

## #BLESSED

Have you ever said this or felt this? Have you ever wondered what someone meant by this statement? Are you feeling blessed or not blessed?

Two weeks ago, I felt truly blessed. We had some time off to spend with our family to eat, swim (I did not) enjoy the sun, play with our grandkids and enjoy the beautiful weather in the north woods. #Blessed. When we returned, I happened upon Psalm 67 and the theme of the story is blessing and worship of God. It starts like this: “May God be gracious to us and bless us, and make his face shine upon us.” (Verse 1)

Rolf Jacobson says this from Working Preacher: “The great theologian Claus Westermann contrasted two general aspects of God's merciful action towards humanity: God's saving activity and God's blessing activity.<sup>2</sup> For good reason, protestant Old Testament theology has strongly emphasized God's saving activity—forgiving sin, rescuing from oppression, saving from death and the like. But the Old Testament consistently speaks of another sphere of God's mercy: the blessing activity of God—fruitful harvests, fertility, health, prosperity, and the like. Psalm 67 majors in an area in which the church has often minored—the longing request for God's blessing.”

Two kinds of blessing that we have from God. Certainly the one that we receive from God, just because he loves us and grants us mercy and forgiveness day after day, and the promise of no fear, just life with him. However, as is stated above, there is another blessing from God. All of creation, fruitful gardens and food on the table, families and good health, the beauty of a lake or a loon, and all things that we have in our lives. Rolf Jacobson also states that the reason we share a blessing and continue to share our blessings is for the mission of God so that all may realize, see and hear what God has done for us and continues to do in his Son Jesus Christ. Our mission of God at First Lutheran Church and the people in our community and lives is pertinent to knowing and showing how much God loves us and continues to bless. How goes it in your lives and what does this mean for our church?

It is easy at this time and place not to see the blessings. It is easy to be down in the dumps about all the changes that have happened just in the last few months. Changes happen every day and we know that by the time we wake up in the morning, news and heartache. What overnight has transpired? The changes are immense and being grateful and blessed may be difficult.

In whom and what do we put our trust? The subtitle from my Bible claims this title for Psalm 67: The Nations Called to Praise God. We ask God to continue to bless us, hold us in His hands, and grant those blessings seen and unseen, appreciated or not appreciated; we continue to count our blessings. It helps. It frees us. It brings us to a different place of thankfulness and gratitude.

It helps us to count our blessings. This may be too much Zucchini in our garden, or just the right amount, a roof over our heads, family and friends, fresh air and sunshine, friends and community, and oh yes there is Psalm 67. A God who continues to love and bless us and allows us to ask for it to continue. This list may go be long.

There are times I see blessings front and center. There are times they are harder to see and even feel. Yet, we may plea and thank our God, give him praise and thanksgiving for each day and breathe. A funny thing happens when you begin to be grateful and thankful. You start seeing and believing all the blessings.

“May God continue to bless us; let all the ends of the earth revere him.” Psalm 67:7

## #STILLBLESSED



# FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

Pastor Brenda Wicklund

August 16, 2020

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

“We are called by God to grow in faith together, sharing Christ’s love with each other and our community”



In Isaiah we hear that God’s house shall be a house of prayer for all people and that God will gather the outcasts of Israel. The Canaanite woman in today’s gospel is a Gentile, an outsider, who is unflinching in her request that Jesus heal her daughter. As Jesus commends her bold faith, how might our church extend its mission to those on the margins of society? In our gathering around word and meal we receive strength to be signs of comfort, healing, and justice for those in need.

## Welcome

### Confession and Forgiveness

*All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.*

L: Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, whose steadfast love is everlasting, whose faithfulness endures from generation to generation.

**C: Amen.**

L: Trusting in the mercy of God, let us confess our sin.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

L: Reconciling God,

**C: 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.**

L: 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.

**C: Amen.**

**Song- “All Are Welcome”**

**Red Worship Book 641**

### Greeting

**Red Worship Book pg. 203**

L: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**C: And also with you.**

### Kyrie

**Red Worship Book pg. 203**

**C: Have mercy on us, Lord, and hear our solemn prayer. We come to hear your living word; it saves us from despair.**

**Have mercy on us, Christ, and wash away our sin. Pour out your grace and make us whole that new life may begin.**

**Have mercy on us, Lord, make sin and shame depart. Renew us with your saving pow’r; create in us new hearts!**

## Canticle of Praise

Red Worship Book pg. 204

**C:** Come, let us join our cheerful songs with angels round the throne; ten thousand thousand are their tongues, but all their joys are one.

“Worthy the Lamb that died,” they cry, “to be exalted thus!” “Worthy the Lamb,” our lips reply, “for he was slain for us!”

Jesus is worthy to receive honor and pow’r divine; and blessings, more than we can give, be, Lord, forever thine.

Let all creation join in one to bless the sacred name of God who sits upon the throne, and to adore the Lamb.

## Prayer of the Day

L: God of all peoples, your arms reach out to embrace all those who call upon you. Teach us as disciples of your Son to love the world with compassion and constancy, that your name may be known throughout the earth, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**C: Amen.**

*The prophet calls upon Israel to do justice in view of God’s imminent intervention to save. Righteousness and obedience define who belongs to the Israelite community—not race, nationality, or any other category.*

## First Reading: Isaiah 56:1, 6-8

<sup>1</sup>Thus says the LORD: Maintain justice, and do what is right, for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance be revealed.

<sup>6</sup>And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, all who keep the sabbath, and do not profane it, and hold fast my covenant—

<sup>7</sup>these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

<sup>8</sup>Thus says the Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather others to them besides those already gathered.

## Psalm 67

L: May God be merciful to us and bless us;

**C: may the light of God’s face shine upon us.**

L: Let your way be known upon earth,

**C: your saving health among all nations.**

L: Let the peoples praise you, O God;

**C: let all the peoples praise you.**

L: Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,

**C: for you judge the peoples with equity and guide all the nations on earth.**

L: Let the peoples praise you, O God;

**C: let all the peoples praise you.**

L: The earth has brought forth its increase;

**C: God, our own God, has blessed us.**

L: May God give us blessing,

**C: and may all the ends of the earth stand in awe.**

*God has not rejected Israel. Rather, the call and gifts of God are irrevocable so that, while all have been disobedient, God has mercy upon all.*

**Second Lesson: Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32**

<sup>29</sup>For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. <sup>30</sup>Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, <sup>31</sup>so they have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy. <sup>32</sup>For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all.

**Gospel Acclamation**

**Red Worship Book pg. 205**

**C: Alleluia! Lord and Savior: open now your saving word. Let it burn like fire within us; speak until our hearts are stirred. Alleluia! Lord, we sing for the good news that you bring.**

**The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew**

**C: Glory to you, O Lord. (spoken)**

**Red Worship Book pg. 206**

*Jesus teaches his disciples that true purity is a matter of the heart rather than outward religious observances. Almost immediately, this teaching is tested when a woman considered to be a religious outsider approaches him for help.*

**Gospel: Matthew 14:22-33**

[<sup>10</sup>[Jesus] called the crowd to him and said to them, “Listen and understand: <sup>11</sup>it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles.” <sup>12</sup>Then the disciples approached and said to him, “Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?” <sup>13</sup>He answered, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. <sup>14</sup>Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit.” <sup>15</sup>But Peter said to him, “Explain this parable to us.” <sup>16</sup>Then he said, “Are you also still without understanding? <sup>17</sup>Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer? <sup>18</sup>But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. <sup>19</sup>For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. <sup>20</sup>These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile.”]

<sup>21</sup>Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>22</sup>Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.” <sup>23</sup>But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, “Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us.” <sup>24</sup>He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” <sup>25</sup>But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” <sup>26</sup>He answered, “It is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.” <sup>27</sup>She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” <sup>28</sup>Then Jesus answered her, “Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

**“The Gospel of Our Lord**

**C: Praise to you, O Christ. (spoken)**

**Red Worship Book pg. 206**

**Sermon**

**“Jesus and Persistence”**

**Pastor Brenda Wicklund**

**Matthew 15: 10-28**

This passage and this story rings true for me in many ways and it has always bothered me and left me with questions I struggle. When I was in the Christian Ministry program at Northwestern College one of the Professors asked us to take one of the passages in the Bible and write a paper on it. One that we had doubts on, that we struggled with had questions about. This would be on black and white, graded on this paper. It did not take me long to pick this passage.

I first recall some of my problems, and mostly it was Jesus’ denial to help the Canaanite woman. This was Jesus. “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.” (Matthew 15: 24). Then she pleads. Still Jesus answered, “It is not fair to take the children’s food and give it to the dogs.” (Matthew 15: 26). After the paper and many years, this passage still stumps me.

In our Gospel of Matthew we are moving on from the Jesus being rejected in his hometown, (Matthew 13: 54-58) which had to have hurt. The death of John the Baptist (Matthew 14: 1-12) and the feeding of the 5 thousand (Matthew 14:13-20) to telling the disciples to leave him, so he could take a break, to him walking on the water, and Peter asking to walk to him, and sinks, when Jesus asks Peter about his faith. (Matthew 14:22-28.) Wow, how did he handle all of this? So many people hanging around him and others are noticing. Yet, he keeps teaching, healing and loving.

Some Scribes and Pharisees came to Jerusalem and questioned Jesus about his disciples practice, using some of the law to count him wrong. Jesus says, "Listen and understand, it is not what goes into the mouth that makes you foul or defiles you, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles." (Matthew 15: 10-11). He just keeps getting himself deeper and deeper into problems.

Jesus left that place and went to Tyre of Sidon. A Canaanite woman came and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." (Matthew 15: 22) Hmm. She is claiming that she knows who Jesus is an ancestral relationship it sounds like. As if, she is kin of Jesus Christ. She may well mean and know about this Jesus Christ through her knowledge of Jesus genealogy from the beginning of Matthew who claim Jesus. Rahab, Tamar and Ruth. (Matthew 1:3, 5). The time where these three woman that worked so hard, did so with courage and hardship. Maybe she could relate. It is as if she is demonstrating that she knows Jesus can help and her willingness to accept his power. She knows Jesus can fix this problem.

Jesus did not answer her at all. She kept persisting. The disciples said to send her away. Have you ever been in a situation where no one listened, acknowledged or answered you? This is not a fun place to be. It could bring anger; it could bring shame and humiliations.

Could this be a lesson for the disciples? Jesus tells her he was sent for the lost sheep. She says again, "Lord, help me." (Matthew 15: 25) Giving Jesus the honor and respect, he deserves. Do not even get me going, right? How much would we do and go out on a limb for our child. Now he talks about dogs. We do not take from the people and throw it to the dogs. Ouch. Really, Jesus? Does she need to prove who she is and that she is worthy? Is this a lesson? What about dogs? The Canaanite's I am told would be fine to have a dog eating at the table, more like a pet, yet the Jewish community would not look at it this way. Interpretation.

Her child was worthy and she was worthy. She knew Jesus Christ and was giving him the honor he deserved, the power he held and the experience of healing for her child. Maybe she heard that a woman was healed just by touching the fringe of his coat (Matthew 9:20-21 and Matthew 14: 34-36). Imagine what he could do for her child tormented by evil. Therefore, she bravely continues this plea, now on her knees to Jesus Christ, "Even the dogs get the crumbs of the master's table. (Matthew 15: 27). Yes, we allow the dogs to catch the crumbs in the house. Imagine.

Jesus answered, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish. And her daughter was healed. (Matthew 15:28)

This woman kept asking, kept pleading, kept believing that that God she believed in was going to hear her prayer. She persisted. She plead. She knew who Jesus Christ was and she was not going anywhere. She did not have to tell Jesus Christ that she was worthy, did she? He did not call her a dog, did he?

This was an intersection for intercession (Mitzi J. Smith). I agree we can look at this story from many angles yet the bottom line is imagine yourself the disciple, the woman, and the people that will hear how Jesus Christ healed, loved, worked, saved and lived his life on this small time on earth.

Jesus has intersected in knowledge that this woman and her child was valid in asking and the intercession like our prayers and the prayers of others. They matter and are heard, just as the woman, we may persist, we may demand an answer, we may question because God has got us covered. His Son Jesus Christ gave us a new life of forgiveness and validity of his child, always and forever, and grants us mercy. Jesus moved then and he still moves in the world.

Jesus ends up commending the woman's faith. Jesus noticed. The disciples noticed. Maybe they imagined their faith. Maybe we imagine ours. Things are changing for the times and for Jesus. They are changed. Hear the rest of the chapter after this encounter with this woman: Matthew 16:-29-31

*<sup>29</sup> After Jesus had left that place, he passed along the Sea of Galilee, and he went up the mountain, where he sat down. <sup>30</sup> Great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the maimed, the blind, the mute, and many others. They put them at his feet, and he cured them, <sup>31</sup> so that the crowd was amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel. Amen.*

**Song- "In Christ There Is No East or West"**

**Red Worship Book 650**

**Nicene Creed**

**Red Worship Book pg. 104**

**C: 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 truly 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 with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who 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.**

**Offering Prayer**

L: God of goodness and growth, all creation is yours, and your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens. Water and word, wine and bread: these are signs of your abundant grace. Nourish us through these gifts, that we might proclaim your steadfast love in our communities and in the world, through Jesus Christ, our strength and our song.

**C: Amen**

**Prayers of Intercession**

L: Confident of your care and helped by the Holy Spirit, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

*(A brief silence.)*

L: Lord, you gather the church to be part of your mission as ambassadors of Jesus Christ. As Jesus acknowledged the great faith of a woman from outside his people, help your church discover and find blessing in the faith of people we might reject. Lord, in your mercy,

**C: hear our prayer.**

L: You have blessed us with the bounty of the earth. Grant your grace to all your creatures, that the earth will flourish. Relieve waters choked by garbage, renew soils stripped of nutrients, and refresh the air all creatures need to live. Lord, in your mercy,

**C: hear our prayer.**

L: You call the nations to be glad and sing for joy. Let your way be known among all the nations of the world, now divided by competing interests, contending alliances, and consumed by enormous worry. Bless us and make your face shine upon all. Lord, in your mercy,

**C: hear our prayer.**

L: You show unexpected mercy, kindness, and generosity. We pray for those who do not have enough, for outcasts in our villages, cities, and town, and for those who need your healing. Lord, in your mercy,

**C: hear our prayer.**

L: In you we live and move and have our being. Grant our congregation grace to find our life refreshed in you. Accompany us in the rhythms of late summer. Give us rest and renewal, and strengthen us for mission in your name. Lord, in your mercy,

**C: hear our prayer.**

L: Your eternal promises are more than we could ever imagine. As you gather all the saints, join us also with them on the great day of your salvation. Lord, in your mercy,

**C: hear our prayer.**

L: In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**C: Amen.**

### **Words of Institution**

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**Red Worship Book pg. 208**

**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.**

**Song- "O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing"**

**Red Worship Book 886**

### **Dismissal**

Go in peace. Christ is with you.

**Thanks be to God.**

*the worship is ended ... let the service begin...*



**\*\*\*THERE IS NO MEN'S TEXT STUDY FOR AUGUST 20TH.\*\*\***



### **Prayer Concerns ~ (Names will be on for one month unless requested longer.)**

Robert Sigler (nephew of Virgil and Joyce Seegebarth), Peter Thorvig, Larry Lammers (brother-in-law of Elaine Garaghty), Kay Conway, George and Joan Wells (brother/sister-in-law of Gary and Gail Wells), Eric Mettling (deployed for service), Gracie Edin, Kyalani Robbins, Jessica Lindahl, Rebecca Karp (Marina Vork's niece), David Stephenson and

Annetta Eberlein (brother and sister-in-law of Kevin Stephenson), Carol Bostrom, Leigha Ness (Pastor Brenda's great-niece), and Barbara Ekberg (sister of Loretta Sprado.)

## **ADOPT A MILITARY CHILD**

"Toni Mettling's husband (Eric) was recently deployed. They have three young children at home, and with watching her kids go through separation anxiety with their dad being gone so long, she thought of all the other kids going through the same thing and came up with

### **"Adopt a Military Child".**

Toni has collected pictures of other military kids who are going through the same thing, and has attached information about each child on the back of their photo.

With "Adopt a Military Child", Toni thought it would be a great opportunity for us to come together and let these kids know that someone is always thinking of them. Whether it's sending a card/goodies to them on their birthday and major holiday, or just a quick note letting them know we are thinking of them."

If you are interested, their picture and information is on the "Youth Bulletin Board."

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