

Order of Worship for April 28, 2024

Prelude:

P: Alleluia! Jesus Christ is risen!

C: He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Opening Hymn: *"Christ, the Word of God Incarnate"*—Hymn #540

Confession and Forgiveness

P: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

P: When we were baptized, we died and were buried with Christ.

C: We were baptized so that we might have a new life, as Christ was raised to life by the glory of God the Father.

P: Therefore, let us confess our sins to God so that, as nourished branches, we may abide in Him who is the Vine.

P: Almighty and all-merciful God,

C: We are dead in trespasses and sin; we have no power to rise. We have offended Your majesty and defied Your divinity; we have brought death and darkness where You once said, "Let there be light." We deserve the doom that You have decreed. We are dead in trespasses and sin; we have no power to rise.

P: But Christ is risen.

C: Risen indeed!

P: Since we have been united with Him in a death like His,

C: we will certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His. For His sake we implore You, O God, forgive our sins, and fill us with that love which overflows into the lives of others.

P: "Thus it is written, that the Messiah had to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins must be proclaimed in His name." That word is now proclaimed to you. In the name and by the authority of our risen Savior, Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins.

C: Amen.

Service of the Word

Entrance Psalm

P: A little while, and you will see Me no longer;

C: and again a little while, and you will see Me.

P: I will extol you, my God and King,

C: and bless Your name forever and ever.

P: Every day I will bless You

C: and praise Your name forever and ever.

P: The LORD is gracious and merciful,

C: slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

P: All your works shall give thanks to You, O LORD,

C: and all Your saints shall bless You!

P: My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD,

C: and let all flesh bless His holy name forever and ever.

**ALL: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever| Amen.**

P: A little while, and you will see Me no longer;

C: and again a little while, and you will see Me.

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

Prayer of the Day:

P: O God, You make the minds of Your faithful to be of one will. Grant that we may love what You have commanded and desire what You promise, that among the many changes of this world our hearts may be fixed where true joys are found; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen

Hymn of Praise: “Fruitful Trees, the Spirit’s Sowing” – Hymn #691

First Reading: Acts 10:34-48

R: So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him. As for the word that He sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all), you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all that He did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put Him to death by hanging Him on a tree, but God raised Him on the third day and made him to appear, not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead. And He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that He is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name.”

While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” And he

commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Epistle: 1 John 4:1–11

R: Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made visible among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Holy Gospel: John 15:1–8

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 15th chapter

C: Glory to You, O Lord

P: [Jesus said:] “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit He takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples.”

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

Children’s Songs:

Children's Message (8:30):

Sermon Hymn: "I Am Content"- Hymn #468

Sermon: "Made Perfect in Love"- 1 John 4

"We are saved by God's grace through faith on account of Christ Jesus." That summarizes our faith. I could quote from St. Paul's writings, the catechism, or any other major Lutheran confession to enforce this, but I will just use this from 1st John where our epistle lesson comes from:

Yet if we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar and His word is not in us.

The forgiveness of sins is a very concrete way of telling us that we are right with God. The catechism reminds us, "that where there is the forgiveness of sins, there is life and salvation."

Then how do we deal with the epistle lesson today when that same 1st John tells us?

The one who fears is not made perfect in love. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God.

The Bible is filled both with stories that emphasize that our salvation rests in God's love alone and our duty to obey Him. Are we right with God by grace alone or also by what we do in our lives? Is it all God, or both us and God?

Again we read, "The one who fears is not made perfect in love." I don't know about you, but I live with fears every day. No, I don't worry about getting to class on time or being ready for tests—though I can still have nightmares about that. But that is not because I am braver. I now hesitate going up and down stairs because of a bum knee, worry about things like nursing home care (which was not in my mind as a young husband and father), and fear more death as I realize there is not much left to the generation before me. Then we have this phrase "made perfect." If anything, age should convince a person that he or she is not perfect. You have a lot more time to see and experience all your failures and be reminded by your children of your shortcomings. How will I ever be "made perfect"?

We go on reading, "No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God." No more sinning? Didn't John tell us earlier in his letter that "If we say we have no sin, the truth is not in us"? What is going on here?

I was wrestling with this until in our student fellowship time on Wednesday night they were going over 1 John. It made me look at what John wrote and wonder what this really says. I had an idea, but I needed to go back to the original Greek. In their wisdom, our ancestors in the church felt that it would be good for pastors in their training to know how to read the Scriptures in the original Hebrew of the Old Testament and Greek in the New. Perhaps this is a small example of how wise they were.

In the Greek you can express the past tense in three ways—as a simple past, as a past thing that occurred over a period of time, or as a definitely completed action. The last of those in Greek is called the “perfect.” Now you might think it is crazy for me to teach you a little Greek, but I will attempt to do it, because it kind of stands out. When you put a Greek verb in a past tense you place the Greek letter ε which is our “e” before it. But when you make it perfect you take the first letter of the verb, place it before the “e”, then the verb form. In English letters it may look like “**t**etalk.” Now look at 1 John in the Greek: (As you read this, do not worry about all that is written. Just notice the bold print where you see the “e” and the first letter repeated in the front. The θ is a “th” which comes from “t,” so the letter repeated in front of θ is the τ for the “t” sound.)

⁷ Ἀγαπητοί, ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, ὅτι ἡ ἀγάπη ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστὶν καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται καὶ γινώσκει τὸν θεόν· ⁸ ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν οὐκ ἔγνω τὸν θεόν, ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν.

⁹ ἐν τούτῳ ἐφανερώθη ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν, ὅτι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ ἀπέσταλκεν ὁ θεὸς εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἵνα ζήσωμεν δι’ αὐτοῦ. ¹⁰ ἐν τούτῳ ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη, οὐχ ὅτι ἡμεῖς ἠγαπήκαμεν τὸν θεόν, ἀλλ’ ὅτι αὐτὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς καὶ ἀπέστειλεν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἰλασμὸν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν.

¹¹ Ἀγαπητοί, εἰ οὕτως ὁ θεὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς, καὶ ἡμεῖς ὀφείλομεν ἀλλήλους ἀγαπᾶν· ¹² θεὸν οὐδεὶς πώποτε **τεθ**έεται· ἐὰν ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, ὁ θεὸς ἐν ἡμῖν μένει καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη αὐτοῦ **τετελειωμένη** ἐν ἡμῖν ἐστίν. ¹³ ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ μένομεν καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν ἡμῖν, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ δέδωκεν ἡμῖν. ¹⁴ καὶ ἡμεῖς **τεθεάμεθα** καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν ὅτι ὁ πατήρ ἀπέσταλκεν τὸν υἱὸν σωτήρα τοῦ κόσμου. ¹⁵ ὃς ἐὰν ὁμολογήσῃ ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ θεὸς ἐν αὐτῷ μένει καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν τῷ θεῷ. ¹⁶ καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐγνώκαμεν καὶ **πεπιστεύκαμεν** τὴν ἀγάπην ἣν ἔχει ὁ θεὸς ἐν ἡμῖν.

I am sure you can’t read any of that, but you can see words with the first letter of the word repeated (or at least its root letter, like τ and θ), followed by “e” and then the verb. Those are all perfects. They are all completed actions. There is no continuing process. They are accomplished facts. There is no sense that it didn’t get done or we are not sure. It is complete, accomplished! Or as one person put it “It is finished.” Yes, the actual word John, the same John who wrote I John, used to record Jesus’ dying word on the cross is:

Τετέλεσται

Sure enough, it is perfect in Greek. Jesus completed all that was required. The deed was done. In fact it is a word from finance meaning the bill has been paid in full!

What are those perfect verbs in 1 John? “Born,” “Behold,” “Perfected,” and “Believe.” Those who love God are born of God. How are they born? Even though none of us has actually beheld God, John beheld the way God made Himself known in Jesus. What Jesus did is an accomplished fact. And what Jesus did was told to people who believe it. Those who believe

are born of God. Those born of God have God's love completed in them. They love God and therefore others. None of this is wishful thinking for the future. It is complete in Jesus who said, "It is finished."

That is why there is nothing we have to do, nothing we should do, nothing we can even do to add to what Jesus has completed. Da Vinci's Last Supper is a masterpiece. But because it was painted on plaster that has moisture problems it was painted over and over since it was done over 500 years ago. Recent technology has allowed us to restore it more and more to the original. What we find under the layers is an even better painting. Why paint over a masterpiece? Why add anything to what Jesus has already done for us?

Then what do we do with all the passages in Scripture that tell us to live according to God's law? Our former pastor, Richard Osslund, did his doctoral thesis on Philip Melancthon, who was Martin Luther's "sidekick." Much of our former Lutheran teachings were written by him, though he always remained a layman. Pastor Osslund noted how Melancthon is the one who talked about the "Third Use of the Law," how God's law informs us about living a God pleasing life. Melancthon said that this always followed a "free and merry spirit." "Merry" did not mean "happy" or "jolly," but "at peace with God." We follow God's law not to gain God's favor, but to live in it. This only applies to the believer, to the one who knows that his or her sins are forgiven by Jesus alone. That is what it means when John says:

The one who fears is not made perfect in love. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God.

We are living in forgiveness. That forgiveness frees us from sin, not that we never sin, but it does not have control over us. We live for God, the one who has freed us in Christ. We follow His commands, not because "we have to," but because "we get to." In Jesus we are completed—made perfect.

Creed: 7th Petition and Conclusion of Lord's Prayer

Prayer of the Church

P: Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

Hymn: "Jesus, Thy Boundless Love to Me" - Hymn #683

Lord's Prayer:

Closing Prayer:

C: Amen.

Blessing (Pastor)

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn: "On What Has Now Been Sown" – Hymn #921

Postlude