



# I AM THERE AMONG THEM

MATTHEW 18:20

# St. Paul's Lutheran Church

25 W. Springettsbury Ave., York, PA 17403

Church Office 717-843-8155

Email: [st.paulsyork@comcast.net](mailto:st.paulsyork@comcast.net)

[www.stpaulsyork.org](http://www.stpaulsyork.org)

[www.stpaulspreschoolyork.com](http://www.stpaulspreschoolyork.com)

## Announcements

**WELCOME** Thank you for being with us.

We are a Christian church within the Lutheran tradition (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America) and we welcome people of all Christian traditions as well as people of other faiths and people of little or no faith. Christian worship has been offered to God in this congregation for 184 years. By worshipping with us today, you become part of that living tradition.

**Restrooms** are available in the Good Shepherd Room (Springettsbury lobby) and the narthex. Baby changing stations are provided in these restrooms.

**Thank you for your faithfulness** in sending your offering through the mail or by using online options from your financial institution or through the “Donate” now from the church website **stpaulsyork.org**. Your gifts are keeping us current with the commitments associated with St. Paul’s and our ministry partners.

**Ushers are needed.** New guidelines are in place. Please contact the church secretary if you can serve. (New procedures were emailed to those who historically served and are also in the August *Our Church* newsletter)

We continue to experience a surge in families needing assistance through the Food Pantry. We can use some additional volunteers. We are seeking folks who are not in the “at risk” category for COVID-19. Simply notify Larry or Janet Moore if you can help on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday morning. **Our most critical need is with help on Tuesday mornings.**

Our COVID-19 task force is assisting us as we remain open at St. Paul’s. Please thank Deacon Ellen Doughty, Dr. Jessica Ericson, Sheridan Palmer, Deacon Harold Sargeant, and Tim Yakim for their dedication and service.

**Thank you** to Victor Fields for the use of his sound system for the outdoor service.



Flowers This Week

This week’s flowers are given to the Glory of God in celebration of our 50th wedding anniversary by Frank & Earline Jones.

## STAFF

Pastor  
Youth Director  
Organist, Choir Director  
Bookkeeper  
Secretary  
Sexton  
Preschool Director

Reverend Stanley Reep	<a href="mailto:prreep.stpaulsyork@comcast.net">prreep.stpaulsyork@comcast.net</a>
Kelly Moore-Spencer	<a href="mailto:kmoorespencer.stpaulsyork@comcast.net">kmoorespencer.stpaulsyork@comcast.net</a>
Victor Fields	<a href="mailto:vfields.stpaulsyork@comcast.net">vfields.stpaulsyork@comcast.net</a>
Dale Zeiger	<a href="mailto:dzeiger.stpaulsyork@comcast.net">dzeiger.stpaulsyork@comcast.net</a>
Patee Pizzirusso	<a href="mailto:st.paulsyork@comcast.net">st.paulsyork@comcast.net</a>
Ted Weikert	<a href="mailto:st.paulsyork@comcast.net">st.paulsyork@comcast.net</a>
Deb Becker	<a href="mailto:director@stpaulspreschoolyork.com">director@stpaulspreschoolyork.com</a>

## **Guidelines for Worship during the time of COVID-19**

### **Entering and Leaving the Church:**

*Face masks are required both inside and outside. If you do not have a mask you may use one of the pre-packaged masks located at the entrances or at the usher stations. (If a face mask was provided upon arrival, kindly deposit it in the specially marked basket at the exterior doors or at the usher stations as you leave so that it can be properly washed and prepared for use again.)*

*Kindly sign in at the door through which you entered. This will help if we need to be in contact.*

*Please take your service bulletin with you or dispose of it properly. Please don't place it back into a basket.*

### **Offerings:**

*Monetary offerings may be placed in the basins provided at the entrances to the nave or at the usher stations outdoors prior to the service or immediately following the service. You may also donate via our website at [www.stpaulsnyork.org](http://www.stpaulsnyork.org)*

### **While in the Nave or on the lawn:**

*You may sit together as a family. Outside worshippers should place their lawn chairs using social distancing. Inside worshippers should sit in designated pews only (green card 10:30 AM. We ask that you practice social distancing from one family to the next within the pew.*

### **Communion Procedure:**

***For the outside service:*** Communion positions are designated with a chalk cross marked on the sidewalks on Springettsbury Ave. and surrounding the lawn. Wearing your face mask., proceed to the closest sidewalk and take your place at a Communion position.

***For inside services:*** Ushers will direct you. The pulpit side of the nave communes first followed by the font side.

*Wearing your face mask, come to the chancel step taking your place at one of the five positions marked on the chancel floor with a green cross.*

*Your entire household may gather at one of the five positions marked by the green cross.*

### ***For all to receive the sacrament:***

- *Extend your arms and cup your hands together to receive the host.*
- *Please do not reach out to take it from the minister.*
- *Once the minister has moved to the next group, then remove your mask, receive the host, replace your mask and return to your pew/seat by the closest side aisle. There is no need to hurry.*

### ***In our prayers we remember...***

*Betty Mehring, Drew Herdson, Dana Sodor, David List, Sandy Shellenberger, Brian McKenna, Abbie Gayle Guyton, Amanda, Jim Young, Penny Bailey, Eddie Turner, Sr., Jessica Ericson, Kristine Gross, Porter Stacey, the family and loved ones of Gene Shue, especially his wife Norma.*

# Fourteenth Sunday of Pentecost

September 6, 2020 8:00 & 10:30 AM  
During the time of COVID -19

## PRELUDE

*Prelude on "Slane"*

Gerre Hancock

*Stand*

## BRIEF ORDER FOR CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

In the name of the Father and of the Son ✚ and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

*Silence for reflection and self-examination.*

Most merciful God,

**we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

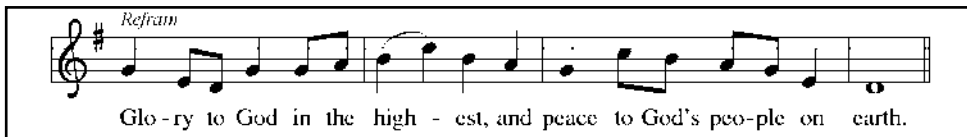
In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ✚ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

## APOSTOLIC GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

**HYMN OF PRAISE** *The cantor sings the refrain, then it is sung by all at the appointed time. The stanzas are sung by the cantor.*





1 Lord God, heav'n-ly King, al - might-y God and Fa - ther, we



wor-ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glo-ry.

### Refrain



2 Lord Je-sus Christ, on-ly Son of the Fa-ther, Lord God, Lamb of



God, you take a-way the sin of the world: have mer-cy on us;



you are seat-ed at the right hand of the Fa-ther: re - ceive our prayer.

### Refrain



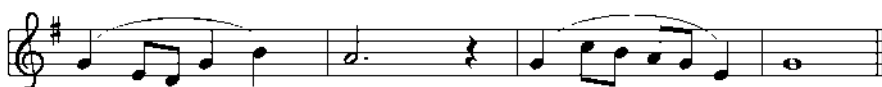
3 For you a - lone are the Ho - ly One, you a - lone are the



Lord, you a - lone are the Most High, Je - sus Christ, with the



Ho - ly Spir - it, in the glo - ry of God the Fa - ther.



A - - men, a - - men.

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.      **And also with you.**

Let us pray. . . .God of all creation, you reach out to call people of all nations to your kingdom. As you gather disciples from near and far, count us also among those who boldly confess your Son Jesus Christ as Lord.      **Amen**

*Sit*

**READING      Eszekiel 33:7-11**

*(back cover)*

*At the conclusion of the reading      The Word of the Lord.*

**Thanks be to God**

**PSALM      Psalm 119: 33-40** *spoken responsively by half verse*

<sup>33</sup> Teach me, O LORD, the way | of your statutes,\*

**and I shall keep it | to the end.**

<sup>34</sup> Give me understanding, and I shall | keep your law;\*

**I shall keep it with | all my heart.**

<sup>35</sup> Make me go in the path of | your commandments,\*

**for that is | my desire.**

<sup>36</sup> Incline my heart to | your decrees\*

**and not to | unjust gain.**

<sup>37</sup> Turn my eyes from watching | what is worthless;\*

**give me life | in your ways.**

<sup>38</sup> Fulfill your promise | to your servant,\*

**which you make to | those who fear you.**

<sup>39</sup> Turn away the reproach | which I dread,\*

**because your judg- | ments are good.**

<sup>40</sup> Behold, I long for | your commandments;\*

**in your righteousness pre- | serve my life.**

*Stand*

**VERSE**

*Sung by cantor*





## HOLY GOSPEL

**Matthew 18:15-20**

*(back cover)*

The Holy Gospel according to **St. Matthew**  
*At the conclusion of the Gospel.*  
The Gospel of the Lord.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

*Sit*

## SERMON

**Pastor Reep**

*Stand*

## APOSTLE'S CREED

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.**

**He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.**

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.**

**He descended into hell.\***

**On the third day he rose again.**

**He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,**

**the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,**

**the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people according to their needs.

*A brief silence.*

Unite your church, O God. Bless the cooperative work of churches in this community. Strengthen ecumenical partnerships; guide the work of the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Protect your creation, O God. Renew and enliven places suffering from drought, flood, storms, or pollution. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Turn nations and leaders to ways of peace. Shape new paths toward peace and cooperation. Teach us to recognize one another as neighbor. Guide legislators, civil servants, judges, and police toward protecting the well-being of all. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Tend to all in need of your compassion. Hear the cries of those awaiting justice and those yearning for forgiveness. Give community to the lonely and neighbors to the out-cast. Shelter all who are vulnerable in body, mind, or spirit (*especially*). Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Sustain us in our work, O God, and give work to those who need it. Shape societies to ensure fair treatment for all who labor. Lord, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

We remember with thanksgiving those who have died in faith. As you equipped them, equip us with your love and mercy, until with them we see your salvation.

Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

All these things and whatever else you see that we need, we entrust to your mercy; through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**And also with you.**

*Sit*

## OFFERTORY PRAYER

Merciful Father,

**we offer with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us—our selves, our time, our possessions, signs of your gracious love. Receive them for the sake of him who offered himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

## DIALOGUE

*sung by Pastor/congregation*

The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.

Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

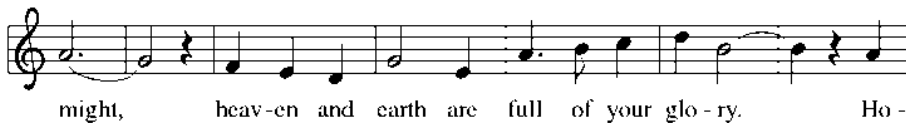
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

**PREFACE** *The preface appropriate to the day is sung*

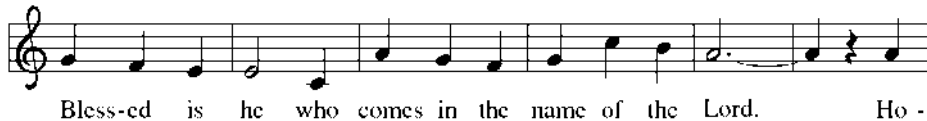


## SANCTUS

*Sung by cantor. Congregation joins at the "Blessed is he..."*



**Congregation joins in singing**



## THANKSGIVING

Blessed are you, Lord of heaven and earth.

In mercy for our fallen world you gave your only Son,

that all those who believe in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

We give thanks to you for the salvation you have prepared for us through Jesus Christ.

Send now your Holy Spirit into our hearts,

that we may receive our Lord with a living faith as he comes to us in his holy supper.

**Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

In the night in which he was betrayed,

our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;

broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:

Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup,

gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying:

This cup is the new covenant in my blood,

shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever. Amen.

**FRACTION** *a brief silence is kept*

**AGNUS DEI** *sung by cantor*



Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the  
world; have mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you  
take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on us.  
Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the  
world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

*Sit The pastor cleanses hands and prepares for the distribution of Holy Com-munion.*

## COMMUNION OF THE FAITHFUL

*Instructions for receiving the sacrament are on the inside front cover of the bulletin.*

**HYMN**      *Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God*  
(congregation joins in humming the melody)

*Stand*

## POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

**Amen**

## POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Let us pray. We give you thanks, almighty God, that you have refreshed us through the healing power of this gift of life. In your mercy, strengthen us through this gift, in faith toward you and in fervent love toward one another; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

**HYMN**      *Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee (Stanza 1 & 3) back pages*

## BLESSING

Almighty God, Father, ✙ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

**Amen.**

## DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord      **Thanks be to God.**

**POSTLUDE**      *Fanfare for the Common Man*      Aaron Copland

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*Please be respectful of distancing and personal space as you leave. Feel free to gather outside for conversation.*

*Please take your service bulletin with you or dispose of it properly. Please don't place it back in the basket or leave it in the pew.*

*If you were provided with a mask on arrival, kindly place it in the marked container at the exterior door. It will be laundered and returned for a future time.*

Stanzas 1 & 3

## Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee



- 1 Joy - ful, joy - ful we a - dore thee, God of glo - ry, Lord of love!
- 2 All thy works with joy sur-round thee, earth and heav'n re - flect thy rays,
- 3 Thou art giv - ing and for - giv - ing, ev - er bless-ing, ev - er blest,



Hearts un - fold like flow'rs be - fore thee, prais-ing thee, their sun a - bove.  
stars and an - gels sing a-round thee, cen - ter of un - bro - ken praise.  
well - spring of the joy of liv - ing, o - cean-depth of hap - py rest!



Melt the clouds of sin and sad - ness, drive the gloom of doubt a - way.  
Field and for - est, vale and moun-tain, flow-'ry mead-ow, flash-ing sea,  
Thou our Fa - ther, Christ our broth - er, all who live in love are thine;



Giv - er of im - mor - tal glad-ness, fill us with the light of day.  
chant-ing bird, and flow - ing foun-tain call us to re - joice in thee.  
teach us how to love each oth - er, lift us to the joy di - vine!

Text: Henry van Dyke. 1852–1933

Music: HYMN TO JOY. Ludwig van Beethoven. 1770–1827. adapt.

**Thank You for Your Consistent Giving**—During this time of pandemic we cannot thank you enough for your generous, consistent gifts to the church. Without them we would need to radically rethink our daily operation. Knowing that this is the month in which we transition from our construction loan to a traditional mortgage, the future lender has been keeping abreast of our financial commitment to the ministry undertaken by St. Paul's. To that end we are grateful that we do not need to seek out a new lender, or worse yet, scramble to show our financial capability. Because you have consistently given throughout these months of physical distancing we are able to continue to carry out the plans outlined and set forth at the annual meeting held last November. Thank you for financial giving to the work and witness carried out through St. Paul's Lutheran Church. We also extend our appreciation to the ongoing work of our Finance Committee.

**Small group musical ensembles are forming.** Please contact Victor Fields if you are willing to participate; vocally, handbells, instruments, percussion. Thank you.

**HARVEST WINE DINNER AND AUCTION—IMPORTANT NOTICE**—On behalf of the entire event committee, thank you for your interest and excitement in the 2020 Italian Wine Dinner and Auction. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we must postpone the event until October 16, 2021. While this event is a very important fundraiser for our ministry, the health and safety of those around us are our highest priority. For those of you who have already purchased your tickets, we will gladly refund your ticket price. Please contact the church office at 717-843-8155 by October 1, 2020 and a refund check will be sent. For those of you who would prefer that your ticket price be made as a donation to the St. Paul's Food Pantry and Preschool (proceeds recipients), please do nothing. Your ticket price will automatically be considered a donation if we do not hear from you by October 1st. Thank you for your support in 2019 which made our fundraiser successful. We're looking forward to seeing everyone in 2021 for an even more successful night of fun and fellowship.

### **Food Pantry—September**

**Items needed:** Canned fruit, canned vegetables, canned meats, mashed potato mix, rice, pasta side dish and peanut butter. We are in need of volunteers for the summer. Anyone able to help can contact Teresa Rohrbaugh or Janet and Larry Moore. Plastic Bags are always needed. Money donations are gratefully accepted. Please place cash or check in a "special" envelope marked "Pantry".



Boy Scout Troop 19 is taking orders for the sale of popcorn and/or nuts in September. We will not be selling in-person this year. Our order will be placed in mid-October and will be available on November 14. If interested in helping out our troop and their program, please call Nancy Banta @ 717 848 6627 for more information. Thanks so much.

**On Monday September 14 the Church observes Holy Cross Day.** The Prayer of the Day is as follows: *Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ was lifted high up on the cross so that he might draw the whole world to himself. Grant that we who glory in his death for our salvation may also glory in his call to take up our cross and follow him; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.* We will observe the day with Vespers at 6:30 PM. If the weather is cooperative we will gather on the south lawn encircling the large wooden lawn cross. If there is rain, we will hold the liturgy in the Church Nave. Worshipers are asked to bring a cross that holds significant meaning for them. The crosses will be placed on tables at the base of the cross for all to view. The Liturgy will be recorded and posted on the church website and Facebook page.

### **Confirmation Sessions Begin Tuesday September 8 @ 6:00 PM**

The first session of Confirmation Ministry will begin on Tuesday September 8 at 6:00 PM in Christ Hall. The sessions will last 45 minutes so please arrive promptly. The design of the program this season will allow for in person or remote participation by students grade 7 and up who have not yet confirmed their faith in Christ Jesus. Participants will be provided with a new study Bible. This is an edition of the sacred scripture that has proved helpful in past years and is accessible for students beginning the seventh grade. We will practice social distancing; each participant will have their own table and supplies. The sessions will video record the presenters (not the participants) so that any student not able to attend can have access to the session and complete the work independently. In addition to the Tuesday evening sessions scheduled, worship notes will be an ongoing part of the program. The worship notes forms will be provided along with all other necessary class materials. Worship notes can be completed through in person worship or by participating via the video recorded service posted to the church website. It is critically important that confirmation students who are not able to meet in person for class sessions discuss the materials with a member of their household. It is through conversations that faith and life is engaged. To enroll for the fall session please contact the church office 717-843-8155. The Confirmation Ministry follows the Small Catechism of Martin Luther. We will begin with the section on The Lord's Prayer. The start date for the fall session is September 8 and the concluding date is October 27. We hope that all of our students grade 7 and up will engage in this ministry.

## **Christian Education this Fall**

Growing in our faith is important in our lives as Christians. Currently, being together in large groups to learn, share and grow is not advisable. The Christian Education Committee and church staff are planning education to be held at other times.

Monday            ZOOM with Pastor McKee

Tuesday          Confirmation Class with Pastor Reep and Miss Kelly

Wednesday      Bible Study with Pastor Reep

**Parents**—Watch for your next issue of Spark Family Magazine which you should be receiving in late September. St. Paul's Church pays for this subscription to be sent to your home four times a year to help in your faith journey with your children. During this time when we cannot meet regularly for education at the church, this magazine will be especially helpful in your child's faith formation. We hope that you enjoy this time learning together. Watch for further ideas in the October newsletter. Please let us know how it goes and send pictures of your experiences.

Sincerely,

The Christian Education Committee

## **Discussions on the Letters to the Phillipians**

**Four Monday evenings at 7:00 PM via ZOOM**

**September 21, 28 October 5, 12.**

Join Pastor Tom McKee in conversations on Paul's letters to the church in Philippi! St. Paul wrote letters to the Christians in Philippi to encourage them to keep the faith during difficult times. We will read part of a chapter each week. Pastor McKee will give some historical background. Participants will be invited to share what stands out to them and then reflect on what this means for their lives. This class will meet via Zoom. Please contact the church office to be provided with the link to the weekly study.

**Wednesday Bible Study, September 9 @ 10:30 AM-** Studying the scriptures together deepens our knowledge of the biblical content, renews faith and draws us closer together as a community of Christ. We will be studying the Old Testament reading and gospel reading for the upcoming Sunday morning. In the month of September our discussion will include Old Testament texts of Ezekiel, Genesis, and Jonah; and gospel texts in Matthew focusing on chapters 18 through 20. The group will gather in Christ Hall. We will practice physical distancing allowing ample space between participants. The sound system in Christ Hall will be utilized so that everyone should be able to hear even if positioned further from



Sacred texts gave form and shape to Ezekiel's life. Just as the Bible today gives form and shape to our lives. As God's messenger Ezekiel grasped the book of Exodus (22:21-22, 25-27) and its importance for life and living in relationship with God and with one another. We know the book of Exodus mostly as it relates to the move from bondage and captivity under Pharaoh, crossing the Red Sea, and the giving of the law as stated in the Ten Commandments. But Ezekiel had a deeper grasp of the law and how it shaped relationships.

*You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.*

*You shall not abuse any widow or orphan.*

*If you lend money to my people, to the poor among you, you shall not deal with them as a creditor; you shall not exact interest from them.*

*If you take your neighbor's cloak in pawn, you shall restore it before the sun goes down; for it may be your neighbor's only clothing to use as cover; in what else shall that person sleep?*

These are God's laws. This section of the book of Exodus sports the heading *Social and religious laws*. We don't spend much time rooting around in religious biblical laws. We are Lutheran's; people who pride ourselves on grace. As Lutheran's we are also a biblically literate people. We are people who delve into the scriptures and use them to interpret scripture. Brother Martin himself found this endeavor to fill up nearly every waking hour of a day. (That is why his beloved wife Katie did all of the work and allowed him to wage reformation.) These religious laws are exemplary for us this morning as we tackle the reading from the Prophet Ezekiel. They provide a part of the backstory for making sense of the present story.

Every good story has a turning point. The turning point is critical to the whole of the story and the book of Ezekiel is no exception. The turning point in the first reading is the fall of Jerusalem. Now in order to fall you have to have experienced; some height, some prestige, some recognition about who you are, where you have come from, what makes you different, what makes you stand out from all the others.

And part of what made God's people stand out from all the others is that Israel's God is the protector of the legally defenseless. That God stands with the resident alien the sojourner in the land. That God positions himself with the orphan and widow and the poor. These are the religious attitudes and actions that set Israel apart from the others and what provided them with such a vibrant reputation.

But remember our turning point. These things had all but fallen by the wayside. There was so much more that was appealing, calling to them, stroking their ego. When Ezekiel lamented to God and cried out to the people to turn from their wicked, sinful ways, his words fell on deaf ears. People didn't want to hear about how far they had fallen, how their reputation was soiled, how they had forgotten the days in Egypt and the years spent eking out life and living in a place that was not theirs. But now at this turning point, at this critical moment, Ezekiel is banned from addressing his fellow Israelites.

This is a time of crisis. Ezekiel knew it. He recognized the signs; exorbitant interest being charged in the markets, lack of care for widows and orphans, sojourners being put out, and the only thing being protected was the wicked way of life that had taken possession of them. Ezekiel is doing ministry in a time of crisis. Ministry during a time of crisis is complex and burdensome. It is tough going creating an awareness that will lead people to appropriate action. Most of us would run from such a task. Ezekiel knows that to have any meaningful kind of life it involves association with God. And to have association with God one needs to be living obediently to the “life giving laws” of God. (The text cited from Exodus.) So, turning, a turning point in the story, a turning point in your life, Ezekiel reminds us that *God does not desire the death of sinners (wicked) but rather that we turn from our sinful (wicked) ways and live*. In the Gospel reading it is stated in language of binding and loosening. Turning is a matter of doing rather than aspiring or hoping or longing or even wanting something more, something other than the present situation in which you and I find ourselves. Turning is a matter of doing. It is action.

We hear this text most often in the large extended confession of sin on Ash Wednesday. Where we tell God and one another that we are going to take up the disciplines of lent; prayer, fasting, almsgiving. For 40 days we are going to pray more, eat less, and give enough so that someone else can have a life. Early in ministry as an exercise for the stewardship committee, as an example of giving, generosity, I asked folks to use the dollar amount of their weekly offering to purchase groceries in their home that week! Man O Day was there belly aching (and not because they were fasting)! We are “all in” on Ash Wednesday stating as a matter of fact how we want to turn our lives around. And the turning comes with the doing. The examples from Exodus; restoring the poor man’s pledge, returning stolen property, standing with the poor and needy, helping the legally defenseless, and making sure that people aren’t swindled out of having a pair of pajamas when it is time for bed. These all require doing, being active, engaging on behalf of the other.

This liberating teaching that Ezekiel was on about as messenger of the most-high God is all about removing burdens of the past and opening up the possibility of a different future. Ezekiel remembered that Israel’s God is the protector of the very ones that are being given the short end of the stick, or worse, no stick at all. The liberating teaching that we proclaim is how the most-high God is all about removing burdens of the past and opening to us the possibility of a different future through his Son, Christ Jesus. Jesus comes on the scene and the first words proclaimed in a time of crisis are “repent” turn, live differently, love abundantly, give generously, transform life. Turn.

We are in the presence of the Lord this morning. He comes among us forgiving us from past burdens and opening up the possibility of a different future with him and with our neighbors. Christ Jesus through his own death and resurrection graciously provides a way for us. But the turning took action, doing, on his part. He took up the cross, was beaten, suffered and died, was buried, and was raised up on the third day, to make a way. Through Jesus there is a turning point in the story; in your story and mine, of life before when we lived for self, and life now taking up the cross living for others. Ezekiel was silenced, banned from speaking out about how far God’s people had fallen. The fall of Jerusalem is a turning point. Christ Jesus gives us opportunity to turn and live. Every good story has a turning point. Ours is possible through Jesus’ love. Amen.

**FIRST READING: Ezekiel 33:7-11**

So you, mortal, I have made a sentinel for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. <sup>8</sup>If I say to the wicked, "O wicked ones, you shall surely die," and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but their blood I will require at your hand. <sup>9</sup>But if you warn the wicked to turn from their ways, and they do not turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but you will have saved your life.

<sup>10</sup>Now you, mortal, say to the house of Israel, Thus you have said: "Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?" <sup>11</sup>Say to them, As I live, says the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?

**Psalms 119:33-40**

**SECOND READING: Romans 13:8-14**

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup>The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." <sup>10</sup>Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

<sup>11</sup>Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; <sup>12</sup>the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; <sup>13</sup>let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. <sup>14</sup>Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 18:15-20**

[Jesus said to the disciples:] "If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. <sup>16</sup>But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>17</sup>If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. <sup>18</sup>Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. <sup>19</sup>Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup>For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

**Next Sunday's Readings:** Genesis 50:15-21; Psalm 103:[1-7] 8-13; Romans 14:1-12; Matthew 18:21-35.

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