

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church
A Family Connecting in Christ



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Service of Word & Sacrament

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we see Jesus put his church to work. We get to join Isaiah, Peter, James, John, and the rest of Jesus' disciples in the mission and ministry that gives the life and love of heaven!

OPENING HYMN

"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"
Hymn 61

Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born king;
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all you nations, rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With th' angelic host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark, the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born king!

Christ, by highest heav'n adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold him come,
Offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the God-head see,
Hail th'incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with us to dwell,
Jesus, our Immanuel!
Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!

Hail, the heav'nly Prince of Peace!
Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
Ris'n with healing in his wings.

Mild he lays his glory by,
Born that we no more may die,
Born to raise us from the earth,
Born to give us second-birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing,
“Glory to the new-born King!

+THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM+

Kiara Lindsay LaCosse, Alianna Kilihau Lacosse,
and Aiden James LaCosse

Christ's Command

Our Savior Jesus Christ commanded baptism when he said, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Our Need for Baptism

All of us are born into this world with a deep need for baptism. From our parents we inherit a sinful nature; we are without true fear of God and true faith in God and are condemned to eternal death.

God's Promise in Baptism

But Jesus took away our sin by giving his life on the cross. At our baptism he clothes us with the robe of his righteousness and gives us a new life. Our sinful nature need not control us any longer. We recall what baptism means for our daily lives as we speak these words:

Baptism means that the sinful nature in us should be drowned by daily sorrow and repentance, and that all its evil deeds and desires be put to death. It also means that a new person should daily arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

As baptized children of God we confess our sins:

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.

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.

The Sacrament of Baptism

In coming to be baptized, you are doing what is God-pleasing. Ananias said to the apostle Paul after his conversion, "Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away.

Receive the sign of the cross on your head and heart to mark you as a redeemed child of God.

_____, I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The almighty God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - has forgiven all your sin. By your baptism you are born again and made a dear child of your Father in heaven. May God strengthen you to live in his grace all the days of your life. Peace be with you.

Exhortation

Brothers and sisters in Christ:

Our Lord commands us that we teach his precious truth to all who are baptized. Christian love urges all of us, especially parents and sponsors, to assist in whatever way possible so that _____ may remain a child of God to eternal life. If you are willing to carry out this responsibility, then answer: Yes, as God gives me strength.

Yes, as God gives me the strength.

Prayer

Merciful Father in heaven, we thank you for the blessing of baptism by which you offer and grant the forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation. Help us to regard our baptism as the robe of righteousness to wear all the days of our life. Look with special favor on _____ and grant ____ a rich measure of your Spirit that ____ may grow in faith and godly living. Make us willing to carry out our responsibilities to those who have been baptized, so that all of us may finally come to the blessed joys of heaven, through Jesus our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Eternal Son of God, we remember the day you were named Jesus, a name that proclaims you to be the savior of all people. Give us strength in the new year to live each day to the honor of your name, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

FIRST LESSON

Jeremiah 33:14-16

“‘The days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will fulfill the gracious promise I made to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah.

“‘In those days and at that time

I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David’s line;
he will do what is just and right in the land.

In those days Judah will be saved

and Jerusalem will live in safety.

This is the name by which it will be called:

The LORD Our Righteousness.”

VERSE OF THE DAY

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived.

When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons."

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you now dismiss your servant in peace.
For my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the sight of all people,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel."

The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming

up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.

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 fully 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

"Now Greet the Swiftly Changing Year"

Hymn 708



1 Now greet the swift - ly chang - ing year With
 2 Re - mem - ber now the Son of God And
 3 This Je - sus came to end sin's war; This
 4 His love a - bun - dant far ex - ceeds The
 5 With him as Lord to lead our way In



joy and pen - i - tence sin - cere. Re -
 how he shed his in - fant blood. Re -
 name of names for us he bore. Re -
 vol - ume of a whole year's needs. Re -
 haz - ard and pros - per - i - ty, What



joyce! Re - joyce! With thanks em - brace An -
 joyce! Re - joyce! With thanks em - brace An -
 joyce! Re - joyce! With thanks em - brace An -
 joyce! Re - joyce! With thanks em - brace An -
 need we fear in earth or space In



oth - er year of grace.
 oth - er year of grace.
 oth - er year of grace.
 oth - er year of grace.
 this new year of grace?

6 "All glory be to God on high,
 And peace on earth!" the angels cry.
 Rejoice! Rejoice! With thanks embrace
 Another year of grace.

7 God, Father, Son, and Spirit, hear!
 To all our pleas incline your ear;
 Upon our lives rich blessing trace
 In this new year of grace.

SERMON

Expectations. We have them, don't we? Especially this time of year, we have expectations of the new year. What do you expect? I'll give you four options: a - 2021 will be better than 2020; b - 2021 will be worse than 2020; c - 2021 will be more of the same; or d - 2021 will be all the above. What do you expect? I expect "d," final answer. 2021 will be better than 2020 and worse than 2020 and more of the same as 2020. Does that sound like a mixed-up mess? Well, that's what we can expect.

And that's what Jeremiah was expecting, some more of the same, some worse, some better. But not just some worse, Jeremiah could expect life to get a whole lot worse before it got better. Because life was about to get a whole lot worse, God gave Jeremiah a "Little Book of Comfort," or as I like to call it, Jeremiah's "Disaster Preparedness Kit."

We took a peek into Jeremiah's "Disaster Preparedness Kit" last November (on Saints Triumphant Sunday) when we heard the LORD promise a new covenant - "**I will be your God and you will be my people. I will forgive your sins and remember your transgressions no longer.**" We heard God make that same promise today in Baptism, and in the Lord's Supper we will hear Jesus invite us in for a refresher - "take, drink, the **blood of the covenant** given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins."

Today we take another peek into Jeremiah's disaster preparedness kit. At first listen it sounds almost identical to another lesson we heard in November, from Jeremiah 23. But a careful look will show us some key differences, some wonderful differences, some wonderful promises, not only for Jesus, but for us!

But before things get better for Jeremiah, things get worse. Jeremiah is in prison. Why? The people don't like what Jeremiah is saying; they don't like what God is saying. God is judging Judah and Jerusalem. He is about to have Jerusalem destroyed, just as he said. Why? Expectations. God expected his people to listen to him. His people, the people of Jerusalem, they had their own set of expectations. They expected to be able to do their own thing without God getting in their way. And if they wanted some God-time, when they wanted some God-help, they expected God to listen to them without God expecting them to repent. God has had enough of that. Now he is bringing in the armies of Babylon to show the people of Jerusalem what he thinks of their expectations.

There's a lesson there for us, isn't there? And maybe not just a lesson, but a warning, a wake-up call. Why are we in this COVID-time? Is it because we - and our world - have been so attentive to God's expectations? It is because we - and our world - live so in line with God's expectations? Or are we in this COVID-time because of this? Because we - and our world - share the same expectations as the people of Jerusalem - expecting God to stay out of our way unless and until we want some God-time or need some God-help, and then, "God, we expect you to feel bad for the mess you got us into ... God, we expect you to tell us how right we are ... God, we expect you to snap your fingers and do what we want and expect." Do I have that about right? Just like at the time of our lesson, God has had enough of that, and now he's teaching our world what he thinks of those expectations. He's teaching us all a lesson on how small we are without him, how hopeless, helpless, and hapless we would be without God.

And what have we done with this warning, this wake up call? I'll tell you what I see - some people growing tighter and tighter with the LORD, thinking more and more like the LORD, living closer and closer with the LORD; and I see some people growing tighter and tighter with the world, thinking and living more and more like the world. What do you see? Tougher question - where do you see yourself?

Our lesson is good news! Good news for those holding tight with the LORD. Good news for those who heed God's wake-up call. It's the promise of a new life, a new you!

Let's hear it. **“The days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will fulfill the gracious promise I made to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. “ ‘In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David’s line; he will do what is just and right in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.’”** That sounds so much like a different promise in Jeremiah, a promise we heard back in November on Christ the King Sunday, from Jeremiah 23. There we heard God promise that he would raise up a King who would do what is just and right in the land. More than that, a King who would establish ..., even better, a King would bring about justice and righteousness, a King who would make life right for his people.

We know that King as Jesus. And we know what he did to bring about justice and righteousness. He lived a perfect life of justice and righteousness. First, he did right by God, and then he did right for God's world. He treated the sick and the poor, the helpless and the hopeless, the guilty and those wanting to be right - he treated them all with God's love. He lived a perfect life of justice and righteousness. And then what? He died a guilty death. He was judged guilty of crimes against God and crimes against humanity. Even though he had lived a perfect life, he died a guilty death - guilty with my guilt, guilty your guilt, guilty with the guilt of the world. Why? We heard it for our Verse of the Day - **“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”**

That's what God has done for us in baptism! He's washed our sin away; he's washed us clean and covered us with the perfect, right life of Jesus. What does that get to mean for us in this new year? Look in the window - we get to live safe and secure with Jesus!

That promise is so good it deserves to be heard again and again. But our lesson today doesn't just repeat the promise of Christ as King; it doesn't just repeat the promise of the LORD as Our Righteousness. Our lesson today isn't so much about the Righteous Branch that sprouted 2000 years ago as about a branch of rightness that is always sprouting more and more and more rightness today. Our lesson today isn't so much about what a King did back then as what his people are doing today. Our lesson doesn't just tell us the name of our King - the LORD our Righteousness; instead our lesson tells us what we are called - “The LORD our Righteousness.”

That sounds a bit odd, doesn't it? We aren't named: “The LORD our Righteousness,” but we are called “The LORD Our Righteousness.” We aren't named Christian, but we are called Christian. In fact, we can go a step further, we aren't named Christ, but we are called Christ. In baptism we are so closely connected with Jesus that his life becomes our life, his righteousness becomes our righteousness, his identity becomes our identity.

What does that mean for us? We don't have to go through life beating ourselves up, feeling guilty. We don't have to go through life feeling small and ashamed. We don't have to face sin and temptation as a loser; we don't have to face the evil and injustice of this world as a victim. And we don't have to face this new year expecting to fail and fall short. We get to live as God calls us. We get to

live as Jesus holds us. We get to live what the Spirit is working in us. We get to live as “The LORD our Righteousness.”

Will I see that in myself every day this year? No, but with Jesus, God will. And with Jesus, as we fill ourselves more and more with Jesus, what can we expect? We will be more and more like Jesus. How might that look? When we trip up, we will be quicker to turn back to Jesus. When we think of Jesus, and our baptism and our connection to Jesus, we won't just think of Jesus as our life-preserver, we will more and more think of Jesus as our life. We will live more like Jesus; we will love more like Jesus; we will look forward more with Jesus, we will look forward to being more with Jesus, here and in heaven.

What does that mean for 2021? Oh, we can expect more of the same, some worse, some better. But at the same time we can expect a whole lot better. Maybe in 2021, maybe later, we can expect our whole lives, my whole life, your whole life to be made perfect and right, just the way it's supposed to be. That's not just a wish or a want. That's his promise. And because it's God's promise, it's what we can expect! Amen.

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God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It



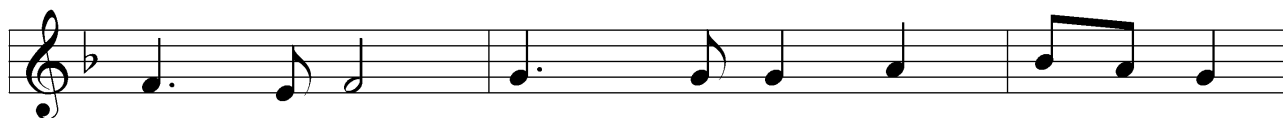
1 God's own child, I gladly say it:
 2 Sin, disturb my soul no longer:
 3 Sa - tan, hear this pro - la - ma - tion:
 4 Death, you can - not end my glad - ness:
 5 There is noth - ing worth com - par - ing



I am bap - tized in - to Christ! He, be -
 I am bap - tized in - to Christ! I have
 I am bap - tized in - to Christ! Drop your
 I am bap - tized in - to Christ! When I
 To this life - long com - fort sure! O - pen -



cause I could not pay it, Gave my full re -
 com - fort e - ven strong - er: Je - sus' cleans - ing
 ug - ly ac - cu - sa - tion; I am not so
 die, I leave all sad - ness To in - her - it
 eyed my grave is star - ing: E - ven there I'll



demp - tion price. Do I need earth's trea - sures
 sac - ri - fice. Should a guilt - y con - science
 soon en - ticed. Now that to the font I've
 par - a - dise! Though I lie in dust and
 sleep se - cure. Though my flesh a - waits its



man - y? I have one worth more than an - y
seize me Since my bap - tism did re - lease me
trav - eled, All your might has come un - rav - eled,
ash - es Faith's as - sur - ance bright - ly flash - es:
rais - ing, Still my soul con - tin - ues prais - ing:



That brought me sal - va - tion free,
In a dear for - giv - ing flood,
And, a - gainst your tyr - an - ny,
Bap - tism has the strength di - vine
I am bap - tized in - to Christ;



Last - ing to e - ter - ni - ty!
Sprink - ling me with Je - sus' blood?
God, my Lord, u - nites with me!
To make life im - mor - tal mine.
I'm a child of par - a - dise!

Text: Erdmann Neumeister, 1671–1756; tr. Robert E. Voelker, b. 1957 © 1991 Robert E. Voelker. All rights reserved.
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Tune: BACHOFEN (87 87 88 77) Johann Caspar Bachofen, 1695–1755, alt.

LORD'S PRAYER

C: 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

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 good and right so to do.

M: It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who comes with his Father to make his home in human hearts, working repentance and faith by his Spirit until he comes again.

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."

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: Amen.

LAMB OF GOD

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 your peace. A - men.

M: We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet that you have given us to eat and to drink in this sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith, nourished our hope, and strengthened our love. By your Spirit help us to live as your holy people until that day when you will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

BLESSING

M: 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

"From Heaven Above to Earth I Come"
Hymn 38 (vs 13-15)

Ah, Dearest Jesus, holy child,
Prepare a bed, soft, undefiled
Within my heart, made clean and new,
A quiet chamber kept for you.

My heart for very joy must leap;
My lips no more can silence keep.
I, too, must sing with joyful tongue
That sweetest ancient cradle song:

Glory to God in highest heaven,
Who unto us his Son has given!
While angels sing with pious mirth
A glad new year to all the earth.

OFFERING

(Please fill out friendship pad on the pew)

If you prefer online giving, you may scan this code with your mobile device.

