



Second Sunday of Easter

April 19, 2020

PRELUDE

SANDY WENTZLOFF

WELCOME AND NEWS OF THE CHURCH

**NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE OR WHERE YOU ARE ON LIFE'S JOURNEY,
YOU ARE WELCOME AT GAYLORD UNITED CHURCH, 318 4TH ST, GAYLORD, MN 55334**

WE CONTINUE TO WORSHIP ONLINE AT: WWW.LISTEN2GOD.ORG

**THE WORSHIP VIDEO WILL BE POSTED ASAP AFTER WEDNESDAY EACH WEEK UNTIL
WE COME TOGETHER AGAIN!**

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Sing a new song!

People: **A springtime shout-out to life!**

Leader: Sing praise to our joyful Easter God

People: **Whose power brings new life out of death!**

Leader: Immerse doubt and despair in the fountain of new birth

People: **Find refreshment and strength for a future of hope!**

Leader: For God has taken ordinary things

People: **And made them extraordinary:**

All: **Sing a New Song!**

GATHERING HYMN:

"REJOICE, YOU PURE IN HEART"

NCH #55

1 Rejoice, You pure in heart,
Lift praises to the sky your festal banner
wave with joy, the cross of Christ raise
high!

2 Bright youth and seasoned age,
strong souls and spirits meek,
Lift high your free, exulting song,
God's wondrous praises speak. **Refrain**

Refrain:

Rejoice, rejoice, rejoice, give thanks, and sing!

OPENING PRAYER

Holy God,

Nothing is beyond your power to transform!

In a gray dawn, you coax songs of Alleluia!

From the tombs of despair we take refuge in You, call us to wake up and work.

We praise you for this amazing day!

Come, Risen Christ, in newness and hope on this Eastertide morning.

Lord, God, remember us now and forever as we pray:

**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. Amen.**

CONFESSING OUR HUMANNESS

Leader: Redeeming God, with you there is always more life, more hope, more joy.
When doubt assails us, and we fail to recognize you at work in our lives,

Response: Lord, have mercy!

Leader: When fear impairs our faith, and our eyes and ears and hearts do not know you,

Response: Christ, have mercy!

Leader: When anger and sorrow stop us from doing the risky work of love,

Response: Lord, have mercy!

WORDS OF ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Within every kernel of doubt, there is a spark of life and hope.

In those times when our faith falters, when we cannot recognize the presence of the Holy among us, God takes our faith and transforms it, patiently showing us the many ways Christ walks among us. Look around you: as close as your own beating heart, and in the eyes of your nearest neighbor, grace abounds at the heart of all life.

You are all God's children, pardoned and loved without condition, go in that peace. **Amen.**

**GLORIA PATRI: GLORY BE TO CREATOR, AND TO THE CHRIST AND TO THE HOLY GHOST
AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING IS NOW AND EVER SHALL BE
WORLD WITHOUT END; AMEN. AMEN.**

LECTIONARY TEXTS

1 PETER 1:3-9 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

JOHN 20:19-31 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

MESSAGE

"LOCKED DOORS"

PASTOR DENNIS

Several years ago, the Saturday Evening Post ran a cartoon showing a man about to be rescued after he had spent a long-time ship-wrecked on a tiny deserted island. The sailor in charge of the rescue team stepped onto the beach and handed the man a stack of newspapers. "Compliments of the Captain," the sailor said, "He would like you to glance at the headlines to see if you'd still like to be rescued!"

Sometimes the headlines do scare us. I'm sure that's how the disciples felt that first Easter evening. For three years they had devoted their lives to Jesus. They had left home and family, jobs and security to follow him. But now the one they had followed had died- a cruel death on a cross no less. And they are caught in a whirlpool of anxiety. They could be accused of stealing his body. Or they could be punished- even killed- for guilt by association with Jesus. The headlines didn't look good for Jesus' disciples. They feared what might happen to them now and so they huddled together in a room with the door to the room tightly locked.

Fear is the kind of thing that most people are familiar with, isn't it? The disciples feared the Jews. Today, people's fears can range from fear of the future, to fear of one's savings running out, to fear of being alone or fear of health issues or relationship issues. During this time of the Covid-19 pandemic, our reasons for fear and anxiety can even be more pronounced. Like the disciples our fears can leave us shut out and locked in!

Pastor Lee Hallstrom relates this story: One of the most embarrassing experiences that I've had as a pastor happened in my first years of ministry. It's one of those experiences that you just want to forget, but you can't! I had been invited to some parishioner's home for dinner one evening. As the evening wore on, I asked to use the restroom. In trying to leave the restroom, however, I discovered that the door had somehow gotten stuck and would not open.

After a few tries of pulling and tugging at the door, and the help of a few choice words, I admitted I was locked in. Fearing ridicule, embarrassment and the need to resign immediately, I set aside my pride and called for help. The wife came to see what was wrong and laughed when she realized the situation. I was not laughing however. After several failed attempts by her husband to open it, he ended up going around to the outside of the house, crawled in the window and joined me in the bathroom. We stood there looking at each other for a moment and he finally said we have to break down the door. So together we threw our weight against the door and on the second try- the door gave way and we both ended up on the floor on top of the door. We had succeeded at freeing me from the John.

Fortunately, John our gospel writer describes the door and the locks as more than a door on hinges and a deadbolt lock. He is describing the interior conditions of the disciples. The locked places of our lives are always more about what is going on inside of us than around us. The disciples were locked and bound in their fears.

But nothing could keep Jesus from coming to his disciples. None of their fears are too great. None of their doors are too tightly locked. Not even their grief was too overwhelming, but Jesus came right through the locked door and stood among them. In the RSV version of the bible it says here that Jesus came and stood by them. And that's what Christ always does for us. He stands by us-even amid our fears.

The first word that Jesus says to the disciples is "peace...peace be with you." This is a peace that comes from God's presence with us. While growing up in a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), one of the soloists of the congregation often sang a song with lyrics that went like this: **No! Never alone. No! Never alone. Oh, he promised never to leave us- never to leave us alone!** These words spoke to me as a child and now as an adult they still give me the assurance that God is with us and will never leave or forsake us. This is our peace.

Along with peace, the risen Christ gives the disciples power. Verse 22 tells us that “when he said this, he breathed on them the Holy Spirit.” This is John, the gospel writer’s version of Pentecost. That first Easter evening Jesus breathed on those disciples the Holy Spirit- the very same spirit that God breathed on you and filled you up with at your baptism.

Former presiding bishop of the ELCA Mark Hanson once said, “The Holy Spirit is the church’s oxygen. It is our very life breath as people of God. Filling us with vision and a passion to be the people of God in the world today.” Christ comes through the locked door of the disciples and gives them peace and power and also, he gives them a purpose. You see Jesus didn’t just unlock the door of the disciples’ hearts; he propels them out the door of that room to tell others so they too can be released from the grip of fear. “As the father has sent me,” Jesus said, “so I am sending you.” When the risen Christ shows up, he gives us purpose.

A bishop tells of a congregation that had been in decline for many years. It was an inner-city church with a number of homeless people around the church. They had an expensive security system but even so someone broke in. After this happened, the church was thinking that the best thing to do would be to get a better security system. At the meeting, however, an older member of the congregation stood up and said, “You know as long as I’ve been coming to this church, we’ve been trying to get people to come to this church. We try to get new members but have no luck. Seems that there are people dying to get inside. So, rather than pay for an expensive security system when we are declining, what say we just unlock the doors and see what happens?” Another person in their eighties seconded the motion!

The first night, fifteen homeless people slept on the floor of the church. The second night, thirty people slept on the church’s floor. Congregational members asked the people, “Will you just try to see that nothing happens to our beautiful building?” And it didn’t!

Soon members of the congregation realized that the people sleeping in their church were hungry. So, they got organized and prepared a simple meal each night. Then they found out that some of the people had health problems. So, a couple of nurses in the congregation were called out of retirement and they enlisted others to help them provide some health care for the homeless people. Others in the congregation stepped up and volunteered to be hosts for each evening. Many others rounded up usable clothing. Members of this congregation hadn’t had as much enjoyment in years. And guess what happened? In six months, the Sunday morning worship attendance doubled! The congregation was brought back to a newness of life!

Now the point here is NOT that a church should dismantle their security system and leave the doors to the building unlocked. The point is, look what happened when the congregation stopped focusing on getting new members and started focusing on new missions- it’s purpose!

Sometimes a congregation’s locked doors can be “I don’t want anything to change,” or “I only want my style of music and worship,” or “I only want to get to know people who are like me.” The risen Christ, however, wants to unlock our doors and propel us out to receive all and to embrace what God is doing at this time and in this day. When that congregation’s “doors” were locked, no one got it. But when they focused on their purpose/mission, look what happened! Truly the risen Christ just loves to get through locked doors!

Let us pray: Eternal God, we thank you that in our darkest hours you come to us. Thank you for coming through our locked doors-whatever those doors may be for us. In the power and presence of your Spirit, breathe into us anew your peace and power and purpose. During these days, touch us and fill us with that assurance that you will never leave us-never to leave us alone. Empower us even now to share your light and your love with others through our words and actions. Help us always to catch a vision for your mission in the world. In the name of Christ our Lord. Amen.

I'M PRESSING ON THE UPWARD WAY, NEW HEIGHTS I'M GAINING EVERY DAY;
STILL PRAYING AS I'M ONWARD BOUND, "O PLANT ME, GOD, ON HIGHER GROUND."

REFRAIN

O LIFT ME UP, AND I SHALL BE BY FAITH IN HEAVEN ETERNALLY,
A HIGHER PLANE THAN I HAVE FOUND, O PLANT ME, GOD, ON HIGHER GROUND

MY HEART HAS NO DESIRE TO STAY WHERE DOUBTS ARISE AND FEARS DISMAY;
THOUGH SOME MAY DWELL WHERE THESE ABOUND, MY PRAYER, MY AIM IS HIGHER GROUND.

REFRAIN

I WANT TO LIVE BEYOND THE WORLD, THOUGH SATAN'S DARTS AT ME ARE HURLED:
FOR FAITH HAS CAUGHT A JOY-FUL SOUND, THE SONG OF SAINTS ON HIGHER GROUND.

REFRAIN

I WANT TO SCALE THE UTMOST HEIGHT, AND CATCH A GLEAM OF GLORY BRIGHT;
BUT STILL I'LL PRAY TILL HEAVEN I'VE FOUND, "GOD, LEAD ME ON TO HIGHER GROUND."

REFRAIN**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

LEADER: THE HEADLINES FRIGHTEN US EACH DAY. THEY REASSURE US THAT THE INVISIBLE ENEMY IS STILL OUT OF CONTROL IN OUR WORLD. FEAR COMES EASILY AND ANXIETY AT TIMES CONTROLS. HELP US, LORD, TO TRUST IN YOUR STRENGTH TO OVER COME OUR FEARS AND ANXIETIES. STAND AMONG US AND GIVE US PEACE. LORD IN YOUR MERCY,

RESPONSE: **HEAR OUR PRAYER.**

LEADER: LIFE'S DEMANDS AND FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES IMPOSE THE NEED TO MAKE HARD DECISIONS EACH DAY. MAKING ENDS MEET AND BEING A JOY PRESENCE IN THE LIVES THAT MEAN SO MUCH TO US, IS DIFFICULT. WANTING TO EXPRESS AND ACCEPT LOVE IS A CHALLENGE. LORD, GRANT THAT WE MIGHT RELEASE OURSELVES FROM THE STRESS OF LIFE KNOWING THAT STRESS IS NOT YOUR WILL FOR US. LORD IN YOUR MERCY,

RESPONSE: **HEAR OUR PRAYER.**

LEADER: FOR THE LONELY AND FOR THOSE WHO ARE ILL, FOR THE COMMUNITY AND THE WORLD, FOR ALL PEOPLE EVERYWHERE, WE PRAY FOR HEALING AND CONTINUED HEALTH. LORD IN YOUR MERCY,

RESPONSE: **HEAR OUR PRAYER.**

LEADER: FOR THE CHURCH AND THE INFLUENCE IT HAS OR HAS NOT ON THE WORLD IN WHICH IT EXISTS, FOR PEOPLE LOOKING FOR RELEVANCE AND PURPOSE, MAKE THE WITNESS OF YOUR GOOD NEWS RELEVANT IN A CHANGING WORLD. LORD IN YOUR MERCY,

RESPONSE: **HEAR OUR PRAYER.**

LEADER: IN THE NAME OF ALL THAT IS HOLY, AMEN.

CALL FOR OFFERING

Easter teaches us that generous love is at the heart of God's work.
Joyfully we are able to give knowing that our gifts will help others
to see the blessed miracle of God's creative joy.

(Offerings can be dropped off at the church office each Wednesday, or mailed to Box 385, Gaylord, MN 55334)

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Loving God, can a generous prayer be lifted up to you this Eastertide?
Can these gifts, given with love,
be further transformed like echoes of grace,
delighting all who receive their blessings?
May it be so, through the surprising power of your Holy Spirit,
and may our lives speak of a loving God, full of Easter surprises. **Amen.**

SENDING HYMN: "I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD" NCH #584

REFRAIN: "I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD! YOU PEOPLE COME AND FOLLOW ME!"
IF YOU FOLLOW AND LOVE YOU'LL LEARN THE MYSTERY OF
WHAT YOU WERE MEANT TO DO AND BE.

1. When the song of the angels is stilled.
When the star in the sky is gone.
When the kings and the shepherds have found
their way home.
The work of Christmas is begun!

REFRAIN:

2. To bring hope to every task you do,
To dance at a baby's new birth,
To make music in an old man's heart,
And sing to the colors of the earth!

REFRAIN

BENEDICTION

Follow God's lead into new life!
Recognize Jesus in unexpected places.
Easter! Christ is Risen!
May you dance an alleluia dance, and sing a resurrection song.
Laugh with God and let joy reside in your hearts always. **Amen.**

Postlude

Sandy Wentzloff

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Remember in Prayer

Bill Cowell, Eunice Gasow, Aggie Schue, Howard Armstrong's brother Greg Armstrong.
We pray for others who have been ill or are home bound and those at Oak Terrace and Golden
Hearts. We pray for health and healing for all people everywhere since everyone is affected by this
virus in some way. We pray with anticipation for the day we can all gather again with our church
family. Pray for the ministries of our church. Pray for those serving in the military and for our local
and national leaders.

Your pledge can be mailed to:

Gaylord United Church of Christ P.O. Box 385 Gaylord, MN 55334-0385
or you can *drop it off at church on Wednesdays when the office is open.*
Thank You.

If you have a prayer request or would like to receive a call from Pastor Dennis
call his office at 237-2595 (leave a private voice mail) or his cell 763-258-3371.

E-mail: dmckee545@gmail.com

Go to our Website to view recent messages and sermons: listen2god.org

