

June 26, 2020

The Festival of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, Apostles

Dearest Saints in Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who sent out his apostles to proclaim the good news of the reign of God (Luke 9:1-2).

Since my last letter to you, we have entered into the longest season of the Church calendar. During the Pentecost season, the colors of the paraments turn green, a sign of the life and growth that the Holy Spirit gives to God's people. In the summer and fall months, we get to hear the story of Jesus' ministry from Matthew's Gospel each week, as Jesus taught, healed and slowly revealed himself as the Savior and Christ.

During the next few months, we also get to hear from Paul's first-century letter to the Christian congregation at Rome. Beginning in Chapter 5, Paul powerfully proclaims peace and life in Christ (Romans 5) which is delivered through Baptism and grasped by faith (Romans 6) and empowers us through the Spirit to live new lives in Jesus' resurrection (Romans 6-8). Our hope is in Jesus' return and his renewal of all creation, including our bodies (Romans 8). Nothing can separate us from his love, because salvation depends entirely on God (Romans 9-11). Until the time of our final salvation, we offer ourselves to God as living sacrifices, loving what is good, hating what is evil, and living together in the bonds of love and unity in Christ (Romans 12-14).

I will be preaching from this letter throughout the summer, highlighting Paul's proclamation in a series called "God's Greater Story." The sermons are adapted from a series originally written by Rev. Dr. David Schmitt, professor of homiletics at Concordia Seminary in Saint Louis. you will no doubt notice that this series makes use of images to accompany the proclamation of Jesus. Some are paintings, others pictures, and still others sculptures - all meant to help us see the depths of the beauty and life that God brings to us in Christ. Whenever possible, these images will be displayed in the bulletin and referred to as a part of each message.

I mentioned that the season of Pentecost is a season of growth of life. These gifts from God do not come to us 'magically'. We know exactly how God grants these good gifts - through the power of his Word and Sacraments. It is because of this that I encourage you to hear God's Word and receive his gifts whenever you are able. As gatherings for worship resumed last month, we have the opportunity (Twice a week!) to hear the good news of Jesus proclaimed and to receive his body and blood for our forgiveness. While I know that the current restrictions may at times seem burdensome, we have seen already how important they are for limiting the spread of the virus during a time when case numbers continue to increase. Even more, we know that we will do whatever we must to be able to gather together as the body of Christ, not only so that we can see one another and visit but most of all to worship the Lord of creation and to receive his saving gifts in our ears, in our mouths, and in our hearts. May God continue to grant us his Grace and peace in Christ Jesus our Lord!

Your brother in Christ,

Pastor Squire

PS - For public worship, we continue to follow the restrictions and guidelines sent out in May, the only slight change being that we are allowing as many people for services in the sanctuary as we can safely fit with social distancing. So we continue to sit in alternating pews, to wear masks for the service, to collect the offering at the back, to practice a slightly altered Communion distribution, and to have fellowship only outside and at safe distances. Please continue to contact me with your intention to worship, so that we can plan accurately for each service. If you are unable to attend services

for any reason and would like to give your offering for the week, you may drop it off at the church office or mail it. Thank you.