

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church

A Family Connecting in Christ



Pastor Kevin Raddatz
Principal Jon Woldt
501 West Park Avenue
Libertyville, IL 60048
847-362-4424
www.StJohnsLib.com

WELCOME TO ST. JOHN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

At this time our services are for people wearing masks and social distancing!

Please know that even as we experience this awkwardness, your Good Shepherd holds you close to his heart and goes with you to share his love!

To Our Guests

- We pray that you receive a warm welcome and are blessed by the message of God's Word in our lessons and hymns. If you have questions, please ask!
- Our service is designed to focus us on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit does that by exposing our need for Christ and by showing us the wonders of God's grace in Christ – forgiveness and peace, help and hope for life in this world, and life forever with God in heaven.

Our Communion Practice

We practice close communion, the Biblical and ancient practice of the church. We invite our congregation members and visitors from sister WELS or ELS congregations to join us, but ask Christians from other denominations to kindly respect our practice. Further explanation is in the pew racks or from our pastor.

We Care about Your Children

We love to have children with us in worship.

- If your children are crying loudly, our nursery, Gathering Area (back of church), and downstairs Fellowship Hall are audio-equipped for you and your young children. When your children are ready, come back so we can worship together.

We Care about Your Special Needs

- **Large Print** Service Folders are available from an usher.
- **Hearing Assistance** for those with hearing aids is provided through our Hearing Loop or personal hearing devices available at the "sound table."
- A **wheelchair lift** is available for your assistance; please ask an usher.



Our Facilities

Restrooms are in our Fellowship Hall, downstairs and to the right of the kitchen.

Our Ministry

St. John offers an excellent preschool-8th grade school program. We are members of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) - www.wels.net.

January 31, 2021

DIVINE SERVICE II

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... we see a world struggling with so many of life's hurts and heartaches. How long would it take you to number 5 of these hurts and heartaches? In "normal" times these hurts and heartaches can be overwhelming for people. Now the "normal" is compounded by COVID-time fear, stress, and isolation. And people wonder: "Where is God in all this?"

OPENING HYMN

"Son of God Eternal Savior"

Hymn 492

Son of God, eternal Savior,
Source of life and truth and grace,
Word made flesh, whose birth among us,
Honors all our human race,
You our head, who, throned in glory,
For your own will ever plead:
Fill us with your love and pity;
Heal our wrongs and help our need.

Come, O Christ, and reign among us,
King of love and Prince of Peace;
Hush the storm of strife and passion;
Bid its cruel discords cease.
By your patient years of toiling,
By your silent hours of pain,
Quench our fevered thirst for pleasure;
Stem our selfish greed for gain.

Bind us all as one together
In your Church's sacred fold,
Weak and healthy, poor and wealthy,
Sad and joyful, young and old.
Is there want or pain or sorrow?
Make us all the burden share.
Are there spirits crushed and broken?
Teach us, Lord, to soothe their care.

As you, Lord, have lived for others,
So may we for others live.
Freely have your gifts been granted;
Freely may your servants give.
Yours the gold and yours the silver,
Yours the wealth of land and sea;
We but stewards of your bounty
Held in solemn trust will be.

INVOCATION

M: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C: **Amen.**

CONFESSION

M: Dear friends, let us approach God with a true heart and confess our sins, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.
C: **Lord of life, I confess that I am by nature dead in sin.
For faithless worrying and selfish pride,
For sins of habit and sins of choice,
For the evil I have done and the good I have failed to do,
I deserve to be cast away from your presence forever.
O Lord, I am sorry for my sins. Forgive me, for Jesus' sake.**

ABSOLUTION

M: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. In his great mercy, God made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in our sins. Hear the word of Christ through his called servant: I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C: **Amen.**

LORD, HAVE MERCY (*Kyrie*)

M: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.
For the well-being of all people everywhere, that they may receive from you all they need to sustain body and life, hear our prayer, O Lord.
C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: For the spread of your life-giving gospel throughout the world, that all who are lost in sin may be brought to faith in you, hear our prayer, O Christ.

C: **Christ, have mercy.**

M: For patience and perseverance in this life, that we may not lose the hope of heaven as we await your return, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: Lord of life, live in us that we may live for you.

C: **Amen.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, you reveal your mighty power chiefly in showing mercy and kindness. Grant us the full measure of your grace that we may obtain your promises and become partakers of your heavenly glory; showing and sharing your mercy and kindness with the world around us; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

FIRST LESSON

Jeremiah 9:23-24

This is what the LORD says:

“Let not the wise boast of his wisdom
of the strong man boast of his strength
or the rich man boast of his riches,
but let him who boasts boast about this:
that he understands and knows me,
that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness,
justice and righteousness on earth,
for in these I delight,”
declares the LORD.

VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia! But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Alleluia! (Galatians 5:22-23)

As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"

Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else - to the nearby villages - so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became fully human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

HYMN

"Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness"

Hymn 353

Praise the one who breaks the darkness
With a liberating light;
Praise the one who frees the pris'ners,
Turning blindness into sight.
Praise the one who preached the gospel,
Healing ev'ry dread disease,
Calming storms and feeding thousands
With the Father's word of peace.

Praise the one who blessed the children
With a strong, yet gentle, word;
Praise the one who drove out demons
With the piercing, two-edged sword.
Praise the one who brings cool water
To the desert's burning sand;
From this well comes living water,
Quenching thirst in ev'ry land.

Let us praise the Word incarnate,
Christ, who suffered in our place;
Jesus died and rose victorious
That we may know God by grace.
Let us sing for joy and gladness,
Seeing what our God has done;
Let us praise the true Redeemer,
Praise the one who makes us one.

Sermon and Discussion on Jeremiah 9:23-24

January 31, 2021

Have you heard of happy Santa glasses? When you wear them, all the bright lights you see have happy Santas around them. White lights give you happy white Santas, green lights give you happy green Santas, red lights and brake lights give you happy red Santas. Tip your head back and forth and the happy Santas go tipping with you. Oh, what a great way to see the world, happy Santas all around. Today we take off our happy Santa glasses. And what do we see? What is it that makes our world happy, that makes people sit a little taller, stand a little taller? If not happy Santas, what puts a smile on the face of the world? I'm not talking about kids or kittens or even puppies. I'm not even talking about sex and drugs and rock and roll.

What do you see putting smiles on the faces of our world?

What do you see making people stand a bit taller?

Jeremiah gives us an idea of what the LORD saw putting a smile on the faces of his people. And the LORD wasn't happy. **“This is what the LORD says: “Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches....””**

We're not sure when Jeremiah first said this. It could have been during the time of good and godly King Josiah. Judah was feeling great again. To the south and west Egypt was weak; to the north and east Assyria was falling apart. In the middle, small, little Judah was feeling free and full of themselves - feeling good and boasting of their smarts, their strength, their riches - “Look at us and how smart, how strong, how rich we are!” Or it could have been after good and godly Josiah got stupid and stepped in against Egypt and got squashed, and after Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar stepped in and squashed Jerusalem. At a time when Judah and Jerusalem should have been repenting, turning to God, on their knees begging God for mercy, instead, so many in Judah and Jerusalem were still full of themselves talking big about themselves that they had the smarts, they had the strength, they had the stuff to be great again, to make things right for Judah and Jerusalem - even as they lied and cheated and stepped on anyone who wasn't as smart and strong and rich as they were.

Does that sound familiar? How so?

Sound familiar? When life is good, it's so easy to be full of ourselves, to think first, to think most of making life better for ourselves. And when life is hard, when God

steps in and puts the squeeze on us, when God steps in to put the proud in their place, then what? We can still be so stubborn: “I got this, I can handle this, I know what to do ...” That stubbornness is so much a part of us, we think of it as good. We give it good names - grit, determination, confidence, resiliency. But God sees things differently.

What is the difference between the determination and resiliency that God blesses and that God condemns? How do we know which we have?

You know how that works. We’ve all seen the 2,3,4-year-old, the 25, 45, 85-year-old talk big - “I got this, I can handle this, I know what to do” as they make things worse and worse. And we see if they would just humble themselves and listen, just humble themselves and accept a little help, just humble themselves and follow, then life could be so much better for them.

When the 2,3,4-year-old, or the 25,45,85-year-old are set on doing things their way no matter how wrong it goes, what do loving people sometimes have to do? When things go from bad to worse, what is that ____ often perceived to be? How might we use that analogy?

God saw the same thing in Judah and Jerusalem; he sees the same thing today. He sees and hears our world talking big: “I got this, God. I can handle this. I know what to do. So unless you do what I say, God, I really don’t need you, God.” God sees it and hears it out there; he sees it and hears it in here. And just as we can see how foolish it is in other people, God sees how foolish it is in us. Especially because God knows the cost. God knows what happens to those who drift off and live without him; God knows the judgment facing those who push off and fight against him. Our world is getting a taste of that hell today, and still our world thinks: “I got this, God. I can handle this. I know what to do. So, unless you do what I say, God, I really don’t need you, God.”

What is the cost for those who drift off or push off?

So the LORD says: “Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches....”

God didn’t have his happy Santa glasses on when he said that, did he? But did you see what does make God happy? It’s not looking in the mirror and thinking of self. It’s looking out at the world and showing mercy; working justice; living life right, making life right. That’s what puts a smile on God’s face.

So what do we see in our Gospel lesson? Jesus showing mercy and justice, healing the sick whoever they are - friends, family, complete strangers. We see Jesus showing mercy, working justice, casting out demons, putting evil in its place. But that’s not all. Jesus knew the justice we need - the justice of the cross. He knew the judgment we were under, the guilt we carried, the hell we were in for. So Jesus wouldn’t let himself get

stuck just helping and healing for this life. He looked ahead to the justice of the cross - he saw all the evil of this world, your guilt, my guilt, all evil of the world paid for at the cross. He knew the justice of the cross and its cost - his life, his death to pay justice for you, for me, for the world. Yes, Jesus knew the justice of the cross - sin paid for and forgiven, your sin, my sin, the sin of the world paid for, so that we can live right with God. Jesus knew the justice of the cross, so Jesus couldn't, he wouldn't let himself be stuck helping and healing for just this life. He had to move on from helping and healing to tell that good news of sins forgiven, the good news of life right with God, the good news of life the way it is supposed to be with God in heaven. And as Jesus smiled, God smiled.

Sometimes as we see Jesus working miracles, showing mercy, it can be easy to think: "That was good for them then, but what about our world today? If showing mercy and working justice, if making life right is really what puts a smile on God's face, then why don't we see more mercy, more justice, more righteousness today?" Good question, isn't it?

Part of the answer is this - There can be no justice without judgment; there can be no justice without putting evil in its place. Today God is working his justice and our world is getting a taste of his judgment. But, thank God, there's more to the answer. When you wonder: "If God delights in showing mercy, justice, and righteousness, why don't we see more of what God says makes him happy?" ... instead of blaming God for not giving us the mercy and justice and rightness we're looking for, look at the mercy and justice and righteousness that God has for us. Instead of just kicking our broken mess to the curb, God is giving us Jesus. Instead of making us pay justice, Jesus paid justice for us. Instead of leaving us to be satisfied by the crumbs of this world, God is giving us the way to a new life, a better life, a right life with him. Listen to Jesus' picture of heaven - **"Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."**

When we are surrounded by hurt and heartache, injustice, a world gone wrong, it's not always easy to see the mercy and justice and righteousness that God is working for us. How do you help yourself and others to see God's better gifts?

How about that for mercy, justice, righteousness? In Jesus we are right with God, and in heaven with Jesus we will have life made right - no hurt or heartache, no evil, no sickness or death, just life made right in the glory of heaven. That puts a smile on God's face and on our face too, doesn't it?

How do we show that smile?

And not just for ourselves! We don't see it as much here in the United States. We're still so much stuck on our "wisdom," our power, our riches. But around the world, heaven is being filled with people who don't have our wisdom, our power, our riches. God doesn't play favorites, rich over poor, strong over weak, smart over slow, white over anybody else. God is showing his mercy and working his justice and righteousness with this promise in mind - **"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."** Yes, God is showing his mercy and working his justice and righteous with this picture in mind - **"A great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.""** That picture, that promise, puts a smile on God's face, and it puts a smile on our face too, doesn't it?

*How do you show God's smile for the poor, the weak, those who aren't like us?
How do you show God's disgust (and your disgust) for racism?*

But some days it's still hard to smile, isn't it? We see so much broken-ness in our world. And it's easy to wonder: "If God delights in mercy and justice and rightness, why do we see so much broken-ness?" Here's another part to the answer - God doesn't see you as just spectators in this world. God doesn't see you as too small, too helpless to make a difference in this world. God hasn't just stuck you on the sidelines. Instead, with Jesus and his Spirit, God delights to show his mercy through you. As a Father, he delights to see you, his children, taking care of each other - and not just each other. He delights to see you, his children, taking care, sharing his love with the people of the world. Yes, God delights to see you opening your hearts and your hands, opening your time and your schedules, opening your wallets and bank accounts to show his mercy, to work his justice, to share life made right with Jesus. Yes, God delights in seeing you show his mercy, work his justice, and share his righteousness. And what makes God smile, makes us smile, doesn't it? Amen.

How can we show God's mercy, work his justice, and share his righteousness in a world so twisted in on itself by the hurt, the injustice, and the wrong it demands?

Love divine, all love excelling,
Joy of heav'n, to earth come down,
Fix in us your humble dwelling,
All your faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, you are all compassion,
Boundless mercy from above.
Visit us with benediction;
Comfort us with heav'nly love.

Take away our love of sinning;
Alpha and Omega be.
End of faith as its beginning,
Set our hearts at liberty.
We would ever seek your blessing,
Serve you as your hosts above,
Pray and praise you without ceasing,
Glory in your perfect love.

Sanctify your new creation;
Pure and spotless let us be.
Let us trust your great salvation,
Won for us on Calvary,
Till we lay our crowns before you,
Till in heav'n we take our place,
Till in glory we adore you,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

M: Let us pray, brothers and sisters, for the holy Church of God throughout the world, that God the almighty Father gather and guide it so that we may worship him in peace and tranquility:

Almighty and eternal God, you have shown your glory to all nations in Jesus Christ. Guide the work of the Church. Help it to persevere in faith, proclaim your Word, and bring salvation to the people everywhere. Lord, in your mercy,

C: Hear our prayer

M: Let us pray for our pastors and teachers and all leaders of the Church, and for all the people of God:

Almighty and eternal God, your Spirit guides the Church and makes it holy. Strengthen and uphold all who serve you and your people. Keep them in health and safety for the good of the Church. Help each of us to do faithfully the work to which you have called us. Lord, in your mercy,

C: Hear our prayer.

M: Let us pray for those who do not believe in Christ, that the light of the Holy Spirit may show them the way to salvation:

Almighty and eternal God, enable those who do not acknowledge Christ to receive the truth of the gospel. Help us, your Church, to grow in love for you and for one another, so that we become more perfect witnesses of your love for all people. Lord, in your mercy,

C: Hear our prayer.

M: Let us pray for those who serve in public office, that God may guide their minds and hearts, so that all of us may live in true peace and freedom:

Almighty and eternal God, graciously direct those who have been set in positions of authority among us, so that people everywhere may enjoy justice, peace, freedom, and a share in the goodness of your creation. Lord, in your mercy,

C: Hear our prayer.

M: Let us pray that God, the almighty and merciful Father, may heal the sick, comfort the dying, give safety to travelers, and free those unjustly deprived of liberty:

Almighty and eternal God, you give strength to the weary and new courage

to those who have lost heart. In your mercy hear the prayers of all who call on you in any trouble, that they may have the joy of receiving your help in their need. We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

C: Amen.

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.

THE SACRAMENT

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)

M: The Lord be with you.

C: (Spoken) And also with you.

M: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them up unto the Lord.

M: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

C: It is good and right so to do.

M: It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who rose from the dead in glorious triumph to bring forgiveness to the world and everlasting life to all who believe.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

M: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my † body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my † blood of the new covenant, which is poured

out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

M: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: Amen.

LAMB OF GOD

Agnus Dei

Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; have mer - cy on us.

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the
world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God,
you take a - way the sin of the world;
grant us your peace. A - men.

BEFORE COMMUNION PRAYER

Lord, I am not worthy to be a guest at your holy table. But you are the friend of sinners, and you will not cast me out. This bread is your body, which bore my sins upon the tree. This wine is your blood, which purifies me from all guilt. At your invitation, I come rejoicing. Receive me, my Savior.

AFTER COMMUNION PRAYER

Thank you, Lord Jesus Christ, for nourishing me in this sacrament with your body and blood. You have given me forgiveness, life, and salvation. Let me always remain in you as a branch remains in the vine. Send me out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory.

DISTRIBUTION HYMN

"How Lovely Shines the Morning Star"

Hymn 79

How lovely shines the Morning Star!
The nations see and hail afar
The light in Judah shining.
O David's Son of Jacob's race,
My Bridegroom and my King of grace,
For you my heart is pining.
Lowly, Holy, Great and glorious,
O victorious Prince of graces,
Filling all the heav'nly places.

O highest joy by mortals won,
True Son of God and Mary's Son,
The highborn King of ages!
In your blest body let me be,
E'en as the branch is in the tree,
Your life my life supplying.
Sighing, Crying For the savor
Of your favor Resting never
Till I rest in you forever.

O mighty Father, in your Son
You loved me ere you had begun
This ancient world's foundation.
Your Son has made a friend of me,
And when in spirit him I see,
I joy in tribulation.
What bliss Is this!

He is living, To me giving
Life forever;
Nothing me from him can sever.

Oh, joy to know that you, my Friend,
Are Lord, beginning without end,
The first and last, eternal!
And you at length -- O glorious grace --
Will take me to that holy place,
The home of joys supernal.
Amen, Amen!
Come and meet me, Quickly greet me!
With deep yearning,
Lord, I look for your returning.

Lift up the voice and strike the string,
Let all glad sounds of music ring
In God's high praises blended.
Christ will be with me all the way,
Today, tomorrow, ev'ry day
Till trav'ling days are ended.
Sing out, Ring out
Triumph glorious, O victorious
Chosen nation;
Praise the God of your salvation.

CLOSING PRAYER

M: We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet that you have given us to eat and to drink in this sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith, nourished our hope, and strengthened our love. By your Spirit help us to live as your holy people until that day when you will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

BLESSING

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

“Sent Forth by God’s Blessing” Hymn 318

Sent forth by God’s blessing, Our true faith confessing,
The people of God from his dwelling take leave.
The supper is ended; Oh, be now extended
The fruits of this service in all who believe.
The seed of his teaching, Receptive souls reaching,
Shall blossom in action for God and for all.
His grace did invite us; His love shall unite us
To work for God’s kingdom and answer his call.

With praise and thanksgiving, To God ever living,
The tasks of our ev’ry-day life we will face.
Our faith ever sharing, In love ever caring,
Embracing his children of each tribe and race.
With your feast you feed us; With your light now lead us;
Unite us as one in this life that we share.
Then may all the living With praise and thanksgiving
Give honor to Christ and his name that we bear.

OFFERING

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