Lutheran School at a Glance

- A Christian education with emphasis on Jesus Christ and faith
 - WELSSA and NCPA Accreditation
 - Emphasis on creating intellectual curiosity in a safe environment
 - 12:1 student-to-teacher ratio
 - Experienced, caring teachers who truly get to know your child
 - SEVP-Certified International Program
 - Multi-age classrooms which:
 - encourage cooperative learning,
 - provide a student-centered setting that is rich in diversity,
 - allow peer teaching and flexible learning opportunities,
 - resemble real life situations,
 - enable children to become skilled nurturers,
 - challenge students in a positive way
 - Proudly celebrating over 50 years of Christian education in Libertyville
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*St. John Lutheran School is enrolling students for the 2025-2026 school year. The new school year will begin on **Tuesday, August 19**, and students can be enrolled from 3-year-old preschool all the way up to 8th grade. **Orientation Night is Tuesday, July 29, at 6 p.m.***

For more information and to set up a time to tour our school, please call our office at 847-362-4424, or email our principal, Mr. Retzlaff (david.retzlaff@stjohnslib.com). Scan the QR code to visit our website. We would be happy to discuss with you how we can partner with you in your child's Christian education!

