August Newsletter/Pentecost 8 Leadership Letter

Dear Friends, this week we continue our study of the Sermon on the Mount. These texts are easy to read, but difficult to live. As you reflect on Jesus's words may God grant insight, understanding...and strength. Pastor Janet

Day 1 Read Matthew 5:17-20 When Jesus speaks of the Law and Prophets, he is speaking about Scripture as the disciples knew it. "What you have read and studied and heard preached," he says, "is being lived out in me—and in you." The regulations and requirements of the covenant are important, but they are not to be understood as a checklist with 90% being acceptable and 50% denoting a failure. The Old Testament has little to say about internet ethics and television rating systems. It doesn't speak to a world bristling with class action lawsuits and welfare requirements, airline security and privacy regulations. But it does speak to what it means to live as part of God's covenant people. It isn't enough to just satisfy the letter of the law, instead we are called to live all of life in the light of mercy and justice. In other words, we are to honor God and love our neighbor. What the law and prophets and gospel call us to do is to look at all the moral ambiguities and ethical challenges of the 21st century in the light of Jesus Christ—who came to be a living example of all that the law required. Kingdom living isn't a matter of laws to be obeyed, but love to be fleshed out in every aspect of life.

Day 2 Read Matthew 5:21-26 Some of the Ten Commandments make me squirm a bit. But I hold my head high when I read: Thou shall not murder. I have never murdered anyone—intentionally or accidentally or in any form whatsoever. Yet even as I pat myself on the back, Jesus' words inch their way into my being. The heart of the commandment is much more than "Don't Kill." Our words and actions can inflict such damage on others that, while they are still living and breathing, something in them dies. Anger unleashed can sever relationships and destroy lives. As is often the case in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus uses extreme examples to make his point but, if we turn from the harshness of his words, we may miss their healing power. After all, how can we sing Amazing Grace while, with the same breath, we are muttering and grumbling and wishing harm to "them." How can we pray forgive us our trespasses while we plan ways to put another in her place? If, however, we seek ways to mend relationships, to let the anger in us soften, then we will cast off the burden of resentment which can kill the spirit of love within us.

Day 3 Read Matthew 5:27-30 Jesus calls us to live in our relationships with others the way God chooses to live with us. Divorce in Jesus' day was as simple as a man deciding he was tired of his wife (never the other way around), and casting her out onto the street. Yet, despite centuries of provocation, God never lets us go. When we commit ourselves to another we enter into that same sort of relationship. We become connected in ways that go beyond the surface, beyond "what you can do for me?" and "you make me feel so young." Love, Jesus reminds us, isn't about what we can get from the other, but what we can give. Faithfulness to another means that we shape our thoughts, govern our actions, and mold our relationships in ways that preserve the value and worth for the other. Or as Paul writes in First Corinthians: Love is patient. Love is kind. Love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Day 4 Read Matthew 5:33-37 When I was a child, we were quick to make promises. We were quick to assert our intent with, "Cross my heart and hope to die." We were also quick to renege on our promises by saying, "I had my fingers crossed." In other words, no matter how dramatic our promise, we could never quite trust each other. Even as adults this same sort of deception is common. We swear on a stack of Bibles. We say, "As God is my witness…" and then we do as we please. Disciples are to live lives of such integrity that no great promises are needed. What we say we do. When we bring God's name into our oaths and vows, we belittle God. God is to be so much a part of who I am and what I do that I don't need to say it. Whether we are under oath or not, all we say should be the truth.

Day 5 Read Matthew 5:38-42 As Jesus moves closer to the heart of his sermon, the teachings become more uncomfortable to hear. I may not strike back at you if you hit me, but I sure don't want to stand there so you can hit me again. Jesus speaks here of a way of life that is hard for most of us to understand. The prevailing mood of our world is to return two punches for every one received. Our security is based on the principle of "preemptive strikes." We must be careful lest someone takes advantage of us. Jesus offers a totally different way of life. He calls us to respond to others in terms of their needs not our own rights. This may seem like weakness, but this stance of love only comes from great strength. It means setting aside my urges to protect myself and my future—trusting instead in God's protection. It means absorbing another's hate and returning it as love. It means offering everything I have into God's hands, trusting that God will not let me down. That's scary

business. I can't do that on my own strength. I can only work toward it when I remember Christ's refusal to retaliate on the road to Golgotha. He died breathing love and forgiveness rather than revenge and retaliation. And thus, love won.

Day 6 Read Matthew 5:43-47 One of the most difficult prayers is one for the enemy—the person or group that causes us deep pain. Oh, it is easy to pray, "God change them and help them to see the error of their ways." Or how about, "God, teach them a lesson so that they will suffer as I have." But to pray, "God, let them know how much you love them. Give them deep joy and peace" is a very different matter. The words stick in my throat. But when we can pray in this way and mean it, something happens—to us. The one we call enemy, God calls child. When we can remember that our prayers take on new energy, and we are able to see "them" in new ways. And then, just maybe the day will come when we can sit together in a spirit of understanding.

Information and Updates for the Week Ahead:

-Please join us for worship this Sunday at 10:00 AM. This Sunday's worship service on the Zoom platform continues for those with internet access via computer, tablet, smart phone, or through the livestream of YouTube. Those who choose to may call in to listen from their phone. You can also continue participating in Zion's virtual Sunday 10:00 AM worship service by utilizing the Service of the Word template provided later in this newsletter. Feel free to use the Service of the Word at any time if you aren't able to join us in spirit at 10:00 AM on Sunday.

-To join this Sunday's service, same log-in info as last week: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84354840714?pwd=TDJGTkwvSTBER2INb1o1Qzd6WGxDdz09 Meeting ID: 843-5484 0714, Password: 022654.

Or by PHONE, One tap mobile, 6465588656, 84354840714#, 1#, 022654# US (New York)

-If you would prefer to view the service via livestream on our YouTube channel, you can do so by visiting our page at: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWzOtbfCe2z7-bIPvxp62IA. Thanks, Shawn, for developing this option!

-Thank you to all who provided feedback for the Ministry Site Profile! The MSP committee will meet July 27th to finalize our document and we will continue to communicate updates on the process as we submit our documents to the Synod.

-The Task Force continues to monitor the situation and to plan for an eventual safe return to in-person worship, making recommendations to council on a monthly basis. They will be meeting on July 28th.

-This Call's For You is the theme of our summer Bible study (via Zoom). Janet Hoover leads this study each Thursday from 7:30-8:30 pm. Here is the link to join:

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83302013288?pwd=cGpwTnYwMjduMk96OE0rQXVNTTREQT09. Meeting ID: 833 0201 3288. Password: 834215. Hope to "see" you there!

-This hymn, "You are mine" by David Haas, has been on my heart this week: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sgm9lkTNQmc. The lyrics of the chorus say "Do not be afraid I am with you. I have called you each by name. Come and follow me..." As you journey through this week, I pray that you will know the comfort of our God who casts out fear and calls us to love.

The peace and blessings of our loving God be with each of us. Kristen Burson and Mark Thompson Church Council co-presidents



SERVICE OF THE WORD
GATHERING

WELCOME

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the Holy Trinity, + one God, whose steadfast love is everlasting, whose faithfulness endures from generation to generation. **Amen.**

Trusting in the mercy of God, let us confess our sin.

Reconciling God,

We confess that we do not trust your abundance, and we deny your presence in our lives. We place our hope in ourselves and rely on our own efforts. We fail to believe that you provide enough for all. We abuse your good creation for our own benefit. We fear difference and do not welcome others as you have welcomed us. We sin in thought, word, and deed. By your grace, forgive us; through your love, renew us; and in your Spirit, lead us; so that we may live and serve you in newness of life. Amen.

Beloved of God, by the radical abundance of divine mercy we have peace with God through & Christ Jesus, through whom we have obtained grace upon grace. Our sins are forgiven. Let us live now in hope. For hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

Alleluia! Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism, we are raised with him to new life. Let us give thanks for the gift of baptism. We give you thanks, O God, for in the beginning you created us in your image and planted us in a well-watered garden. In the desert you promised pools of water for the parched, and you gave us water from the rock. When we did not know the way, you sent the Good Shepherd to lead us to still waters. At the cross, you watered us from Jesus' wounded side, and on this day, you shower us again with the water of life. We praise you for your salvation through water, for the water in this font, and for all water everywhere. Bathe us in your forgiveness, grace, and love. Satisfy the thirsty and give us the life only you can give. To you be given honor and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn: If You But Trust in God to Guide You # 769, Verses 1 & 4 - Mary Senn

Vs. 1 If you but trust in God to guide you with gentle hand through all your ways, you'll find that God is there beside you when crosses come, in trying days. Trust then in God's unchanging love; build on the rock that will not move.

Vs. 4 Sing, pray, and keep God's was unswerving, offer your service faithfully. Trust heaven's word; though undeserving, you'll find God's promise true to be. This is our confidence indeed: God never fails in time of need.

Prayer of the Day

Beloved and sovereign God, through the death and resurrection of your Son you bring us into your kingdom of justice and mercy. By your Spirit, give us your wisdom, that we may treasure the life that comes from Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

THE WORD

First Reading: 1 Kings 3:5-12 Second Reading: Romans 8:26-39 Gospel: Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Sermon: Do All Things Work Together for Good? -Rev. Jennifer DeWeerth

We often interpret scripture to say that what happens in the world is "God's will" or that "everything happens for a reason." Our passage from Romans today is filled with well-loved lines, including this one: "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose."

Here's the thing: I don't believe that all things work together for good. Sometimes, they just don't. Sometimes things don't work together at all, and sometimes they don't come together for good even for people who love God and may be called and trying to serve God's purpose. I want to talk this morning about how good our God is and, yet, how God does not, how God cannot, control or determine what happens in this world. God loves us but cannot keep us protected from the ills or accidents of this life. God never leaves us but can't stop bad things from happening.

Our lives are filled with pain and strife, as Paul says, a few verses earlier, and I don't disagree: "We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now, and not just the creation, but we ourselves." (vs 22) We-you and me and all of us- have known, will know, may be experiencing right now, hardship, distress, deep hunger (for food or something else), shame (nakedness), danger, and pain. The suffering of this life is such that at times we can barely articulate our loneliness, our sorrow, our anxiety, our great distress. And sometimes when we are lucky, and we throw all that we are feeling toward God in what barely even resembles prayer, but is mostly desperation, we receive comfort somehow. "The Spirit intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words." (vs. 26.) We can't always feel that, but sometimes we do. So far, I, like Paul, am just describing, just putting into words, what this life can be like at times.

Paul then goes on to write very comforting words about how the people of God receive special intercession. On this count, I just don't think God (or the Spirit) offers special provision for those who love God, predetermining their well-being, justification, and glorification. And it is not just that I think that sounds unfair, that some people are in a special category compared to others. The reason I don't believe in *pre-* determination, is because when it comes to God, I am not a *determinist* at all. I have seen over and over in life, as perhaps you have as well, that all things do *not* work together for good, not for those who love God, and not for those who don't. Bad things happen to good people and bad and just happen. For no reason. Things happen randomly, like cell division and genetic error. Sometimes when two well intentioned people or groups or systems both try to accomplish something, what results is a confluence of events that no one intended.

God is good all the time, as Luther said, "nothing but love." But God's goodness and love are not able to control everything that happens, because love just doesn't have that kind of power. God works through love, and love can only persuade and influence, not control or determine. God offers grace and love to everyone all the time but, in terms of *outcomes*, as they say: "YMMV: Your Mileage May Vary."

The evidence for this I find in the central organizing story of our faith: that people met someone named Jesus, and through their encounters with him, they claimed they had come into a relationship with the one true God. Then, that same man was executed as a criminal and, as he died, he forgave his enemies, and so hatred and enmity were powerless over love. Our ancestors, in faith, spoke and acted as if the true God were a reality that cares for each person and seeks them out through their heart and mind and conscience, but that is also powerless to do anything else but this for them. With this God, and only this God, on his side, Jesus came to a violent end and so did the disciples, and so did the Apostle Paul. Why? Because love, which is God's one and only way of interacting in the world, can give no protection and no guarantees.

Lately I have been listening to the podcasts of Kate Bowler called *Everything Happens*. The "For a Reason" in the title is literally crossed out. Kate was a young mother of a two-year-old, a writer and Duke University professor who, at age 35, was suddenly diagnosed with Stage IV cancer and told she had about two years left to live. Even though she didn't believe in what she studied-the prosperity gospel-she was shocked at how deeply she had absorbed the cultural idea that if she did everything well in her life and worked hard, she would have a good and healthy life. And of course, that's not how it works. Cancer didn't care about anything she was or had achieved. She is still here, a few years later, but she lost all her illusions about how "everything works for good for those who love God." Her view is not that everything happens for a reason, but that anything can happen and does, because life is a chronic condition.

In her podcast, she interviews people with deep spiritual insights about life, and how they came to them, usually, not easily. She says, "The world loves us when we are good, better, best. But this is a podcast for when you want to stop feeling guilty that you're not living your best life now. The self-help industry will tell you that you can always fix your life... "Eat this and you won't get sick. Lose this weight and you'll never be lonely. Believe with your whole heart and God will provide. Keep this attitude and the money is yours." But I'm here to look into your gorgeous eyes and say, "Look, there are some things you can fix and some things you can't. And it's okay that life isn't always better. We can find beauty, meaning, and truth, but there is no cure to being human." So, let's be friends on THAT journey; let's be human together.

And it hasn't just been that she has found comfort in the daily things of shared humanity with other people: in talking with friends, cuddling with her four-year-old, a moment of laughter with her husband. She has been surprised to feel only more powerfully the presence of God. "The only category I understand more [now] is the love of God," she says. "Both the experience of wanting to be close to God and the surprise of the feeling that God is close to me."

And this is where I start to come back into agreement with the Apostle Paul-on his conviction that God does not leave us when we suffer any of the attacks or anxieties of this life, which is the much quoted conclusion of the chapter. Never let anyone tell you that it's a little thing that God doesn't leave us alone in this life no matter what. Staying with us when we suffer? That's who God is.

A rabbi, not Jesus, but another rabbi who lived hundreds of years ago, tells a parable. "God," he says, "is like a mother who lived with her daughter, who was pregnant. The two did not get along. When the daughter was about to give birth, her mother went upstairs, and the daughter cried out from downstairs. Her mother heard her voice and she began to cry out from upstairs, too. Her neighbor friends asked her, 'What are you doing, crying out like that? You aren't giving birth!' She answered them, 'Isn't my own daughter in distress? How could I endure her crying out? Look, it is much better that I cry out together with her, for the distress of my daughter is my own." Says the rabbi, "God is like this mother; our distress is God's own."

When the moment comes and we begin to cry out, none of the trite sayings that trivialize the suffering of life or faith in God are much use to us, and that is fine. God is not a magician, a successful tycoon, or the ultimate insurance company. We take comfort not in a belief that God has it all planned out or runs the tables. We take comfort not in a belief that God has a reason or a plan, that what's happening is for a greater purpose. We take comfort not in a belief that God is on our side, or makes it right, or makes it worth it in the end. We take comfort in the promise that God is with us in this journey, in this flesh, in this moment, in whatever chronic condition of life we are experiencing now; we cannot be separated from the love of God. Together with the God of love we are not conquerors, always victorious in the game, but we are something more than conquerors. We are inseparable. Amen.

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's 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 to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

ANTHEM Come, Christians, Join to Sing Larson

Prayers of Intercession

Confident of your care and helped by the Holy Spirit, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

When your word is opened, it gives light and understanding. Increase our understanding and awe of your creation; guide the work of scientists and researchers. Treasuring the earth, may we live as grateful and healing caretakers of our home. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

You show steadfast love and direct us to ask of you what we need. Help this congregation ask boldly for what is most needed. Refresh us with new dreams of being your people in this place and time. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

In you our lives are never lost. Strengthen us by the inspiring witness of your people in all times and places. Embolden our witness now and one day gather us with all your saints in light. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Listen to the cries of your people waiting patiently for your healing hand and comforting Spirit especially: those who suffer with chronic pain and all cancer patients, Pr. Mary Etta, peace and comfort for Mary Ellen Van Allen, Gail, Fran and Claudia, Joe and family, the family of Debbie Presite, Edie Marie, Suzee, Michael Gilleece and family, healing and peace for Jack and Jim, the Nelson family, Your Neighbors clients, Theresa, and residents of the Presbyterian Home, that the light of Christ may shine upon them with hope. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Thanksgiving at the Table

O God of justice and love, we give thanks to you that you illumine our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, awaken unto the needs of others, and at the end bring all the world to your feast; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever. **Amen.**

The 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.

Closing Hymn: Build Us Up, Lord # 670, Verses 1 & 2 -Mary Senn

Vs. 1 Build us up, Lord, build us up; set in us a strong foundation. Lead us to do your holy will; form and shape your new creation. Build us up, Lord, build us up; as we guide and teach each other, help us to share your love with the world: ev'ry sister, ev'ry brother. Growing in Christ, we plant seeds for the kingdom; we follow in faith what's begun! Lord, set in our hearts the pow'r of your word to spread the news of your Son!

Vs. 2 Build us up, Lord, build us up; let our lives reflect your glory. Cast away all our doubts and fears; help us tell the world your story. Build us up, Lord, build us up; help us bear good fruit for you, Lord, give us vision and keep us sure. Grant us faith that's steadfast and true. Growing in Christ, we plant seeds for the kingdom; we follow in faith what's begun! Lord, set in our hearts the pow'r of your word to spread the news of your Son!

Blessing

Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. God, the creator, † Jesus, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the comforter, bless you and keep you in eternal love. Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Christ is with you. Thanks be to God.

Summer Bible Study on Zoom, with Janet Hoover

Bible Study is held on *Thursdays from 7:30-8:30 PM*. Last week we talked about how when God calls us to do something that we might feel intimidated by, he reminds us that he is with us, guiding us as we go along to do the work we're called to do. Put down our own safety nets and trust him.

July 30th Isaiah: Mr. Tell-a-Vision Isaiah 6:1-13

To join on Zoom: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83302013288?pwd=cGpwTnYwMjduMk96OE0rQXVNTTREQT09

Meeting ID: 833 0201 3288. Password: 834215.

To join by phone: Dial 646-558-8656, Meeting ID: 833 0201 3288, Password 834215.

August schedule:

Aug 6 Mary, Elizabeth, and Joseph: Great Expectations, Luke 1:1-45, Matthew 1:18-25, Matthew 2:13-23

Aug 13 Disciples: The Dusty Dozen, Matthew 4:18-22, Matthew 9:9-13, John 1:35-51

Aug 20 Mary and Martha: Sister Act, Luke 10:38-42, John 12:1-8, John 11:17-27

Aug 27 Paul: On the Road Again, Acts 9:1-31

August Birthdays — Happy Birthday from your Zion family!!

Darlene Youngkrans	2	Deborah Miller	16	Kelly Whipple	26
Julianna Griffiths	4	Claudia Trad	16	Megan Roberts	27
Nancy Thompson	7	Ed Nelson	18	Linda White	27
John Bonvicino III	8	Jennifer Pierce	19	Melissa Aceto	29
Michael Stevens, Sr.	8	Joyce Maher	23	Karen McLennan	30
James Daly	10	Shawn Kelly	25	Sharon Jeche	30
Megan Bonvicino	11	Corey Pardee	25	Eleanor Harrington	31
Kevin Owens	11	Grayson Stevens	25	Autumn Stevens	31

Gíven to the Glory of God

In Memory of:	To:	Given by:	
My Father on Father's Day	Roof Fund	Fran LaGase	
Helene Cushman Fand	Current expenses	Jack Henke	
Gene "Papa" White on his first	Roof Fund	Linda White & family	
Anniversary in Heaven			
Ozzie Meneses	Roof Fund	Linda White & family	
Klara Kohlbrenner	Roof Fund	Linda White & family	
Our dad & Papa on his Birthday	Roof Fund	Sandra, Rich, & Connor Russell	
In Honor of:	To:	Given by:	
Zion's Council & Volunteers	Roof Fund	Millie Angevine	
Zion's Ministry	Building Fund	Kirsten Soykan	

		June 2020 Treasurer's Report		
	June 2020	Year to Date	Budget	Over/Under Budget
Income				
Giving	\$ 10,064.95	\$ 78,033.42	\$ 95,500.00	\$ (17,466.58)
Other Income	\$ 1,124.91	\$ 16,370.55	\$ 17,555.00	\$ (1,184.45)
Total Income	\$ 11,189.86	\$ 94,403.97	\$ 113,055.00	\$ (18,651.03)
Total Expense	\$ 10,854.29	\$ 82,978.67	\$ 125,871.56	\$ (42,892.89)
Net Income	\$ 335.57	\$ 11,425.30	\$ (12,816.56)	\$ 24,241.86

Enjoy our 14th recipe exchange provided to us by chef Jon Daly

Cashew Chicken Salad

This chicken salad is both delicious and texturally complex. Serve over mixed spring greens for an al fresco salad or, more traditionally, inside a Kaiser roll or croissant as a sandwich.

Ingredients:

Chicken 8 legs, 8 thighs, 8 breast halves – bone in Salt 2 TBS
Granulated garlic 1 TBS
Black pepper 1 tsp
Cashews 8 oz
Celery 2 stalks, finely sliced
Red onion 1/3 cup, diced
Red bell pepper 1/3 cup, diced
Hardboiled eggs 2 each, diced

Mayonnaise 2 cups

Brown mustard 1½ TBS

Sugar 1 TBS

Salt and Pepper to taste

Directions:

In a small bowl, mix the salt, granulated garlic, and black pepper. Season chicken on both sides and bake on an oiled sheet pan at 275 degrees for one hour or until the internal temperature of the chicken reaches 160 degrees. Remove from oven and let sit for 30 minutes. Pick the meat from the chicken, and rough chop it into 1-inch pieces. Set aside. Toast the cashew nuts in the oven on a sheet pan for 10 minutes at 325 degrees. Let cool. In a large bowl, mix the chicken, cashews, celery, red onion, red bell pepper, hardboiled eggs, mayonnaise, brown mustard, and sugar. Salt and pepper, if desired.

From the pen of Mae Parker

No one is safe any more
The people now have a common view
When will it end this terrible plague?
I only wish I knew

Look up, dear people to your God
Only he can help us now
To help the doctors and the researchers
To find a cure somehow.

