

Pentecost 12 Leadership Letter

Dear Friends, this week concludes our study of the Sermon on the Mount. Through these words, Jesus calls for disciples (and that includes us), to embark on a new way of loving and living that won't be easy. I suspect they turned to these teachings again and again as their ministry with Jesus unfolded. And so it is for us. These are not words to be read once, and then forgotten. They are to be the drumbeat by which we live. After you focus on the particular texts of this week, I encourage you to read it again on days 5 and 6... All of it from 5:1-7:29. Then as we move through the days ahead, let these teachings continue to inform your understanding and guide your living.

-Pastor Janet

Day 1 Read Matthew 7:15-20 The original disciples had it easy, for they had Jesus himself to teach them. Thousands of years later, we struggle to know who Jesus is. Our understanding of him is filtered through centuries of experience. There are libraries full of books describing his teachings, his life, his resurrection- and they don't agree with each other. So who are we to believe? Ultimately, we are to trust those whose lives look the most like Jesus' life. They may not be the most intellectual or articulate, but those who lead in Christ's name today listen to others, reach out to the lonely, seek the good of others, not their own. And remember- you may be the one someone else looks to as they seek to follow Jesus. What kind of fruit are you bearing?

Day 2 Read Matthew 7:21-23 It's easy to say the right words, to be seen in the right places. It's easy to claim a connection to Christ. But our pious words and deeds don't matter as much as our relationship to God- living a life that centers around God, that has its roots deep in God's love, that is shaped by God's ways of justice and peace. We are not to use or manipulate God, but to turn our lives over to God. Again, I come back to the word integrity. What we say, what we do, and what we think, should all come together in the light of God's love. Our minds, our hearts, and our hands are to be involved in discipleship. If any of these pieces are missing or distorted, then we haven't heard what Jesus is saying.

Day 3 Read Matthew 7:24-25 This story has been a part of my life since my earliest days in Sunday School. The sermon on the Mount contains many important words and images, but this may be the most vivid. I can picture a house built on a foundation that is not quite solid- a base of comfort and power, possessions and self-centeredness shifting, creaking, and cracking as the storms of adversity and hard times blow around it. I can also picture the house whose base is God- a base of goodness, patience, and courage- swaying a bit, perhaps, but surviving the tempests with all shingles in place. It's a great story which lends itself well to Sunday School art projects and drama. But it is not a children's story. We need to regularly think about its images and do a structural analysis of our lives. What does your foundation look like? How can these words help us weather the storm?

Day 4 Read Matthew 7:28-29 This time with Jesus must have been both confusing and comforting for the disciples. They thought they knew what they were doing when they signed on with him but, after these lessons, they may have wondered if they had done the right thing. What does the authority of Jesus mean for you? How do Jesus' teachings shape your life?

Join us for our last summer lesson – Bible Study on Zoom, with Janet Hoover

Thursday from 7:30-8:30 PM.

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

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.

We would like to extend a special thank you to Rev. Janet Hoover for leading our summer bible studies. We have learned so much about a lot of biblical characters and how God transformed them and worked through them to help carry out His work. We really appreciate all of the insight into these people that Rev. Hoover provided us with over the past few months.

Information and Updates for the Week Ahead:

-We are pleased to announce that Pastor Eldon DeWeerth will serve as our “guest” supply pastor for this Sunday’s service! Please join us for worship this Sunday at 10:00 AM. Sunday’s service on the Zoom platform continues for those with internet access via computer, tablet, smart phone, or through the livestream on Zion’s Facebook page, Zion Lutheran Church, New Hartford, NY. Those who choose can 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 via the Zoom platform, same log-in info as last week:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84354840714?pwd=TDJGTkwvSTBER2lNbl1o1Qzd6WGxDbz09> Meeting ID: 843-5484 0714, Password: 022654. Or by PHONE, One tap mobile, +16465588656, 84354840714#, 1#, 022654# US (New York)

-If you would prefer to view the service at any other point in the week, you can find the recorded service on our YouTube channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWzOrbfCe2z7-bIPvxp62lA>

-We are pleased to report that Rusty Pentland has been discharged from the hospital and returned home. We ask for continued prayers for Rusty and Bill Pentland, along with Fran and Claudia King, and all those mentioned in our Prayers of Intercession from last Sunday’s service.

-If you haven’t already done so, please send us your feedback for the suggested protocol for our (eventual) return to in-person worship developed by Zion’s Task Force. Feedback can be sent to the office via the US Postal Service or email:

office@zionluth.com. We ask that all feedback be received by August 24th, as the Task Force is scheduled to meet next on August 25th and would like to consider your feedback as we continue planning for our return to in-person worship.

-Volunteers needed! If you are willing to serve as a greeter or usher once we do return to in-person worship, please contact Sara at the office to express your interest. Many hands make for lighter work!

-Many of you have already heard that long-time Zion member, George Thompson, passed away last week following an extended period of declining health. George’s obituary can be found at the following link: <https://protect-us.mimecast.com/s/PkAoCjRk26FGmolWfWYGKz?domain=legacy.com> Several members of Zion attended the services held at the Heintz Funeral Home this past Saturday. Mary Senn and Mark Thompson spoke about George on behalf of our Zion congregation. We will miss George’s presence, smile, pleasant demeanor, and color-coordinated shirt, tie, and socks! George will be missed.

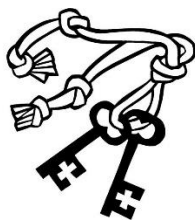
-The YMCA will continue use of the Fellowship Hall during the day for the upcoming fall academic semester as the school year gets underway. The Y’s after school program is needed given the part-time/ in-person school schedule for many local school districts. Zion is looking to support this worthwhile community partner as best we can.

-The Railroad Association, Girl Scouts, and Al Anon meetings will resume at Zion in the near future.

-Start searching for that favorite coffee mug or teacup, especially if there’s a special memory associated with it. As Kim Marscher mentioned for those on the post-service “joyful chaos” this past Sunday, we’ll have a fellowship “coffee hour” (more like 15-30 minutes) together after our service on Sept. 6th (Labor Day weekend). If you have a mug/cup with special significance for you, please share that with us on the 6th!

-We are living in a time of so much discord and polarization. Conflict seems to rule the day. But we can insert ourselves into this turmoil to bring the world something different. In her sermon this past Sunday, Rev. Janet Hoover reminded us that we are the vessels that allows God’s work to be done in the world. In Rev. Hoover’s words, “It is in our families, our community, our nation, that God is still working out God’s great mystery. Whether we are united in love and understanding or broken, hurting, and torn with internal conflict, it is...we are...just the vessel God can use in which to do great and glorious things. And it is through our imperfections that the perfect love of God is revealed. Trust that. Believe that. And know that even now, even here, God is working in you- opening your eyes to new ways of loving.” The closing hymn played by Mary this past Sunday was “Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace,” which underscored this message. May the words of the second verse stay with us this week and in the weeks that follow. “Break down the wall that would divide thy children, Lord, on ev’ry side. My neighbor’s good let me pursue, let Christian love bind warm and true.” Let us share the Lord’s peace with all we encounter in the days ahead.

With gratitude for our Zion family,
Mark Thompson and Kristen Burson, 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: *Precious Lord, Take My Hand* #773, Verses 1 & 2 –Mary Senn

Vs. 1 Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand, I am tired, I am weak, I am worn. Through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light. Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

Vs. 2 When my way grows drear, precious Lord, linger near, when my life is almost gone, hear my cry, hear my call, hold my hand lest I fall. Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

Prayer of the Day

O God, with all your faithful followers of every age, we praise you, the rock of our life. Be our strong foundation and form us into the body of your Son, that we may gladly minister to all the world, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

THE WORD

First Reading: Isaiah 51:1-6

Second Reading: Romans 12:1-12

Gospel: Matthew 16: 13-20

Sermon: *When you have enough light within You* –Rev. Eldon DeWeerth

Dear Friends in Christ. Grace and Peace in these strange & challenging days. Who would have thought that I would be bringing the “Good News from ZION” to my good friends at Zion Lutheran by YouTube, all the way from Highland Park/Chicago, Illinois? Amazing! Right!

I hear good things have been taking place for Zion, even in these challenging days. Thanks to solid leadership, strong Preaching - Pastor Jen! (and others, of course.) God continues to bless Zion with faithful people even in these Covid-19 days, and in a Pastoral vacancy. I miss the folks of Zion. By the mercies of God, Zion gets it done!

Like all Communities of faith, we would like to worship in person and be living out our faith together. Yet, the Apostle Paul reminds us that we can, by God's grace, be a living sacrifice which is our spiritual worship. We can give thanks for the good we see & offer prayers for those who suffer.

We were not around for the last pandemic of 1917-18. It was also horrible, as history described. Suffering, death, and fears were the same. Even back then, the Pastors and people had to make sense of the Word of God -to use the scriptures to hear God speak to that moment in time. The Good News is that God Still speaks to you and me today. The Spirit continues to guide us into new ventures, of which we don't know the ending, but we know and accept God's promise to walk with us. The Gospel tells about Jesus who stops abruptly, entering a new district, to assess with the disciples His teaching and healing ministry. Jesus wants to know how his ministry is doing and what people are saying about him and his work. He discovers that things have to change if he is to fulfill his calling as the Messiah. He finds that his disciples are almost clueless about who he is & where things are heading for Jesus and for his disciples. Jesus' followers have learned from Jesus teaching and have been amazed by the way people seek out Jesus as a rabbi or want Jesus' healing-touch for all who come. Neither his disciples nor crowds have had the occasion to put down Jesus for talking about suffering and death.

Jesus knows he must shift gears, so he does set his mind on Jerusalem and the cross. In Matthew, this is the time Jesus turns toward Jerusalem and starts to help the disciples grasp the truth of the Messiah, who gives up everything to suffer and die so that God's love and mercy will redeem the whole world.

That is the light that the world cannot give. The light that is freely ours through Christ. "Why" Jesus was sent is not easy, but hard. Jesus' followers need to know how difficult and both hard & empowering the journey will be, for Him & for them. Paul's letter addresses the faithfulness and the challenges of new Christians trying to be faithful to Christ in the Roman society. Paul talks about how to think about each other as fellow disciples; how to not conform to the ways of Roman society, but to be transformed by the light of Christ's spirit in their loving and caring for themselves, the world, and others in their attitude and actions.

They needed to learn about being members of the one body of Christ, yet uniquely & individually blessed - gifted to be a blessing to others, in all their attitudes & actions. We also need to learn about how to understand our context in the community of faith and our calling to be a blessing to our neighbors. I believe that God can use the good or difficult times to help us learn, grow, and overcome our fears and hurdles. Isn't that what this season of green (Ordinary Time) is all about in the church? Scripture is full of passages, stories, and parables that invite us to pause - learn and grow so we can change & move forward through life - even with pandemic, social evil, and the pastoral vacancy.

So, let's pause & learn again how God, in Baptism, joins us in Christ, the fullness of grace, the light & reconciling power, to act and change everything for our community of faith; for the world and our neighbors - friends or enemies. That is all we need to know. "But how?" you ask. Henri Nouwen (global peacemaker & advocate for 'Special Needs' persons) says the Christian's challenge is that we too often see our lives & others through the fears & darkness which divide us - which makes us fearful of the world - without hope or clear sense of the light that can fill our lives. Only when we have the light can we help others see the light and move forward.

Henri says - we all know about day and night - light & darkness in our own hearts, our families, our communities & World, but how can we grow or make a difference without a centering light that can help us see a way through. Henri concludes the analogy with an old Hasidic tale:

The rabbi asks his students: "How can we determine the hour of dawn, when the night ends and the day begins?" One student suggests, "When from a distance you can distinguish a dog from a sheep?" "No." is the answer of the rabbi. "Is it when you can distinguish between small tree & a bush?" asks another student. "No." responds the rabbi. "Then, please tell us answer," say the students. "It is, then," says the wise teacher, "when you look into the face of another human being, you have enough light within you to recognize your sister or your brother. Until then, it is still night, and the darkness is still with us." Let us pray for the light. It is the peace and the hope that the world cannot Give. We saw this light in the thousands of caring, risk-taking, selfless individuals- doctors, nurses, first responders, essential front-line workers, who were there for all the victims of the COVID-19 pandemic & resulting turmoil.

We also saw it in the life of a hero and an icon in Rep. John Lewis, in whom that light shines like a torch. I hope that many of you watched & heard some of the services and tributes for this iconic Black Civil Rights leader. He lived and breathed what it meant to be light for all sisters and brothers dealing with racism, injustice, & white-supremacy. He was constantly

working for justice, hope, & peace for all persons. It was John, who when asked about any injustice, would always listen to the pains and then be there to work together to do what was needed. He believed that everyone could do something to help the hurting person or society. He would say, "You can always stand-up and speak out about what you see." He would also say, "Go Make Trouble - good trouble & do it peacefully." Known as a truth teller, he served our country for 30+ years in Congress where his light shown as the conscience of the Congress. I want to leave you with the question. What is going on in our country that needs our love, care and action?

As people of God and disciples of Christ...
who look into the human needs around us...
will we have enough light within us to see ...
our sisters and brothers in pain. I pray our
response is YES... Let the people say, "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 resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

ANTHEM: He Knows My Name -Walker / Wilhelmi

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.

Lord our rock, you are our foundation in Jesus Christ, your Son, whom we confess as the living God. Prepare your church for its mission in bearing witness to Christ, both here at home and throughout the world. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Though we walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve us, deliver us, and fulfil your purpose for us. According to your steadfast love, grant healing and wholeness to those who are bereaved, in trouble or adversity, or sick and in need of care. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You call us into this community, in which we, though many, are one in Christ. May we recognize in ourselves and in one another the unique gifts you have given us for the building up of the church for the sake of the world. 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, Gail, Fran and Claudia, Rusty and Bill Pentland, comfort for the family of George Thompson, for the peace and comfort of Patty and her family, the family of Debbie Presite, to all those affected by the fire in East Utica, Edie Marie, Suzee, Michael Gilleece and family, the Nelson family, Your Neighbors clients, and Theresa, 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: Here I Am, Lord #574, Verses 1 & 2 -Mary Senn

Vs. 1 “I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my people cry. All who dwell in dark and sin my hand will save. I, who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright. Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?” Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night. I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.

Vs. 2 “I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my people’s pain. I have wept for love of them. They turn away. I will break their hearts of stone, give them hearts for love alone. I will speak my word to them. Whom shall I send?” Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night. I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.

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.**



Please stay on Zoom after the worship service on Sunday, September 6th for a little Labor Day get together with your Zion family! Bring a tea mug or a coffee cup that has special meaning or memories for you. You can volunteer to speak about its special meaning to you by raising your hand or by writing in the chat bar. We hope you will join us!!

Can you believe it has been Seventeen weeks since we began sharing the recipe exchange?

Enjoy our 17th recipe exchange provided to us by Sara Silva

Grilled caprese panini – yields one sandwich

Ingredients:

- 1 ciabatta roll or 2 slices sourdough bread
- 2 slices fresh mozzarella
- ½ tomato, sliced
- Handful of basil leaves
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp. Balsamic vinegar
- Salt & Pepper, to taste

Instructions:

Slice the ciabatta roll in half. Brush the outside of the bottom roll with 1 tbsp of olive oil and place on a grill, grill pan, or other. Layer the sliced fresh mozzarella, sliced tomato, and basil leaves, then drizzle with balsamic vinegar and season with a little salt and pepper. Brush the top of the roll or bread with remaining olive oil and place over sandwich in the pan over medium heat. Flip the sandwich once the bottom is toasted until the mozzarella starts to get a little melted around the sides but is not melted completely through. Enjoy this summer favorite!

