

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

July 5, 2020

For video viewing of music and service go to:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEO_pAVddaeV1_dOvvUd5eITX0IJKxqmM

***PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P: Let us pray together:

C: *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 FIRST LESSON**

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

***THE SECOND LESSON**

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? ²⁵Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

***THE GOSPEL READING**

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. ²⁸Come 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."

SERMON: PASTOR RYAN RADTKE

Once upon a time, there were a king and queen who lived in a castle with their two young daughters. The older daughter, Elsa, had an incredible gift – the ability to make snow and ice appear whenever she wished, in fantastic shapes. Her younger sister, Anna, loved Elsa very much. Elsa wasn't just her sister: she was her best friend. Anna also loved Elsa's gift, and they would often play in the snow, no matter what time of year, indoors or outdoors.

One night Anna sneaked up to Elsa's door to ask, "Do you want to build a snowman?" And during the monumental snow adventure that followed in one of the castle's large, great halls, with Elsa throwing magical snow-slides in front of a leaping Anna, one of her bursts of magic accidentally struck Anna in the head, knocking her unconscious and turning her dangerously cold.

Anna and Elsa's parents, the good king and queen, rushed off to take Anna to the wise and friendly trolls who lived nearby. The head troll was able to heal Anna, but decided to take away all her memories of Elsa's magic, leaving only the memories of fun times shared. In the meantime, he warned young Elsa that her powers of ice could produce great beauty...and also great danger. He warned her that, as she grew in years and as her powers also grew, she would need to learn to control them – he told her that fear will be her greatest enemy.

The king and queen promised that they would make sure that Elsa learned to control her powers. Their plan was to close off the castle, to let go of most of the servants and staff, and to isolate Elsa as much as possible, even from her sister

Anna. In this way they thought that they would remove the threat of others getting hurt by Elsa's powers, and so also they would take away her fear until she could learn control. They taught Elsa, "Conceal, don't feel. Don't let it show."

Many years passed, and Elsa and Anna grew into their teens. Elsa's powers continued to grow, and she was afraid all the time that she wouldn't be able to control them. The king and queen were about to set off on a journey by sea for two weeks, and she was afraid of what might happen without them. They assured her that everything would be fine; but a storm at sea sank their ship, and they did not return home. Elsa was now more isolated and afraid than ever, and her sister Anna didn't know how to help.

If you don't know by now, that was the first fifteen minutes or so of the movie Frozen, one of the most popular kid movies ever. If you haven't seen this movie yet, you probably should, and besides, you've probably already had the song "Let it Go" get stuck in your head at least once. In the movie, Elsa (and her parents) are so afraid of what her power of ice might do to hurt others, that they are always afraid of being afraid, or being anything. To conceal and not to feel her feelings might have seemed like a good way to keep everyone safe; but by this point in the story it's clear that, instead, Elsa is trapped and frozen in her isolation – a prisoner of her own fear and her own abilities.

In some similar ways the apostle Paul had felt trapped as well. He didn't have the ability to create ice and snow at will; but he still had the ability to harm others through his words and deeds. This is what he's talking about when he talks about sin. He doesn't end up doing the good things that he wants to do; he ends up doing the bad things that he doesn't want to do, and people get hurt. He says that he has been made captive to the law of sin that dwells in his members, and that he is wretched because of it. This captivity of sin isolates him from God and from those around him. And because he is well-versed in God's law, the Torah, he knows, in great detail, every single time he falls short of that law. He knows that he is a sinner, inescapably; even though, at the same time, he delights in God's law.

In the movie, Elsa is to become the new queen. No more hiding in her room – there will be a grand party for her coronation. But when her powers flare and people are endangered and scared, she runs away. The pendulum swings in the opposite direction, and instead of trying to hold it all in, she flees to a lonely mountain and builds a castle of ice where she can let her power fly with abandon – although she is still isolated from anyone else. That's when she sings "Let it Go," and, like I said, if you haven't heard this song you might have been living under a rock since 2013. Here are some of the words she sings while she builds her own kind of prison: "The wind is howling like this swirling storm inside...couldn't keep it in, heaven knows I've tried! Don't let them in, don't let them see...Be the good girl you always have to be...conceal, don't feel, don't let them know...Well, now they know! Let it go, let it go...Can't hold it back anymore...Let it go, let it go...Turn away and slam the door...It's time to see what I can do...To test the limits and

break through...No right, no wrong, no rules for me...I'm free!...Let it go, let it go...And I'll rise like the break of dawn...Let it go, let it go...That perfect girl is gone."

Elsa stops trying to follow the rules her parents gave her; she stops trying to live up to unachievable standards of being the perfect good girl; but she is still all alone and hurting nonetheless.

Now, please pause the movie in your mind for a couple of minutes – we'll come right back to it. It seemed appropriate to talk about a movie geared towards children today, as we hear Jesus saying, "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." Jesus is frustrated with some of the educated leaders of God's Law, the Torah, because they're never satisfied. They don't like John the Baptist because he didn't eat and drink enough, and they don't like Jesus because he eats and drinks too often, and with the wrong people.

Jesus says, though, that these wise leaders miss the point both times: John the Baptist and Jesus both are talking about how the Lord God has sent Jesus into the world to usher in God's kingdom. They are both talking about the Messiah's long-awaited arrival, and how he looks or eats or doesn't eat doesn't matter a bit. The religious leaders are missing out on God's greatest promise fulfilled, God's new covenant in the works; because, to them, Jesus isn't following the rules. Jesus is too open with his love, too free with his honor. Jesus needs to do a little more concealing, a little more "don't let it show-ing."

And so, to these leaders and nitpickers of the Law; and, even more so, to all the faithful children of God who were trying to follow these nitpickers' rules, Jesus says these words of sublime grace and peace: "Come to me, all you that are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

To the people listening to Jesus, this would have been terrifying and freeing at the same time. The rules were all they knew; but they were also often oppressive and far from life-giving. Besides, how can a yoke mean freedom? To Paul, who didn't encounter Jesus until a few years later, the rules were his bedrock and his way of life; but he still felt like a captive to sin, to the rules and laws he inevitably broke, to the constant dissonance between his good intentions and his selfish ways. Now, was Elsa acting like an unrepentant sinner? Of course not – it's a kids' movie, not Scripture, and Jesus doesn't have to make a cameo appearance. But Elsa's situation can help us understand. Because she did feel trapped and isolated and afraid, looking for some way out. When Jesus says, "take my yoke upon you," he's also telling folks to let go of the yoke they had been under; just let it go, and follow him instead.

One way to describe the life of a Christian is to say that it is a life of surrender. You let go of your own drives, your own regrets, your own neuroses, your own self-made prisons. Of course, you don't just do whatever you want and let your abilities run amok; people could get hurt. No, you let go of any other power that might have control over you – your own power or someone else's or something else's – and you surrender to Jesus' guiding yoke instead. Elsa might have heard Jesus's words and felt freed to let go of her fear; her parents' misguided rules; her concealment of all feelings; her grief at her parents' death; so much! There's a bumper sticker-type phrase that says, "Let go. Let God." These simple words get thrown around a lot, but they carry a lot of power. We don't relinquish our responsibility to work towards freedom for others who are captive; we still echo the prophet Zechariah to promise release to the prisoners; but we let God take the reins.

This power sets us free from anything that is not life-giving, and yokes us to Jesus instead. And Jesus has fulfilled the law. So Paul says, "Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

It's not easy to let it go. It's not easy to let someone else – namely, God – to be in control. It's actually quite scary. There might be a song that says, "Jesus, take the wheel," but most of us would still rather be steering. At the very least we'd be the worst kind of backseat drivers. And since it isn't easy at all to let it go, we Christians take up certain practices that help us stay anchored to our Lord, attuned to his guidance. We pray together. We read the Bible. We worship together and serve others together and give of ourselves generously. We treasure the purest and most loving of our relationships and lift them up in thanksgiving as gifts from God. In Frozen, the movie doesn't end with Elsa running away. We see Anna's unswaying love and faith in her sister Elsa, even after years of isolation and hurt and confusion, as she plows through the snow and every other obstacle to help her sister. Elsa was never truly alone, no matter how much she felt she was, no matter how much she thought that isolation would keep everyone safe. If more than three months of quarantine have taught us nothing else, it's that isolation might keep us safe from a virus, but it isn't good for our souls, and so we do everything we can to still assure those around us: you are not alone.

Surrendering to Jesus' yoke doesn't mean that the going will always be easy; but it does mean that, the more we are able to let it go and trust in God, the lighter the burden will be, and we will indeed find rest for our souls. We need not conceal our fears; we need not be captives to sin or anxiety or anything else. We belong to God, who sets us free and forgives us, who gives us rest, and who sets us free to bring the same word of peace to others in word and deed. "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens." Let it go. Amen.

*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;

by the power of the Holy Spirit

he became incarnate from the virgin Mary, and was made man.

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.

With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.

He has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic 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

*PRAYERS

A: Called into unity with one another and the whole creation, let us pray for our shared world. *(A brief silence.)*

A: 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.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: We pray for the well-being of creation. Protect the air, water, and land from abuse and pollution. Free us from apathy in our care of creation and direct us toward sustainable living. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: We pray for the nations (especially the United States and Canada celebrating their nationhood). 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.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: We pray for all in need. For all who are tired, feeling despair, sick, or oppressed (especially). 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.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: We pray for this congregation. Bless pastors, deacons, and congregational leaders. Energize children's ministry volunteers, church administrators, and those who maintain our building. Shine in this place that we might notice the ways your love transforms our lives. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: God, you are life. We pray for our world, our country, our community, our church as they face the challenges of coronavirus. We pray for those who grieve the loss of loved ones, for the sick and their families, for those fearful of an unknown future. We pray for the millions of unemployed, for children and others at home - that they be safe from abuse. We pray for those who are alone and isolated during this time that they may feel your loving presence. We pray for all the hospital and health care workers, and all first responders, that they receive needed supplies and be kept protected in the work they do. We pray for those making decisions about how to live into the future and when that will happen. Keep us all in your care as we wait for a new day. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of families. For all our Messiah families and especially this week for the Griffin, Griffis and Gunn families. For the talents and good things You have given each of them. Keep them united and faithful to You and each other. Guide them, protect them and equip them to do Your will. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

A: Receive these prayers, O God, and those too deep for words; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

***THE LORD'S PRAYER**

P: Now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to pray:

**C: *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.***

***BENEDICTION**

P: 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.

C: *Amen*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WELCOME PASTOR RYAN!

While Pastor Ryan is not physically here yet, he will be available by email at messiahmechpr@gmail.com; and by phone at (507)-360-7276 . His 'office' hours will be 11am – 8 pm our time since California is three hours behind Virginia. This is such an exciting but strange time for us as we continue to worship from afar. We wish Pastor Ryan and family a safe transition to Virginia when they are able to do so. Pastor Ryan will continue to provide updates to the congregation as moving details are finalized.

A NOTE FROM PASTOR RYAN

Hello, everyone! After a long wait for renovations to be completed, things are moving quickly now. The last of the construction was finished on Friday the 26th; pictures were taken on Monday the 29th; the house was officially listed on July 2nd; and we had three showings already on July 3rd. We'll see what happens over the weekend and if we get any offers, but things are really moving now. Please continue to hold us in prayer as we do another wave of packing and our departure for Virginia gets closer and closer. Thanks again for all your prayers, patience, and love!

WEEKLY FINANCIAL UPDATE

Beginning March 8th, we began providing a summary of the financial well-being of our congregation. Here is this week's information:

- Contributions to general fund averaged \$2936 through June 28th (down from \$3018 on June 21st).
- We are \$12,151.21 behind the year-to-date budget needs (down from \$9642.21 behind the budget the week prior).

JUNE 29th MARKED 50 YEARS OF THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN

You are invited to reach out to thank a woman who is a pastor who's touched your life, in a small way or a big way. It may be a letter, an email or another gesture. If you post it on social media, you can use the hashtag #thankyoupastor. If you would like more resources for celebrating, go to <https://elca.org/50yearsofordainedwomen>, which has an adult forum, Bible study, video, and worship materials.

POWER IN THE SPIRIT BEGINS MONDAY!

Power in the Spirit 2020 is online this Monday, July 6, through Friday, July 10 for a week of study, prayer, fellowship, worship, and art. Learn about theology and advocacy, about evangelism and worship. Experience new ways of worshiping at home and online. This year's theme is The Holy Spirit. Go to <https://www.vasynod.org/event/power-in-the-spirit-2020/> for more information as well as to register.

KAIROS IS GOING ON-LINE TOO!

Since in-person Kairos has been canceled for 2020, we are hosting Virtual Kairos 2020! Join us July 19-23, 2020 (Sunday evening to Thursday morning) for Virginia Synod rising 9th through 12th Graders. We are going to try and squeeze as much of in-person Kairos into this online event as we can! with large group, small group, daily prayer, t-shirts, CLIPPS, Open Talent Mic Show, faith testimonies, comic relief, reflection time, prayer around the cross, speed friending, songs, t-shirt fashion show, and more! Cost per participant: \$25 and payment is required at time of registration. For more information about registration, and to register online, visit www.vasynod.org/event/kairos.

CAROLINE FURNACE UPDATE

Summer Camps have been ordered by the state of Virginia to remain closed for now. However, Outdoor Ministry is so much more than Summer Camp. Here is what we are offering this summer:

- Family Rentals - The Farmhouse, Cabin Village, and Sukkah Village are open for Family Rentals in July and August. 14 days of pre-screening are required for all participants. Both the Farmhouse and Sukkah Village are optional no-contact retreat spaces. We can host a maximum of 5 family groups (of 10 or less) on property at once, so spaces are limited and first come, first served. 2020 Summer Camp families get priority booking until June 30. Regular booking opens on July 1.
- Camp at Home* - Register by July 6 for another round of Camp at Home (\$0-50), an exciting online Summer Camp! We are already halfway through our first session and we're having SO MUCH FUN. With Camp at Home, you can see your favorite camp counselors and chaplains, spend time with your "cabin group", and join in on fun activities - all from home! PJs are optional. We can't wait to meet your pets. Bring your own snacks. Choose your own adventure - participate in as few or many parts as you'd like. Optional: sign up for Camp in a Box (\$50) if you'd like to get fun camp surprises and activity supplies delivered right to your door!
- Contact Julie at 540-449-0012 or julie@carolinefurnace.org to sponsor Camp at Home for your kids!

ELCA PLEDGE TO COMMIT TO ANTI-RACISM

Beyond statements and prayers, we are called to also act and respond to injustices. The ELCA invites you to sign the pledge, "I commit to study, prayer and action to become an anti-racist individual in an anti-racist church," and share your participation on social media using #ELCA4justice. To sign the pledge, go to <https://elca.org/racialjusticepledge>.

PRAYER LIST HAS BEEN RESET

The current prayer list has been reset to begin the third quarter. Please contact Davina if you have names you wish to be added. Email her at MessiahMech@gmail.com or phone 746-7134 with your requests.

DEVOTIONS FROM AUGSBURG FORTRESS

Every Monday Augsburg Fortress sends a devotional message and selection of artwork based on the text from the day before. This email devotion is free and similar to the devotions in the Christ in Our Home devotional book many congregations offer. To sign up for the weekly email go to: <https://go.augsburgfortress.org/augsburg-fortress-weekly-devotional>.

MCEF NEWS

MCEF is now OPEN for clients to receive food and/or clothing. The procedure allows the client to select what they need and a volunteer completes their "order" on a drive through basis. Those needing clothing are escorted to the appropriate closet to make their choices. All volunteers and those clients entering the OSS must be afebrile and wear a mask. All donations may be made to the OSS on the first or third Sunday of the month, 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. or placed in the grocery cart in the narthex when the building is opened. Hopefully, school will be starting and needs include underwear and socks for school-aged children, all sizes. Check out the updated website, <https://4mcef.com/>, and our Facebook page for further information.

JOIN THE 75,000 MORE! FACEMASK CHALLENGE

When Lutheran World Relief launched the 75,000 Face Mask Challenge less than a month ago, they knew the compassionate response would be overwhelming – and that good people like you would meet the challenge. They just had no idea you'd pull it off so quickly. Thank you! To reach even more people in dire need, Lutheran World Relief is collecting 75,000 more masks! How many will you make to help stop the spread? Sign up for more info. www.lwr.org/masks.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

We thank you for your faithful giving! Please continue to mail in your offering to the church office, 8154 Atlee Road, Mechanicsville, VA 23111, or use on-line giving through Vanco which is available on the church website. See messiahmech.com for more details.

BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS

Those who would like to place announcements in our Sunday 'ebulletin' please send them to Donna Shaw at dmslaw70@gmail.com by Wednesday for inclusion.

Prayer List

WE PRAY FOR EACH OTHER

Kenneth Deere
Adam Dworak, Sr.
JoAn Firebaugh
Bill Fulop
Elisabeth Gardner
Werner Gardner
Steve Gilnett

Geoffrey Honan
"Doc" Kondaki
Mac McAllister
Roberta McMillen
Nathan, Ruth Schroeder & family
Judy Schwerdfeger

WE PRAY FOR OUR EXTENDED FAMILY AND NEIGHBORS

Dee Schroeder, sister-in-law of Roger.
Tim Schroeder, nephew of Roger.
Elizabeth Zimmerman, Karen Morris' daughter-in-law's aunt
T.J., grandson of the Whirleys.

Pastor Ryan, as he begins his journey with us
Our veterans, their fellow soldiers & their waiting families
All law enforcement, firefighters & first responders
The people and pastor, Rev. Katherine, of All Souls Episcopal & our shared ministry

Hospitals, nursing homes, other health care facilities
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
The World Health Organization Medical researchers and scientists
Schools, workplaces, government institutions and municipal agencies
For all who travel