**Seventh Sunday of Easter**

*Modified Service of the Word*

May 24, 2020

***Preservice Music and Bell Peal***

**Opening Hymn: CW # 171 v. 1,2,5** *A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing*

**A hymn of glory let us sing! New songs throughout the world shall ring:**

**Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**Christ by a road before untrod, Ascends unto the throne of God.**

**Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**The holy apostolic band Upon the Mount of Olives stand,**

**Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**And with his followers they see Their Lord ascend in majesty.**

**Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**Be now our joy on earth, O Lord, And be our future great reward.**

**Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**Then, throned with you forever, we Shall praise your name eternally.**

**Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

M: ♫ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ †, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

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. We, therefore, confess our sins to him and plead for his mercy.

**All: 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. Have mercy on me according to your unfailing love. Cleanse me from my sin, and take away my guilt.**

The perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ has removed our guilt forever. We are, therefore, God’s children and will continue to live for him. Amen.

In the joy of this relationship with our God we pray…

Father of lights, every good and perfect gift comes from you. Inspire us to think those things that are true and long for those things that are good, that we may always make our petitions according to your gracious will. Hear us, as always, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Congregation: Amen**

**First Lesson** : Acts 1:1-14 (EHV)

I wrote my first book, Theophilus, about everything Jesus began doing and teaching 2 until the day he was taken up, after he had given instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. 3 After he had suffered, he presented himself alive to the apostles with many convincing proofs. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and told them things about the kingdom of God.

4 Once, when he was eating with them, he commanded them, “Do not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for what the Father promised, which you heard from me. 5 For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

6 So when they were together with him, they asked, “Lord, is this the time when you are going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them, “It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

9 After he said these things, he was taken up while they were watching, and a cloud took him out of their sight. 10 They were looking intently into the sky as he went away. Suddenly, two men in white clothes stood beside them. 11 They said, “Men of Galilee, why are you standing here looking up into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mountain called the Mount of Olives, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away. 13 When they entered the city, they went to the upstairs room where they were staying. Peter and John were there, also James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. 14 All of them kept praying together with one mind, along with the women, with Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

**Second Lesson**: I Peter 4:12-17; 5:6-11 (EHV)

Dear friends, do not be surprised by the fiery trial that is happening among you to test you, as if something strange were happening to you. 13 Instead rejoice whenever you are sharing in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

14 If you are insulted in connection with the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 15 Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, a thief, a criminal, or as a meddler. 16 But if you suffer for being a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God in connection with this name. 17 For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God. Now if it begins with us, what will be the end for those who disobey the gospel of God?

5:6 Therefore humble yourselves under God’s powerful hand so that he may lift you up at the appointed time. 7 Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. 8 Have sound judgment. Be alert. Your adversary, the Devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him by being firm in the faith. You know that the same kinds of sufferings are being laid on your brotherhood all over the world. 10 After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who called you into his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will himself restore, establish, strengthen, and support you. 11 To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

**Easter Proclamation**

M: Alleluia! The Lord is risen!

**C: He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

**C: ♫ Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! These words are written that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**Gospel Lesson**: John 14: 23-29 (EHV)

Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will hold on to my word. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 24 The one who does not love me does not hold on to my words. The word that you are hearing is not mine, but it is from the Father who sent me. 25 “I have told you these things while staying with you. 26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I told you. 27 “Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, and do not let it be afraid. 28 You heard me tell you, ‘I am going away and I am coming to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I.

29 “I have told you now before it happens so that, when it does happen, you may believe.

**Hymn: CW # 403** *I Know My Faith Is Founded*

**I know my faith is founded On Jesus Christ, my God and Lord;**

**And this my faith confessing, Unmoved I stand upon his Word.**

**Man’s reason cannot fathom The truth of God profound;**

**Who trusts in worldly wisdom Relies on shifting ground.**

**God’s Word is all-sufficient, It makes divinely sure,**

**And trusting in its wisdom, My faith shall rest secure.**

**Increase my faith, dear Savior. For Satan seeks by night and day**

**To rob me of this treasure And take my hope of bliss away.**

**But, Lord, with you beside me I shall be undismayed;**

**And led by your good Spirit, I shall be unafraid.**

**Abide with me, O Savior, A firmer faith bestow.**

**Then I shall bid defiance To ev’ry evil foe.**

**In faith, Lord, let me serve you; Though persecution, grief and pain**

**Should seek to overwhelm me, Let me a steadfast trust retain.**

**And then at my departure, Lord, take me home to you,**

**And let me there inherit All you have promised me.**

**In life and death, Lord, keep me Until your heav’n I gain,**

**Where I by your mercy The end of faith attain.**

**Sermon:** John 14:23-29

**Are You Glad that He’s Gone?**

Dear friends in Christ, our Ascended Lord: Did this past Thursday have any meaning for you? Perhaps it was just the usual round of telework or school by internet or sitting at home, bored and isolated from others. Of course, it was a special day in the Christian church. And we did celebrate it here at Our Savior’s with a special Thursday evening service and live stream. Forty days after the resurrection, Jesus ascended into heaven. That event was commemorated last Thursday.

We know the disciples found that day to be a special one--for a bad reason! The beginning of the book of Acts shows that they felt a little lost when Christ left. A later chapter would illustrate that they were scared! If we asked them on Ascension Day, “Are you glad he’s gone?” their first reaction would probably be, “No!” No, they weren’t happy he was gone.

Jesus had spoken about his ascension and told them not to worry. For what the Lord would do for them after he left would make up for his not being there. The words of our text show that Christ’s ascension does not mean they were left alone. When Christ left bodily, the Holy Spirit would come. Therefore, Jesus said, “If you loved me, you would be glad I am going to the Father.”

Now sometimes, aren’t we glad when certain people leave? You think of the proverbial “bore” at a party—self-important, horrible jokes and stories, thinking they’re the life of the party—we’re glad when they are gone! Or consider the stereotypical teenage reaction when parents leave. “Alright! I got the house to myself!” Now they can get away with things they couldn’t do before.

Are you glad Jesus is gone for this reason? He’s no long-er oppressing us with his point of view on everything. Now we can get away with things we couldn’t before. Well, Jesus’ Ascension does not mean freedom from responsibility. And it’s not a matter of someone staring over our shoulder. It’s a matter of love. As Jesus pointed out in our text, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching.” And that counts whether Jesus is around or not.

We’ve got so much for which to love Jesus! The apostle Peter knew the source of his love for Christ and wrote about it. “Christ also suffered once for sins in our place, the righteous for the unrighteous,” (I Peter 3:18).

Peter knew full well which category he belonged in. Peter’s famous denial wasn’t all he did. He had tried to convince Jesus not to go to Jerusalem, earning him the rebuke, “Get behind me, Satan!” Peter doubted the Lord’s power—sinking into the Sea of Galilee after Jesus invited him to walk on water. He had joined the others in trying to turn little children away from Jesus. Peter had thrown himself into the disciples’ arguments about which of them was the greatest. All that when the Lord’s eyes were on him directly! Peter was a sinner.

As am I. For we, too, have doubted Christ’s power, perhaps questioning his desire or his efforts to provide all things for our lives—sometimes we think it’s not enough. Maybe we have hindered little children on their way to Christ by not doing everything possible for their spiritual training, or our own example has led them astray. I’m pretty sure that each of us has argued with others in defense of our own importance. If not out loud, I have many arguments in my own mind about how everyone should listen to me and do what I want. All of that makes me—and us—unrighteous and curses us with death.

But Christ has changed all that, with his own innocent death. How should that change us?

Booker T. Washington was a man who rose from slavery to influence as leader of the Tuskegee Institute: In his autobiography “Up From Slavery” he told the story of others who had come to freedom.

“I found (a) man had made a contract with his master, two or three years previous to the Emancipation Proclamation, to the effect that the slave was to be permitted to buy himself, by paying so much per year for his body….

When freedom came, he was still in debt to his master some three hundred dollars. Notwithstanding that the Emancipation Proclamation freed him from any obligation to his master, this black man walked…back to where his old master lived in Virginia, and placed the last dollar, with interest, in his hands.”

The man was free. He had no obligation to fulfill his contract. But his freedom compelled him to honor the one who freed him and to serve faithfully what he had promised.

Christ Jesus has set us free from sin and death! We don’t serve him because we’re afraid of him. We don’t serve him because the law requires it. We serve because we want to honor the one who set us free.

Are you glad he’s gone? Doesn’t that make it harder to serve him? You can’t put anything into his hands. You can’t do anything to or for him.

Not exactly true. When Jesus left, he left something behind. “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching.” Hear Jesus’ words, on the night of his betrayal, “As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (John 15:12).

Who are you mad at and don’t want to talk to this week? Has anyone sinned against you and made you angry? I have days and times when all is not well—and I’m not really helping things ‘cause my attitude stinks. My love and forgiveness level is underwhelming! Is that loving as Christ loved?

Christ isn’t here to watch over your shoulder. But Christ’s Ascension is part of what frees us to serve. And really, aren’t we glad to do so? “We love, because he first loved us,” (I John 4:19). It’s amazing the difference that makes.

So just as teenagers who love and respect their parents aren’t going to destroy the home as soon as the parents leave, so we who love and respect our Savior aren’t going to disobey just because he can’t be seen.

But, you know, Jesus isn’t gone anyhow. Jesus said of believers, “My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” The very day he ascended Jesus reminded us all, “Surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age,” (Matthew 28:20). He promises, “In fact where two or three have gathered together in my name, there I am among them,” (Matthew 18:20). Jesus is never gone!

      Wouldn’t that make you glad? Nearly all NT letters rejoice in the fact that Christ lives in his believers. Are you glad he’s gone? No reason not to be, because he comes back to live with us and change our lives.

In this text Jesus went on to explain about “the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name.” We can spend a great deal of time talking about the Holy Spirit, and no doubt we will next week on Pentecost Sunday. The Holy Spirit brings spectacular gifts. He shows great power. But a reason to rejoice in his coming is given in these words, “He will teach you all things and remind you of everything I told you.” The Holy Spirit does not work for the Spirit’s sake, he works for Christ. It’s not about him, it’s about Jesus.

The Holy Spirit reveals Jesus in words. When speaking of Christ crucified, Paul reemphasized, “We also speak about these things, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual truths with spiritual words,” (I Corinthians 2:13).

It is through these words that the Holy Spirit brings people to faith. Jesus ascended, but the Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to stay connected. In fact, Jesus did declare, “For if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you,” (John 16:7).  Are you glad Christ has gone? I am. Because that means the Holy Spirit has come to work faith in me, and in you also.

So now, we can have what Jesus promised: “Peace I leave with you.”

It doesn’t always seem that way, I know. Our lives can rarely be said to be calm and peaceful. Too much in us, too much around us, too many expectations of us, to feel peace. But then again, Jesus said point blank, “I do not give to you as the world gives.”

You want the world’s idea of peace? We’re not at war with Syria—but we keep shooting at each other. This so-called peace is kind of dangerous. God hasn’t lost his grip on the world, he just doesn’t promise the kind of peace that nations are supposed to strive for.

God’s peace is a very different kind. Paul wrote to the Romans about it: “So then, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,” (8:1). God’s peace is like that a convicted criminal can find.

Obviously, upon conviction a criminal doesn’t have peace of mind. At sentencing what does a criminal face? Fear. Distress. 20 years! Death! Mind racing, heart pounding, there is no peace for a convicted criminal.

Unless—just perhaps—his sentence is commuted, or he is pardoned. What if a governor says to an inmate, “Pack your bags, you’re going free today”? There’s bound to be a bit of shock, a certain uncertainty and disbelief. But ultimately relief and joy replace them. There is peace of mind for a pardoned criminal.

And what of a convicted sinner? There’s only fear at the wrath of God which demands, “Eternal years! Eternal death!” “’There is no peace,’ says the Lord, ‘for the wicked’,” (Isaiah 48:22).

Unless—just perhaps—the sinner’s sins are forgiven. No perhaps or maybe about it! All sins are forgiven through Christ Jesus. We have peace, when the Spirit shares, “By…one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being sanctified,” (Hebrews 10:14). There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Are you glad he’s gone? Maybe it would be nice to know Jesus by sight, and with our own ears hear him say, “Son, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven.” But it’s not all bad. The Holy Spirit does that. Even I get the privilege of sharing Christ’s and the Spirit’s words each week: “In the name and by the command of the Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins.”

Christ left this earth but hasn’t abandoned us. He sends his Spirit to teach us, to bring us peace, and to fill us with love. If Jesus were here, he wouldn’t do anything differently. So, he really isn’t gone. And that makes us glad. AMEN.

**Confession of Faith--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 sin, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen**

**Prayer of the Church**

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who has risen from the dead and ascended to the right hand of God, we thank and praise you for opening the kingdom of heaven to us undeserving sinners and for calling us into that kingdom by sending your Holy Spirit to give us faith. Ruled by your mercy, we are no longer filled with fear, but confident of our salvation.

We pray that, having made us members of your Kingdom of Grace, you would keep us in the true faith until the end. Give us a hunger for your Word and nourish us by it. Have the Spirit teach us and remind us of everything you have said. Cause us to daily remember our baptisms which have washed away our sins. Let us frequently come to your Table of Holy Communion that we might be blessed through the reception of your body and blood, given and shed for our forgiveness.

By your Spirit’s work, assure us that you are with us always, and that we can come to you with all our concerns and needs. Embolden us by your presence to be faithful witnesses of your grace to all people. Cause sinners everywhere to accept you and your forgiveness by Spirit created faith. Make us able ambassadors of your kingdom. Encourage us to support the cause of Christian missions generously with our gifts and to remember our pastors and missionaries daily in our prayers. Give the Word they preach free course that your elect may be drawn from the far corners of the world.

Ascended Lord, hear our prayers, and bestow on us the help and relief we require. Show your power and concern to those for whom we now briefly pray…

Hear us for the honor of your name. And turn your ear to us as we pray...

**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**

**Hymn: CW # 415 v. 1,2,4** *Be Still, My Soul*

**Be still, my soul; the Lord is on your side; Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;**

**Leave to your God to order and provide; In ev’ry change he faithful will remain.**

**Be still, my soul; your best, your heav’nly friend Through thorny ways lead to a joyful end.**

**Be still, my soul; your God will undertake To guide the future as he has the past.**

**Your hope, your confidence, let nothing shake; All now mysterious shall be bright at last.**

**Be still, my soul; the waves and winds still know His voice who ruled them while he lived below.**

**Be still, my soul; the hour is hast’ning on When we shall be forever with the Lord,**

**When disappointment, grief, and fear are gone, Sorrow forgot, love’s purest joys restored.**

**Be still, my soul; when change and tears are past, All safe and blessed we shall meet at last.**

**Closing Prayer and Blessing**

Almighty God, we thank you for teaching us the things you want us to believe and to do. Help us by your Holy Spirit to keep your Word in pure hearts that we may be strengthened in faith, guided in holiness, and comforted in life and in death, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with your and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

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.

**C: ♫ Amen. Amen. Amen.**

**Closing Hymn: CW # 172 v. 1-3** *O God, Our Help in Ages**Past*

**Up through the endless ranks of angels, Cries of triumph in his ears,**

**To his heav’nly throne ascending, Having vanquished all their fears,**

**Christ looks down upon the faithful, Leaving them in happy tears.**

**Death destroying, life restoring, Proven equal to our need,**

**Now for us before the Father As our brother intercede;**

**Flesh that for the world was wounded, Living, for the wounded plead!**

**To our lives of wanton wand’ring Send your promised Spirit guide;**

**Through our lives of fear and failure With your power and love abide;**

**Welcome us, as you were welcomed, To the endless Eastertide.**

***Announcements***

***Brief Postlude***

*Permission to reprint hymns in this service obtained from ONE LICENSE with license #A-716671. All rights reserved.*

**Notes and News**

**Welcome!** Mr. Nathan Lemke, who graduated from Martin Luther College last Saturday, has been assigned to teach upper grades at Our Savior’s School. He is from Jefferson, WI. We look forward to welcoming him in person to Our Savior’s in July.

**End of School Year** The last day of classes for Our Savior’s School is this Friday, May 22. Congratulations and God’s blessings to our students and especially to our 8th grade graduates, Jack Hahn and Alexis Screnock.

**Holy Communion** will be celebrated on Sunday, May 31 from 10:30 to noon. Assuming that we will not yet be gathering for worship in the building, the distribution will again be in the parking lot as outlined in the April/May newsletter. On the first occasion we served about 60 members of Our Savior’s. We look forward to serving you again.

**Memorials** We offer our thanks for gifts given in memory of Gordon Borchardt from Robert & Janice Gresens, Florence & Gerald Ziegel, and Audrey Bey and family: Barb & Lyle Marquis, Steffie & Bill Cass, Greg & Connie Bey, Christine & Kent McMullin. We also thank Audrey Bey for her gift given in loving memory of her son, Bill Bey II.

*Blessed be their memories. Thanks be to God for the love which led to these gifts.*