

Sermon followed by Service - July 6, 2025 - Acts 5:29 & Rev 13

Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* is old, some 460 years old. It's a history of 1500 years of Christian persecution. The *Voice of the Martyrs* is new - month after month reporting how Christians around the world are being persecuted, even killed for their faith.

Christians kidnapped, tortured, killed for being Christians - it shouldn't surprise us. Outlaw militia - ISIS, Taliban, Boko Haram - rampaging to root out Christ's church - that shouldn't surprise us. Anti-Christian governments around the world restricting, seeking to silence and to squash Christ's church - shouldn't surprise us. But what of the United States of America ... the United States with its money that says - "In God We Trust" ... the United States that claims to be "one nation under God"... what if the United States of America were to try to silence Christ and his church? Or perhaps worse, what if the United States of America were to try to warp Christ and his church to fit some political agenda? That shouldn't surprise us either, should it?!

Peter and Paul tell us that government is God's servant. And we like to think that our governments will serve God. But read Revelation and what do we see in these end times? A beast coming up out of the water - a beast wearing the faces of governments, ruling with the power of government, using the power of government to serve the dragon Satan. Yes, the government is supposed to be God's servant to do good, but time and again government turns against God working evil as Satan's pet beast, working evil as Satan's servant to silence Christ and his church.

John didn't need a vision from Jesus to show him that. John had seen the beast at work - his brother James beheaded by Herod, before that John the Baptist beheaded by a different Herod, and his Savior Jesus crucified under Pontius Pilate. I could go on; John knew how Satan worked in government. He had experienced how God's servant to keep order could so easily become Satan's pet beast to bring disorder, to fight against Christ and his church.

Living in the United States we've been largely protected from government as beast. Oh, we've had our complaints about government as bureaucratic behemoth and what not. But for the most part, we haven't had to deal with our government as Satan's beast out to silence Christ and his church. In Confirmation Class, teaching the Fourth Commandment - honoring our parents and honoring our government, we would pull out "the Peter passage" - **"We must obey God rather than men."** We would talk about how God's people in other places, in other times, would have to disobey the state to stand with God. And we would say, "So far we've been blessed to enjoy freedom to worship, to teach, to live as God says."

Today we could be a step closer to using "the Peter passage," not just in a classroom, but in the courtroom as the government calls right what God calls wrong. Why? We could point fingers at the beast. We could point fingers at an ungodly world. We could blame the media and on and on. But as we point fingers at others, what else is true? We have fingers pointing back at ourselves. How often haven't we tuned in the ungodly media and glued our eyes to its ungodliness? How often

haven't we fed the beast, making it stronger, hoping the beast will give us what we want? And how often haven't we swallowed the lies of the world hook, line, and sinker, and then cheered and joined the liars - "I am who I am! I get to be who I want to be! I get to do what I want to do! I come first; what I want should come first. And no one can deny me because the Declaration of Independence says I have a god-given right to pursue happiness, a god-given right to be free to be me!" And the beast belches in approval as Satan laughs at us.

So now what? Now we see the wrath of God being revealed. As we have pushed God away, God's judgment has been to step away. So what do we do? Hire lawyers to fight for our rights! Elect politicians to vote our way! Wring our hands, pull out our hair ...??? No. We get down on our knees - "God, have mercy on me a sinner."

And what does God say? "You fed the beast ... You cheered the lies ... Now you get what you asked for"? No!!! As we hear Satan laugh and the beast belch his approval, God reminds us: Herod the Great didn't get his way with the baby Jesus. Pilate the Weak and the Good Friday mob shouting "crucify" ... they didn't get their way with Jesus either. In the end, the beast won't get its way, Satan won't get his way.

Instead, God reminds us: Jesus did get his way. Even though he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he rose. Even though Satan and the Sanhedrin tried to silence Christ, his word got out. And His word is still getting out. Christ's message and

Christ's kingdom has been going and growing and ruling with a power greater than the fear of death. Jesus is getting his way!

Jesus is getting his way! No matter how Satan lies. No matter how the world rants and rages against what God says. No matter what the beast does ... people around the world - people ruled by Muslim governments, people ruled by Hindi governments, people ruled by atheist governments, people ruled by pseudo-Christian governments ... all around the world, people are hearing and believing and sharing the message of Christ's victory, his rule, and his promise: "The rule of sin and Satan is broken! Your sins are forgiven. Your guilt is gone. Paid for at the cross. Proven by Easter!"

What does that mean? We don't have to live as guilty. We don't have to live as if sin rules. We don't have to live as if the beast gets the final say. With Jesus, in God's courtroom, you are declared right by God. With Jesus, in God's rule, you are set free to live as the people of God in tune with God. And with Jesus, we get to know - God will have the final say.

So today, as you hear Satan laugh, you can know: God will get the last laugh. As you hear the beast belch, you can know: you have Jesus as your Champion against Satan and the beast. No matter how the beast roars, you have Jesus as your Lord and Shepherd, ruling all of heaven and earth for you his bride, his church, his sheep, his lambs ... you have Jesus ruling all of heaven and earth to keep you safe for life with him in heaven.

So why? If Jesus is in control, why do we see the beast strutting like it rules the day? Why? When and where people would rather die with the dragon than live with the dragon-slayer ... where people would rather live the lie “I am who I am - I can be whoever I want to be - I can do whatever I want to do” where people would rather live their lie than bow before Jesus as their Lord and Savior ... there Jesus will let them ... he will let them die with their lie.

But what about us? Why do we have to listen to the beast belch and roar? Consider it a test - when we hear the beast, will we keep our Head? Will we keep our Heart? Will we keep Christ as our Head or will we go with the flow of the world? Will we keep Christ in our heart with a love for our neighbors no matter who or where they might be? Will we keep Christ in our heart with a love for the lost? Or will we let our hearts become hard and haughty? When you hear the beast belch and roar, consider it a test to make you strong, a test to show Christ's strength. We don't have to shake in fear. And we have something better to do than shake our fist in anger. When the beast shows its ugly head, we get to shake ourselves awake, we get to shake ourselves into action - our country needs us! Our country needs us to show them Jesus! Amen.

July 5 & 6, 2025

SERVICE OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... we are surrounded by blessings that move us to thank God for the country in which we live! At the same time, in our “nation under God” we are faced by many challenges to our faith and our witness. This isn’t something new or unexpected. Jesus told us we would be challenged (and far worse) by his enemies in our homes, our culture, our church, and our governments.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we thank and praise God for his blessings, and we consider how we will show God to be God, no matter who or what tries to take his place.

OPENING HYMN

“Before You, Lord, We Bow”

Hymn 775

Before you, Lord, we bow, our 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 you, our King!

The nation you have blessed may well your love declare,
from foes and fears at rest, protected by your care.
For this bright day, for this fair land —
gifts of your hand — our thanks we pay.

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, with joy to sing to heav’ns high King, salvation’s song!

INVOCATION

- 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 OF SINS AND ABSOLUTION +

- M: God invites us to come into his presence and worship him with humble and penitent hearts. Therefore, let us acknowledge our sinfulness and ask him to forgive us.
- C: **Holy and merciful Father, I confess that I am by nature sinful, and that I have disobeyed you in my thoughts, words, and actions. I have done what is evil and failed to do what is good. For this I deserve your punishment both now and in eternity. But I am truly sorry for my sins, and trusting in my Savior Jesus Christ, I pray: Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.**
- M: God, our heavenly Father, has been merciful to us and has given his only Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son † and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

+ PRAYER AND PRAISE +

LORD, HAVE MERCY

- M: For all that we need in life and for the wisdom to use all your gifts with gratitude and joy, hear our prayer, O Lord.
- C: **Lord, have mercy.**
- M: For the steadfast assurance that nothing can separate us from your love and for the courage to stand firm against the assaults of Satan and every evil, hear our prayer, O Christ.
- C: **Christ, have mercy.**
- M: For the well-being of your holy Church in all the world and for those who offer here their worship and praise, hear our prayer, O Lord.
- C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: Merciful God, maker and preserver of life, uphold us by your power and keep us in your tender care:

C: **Amen.**

M: The works of the Lord are great and glorious; his name is worthy of praise.

HYMN (No Introduction)

“O Lord, Our Lord”

Hymn 939

Refrain

O Lord, our Lord, how glorious is your name in all the earth.

Almighty God, merciful Father, you crown our life with your love.

You take away our sin; you comfort our spirit;

you make us pure and holy in your sight.

You did not spare your only Son, but gave him up for us all. *Refrain*

O Son of God, eternal Word of the Father, you came to live with us;

you made your Father known;

you washed us from our sins in your own blood.

You are the King of glory; you are the Lord! *Refrain*

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, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING

Revelation 13:1–10

The dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on its horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion.

The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was filled with wonder and followed the beast. People worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, “Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?”

The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. It was given power to wage war against God’s holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb’s book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.

Whoever has ears, let them hear.

“If anyone is to go into captivity,
into captivity they will go.
If anyone is to be killed with the sword,
with the sword they will be killed.”

This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of God’s people.

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

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalms 2D

Refrain

Great are the works of the LORD. Al-le-lu-ia! Al-le-lu-ia!

lu-ia! Great are the works of the LORD.

Tone



Why do the nations / conspire
and the peoples / plot in vain?
The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together a- / gainst the
LORD
and against his A- / noointed. *Refrain*

The One enthroned in / heaven laughs;
the Lord / scoffs at them.
He rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, / saying,
“I have installed my King on Zion, my holy / mountain.” *Refrain*

I will proclaim the / LORD’s decree:
He said to me, “You are my Son; today I have become your / Father.”
Glory be to the Father and / to the Son
and to the Holy / Spirit,
as it was in the be- / ginning,
is now, and will be forever. / Amen. *Refrain*

SECOND READING

Acts 5:29

Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than human beings!

1 Peter 2:11–17

Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.

For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.

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

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Proverbs 14:34

Alleluia. Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people.
Alleluia.

GOSPEL

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 that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax 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 image is this? And whose inscription?"

"Caesar's," they replied.

Then he said to them, "So give back 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.

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

HYMN OF THE DAY

"God of Grace and God of Glory"

Hymn 770

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 the 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

Acts 5:29

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 truly 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

“Forgive Us, Lord, for Shallow Thankfulness”

Hymn 754 vs. 3, 4

Forgive us, Lord, for selfish thanks and praise,
for words that speak at variance with deeds;
forgive our thanks for walking pleasant ways,
unmindful of a broken brother’s needs:

Teach us, O Lord, true thankfulness divine,
that gives as Christ gave, never counting cost,
that knows no barrier of “yours” and “mine,”
assured that only what’s withheld is lost.

OFFERING

If you prefer to give online, the code at the right will take you to our Online Giving page. We invite our online givers to join in our offering with an “I Give Online” card in the pew racks.



PRAYER INTRO

1 Timothy 2:1–4

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people — for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

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.

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

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

For all these blessings, we praise and glorify you.

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.

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

Keep our financial institutions secure and our economy strong. 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.

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

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.

Lead the citizens of our land to honor the useful foundations of society.

Care for those who are sick or have been injured. Calm those who are disappointed and depressed. [Especially bless... *here name the person and the cause of the petition.*] Provide guidance to those who care for people in trouble or in need.

Lead us to provide help when we can and to pray at all times.

Hear us, Lord, as we pray in silence.

Silent prayer

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

Hear our prayers for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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.)

(Gluten-free wafers are available; ask Pastor.)

M: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

M: Lift up your hearts.

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

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

C: **It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

M: Praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In love he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. He sends the Holy Spirit to testify that we are his children and to strengthen us when we are weak. Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ. To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and thanks and honor and glory for ever and ever.

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY *Sanctus* (No Introduction) - Sung

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of your glory.
You are my God and I will exalt you. I will give you thanks for you have
become my salvation. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth
is full of your glory.

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. **Amen.**

O CHRIST, LAMB OF GOD *Agnus Dei* (No Introduction) – Sung

O Christ, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on
us. O Christ, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy
on us. O Christ, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; grant us
your peace. Amen.

DISTRIBUTION HYMN

"All Depends on Our Possessing"

Hymn 807

All depends on our possessing God's abundant grace and blessing,
though all earthly wealth depart. They who trust with faith unshaken
in their God are not forsaken and will keep a dauntless heart.

He who to this day has fed me and to many joys has led me
is and ever shall be mine. He who ever gently schools me,
he who daily guides and rules me, will remain my help divine.

Many spend their lives in fretting over trifles and in getting things that have no solid ground. I shall strive to win a treasure that will bring me lasting pleasure and that now is seldom found.

When with sorrow I am stricken, hope anew my heart will quicken; all my longing shall be stilled. To his lovingkindness tender soul and body I surrender, for on God alone I build.

Well he knows what best to grant me; all the longing hopes that haunt me, joy and sorrow, have their day. I shall doubt his wisdom never; as God wills, so be it ever; I commit to him my way.

If my days on earth he lengthen, he my weary soul will strengthen; all my trust in him I place. Earthly wealth is not abiding, like a stream away is gliding; safe I anchor in his grace.

CLOSING PRAYER

M: Hear the prayer of your people, O Lord, that the lips which have praised you here may glorify you in the world, that the eyes which have seen the coming of your Son may long for his coming again, and that all who have received in his true body and blood the pledge of your forgiveness may be restored to live a new and holy life, 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. **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN

"God Bless Our Native Land"

Hymn 774

God bless our native land; firm may she ever stand thro' 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!

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St. John Lutheran School at a Glance

- A Christian education with emphasis on Jesus Christ and faith
 - WELSSA and NCPSA 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!

