

Pentecost 5 Leadership Letter

Some thoughts on Psalms from Rev. Hoover. Dear Friends, this week we will conclude our study of the Psalms with a slightly different approach—not just 1 psalm, but 2 of them...Psalm 34 and Psalm 25. Next week we will shift our focus as we spend a few weeks exploring the Gospel of Matthew.

Day 1 Read Psalm 34 A close reading of this psalm tells us a few things about the author. First of all, he is a good (but not perfect) Hebrew poet. This psalm is an acrostic, with the first letter of each line in ABC order (not obvious in our English translation). However, he omits 1 letter and the final line is not part of the scheme. Also, the superscription alludes to a story about David and Abimilech...however, the story in 1 Samuel 21:12-25 mentions David and Achish. Our psalmist is not a perfect poet or historian, but...he knows where praise belongs. He isn't worrying about perfection and accuracy but is pouring out his heart to God. This is not a poem designed to win a Pulitzer Prize, but it is all about God and God's wisdom. The focus is not on the human, but on God. Think about your actions and your words. Do you ever hold back from doing or speaking because you don't think you're good enough? This psalm reminds us that God doesn't look for perfection but love.

Day 2 Read Psalm 34:1-10 This psalm is a testimony of praise and thanks on a personal level from one who has faced danger and difficulty and come out on the other side. He doesn't credit his own wisdom for this but offers thanks to God. Here are a few comments about some of the language. 34:7 speaks of the angel of the Lord. This refers to a figure in Exodus—a holy manifestation and messenger that guards and guides the people. 34:8- Happy might better be translated as blessed—being in a right relationship with God. As we trust God, we will experience joy and peace. 34:9- Fear isn't a matter of cowering in a corner in dread. Rather, fear is a feeling of awe and wonder. The amazement that comes in the presence of one who is so much more than we can even imagine. It is respect tinged with wonder. 34:10- The young lions refer to the princes...the aristocracy...the entitled elite (or those who think they are entitled). But without God they will never have enough. However, those who seek the Lord will have what they need.

Day 3 Read Psalm 34:11-22 I mentioned that this is a poem and a defining characteristic of Hebrew poetry is parallelism...and this section is full of it. As you read it, see how many examples of it you can find (hint- they are usually about the righteous and evildoers). The righteous are not perfect people, but those who have centered their life around God and God's call to love and justice. Evildoers are those who have centered themselves around...well, themselves. This section of wisdom and reflection reminds us that the fear of the Lord leads to life. God pays attention and works to protect and love his people. Our job isn't to try and identify the evildoers. Our job isn't to develop some sort of righteousness test (for others or for ourselves). Our job is simply to love God with all our heart and to trust God each and every day.

Day 4 Read Psalm 25 We like to think that good is always rewarded—but we know that doing the right thing sometimes leads to ridicule or even suffering. Loving God with every fiber of our being means living a lifestyle of love and justice that often finds us at odds with what our society encourages. Loving our neighbor as ourselves may cause us to look foolish and weak. In its opening and closing verses, this psalm verbalizes our frustration and distress when that happens. Those who oppose God's ways, those who mock our efforts, those who confront and challenge our beliefs, can all too easily weaken our faith and eat away at our confidence. The psalmist encourages us to offer our resentment and anguish to God, trusting that as we hold on to God's ways we will be able to hold our heads high, knowing that even in the worst moments of our lives we are not alone.

Day 5 Read Psalm 25 The problem with seeing the path God lays out for us is that we also see how often our footprints wander off the path. Scripture offers us the guide for lives of loving discipleship—it reminds us of the ways we are to reach out with love and justice and peace. But when I set my life against these texts, I find a great divide. Oh, there are occasional times when I served God faithfully, but there are also times when I failed, when I doubted, when my words hurt another, when I ignored God's call upon me. The good news, however, is that each day we begin with a clean slate. God doesn't hold the past against us but offers us fresh opportunities to do the right thing, to be lights of compassion and joy. God's steadfast love means that we can keep trying, keep learning, keep moving forward, knowing that even when we stumble and fall, God is there to pick us up and set us back on the road of grace.

Day 6 Read Psalm 25 The problem with seeing the path God lays out for us is that we also see how often our footprints wander off the path. Scripture offers us the guide for lives of loving discipleship—it reminds us of the ways we are to reach out with love and justice and peace. But when I set my life against these texts, I find a great divide. Oh, there are occasional times when I served God faithfully, but there are also times when I failed, when I doubted, when my words hurt another, when I ignored God's call upon me. The good news, however, is that each day we begin with a clean slate. God doesn't hold the past against us but offers us fresh

opportunities to do the right thing, to be lights of compassion and joy. God's steadfast love means that we can keep trying, keep learning, keep moving forward knowing that even when we stumble and fall, God is there to pick us up and set us back on the road of grace. I enjoy walking in the morning, and it is even better when someone walks with me. However, when I walk with a friend I seem to stumble more often. I think it is because I am often so busy talking that I forget to watch where I'm going. The Psalmist reminds us that, as we move through life, we need to keep our eyes on God. The world is full of so many things that draw us away from God. Our focus shifts so easily to our own concerns and anxieties, longing for comfort. And when we turn our attention to these things, well...we are tripped up and tangled in our misery. However, if we keep our eyes on God—through prayer and scripture, study, and worship—we will be guided through the uncertain terrain of life.

Information and Updates for the Week Ahead:

-We recognize that our Zion congregants look forward to the time when we can safely gather again in our sanctuary for in-person worship. In the judgment of our Task Force and Church Council members, we are not yet at that point. Our worship together, as well as the work of our church, does continue, although maybe not in the way we'd prefer. We invite you to join us again via Zoom for worship this Sunday at 10:00 AM. Rev. Janet Hoover will serve as our supply pastor again this weekend! This Sunday's worship service on the Zoom platform continues for those with internet access via computer, tablet, or smart phone, or who choose to call in to listen from their phone.

-To join this Sunday's service, same log-in info as last week:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84354840714?pwd=TDJGTkwvSTBER2lNbl0lQzd6WGxDdz09> Meeting ID: 843-5484-0714, Password: 022654. Or by PHONE, One tap mobile, +16465588656, 84354840714#, 1#, 022654# US (New York)

-You can 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.

-We sadly report the passing this past week of Paul Van Allen, a long-time member of our Zion family. Paul was a resident of the Presbyterian Home for the past several months. You can find Paul's obituary here (<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/name/paul-vanallen-obituary?pid=196410765>). We encourage you to offer prayers and send condolences to his wife, Mary Ellen, at:
Mary Ellen Van Allen
9461 Mallory Rd.
New Hartford, NY 13413

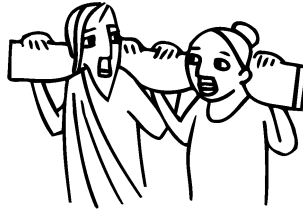
-If you haven't already done so, please remember to return your feedback about Zion for preparation of the Ministry Site Profile (MSP). Your feedback form was sent last week, either electronically or by US Postal Service if you receive your Zion info by mail. We respectfully request you return this feedback by July 3rd so we can compile the information and incorporate that into our MSP, an important document utilized in our Call Process to find Zion's next pastor.

-Please continue offering prayers for Fran King, who has recently developed additional medical issues. Claudia also asks for prayers for friends, Beverly and her husband, Al, and son, Mark. Al and Mark are dealing with significant health concerns.

-We continue soldiering on through so many developments with this pandemic, some encouraging and some a letdown. Because of so much uncertainty, we may hesitate to get our hopes up. Our default may become anxiety and worry. Pastor Janet delivered another wonderful sermon this past Sunday. Rev. Janet closed her sermon with thoughts of hope and encouragement: "Trust in God's providence.... Whatever tomorrow brings, God is there. Is illness or death staring at you or a loved one? Live fully and deeply now. Do anger and violence and bigotry seem to hover over the world? Live generously and faithfully now. Are increasing years diminishing your power and your energy? Love joyfully now. Let worry be replaced by wonder, fear by faith, trembling by trust. Open yourselves to the adventure of spirit-empowered living..." We remain grateful to Rev. Janet for these uplifting reminders, for a loving God who provides for all our needs, and our Zion family who serve as reminders of that every day. Have a good week ahead, everyone!

With gratitude,
Mark Thompson and Kristen Burson,
Church council co-presidents

Pentecost 5 – July 5, 2020



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: *Come to Me, All Pilgrims Thirsty #777, Verses 1 & 2 –Mary Senn*

Vs. 1 “Come to me, all trav'lers weary; come that I may give you rest. Drink the cup of life I offer; at this table be my guest.” Jesus, ever flowing fountain, give us water from your well. In the gracious gift you offer there is joy no tongue can tell.

Vs. 2 “Come to me, all pilgrims thirsty; drink the water I will give. If you knew what gift I offer, you would come to me and live.” Jesus, ever flowing fountain, give us water from your well. In the gracious gift you offer there is joy no tongue can tell.

Prayer of the Day

You are great, O God, and greatly to be praised. You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. Grant that we may believe in you, call upon you, know you, and serve you, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

THE WORD

First Reading: Zechariah 9:9-12

Second Reading: Romans 7:15-25

Gospel: Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

Sermon: *Let Freedom Ring* –Rev. Janet Hoover

I have always been fascinated by the idea of hang gliding. It looks so incredibly freeing—drifting and floating and gliding through the air. The reason I have never gone hang gliding, however, is that I suspect I wouldn't be as free as I would like. Such things as gravity and poor steering can make for a bumpy ride. But the idea of freedom is exhilarating. Something in us cries out to be released from all that seems to hold us down, to breathe freely, to soar on wings like eagles. The very idea of freedom lifts us with hope. Another image of freedom—one of Winston Churchill's aide-de-camps accompanied him on a trip to Washington, DC in the early 1940s. He writes: It was nighttime. Those in the plane were transfixed with delight to look down and see the amazing spectacle of a whole city lighted up. After five years of the London blackout, this city seemed ablaze with light and freedom. My heart filled. We all have different images of freedom. For some, it is swooping and soaring in space. For others it is light blazing in the darkness. It may be a toddler taking her first steps or a teenager with a brand-new driver's license. We may believe freedom will be ours when we win the lottery, graduate, retire. We hear the word freedom a lot around the 4th of July, and we are grateful for the freedoms we have. We give thanks to God for our opportunities and blessings. But at the same time, even in the midst of freedom, we let worry and doubt and despair hold us back and hold us down. The good news is that God has a word for us: Are you tired? Worn down? Burned out? Come to me and you'll recover your life. Walk with me and work with me. Watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. Keep company with me, and you'll learn what it means to be free. These words from Matthew's gospel have been a lifeline to me more than once. But as comforting and hopeful as they are, they aren't an easy pie in the sky solution to all of our problems. For while Jesus offers a life of freedom, he offers not a hammock under a shade tree, but a yoke.

The paradox of this passage is striking. We will be at rest, we will be truly free, only when we put on a yoke—symbol of work, of bondage. We will be free when we allow God to take our lives, every part of our lives—family, work, leisure—and direct them. And not only that, we are told to put on the yoke of Christ—to walk where he walks, love whom he loves, live as he lived. And we all know what that means. Jesus may tell us that his burdens are light and his yoke easy, still, a burden is a burden and a yoke is a yoke. Isn't the purpose of freedom to avoid all restraints, all burdens, so that we can be free to do what we want? One of the struggles we have in living out our discipleship is to accept the fact that, only as our lives are linked to Jesus, only as our lives are bent to his will, only as we give up our own need to control and trust him to lead us where he wants us to go, will we know rest. When we quit fighting God and allow ourselves to be caught up in the plans and purposes of God, then and only then are we free. Freedom doesn't mean doing whatever we want to do. For a Christian, freedom means being the person God intends us to be, living lives wide open to love, approaching each turn and twist in the road not with apprehension, but with a spirit of adventure. Until we accept the fact that God is in charge, our lives will be tossed about by other forces or desires that leave us battered and bruised. When we trust God, when we accept the gift of mercy and companionship that God offers us in Christ, we become free to be who God created us to be in the first place. Then we know what it means to live a life abundant and filled with promise and possibility. And remember we aren't driven along by whips, but we are yoked to Christ. Which means we are never alone. We will never be lost, for each step of our journey is at his side.

Take my yoke upon you, Christ says. What does this yoke look like? We may be afraid it is drab and hard, constraining us with a painful tightness. We may be afraid that it is programmed to lead us away from anything fun. And as we resist it, we find it so easy to return to bondage. To let ourselves be controlled by so many things. The fear of what people might say or fear of the future locks us in a gloomy dungeon. Memory, particularly of some shameful or unhappy experience, can shut us up in a dark cell. Resentment toward others or toward God can shut the door on life. We may be ruled over by some never-ending anxiety or economic woes. We are in bondage to cultural messages about success, attractiveness, the good life. We are held captive by forces inside of us as well as outside of us. We cry out to be free and at the same time we hold on tight to familiar attitudes and actions. The good news is that, when we acknowledge our bondage, when we turn to God for release, when we acknowledge our inability to solve our own problems, the Spirit of God moves into our lives to unwrap and untangle us from our closed, dark existence, bringing us into the light and love of God's presence. And then we discover that the yoke of Christ is not forged with chains of oppression but is woven with bright strands of compassion and courage—knit together with joy. The yoke is shaped and formed by practices that draw us closer to God:

Prayer—a continual connecting of our mind and heart to God.

Scripture—daily turning to God's word for comfort and challenge and guidance.

Worship—gathering with others to praise and confess and be fed at God’s table.

Stewardship—using our money and time and gifts for the good of all.

Service—trying every day through our words and deeds, to help ease the burdens of others.

Prayer, scripture, worship, stewardship, service—as we move through our days wrapped in these things, instead of worry and jealousy and anxiety, we will know a deep peace. Freedom is not only an exit from all those things which bind and enslave us. It is an entrance into a new life. As we choose—freely choose—not to sin, not to hate, not to be afraid, our world expands with joy and love. God brings gifts of freedom into our lives much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard. Things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. However, if we see freedom only as something we possess, we have only half of the picture. Freedom is not only a gift, it is also the task to which we are called. As we walk connected to Christ, as we live as he leads, we begin to see through his eyes, feel through his heart. We begin to know, deep in our bones that, until all are free, none of us are free. We are free not so we can do as we please, but so we can serve God. In freedom we give ourselves to God and to others not out of fear of punishment or a sense of duty, but because we freely choose to love. We are to love our neighbor not because we will be punished if we don’t, not because God will be angry if we don’t, but because we are children of God. Why not ridicule those who look different or believe differently than we do? Because we are free to love them as Christ loves us and, yoked with him, we know that God calls us to a better way.

This time of year, the word freedom is used a lot. We are privileged to live in a land where there are great blessings. We can choose what we do for a living, where we live, how we worship. These treasured freedoms are ours not because we are somehow more intelligent than others, or because we deserve them, but because, by the grace of God, we live in this time and place. The question is what we will do with this gift. If we lay down the burden of insisting that God dance to our music, then we will be free to dance to God’s music. You are invited to lay your burdens down—to give to God your regrets and guilts, your fears and longings, and to become one with Christ so that you move forward connected to him with bonds of mercy and grace. God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in trouble. Be still, God says, and know that I am God. The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge.

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: Just a Closer Walk with Thee -arr. Leatherman

Prayers of Intercession

Called into unity with one another and the whole creation, let us pray for our shared world.

We pray for the church. Sustain us as we share your word. Embrace us as we struggle to find our common ground. Lift up leaders with powerful and prophetic voices. Free us from stagnant faith. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for the nations. Guide leaders in developing just policies and guide difficult conversations. Free us from patriotism that hinders relationship-building. Lead us to expansive love for our neighbor. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for all in need. For all who are tired, feeling despair, sick, or oppressed. Take their yoke upon you and ease their burdens. Give your consolation and free us from all that keeps us bound. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

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 and the friends and family of Paul Van Allen, Gail, peace and comfort for Lorraine and family, Fran K, Doris Hennings, Edie Marie, Suzee, Michael Gilleece and family, healing and peace for Jack and Jim, the Nelson family, Your Neighbors clients, Theresa, Vivian, and residents of the Presbyterian Home, that the light of Christ may shine upon them with hope. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Receive these prayers, O God, and those too deep for words, 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: *O Christ, What Can It Mean for Us* #431, Verses 1 & 2 –Mary Senn

Vs. 1 O, Christ, what can it mean for us to claim you as our king? What royal face have you revealed whose praise the church would sing? Aspiring not to glory's height, to power, wealth, and fame, you walked a diff'rent, lowly way, another's will your aim.

Vs. 2 You came, the image of our God, to heal and to forgive, to shed your blood for sinners' sake that we might rise and live. To break the law of death you came, the law of love to bring: a diff'rent rule of righteousness, a diff'rent kind of king.

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.**

Thank you for being with us today.

Thank you so much to everyone who sent cards, emails, texts, and phone calls to wish Jayden a Happy 10th Birthday! Thank you for coming to wish him a Happy Birthday at his drive-by parade in the parking lot at Zion. He was so surprised and so happy about that. He had a really great day! Thank you so much to Zion for letting him have the parade there, everything worked out great.

Love,
The Silva family



INVITATIONS

Advocacy Tools for Loving Your Neighbor, Thursday July 9th from 12:30-2 PM

This is an online training event jointly hosted by The Episcopal Church and ELCA. Both Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry and Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, plus advocacy leaders from both denominations, will take part. Registration: <https://bit.ly/advocacyforlove> (until capacity is reached). Explore the nature of faith-based advocacy, the issues to which we can speak, and the ways we can make our voices heard. Rostered ministers, Lutherans, Episcopalians, and friends are welcome to the free webinar and will leave with tools and inspiration to make a difference.



Women of Zion are invited to a Zoom meeting to share how each of us are responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, being quarantined or having to go to work, missing children and other family members, and how we can help each other. This social/support time will be coming soon, we'll keep you posted on the date, time. Please let Sara know if you're interested in participating.

Summer Bible Study begins this Thursday!

July's Schedule

July 9 Jacob: Stairway to Heaven/Genesis 28:10-22, Genesis 32:22-31

July 16 Joseph: Beautiful Dreamer/Genesis 45:1-28

July 23 Moses: God's Reluctant Hero/Exodus 3:1-4:17

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

To join on Zoom: Meeting ID: 833 0201 3288. Password: 834215.

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

Please contact Sara for more information. Hope to see you there!

Summer Bible Study
Thursday evenings 7:30-8:30



Each lesson will stand alone
so join all or some of the classes
With Rev. Janet Hoover



ZION LUTHERAN
CHURCH

Tell us how you've been spending your time these past few months! Email Sara if you have ideas to pass along to your church family.

THERE'S
NO TIME
TO BE BORED IN
A WORLD AS
BEAUTIFUL
AS THIS.

**"The way I see it,
if you want the
rainbow, you
gotta put up with
the rain."**

—DOLLY PARTON—

Enjoy our 11th recipe exchange provided to us by Sara Silva

Bean & Corn Dip/or salad – Great for a July 4th recipe!

INGREDIENTS FOR THE DIP:

½ red onion
1 red bell pepper
1 green bell pepper
1 can of black beans
2 small cans of shoepeg corn
1 can regular corn
½ can kidney beans
1 can garbanzo beans

INGREDIENTS FOR THE DRESSING:

½ cup extra virgin olive oil
½ tsp pepper
1 tsp salt
1 tbsp water
¼ cup sugar
¾ cup apple cider vinegar

DIRECTIONS:

Boil all the ingredients for the dressing. Let it cool. Mix all the ingredients for the dip/salad in a large serving bowl. Pour the dressing over everything and mix well.



