

## Easter #7

5-24-2020

J.V. Trautwein

### Celebrate (Introduction)

“In these days between Ascension and Pentecost, we gather with the disciples in the upper room, waiting for the Spirit to transform the church around the world. In today’s gospel Jesus prays for his followers and for their mission in his name. Amid religious, social, and economic divisions, we seek the unity that Jesus had with his Father. Made one in baptism, we go forth to live our faith in the world, eager for the unity that God intends for the whole human family”

### Opening Hymn: [“Ye Watchers and Ye Holy Ones”](#)

#### Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35

Let God rise up, let his enemies be scattered;  
let those who hate him flee before him.  
<sup>2</sup> As smoke is driven away, so drive them away;  
as wax melts before the fire,  
let the wicked perish before God.  
<sup>3</sup> But let the righteous be joyful;  
let them exult before God;  
let them be jubilant with joy.  
<sup>4</sup> Sing to God, sing praises to his name;  
lift up a song to him who rides upon the clouds<sup>[a]</sup>—  
his name is the Lord—  
be exultant before him.  
<sup>5</sup> Father of orphans and protector of widows  
is God in his holy habitation.  
<sup>6</sup> God gives the desolate a home to live in;  
he leads out the prisoners to prosperity,  
but the rebellious live in a parched land.  
<sup>7</sup> O God, when you went out before your people,  
when you marched through the wilderness, *Selah*  
<sup>8</sup> the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain  
at the presence of God, the God of Sinai,  
at the presence of God, the God of Israel.  
<sup>9</sup> Rain in abundance, O God, you showered abroad;  
you restored your heritage when it languished;  
<sup>10</sup> your flock found a dwelling in it;  
in your goodness, O God, you provided for the needy.  
Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth;  
sing praises to the Lord, *Selah*  
<sup>33</sup> O rider in the heavens, the ancient heavens;  
listen, he sends out his voice, his mighty voice.

<sup>34</sup> Ascribe power to God,  
whose majesty is over Israel;  
and whose power is in the skies.  
<sup>35</sup> Awesome is God in his<sup>[a]</sup> sanctuary,  
the God of Israel;  
he gives power and strength to his people.  
Blessed be God!

**Hymn of Praise:** [“Praise, My Soul, the God of Heaven”](#)

### **Prayer of the Day**

“O God of glory, your Son Jesus Christ suffered for us and ascended to you right hand. Unite us with Christ and each other in suffering and in joy, that all the world may be drawn into your bountiful presence, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.”

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading:** [Acts: 1:6-14](#)

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reading:** [1 Peter 4:12-14](#), [1 Peter 5:6-11](#)

**The Gospel:** [John 17:1-11](#)

**Hymn of the Day:** [“Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word”](#)

**The Message** ([Video Link](#))

It has been two months since we have been physically together in the fellowship of worship. This has been difficult for many of us since the bonds we have made with each other have been very much a part of our lives. Hopefully for us it will be like the old saying, “Absence makes the heart grow fonder.” This may very well be true since in a very strange way being a member of the Body of Christ may have taken on new meaning for us. The absence of physically meeting together could very well strengthen our need and desire to experience the meaning of being a member of the Body of Christ, the fellowship of believers. Out of this could be a renewal in the future life of the church. Hopefully for us “Absence [will] make the heart grow fonder.” It just may take this crisis to give new life within the church upon the realization of the importance of being a member of the fellowship of believers.

With the gradual reopening of society, even when the virus is still a threat, we must be patient and wise as to the immediate steps we as the church take. We must realize that when the doors open again that although we will be together, it will not at first be the same as usual. Most likely social distancing will be the norm. Many will be fearful to get back to any resemblance of normalcy until the pandemic is neutralized. For our society as a whole, fear will be the next obstacle to overcome. Even when the virus is under control fear will linger on and this is natural. But, fear must eventually be conquered. Nelson Mandela once said, “I learned that courage was

not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.”

Fear is not new to the followers of Christ. From the very beginning we are told that after the crucifixion the disciples met behind closed doors out of fear. It was not popular among the Jews to be a follower of Christ even being ridiculed and harassed for their beliefs. In many instances the authorities encouraged their persecution and even execution. As Christianity rapidly spread across the Roman Empire, Christians were seen as threat to the Roman social order which resulted in their persecution and even death. To be a Christian during these early years and centuries was to know and live the daily reality of fear. In many cases they could not be seen worshipping and therefore could only meet together in small gatherings. In some ways this could be labeled social distancing out of the fear to be seen together and reported to the authorities.

Although being persecuted the early church not only survived but grew. They lived with and minimized their fear through the cautions they took. They met in homes and even in underground tombs at times when they would least be detected. But even with the cautions they took, fear remained in their lives. Ultimately their fear was overtaken by their strong faith. Just listen to Peter’s words to those early followers living in fear, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering.”

Perhaps these words of Peter are now easier to understand than anytime we may have read them in the past. That is exactly where we are even though the circumstances may be different. We are being challenged but Peter states we must get beyond our anxieties because no matter what, we are in God’s care. This was affirmed by Jesus in our Gospel lesson today. In His prayer He acknowledged the fact that His followers would suffer for their beliefs. He stated after His resurrection and before His ascension, “And now I am no longer on the world, but they [His disciples} are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.” This is the promise that God’s presence is with us through all our trying times. This is what gave comfort and strength to overcome fear in all those early Christians and is for us today.

Knowing God’s presence is with us throughout our trials is a reminder that we are not alone. God’s presence in each of us makes us realize that we are one with all our brothers and sister throughout the world who are also suffering. Peter gives us this reminder that together with all our brothers and sisters we are to remain disciplined and alert remaining steadfast in our faith. This common faith gives us the strength to endure our times of trial; our times of separation. Although we may not be able to physically be together in the sharing of our lives and witness, we still remain one in the presence of God. We still can extend our love for each other by being disciplined as to when and how we are able to unite in our worship together. Regardless, we are still the living body of Christ, the fellowship of believers, the Church in today’s turbulent times. To know that our fear will eventually be overcome giving us hope and the joy of anticipation when we shall gather together again. When this happens it will be a time of true thanksgiving and celebration. With the Psalmist we will be able to proclaim, “Sing to God, O kingdoms of the

earth; sing praises to the Lord. ....How wonderful you are in your holy place, O God of Israel, giving strength and power to your People! Blessed by God!"

**The Anthem:** [“Amazing Grace”](#) Andrea Bocelli (Easter 2020)

**The Offering:\***

We give thee but thine own, what-e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

**The Prayer:**

Ever present God, We long to be with when we will be able to gather together as the fellowship of believers at Epiphany. Give us the patience and the wisdom to make our future necessary decisions out of love for each other. Comfort all those who are suffering and dying from this virus. Be with their families during their suffering. Give us the wisdom and the strength of conviction to reach out to those who are in economic hardship. Continue to give the researchers and scientist the persistence and knowledge in order to find solutions which will neutralize and defeat this deadly virus bringing suffering to an end. Through it all we come to you with thanksgiving for all those who are risking their lives in order to bring healing and comfort to those who are in pain and facing death.

We pray for all whole need your comforting an heeling presence especially Pam Ash, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, Billy Jean Eddy & family, the Elshafei family, Betty Fultz, Darrell Garrison, the John Family, Robert Karner, Ray Lambert, Donna Mayhew, Bev and Jim Mertz, Nic Nelson, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Terre Rones, Paul Sagal, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Tommy Shimer, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Linda Stephens, Randy Stephens, Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Pastor Jack, and all those who are suffering pain, and sorrow as a result of this pandemic.

We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

**The Lord's Prayer**

**The Benediction**

The Lord bless you and keep you;  
The Lord make His face shine upon you;  
The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters  
Live on knowing God's love,  
The joy of living this life of love,  
And the peace which only come through the power of His presence within you.  
So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

**Closing Hymn:** [“Jesus Shall Reign”](#)

\*Offering to be sent to:

Bob Brackbill

10274 Raleigh Tavern Road

Ellicott City, MD 21042

Epiphany Lutheran Church

9122 Sybert Drive

Columbia Hills

Ellicott City, MD 21043

Website: <http://www.epiphanylutherancolumbia.org>