



Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church ELCA

READINGS for Sunday July 5, 2020.

Zechariah 9:9-12

Chapters 1–8 of Zechariah include a series of hopeful visions responding positively to the return from exile and the rebuilding of the temple. However, Second Zechariah, chapters 9–14, perhaps coming from another and later author, proclaimed that only in God would there be success, safety, and comfort. In the appointed oracle, the prophet promised peace not from the present king, but from a future one, who would enter the city on a lowly donkey, rather than a charger and a royal chariot. The prophet also recalls the covenant of blood sealed between God and the people.

Romans 7:15-25a

Continuing through his letter to the church in Rome and writing in the Greco-Roman culture that assumed a slave economy in which most people served those placed above them, Paul employed the metaphor of slavery to describe the powerful domination of sin. Paradoxically, freedom in Christ is also slavery to God.

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

Chapters 9–16 in the Gospel of Matthew alternate between what we might call the bad news describing actual human existence, even in the church, and the good news of the kingdom of heaven made known in Jesus Christ. In chapter 11, John the Baptist has been imprisoned, and Jesus condemned those who remained unrepentant. In the appointed section, Jesus spoke comfortingly about God's gracious will, saying that, paradoxically, the burden of faith was light. Matthew described Christian life as Christ's yoke, a metaphor Jewish tradition had used to describe the law as assisting the path through life. Matthew's concern about authority in the church remains evident.



SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION

We will be highlighting a verse(s) here for memorization that captures the main idea of the month's scriptures – July verse:

"²⁸There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:28.

PASTOR JIM'S CONTACT INFORMATION

His phone number is (563) 599-2096 and his email address is: jamespmehrtretter@gmail.com

Weekly Giving – June 28, 2020

General Giving	\$3,457.05
Noisy Change	\$102.02
<u>Mission Giving</u>	<u>\$ 100.00</u>
Total	\$3,659.07

PRAYER MINISTRY

-Steven & Jodi Swanson & Family

(our missionary family)

- **All those who have been affected by Covid-19**

- **All Essential workers**

- **Law Enforcement Officers**

- **Those suffering from racism**

- **Janice McKee** (Kay Hesselbacher's friend)

- **Roxann Krull** (Paul Mills' daughter)

- **West Bowen** (Paul & Karron Mills' grandson)

- **Michael Lorento** (Larry & Sue's neighbor)

- **Sheri Mysliwicz** (Israel's niece)

- **Dean Mysliwicz** (Israel niece's husband)

- **Ken Reinert** (Israel' nephew)

- **Liam Vogt** (Joe & Kirstin Ehrler Vogt son)

- **Kate Redfearn** (Russ & Brittney's daughter)

- **JoAnn Hesselbacher**

- **Juliette Schmidt**

- **Kendall Smith** (Hansen's granddaughter)

- **Gabe Hilby** (Heim girl's classmate)

- **Janice Bradley** (Ladora Williams' daughter)

- **Liam Petelle** (Edie's grandson)

- **Rich Schelke**

- **Caroline Krug** (Jim & Babette's granddaughter)

- **World Leaders & Peace in the World**

- **Men & Women serving our country**

Happy Fourth of July Weekend Message & Lessons – July 5, 2020

LINK TO HEAR PASTOR'S MESSAGE: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lakvqwbS_sg

PASTOR'S MESSAGE by Deacon Cheryl Erdmann

This week's video message comes from Northern Illinois Synod staff member Deacon Cheryl Erdmann. Bishop Jeffrey Clements has asked his staff to make messages available for local churches to use as needed.

Pastor Jim will deliver his own message, as usual, during our small outdoor services this week.

Luke 10:25-37 The Parable of the Good Samaritan

25 Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 [Jesus] said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" 27 [The lawyer] answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." 28 And [Jesus] said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

29 But wanting to justify himself, [The lawyer] asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30 Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' 36 Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" 37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

As some of you many know, or you will now, one of my guilty pleasures is reading advice columns. I've even used that format for sermons now and then, taking one of the many dysfunctional family stories, either a story of God's chosen people or a story in the form of a parable, and imagining a letter from one of the characters written to Dear Abby or Miss Manners, asking for advice about a difficult situation.

I've thought about the changing nature of problems sent to advice columns frequently, as the world and its people face all kinds of "new" challenges. I especially thought about what might have been written to an advice columnist during the past season of Easter. Because, one of my favorite series of lessons is those that we read during the Easter Season, when we follow the founding and growth of the early church. I've never used texts from Acts as the basis for one of the sermons cum advice column, but I certainly could. I think the reason that I like hearing those readings from the book of Acts is that instead of struggles between families, Acts records honestly and forthrightly the struggles of the leaders of the early church to find out how to live out their newly spirit-founded and growing faith in the risen Lord Jesus Christ amongst both their fellow disciples and the new believers. They faced both problems that they had never faced before, and familiar problems of living together in community, just in a new setting.

I remember the setting apart of the first deacons happening because some complained that the gentile widows and orphans were not being treated fairly. I remember the murmurs and doubts among the disciples about whether Saul, who became Paul, could be trusted after his conversion. I remember the initial response of Peter to God during his vision and finally just being told, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane" (three times). He then accepted those who were formerly considered unclean into the church, baptized Cornelius and his household; then needed to face the criticism of those believers who asked "Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?". There were spats, disagreements, factions – too many to list. I may be odd, but the book of Acts comforts me that it has to be true, because otherwise what group or community would be that honest about its problems?

The story of the early church seems, to me, to be the story of learning to live out the definition of neighbor that Jesus gave in answer to the lawyer who stood up to test Jesus in our gospel lesson, saying "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus answered the lawyer's question with another question, "What

is written in the law?” And when the lawyer gave what is written in the law, what is my go-to explanation of how to live out the Christian faith, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself,” Jesus commends the lawyer, saying that the lawyer had given the right answer and, frankly, just do it.

Then we come to the place that causes the early church, and the church of all time, including today, to trip. It is the crack in the sidewalk. It is the stone left in the road. The “but, teacher” time. The attempt to put a fence around this command, to somehow separate this double whammy of a command, from the reality of our “real” life. The place where the lawyer, and me, if I am honest, try to find an escape clause, a way out of this simple commandment to love, “And (although I feel like he was really saying “but”) who is my neighbor?”

The parable which follows, the Parable of the Good Samaritan, is a wonderful parable, and one that it would be easy to bring to the present day. Replace the Priest with a Pastor or a Deacon. Replace the Levite with a member of a congregation council. Replace the road to Jericho with a road in an under resourced and economically depressed area. Make clear that the victim of the robbers is a person of privilege, someone who expected to be safe from robbers. And replace the Samaritan with a Samaritan of today – a person who is of a different color from the victim, or who is a different religion of the victim, or who on first look seems to be someone very much unlike the victim.

But I’m not going there. That is a different message. I’m going to stay with the lawyer looking for an escape clause. Because the lawyer is the person that I most identify with right now. I see myself in that lawyer, in the members of the early church who fell into factions and then had to be called out by visions and wonders, in the church in all the ages that found itself on the wrong side of justice and mercy, and the church of today, that still is asking that question, “And who is my neighbor?” And how do I show the mercy that Jesus forced the lawyer to admit was the sign of loving God and loving neighbor, and how do I “Go and do likewise”?

Writing a sermon to be read on any Sunday, out of the regular cycle, makes many, if not most, preachers in the ELCA nervous. I do not wish to be seen to picking and choosing passages to fit my personal message, even though I have felt this message tugging on my heart for the last several weeks, ever since I knew I would be preparing a message to be used “as needed” by any congregation, at any time.

So, the lessons that we read today, are lessons for the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost, but in a different yearly cycle. Many of our congregations would have heard these lessons and a sermon based on them last summer. Why does that matter? It matters because in times such as these, God’s word can speak to us even out of the “usual” sequence. And I believe it is speaking to us today, whenever “today” happens to be. Jesus’ words to the lawyer and the stories from Acts remind me that change and growth do not happen without conflict. Change is uncomfortable, even painful. Jesus spoke truth to power, not only in the passage we read today, but again and again. He called out those who prayed loudly in front of others thanking God for how great they were, and he commended the poor widow (Mark 12:41-44, Luke 21:1-4) and a Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14), the widow for her gift of all she had and the Tax Collector for his awareness of his sinful self and need for forgiveness. He denounced the Scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23), calling them whitewashed tombs (v. 27), reminding those listening that “all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted. (v. 12)

And, eventually, Jesus’ words led to his death on the cross. And as he told his followers, although they also looked for an escape clause several times, Jesus’ answer was simple and disquieting: “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” (Mark 8:34) Loving God and loving our neighbor is not the easy path. It was the path that Jesus walked, and we know how that went. Yet, as baptized Christians we are called in our baptism “to live among God’s faithful people; to hear the word of God and share in the Lord’s supper; to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed; to serve all people, following the example of Jesus; and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth.” This is the helpful detail on “Love your God and Love you Neighbor,” that we promise either when baptized or confirmed.

The year 2020 has challenged us as God’s redeemed and called people more than any time that most of us can remember. The combination of at least three different crises that call on us to love God and neighbor in ways that are uncomfortable, and as I said earlier, even painful, has stirred up conflict among us. But change only happens in a time of healthy conflict (yes, there is such a thing).

We have an often predicted-but-never-truly-anticipated pandemic of a virus that is highly contagious and, for many of our neighbors, deadly, and has required and still requires, for the sake of our neighbor, to limit our interactions with others, and even self-quarantine. Some of our neighbors, those considered essential workers and those with underlying health concerns are especially at risk. This pandemic has shown a light on how the unevenness of the availability of health care in our nation results in disparate spread and effect of the virus. Is the road to Jericho those places in our nation where little or no adequate medical care leaves our neighbors dying on the road for lack of basic health treatments? Is this the time, like in Acts, when we are seeing it is a time where we must change how we show mercy to our neighbor? Do we need to do this, even when it means we postpone gathering in community and living with loneliness? Do we need to reach out more intentionally to those who were already isolated and forgotten?

We have an economic collapse of many businesses, resulting in immediate and unexpected layoffs, furloughs, and permanent loss of jobs and of the viability of those businesses. Even with help from government and agencies, our neighbors are finding they cannot afford food, housing, medicine, and that even if they avoid the coronavirus, they cannot get their needed medications for chronic conditions or treatment for other illnesses. Is the road to Jericho those places where our neighbor is hungry, homeless, ill, dying alone? Is it the place where even those neighbors who are safe, fed and housed are lonely, or forced into multiple roles as parent teachers, while still trying to work from home? And is this the time, like in Acts, where we much change how we show mercy to our neighbor? Do we who are well and managing economically share even more of our good fortune with those hit harder by the effects of the pandemic?

We have a situation where the unjust and unmerciful results of structural racism begun and continued out of our nation's original sin of enslaving our neighbor has finally been shown clearly and has finally, I hope, been recognized by people like me – people who have never had to worry about being followed when shopping; being accused of stealing or passing a counterfeit bill and being thrown on the ground and held in a way that chokes me; being stopped when walking in my neighborhood and asked for i.d.; being questioned when sitting in my car in a parking lot, a forest preserve or outside my house. I have never been found to be sitting on the road to Jericho and passed by, when I had a flat tire or a mechanical breakdown. I know that neighbors of mine have had those experiences, and fortunately, survived them. But I know that too often the ones who confronted these neighbors of mine, or just passed by those neighbors in need, looked like me. Do we speak up and speak out, to protect those neighbors who carry the burden of not being considered true neighbors in our nation, people of value and worth, people who, when not allowed to live out their full God-given potential, hurts the quality of our lives, and we don't even know it.

We all, I believe, know who our neighbors are. We, unlike the lawyer, do not need to ask Jesus that question. However, I know that it is still too easy for me to look for that escape clause, to try to find a way not to show the mercy that Jesus commanded the lawyer, and all of us, to show.

I pray that in times such as these, when our neighbor is sick, alone, hungry, homeless, in prison or on the side of the road to Jericho, Jesus will graciously open my eyes and strengthen my courage to face those both the neighbors in visible need and neighbors who seek "escape clauses." I pray to act in the love and mercy shown to me by Jesus in Jesus' death and resurrection to all people. I pray that I may live out my baptismal promise to see all people as my neighbor, and to love them not just in word, but also in deed. I pray to proclaim the gospel of Jesus crucified and risen for all of us and to comfort all sinners because of that promise of the power of the Holy Spirit to do those things. Amen

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.

First Reading: Zechariah 9:9-12

⁹Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!

Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he,
humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

¹⁰He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war-horse from Jerusalem;
and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall command peace to the nations;
his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

¹¹As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.

¹²Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double.

Psalm: Psalm 145:8-14

⁸The LORD is gracious and full | of compassion, slow to anger and abounding in | steadfast love.

⁹**LORD, you are | good to all, and your compassion is over | all your works. R**

¹⁰All your works shall praise | you, O LORD, and your faithful | ones shall bless you.

¹¹**They shall tell of the glory | of your kingdom and speak | of your power,**

¹²that all people may know | of your power and the glorious splendor | of your kingdom.

¹³**Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; your dominion endures through- | out all ages.**

You, LORD, are faithful in all your words, and loving in | all your works.

¹⁴The Lord upholds all | those who fall and lifts up those who | are bowed down. **R**

Second Reading: Romans 7:15-25a

¹⁵I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. ¹⁹For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. ²⁰Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.

²¹So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. ²²For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, ²³but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ²⁴Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? ^{25a}Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

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

[Jesus spoke to the crowd saying:] ¹⁶“To what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,

¹⁷“We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we wailed, and you did not mourn.”

¹⁸For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; ¹⁹the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”

²⁵At that time Jesus said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; ²⁶yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²⁷All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

²⁸“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

WORSHIP SERVICE UPDATE

You will be receiving a call to see if you would like to schedule your service for Sunday or the week following. You can also contact me (Pastor Jim) at (563) 599-2096. Everyone has been very gracious in this process. If weather affects a service, it will not be rescheduled due to the frequency of services.

Communion: Communion will resume using special factory sealed cups that contain both the wafer and juice. Distribution will be carefully organized. The resumption of communion using these cups, during this unusual time, was considered and supported by the church council. Additional changes that help the congregation adapt to our current circumstances are continually explored by Pastor Jim and the council.

Reminder: Please accept a reminder that masks are required at all our outdoor services if you leave your car. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Pastor Jim

OPEN FORUM

For services of the week of 12 July, an open forum will be held at each service. Understanding that any questions which may be asked, or comments made, will not be heard by all, discussions will be documented and assembled then published in a future edition of the weekly announcements.

BIBLE STUDY WITH THE BISHOP

Dear friends in Christ,

I am inviting you, as a member or friend of the Northern Illinois Synod, to join me in a **six-week** book study of *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo. Racism is a really tough subject to discuss and I think this book will help us get into an important and timely discussion.

From the back cover: "Referring to the defensive moves that white people make when challenged racially, white fragility is characterized by emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and by behaviors including argumentation and silence." Does that resonate with you? It certainly does with me.

If you are interested in joining with others, in what I hope will be a challenging discussion without being threatening or scary, please plan to read and join in. We will meet by Zoom **Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m. beginning July 29**. You will need to register so that I can send you the Zoom link to participate. Reading assignments will be made in advance.

Order a copy of the book by whatever means you normally use. It is available in print or e-book forms.

I am looking forward to spending this time with you. Register here: [Bishop Clements' Book Study](https://nisynod.org/white-fragility-book-study) (<https://nisynod.org/white-fragility-book-study>). Walking with you,

The Rev. Jeffrey Clements, Bishop of the Northern Illinois Synod, ELCA

BOOK CLUB

The Shepherd of the Hills Book Club will be discussing [American Dirt](#) by Jeanine Cummins via Zoom. [American Dirt](#) tells the story of Lydia Quixano Pérez, a middle-class Mexican bookseller who flees Acapulco with 8-year-old son, Luca; after a drug cartel violently attacks a quinceañera (a celebration of a girl's 15th birthday) she's attending, killing her journalist husband who earlier had profiled the cartel leader, Javier. Jan 22, 2020."

(BuzzFeed News) This 2020 Oprah's Book Club novel is a thriller that is filled with suspense. All are welcome to join our Zoom discussion. To obtain the Zoom address & password, please contact Pam Ohms at pamelaohms@gmail.com.

FACE MASK MAKERS



The Galena Midwest Medical Hospital, Galena Assistant Living and Provena Nursing Home in Freeport are in need of homemade face masks. If you would like to help, contact Pam Ohms at 815.275.2345 or pamelaohms@gmail.com. Pam & Steve have washed fabric & elastic cut-to-size ready to share in plastic bags of 10, 20, or more at her home at 3633 N

Rawlins Rd, Galena. Be sure to call/email 1st so she can put a bag on her front porch with your name on it. You may drop the finished masks off at the hospital with your name & address on the bag .or on Pam's front porch (with name/address), & she'll deliver. Thank you to those of you who have already shared your sewing skills and made hundreds of masks!

REQUEST FROM SOCIAL MINISTRY

This Sunday, **Sunday, July 5**, everyone is encouraged to bring fresh produce which could be unrefrigerated for 2 to 3 days. If you have an abundance of garden vegetables, they are welcome. Also consider melons and seasonal fruits. Food pantry clients love fresh produce, and, with your generosity, they will have the opportunity to select their favorites on Monday, July 6th.

When worshippers are encouraged not to enter the church, the shopping cart will be pulled into the parking lot area for each church service and will be put back inside the church after worship. If and when we can safely enter the church, the shopping cart will remain in the narthex for your gifts of food. Also consider cash gifts, which can be included in your church envelope. The Food Pantry has access to discounted food and can sometimes make your cash go further than when you buy the items yourself.

Thank you for helping our neighbors in need.

GIVING WHILE WE ARE CLOSED

Thank you to all who have been faithfully sending your giving to the church during our shut down. While services may not be held during this troubling time, our expenses for operation of the church do not stop. Please consider continuing your weekly offering by mailing it to the church office at 536 E Schapville Rd, Scales Mound, IL 61075, or arranging for online banking.

Please stay safe and healthy, Church Council