

Sermon followed by Service

January 26, 2025 - Lutheran School Sunday - Ephesians 4:32

You should have seen what I got to see. One of our preschoolers saw one of our toddlers standing alone. She helped her with her bag, took her by the hand, and helped her up the steps to church. Two young children smiling and happy in the house of God. That's the stuff that makes angels smile. Another time, two of our older students asked to have a word with me out in the hall. I thought, "Oh, oh. What did I do now?" But I wasn't in trouble, they wanted to tell me that a classmate was going through a tough time and they were concerned. Wow - that's what our theme verse is about - kindness and compassion. Then, about that same time, we had a school prospect visiting one of our classrooms, thinking about joining our school. The teacher went out on the limb - is it going to be silly answer day? He took a chance and asked his class to tell that visitor what they liked about St. John School. It wasn't silly answer day. It was shiver up and down the spine day. One of the students talked about respect - "here we learn respect." After school he would play baseball with kids from all sorts of schools against kids from all sorts of other schools. And he says here we have something special; here we have respect.

I know we're not alone there. We have neat kids and caring teachers in schools all across our county. But here we have something that very, very few of those other schools can have. Here on Wednesday mornings, we see smiling faces tell each other: "It's chapel today." Here I get to remember a young

boy tell me on a Tuesday afternoon: “We have chapel tomorrow.” That night his dad was in jail, but here that young boy learned the love of his better father, his heavenly Father, and the love of his Savior Jesus. Yes, here I get to see students, not just with science books and math books, but with Bibles, treasuring their Bibles because they treasure their Jesus because they know what Jesus has done for them, because they know Jesus loves them - and they love to hear it.

I know we’re not perfect here. That’s why we have the theme verse that we do - **“Be kind and compassionate, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”** Some days when I read that verse - **“Be kind and compassionate, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you”** ... some days I think: “How wonderful that we have a God with a heart that champions and cheers kindness and compassion. How wonderful that we get to grow up knowing there is something more important than “Get the most. Get the best. Do whatever it takes to be #1.” Or how rich it is to grow up knowing that there is something more to life than: “Be true to your feelings.” Even better, we get to grow up knowing that the most important figure in our life isn’t casting a dark shadow over us: “You better get it right ... you better get it right now, or else.” Instead the most important figure in our lives wants us to know his kindness, his compassion, and his forgiveness. Knowing that ... what a relief!

And then there's other days I think of that passage - "**Be kind and compassionate, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you**" ... I think of that passage and I feel like I've been kicked in the gut. "Why was I scowling like that? Why did I have to say that ... like that? Why didn't I ...? Why can't I get it right?" Those words - "**be kind and compassionate, forgiving ...**" ... they sound so peaceful, but they hit me in the gut in a way that makes me feel so small. Why? I'm here ... you're here ... we're here in this world of hurt to represent God's kindness and compassion. But sometimes, instead of shining with God's heart, what do we sometimes do? Time and again we forget God's heart and we get stuck on ourselves - "what about me?" And then, instead of sharing God's kindness and compassion, we make this world of hurt hurt with even more hurt.

That's why the last words of our verse are even better than the first words. "**In Christ, God forgave you.**" In Christ, God forgave me. He forgave you! I think of the mean things I've said, Jesus didn't ever say things like that, never ever. Instead, when he was blasted with the hate of this world, he answered back: "**Father, forgive them.**" I think of all the love I've left unsaid, undone. Jesus didn't get too busy, too impatient. Jesus wasn't blind to the hurt around him. He didn't ignore or try to get away from the hurt around him. He reached out. He touched. He healed. He showed his kindness; he showed the heart of God. And he did what no one else could do for you and for me. He stepped into our guilt and he took our place. Jesus didn't leave us on our own, guilty before God to be cursed with an eternity of loveless hell. No, Jesus took our guilt; he took God's anger over

the loveless way we've treated him, the loveless ways we've treated the people he's given us to love. He stepped in for us and paid the price of our guilt, so that instead of facing God's anger, we get to see God's face smile with peace: "Your sins are forgiven you. You are right by me."

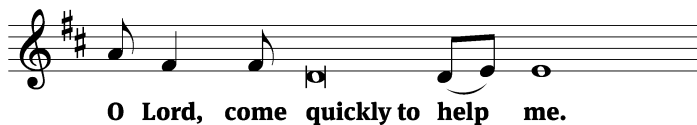
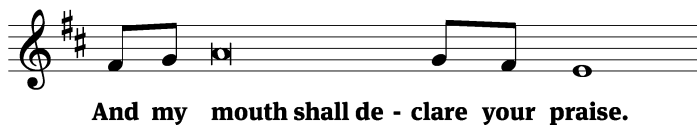
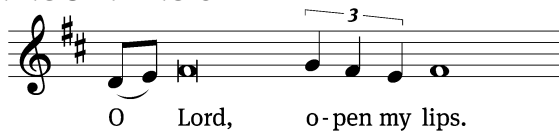
What does that mean for us, for you and for me? In this world of hurt, we don't have to live like hurt and hopelessness win. We don't have to surrender to hurt and hopelessness. We get to live like we're going to heaven where there will be no more hurt, because with Jesus you are going to heaven where there will be no hurt. But that's not all. Today we get to share a taste of that heaven, not just share in, but we get to share out. Today we get to share God's heart with the people around us - showing kindness, caring, forgiving. That's what we do as the family of God. That's what we do as a family connecting in Christ. And that's what we learn to do at St. John Lutheran School. **"Be kind and compassionate, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you."** Amen.

NEW MORNING PRAISE

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... we experience hurt and heartache, that leads to anger and strife, that leads to more hurt and heartache, that leads to payback and retribution, in a vicious cycle that never seems to end.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we are blessed to know and to experience, to share and to work the end of that vicious cycle - kindness, compassion, forgiveness, and love in Christ! At St. John, in our congregation and school ministry, we are blessed to experience and to grow in this love and peace that passes all understanding. Today, in word and song, we hear our school children share that peace and love with us!

OPENING SENTENCES



CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION OF SINS

M: 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. Therefore, let us confess our sins to him and plead for his mercy.

C: 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. But trusting in Jesus, my Savior, I pray: Have mercy on me according to your unfailing love. Cleanse me from my sin, and take away my guilt.

M: God, our heavenly Father, has forgiven all your sins. By the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, he has removed your guilt forever. You are his own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to his will.

C: Amen.



Give glory to God, our light and our life.



Come, O come, let us wor - ship.

COME, O COME, LET US SING TO THE LORD



Come, O come, let us sing to the Lord,



let us shout with joy to our sav - ing Rock;



come, en - ter in with our songs of praise,



come, en - ter in with thanks - giv - ing.

1 You are a great and a wondrous God,
2 Come, let us wor - ship and, bow - ing low,
cup - ping in your hands all the depths of earth.
kneel be - fore the One who has made us all.
You made the hills and the moun - tains high,
You are the God whom we call our own,
Refrain
you made the seas and the dry land.
we are the flock that you shep - herd.

PRAYER OF THE DAY (LUTHER'S MORNING PRAYER)

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have kept me this night from all harm and danger. Keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please you. Into your hands I commend my body and soul and all things. Let your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. **Amen.**

HYMN

"How Lovely Shines the Morning Star"

Hymn 370

Congregation Sings vs. 1, 3, & 5

School Children Sing vs. 2 & 4

How lovely shines the Morning Star! The nations see and hail afar
the light in Judah shining.

O David's son of Jacob's race, my Bridegroom and my King of grace,
for you my heart is pining. Lowly, holy, great and glorious,
O victorious Prince of graces, filling all the heav'nly places.

*O highest joy by mortals won, true Son of God and Mary's son,
the highborn King of ages!
In your blest body let me be, e'en as the branch is in the tree,
your life my life supplying.
Sighing, crying for the savor of your favor, resting never till I rest in you forever.*

O mighty Father, in your Son you loved me ere you had begun
this ancient world's foundation.
Your Son has made a friend of me, and when in spirit him I see,
I joy in tribulation. What bliss is this!
He is living, to me giving life forever; nothing me from him can sever.

*Oh, joy to know that you, my friend, are Lord, beginning without end,
the first and last, eternal!
And you at length—O glorious grace— will take me to that holy place,
the home of joys supernal. Amen, amen! Come and meet me, quickly greet me!
With deep yearning, Lord, I look for your returning*

Lift up the voice and strike the string, let all glad sounds of music ring
in God's high praises blended.
Christ will be with me all the way, today, tomorrow, ev'ry day
till trav'ling days are ended. Sing out, ring out triumph glorious,
O victorious chosen nation; praise the God of your salvation.

A MEDLEY OF SCHOOL THEME VERSES

- M: Do not be anxious about anything,
C: **but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,
present your requests to God.** (Philippians 4:6 ~ 2016-2017)
- M: I have told you these things,
C: **so that in me you may have peace.**
- M: In this world you will have trouble.
C: **But take heart! I have overcome the world.** (John 16:33 ~ 2017-2018)

M: So do not fear, for I am with you;

C: **do not be dismayed, for I am your God.**

M: I will strengthen you and help you;

C: **I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.** (Isaiah 41:10 ~ 2018-2019)

M: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened,

C: **and I will give you rest."** (Matthew 11:28 ~ 2019-2020)

M: "I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord,

C: **"plans to prosper you and not to harm you,
plans to give you hope and a future."** (Jeremiah 29:11~ 2020-2021)

M: Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.

C: **They will soar on wings like eagles;**

M: they will run and not grow weary,

C: **they will walk and not be faint.** (Isaiah 40:31~ 2021-2022)

M: Therefore go and gather disciples from all nations

C: **by baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit.** (Matthew 28:19 ~ 2022-2023)

M: I can do all things

C: **through Christ who strengthens me.** (Philippians 4:13~ 2023-2024)

M: Be kind and compassionate to one another,

C: **forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**
(Ephesians 4:32 ~ 2024-2025)

FIRST READING

Ephesians 5:1-2 (EHV)

Therefore, be imitators of God as his dearly loved children. And walk in love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

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

SCHOOL CHILDREN SING (SUNDAY)

"Oh, How Good It Is"

Hymn 731

School Children Sing vs. 1 & 2

Congregation joins for vs. 3

Oh, how good it is when the fam'ly of God dwells together in spirit, in faith and unity. Where the bonds of peace, of acceptance and love are the fruits of his presence here among us.

Refrain

*So with one voice we'll sing to the Lord,
and with one heart we'll live out his word,
till the whole earth sees the Redeemer has come,
for he dwells in the presence of his people.*

*Oh, how good it is on this journey we share
to rejoice with the happy and weep with those who mourn.
For the weak find strength, the afflicted find grace
when we offer the blessing of belonging. Refrain*

3 Oh, how good it is to em-brace his com-mand to pre-fer one an-oth-er, for-give as he for-gives. When we live as one we all share in the love of the Son with the Fa-ther and the Spir-it.

Final Refrain 2X

Refrain

So with one voice we'll sing to the Lord,
 and with one heart we'll live out his word,
 till the whole earth sees the Re - deem - er has come,
 for he dwells in the pres-ence of his peo - ple.

GOSPEL

John 13:1-17

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

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

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

HYMN

"God Loved the World So That He Gave"

Hymn 570

God loved the world so that he gave his only Son the lost to save that all who would in him believe should everlasting life receive.

Christ is the solid rock of faith, who was made flesh and suffered death.
All who confide in him alone are built on this chief cornerstone.

God would not have the sinner die; his Son with saving grace is nigh.
His Spirit in the Word declares that we in Christ are heaven's heirs.

Be of good cheer, for God's own Son forgives the sins that you have done.
You're justified by Jesus' blood; baptized, you are a child of God.

If you are sick, if death is near, this truth your troubled heart can cheer:
Christ Jesus saves my soul from death; this is the anchor of my faith!

Glory to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Three in One!
To you, O blessed Trinity, be praise now and eternally!

SERMON

HYMN

"Love in Christ Is Strong and Living"

Hymn 726

Love in Christ is strong and living, binding faithful hearts in one;
love in Christ is true and giving, may his will in us be done.

Love is patient and forbearing, clothed in Christ's humility,
gentle, selfless, kind, and caring, reaching out in charity.

Love in Christ abides forever, fainting not when ills attend;
love, forgiving and forgiven, shall endure until life's end.

OFFERING

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



(For over 50 years we have been providing families and children with a Christ-centered education. You can help support the ministry of St. John School with a special gift for our Tuition Grant Fund.)

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Eternal Father, your Word is a lamp for our feet and a light to our path. You inspired the Scriptures for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that your servants might be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Lead us to love your Word more and more and to receive your message with great eagerness.

You have given us your Word that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing we may have life in his name. Enable us to see the wonders of your love in Christ from the beginning to the end of your holy book.

Help us to see Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

Work in all your people, especially in parents, the resolve and patience to teach their children the simple truths about the Savior who loves them. Walk with us as we take our children to the manger, the cross, and the empty tomb. Let them find Jesus in stories, songs, and prayers.

Move us to bring up our children in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Provide wisdom and commitment to teachers who train our young people in Sunday Schools and youth Bible classes. Deepen their knowledge of your Word as they prepare and share the lessons they teach. Move them to model a sincere devotion to the Scriptures.

Lead us to plan for and support the Christian training of children.

We thank you for enabling our congregation to provide elementary (and secondary) education for our children. We know our schools are your special blessing, and we pray for the resolve to establish and maintain standards of excellence in all aspects of education. Move us to be generous in our offerings so that teachers may teach and students may learn in fitting surroundings.

Lead us to provide Christian schools that reflect the immensity of your love.

Work in us that we may find the lasting value of growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ. Lead us to be faithful in our personal study of the Scriptures and in participating in regular Bible classes. Rid us of all thoughts that Christian education ends in our youth. Make us life-long students of your precious Word.

Lead us to believe that at every age your Word remains a lamp for our feet and a light to our path. Amen.

PRAYER AND 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.

M: O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, you have brought us safely to this new day. Defend us with your mighty power, and grant that this day we neither fall into sin nor run into any kind of danger; and in all we do, direct us to what is right in your sight, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. **Amen.**

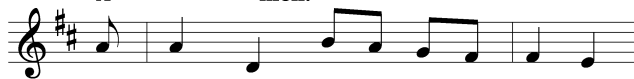
BLESSING



The Lord bless and keep you.



A - men.



The Lord's face ev - er shine up - on you.



A - men.

The Lord grant you peace for all your days.

A - men.

CLOSING HYMN

“Gracious Savior, Gentle Shepherd”

Hymn 757 vs. 1, 3-4

Gracious Savior, gentle Shepherd, children all are dear to you;
 may your loving arms enfold them in your care their whole life through.
 By your tending and protecting keep them safe in all they do.

By your holy Word instruct them, fill their minds with heav’nly light;
 by your pow’rful grace convince them always to approve what’s right.
 Let them feel your yoke is easy, let them find your burden light.

Taught to love the holy praises which on earth your children sing,
 with their lips and hearts, sincerely, glad thank-off’rings may they bring,
 then with all the saints in glory join to praise their Lord and King.

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Special Thanks

We thank our school children for beautifying our Sunday Service.

We thank our musicians for beautifying our Sunday Service.

Meredith Fein – violin, Charles Ledvina – bass, Steve Lemerand – percussion, Tim Samelson – guitar

“For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will.” Colossians 1:9

Who needs your prayers most? Ask the Lord to bless your witness to them today.

NEW BIBLE INFORMATION CLASS

Bible Information Class is a series of 18 lessons that covers the basic doctrines of our Lutheran church. Participating is a great way to learn more about what we teach at St. John and get a better understanding of Scripture. Some take the class simply to learn more, and some take the class with the desire to eventually become members at St. John.

It does take a bit of a commitment, but we try to help out by offering a class on Tuesday evenings via Zoom. This allows parents to stay home and not worry about child care or traveling back to St. John in the evening. In-person options are also possible based on participants' interest. Mr. Retzlaff conducts these classes, so if you are interested in signing up or just investigating the possibility, please contact him at david.retzlaff@stjohnslib.com. A new round of classes is scheduled to begin this week.

ENROLLMENT FOR 2025/2026 SCHOOL YEAR

We are excited to open enrollment season at St. John Lutheran School for the 2025/2026 school year!

For more information, please visit our website (stjohnslib.com/school), call our office at [847-362-4424](tel:847-362-4424), or email David.Retzlaff@stjohnslib.com. We are eager to discuss with you how we can partner with you in your child's education!