



Third Sunday after Pentecost

Order of Worship for streaming service during COVID-19

June 21, 2020

9:30 am



about today's service

The book of The Acts of the Apostles is often referred to as "The Gospel of Luke, Part 2." It begins with the founding of the Church through the blessing of Christ and the sending of the Spirit. It deals with the struggles, joys, frustrations, and growth of the Body of Christ throughout those middle decades of the First Century. The book closes with the Apostle Paul in Rome, defending the faith before an unbelieving government. We as a congregation will be looking at this book over seven weeks, and discover how the lives of believers from nearly two thousand years ago match up with the struggles, joys, frustrations, and growth of our lives, today!

P: Presiding Minister C: Congregation L: Lector

✝ Gathering ✝

We gather together to praise God and receive God's love.

Welcome Pastor Liz Frey

Song: "I Will Follow" By Chris Tomlin (Faithx video)

Announcements Pastor Liz Frey

Confession and Forgiveness Pastor Liz Frey

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✝ one God, who forgives all our sin, whose mercy endures forever. Amen.

P: Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

P: Most merciful God, we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

P: In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ✝ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Hymn: "Faith of Our Fathers"

- 1. Faith of our fathers, living still in spite of dungeon, fire, and sword. Oh, how our hearts beat high with joy when'er we hear that glorious word.

Refrain

Faith of our fathers, holy faith, we will be true to you till death.

- 2. The martyrs, chained in prisons dark, were still in heart and conscience free; and blest would be their children's fate if they, like them, should die for thee.

Refrain

- 3. Faith of our fathers! We will love both friend and foe in all our strife; proclaim thee too, as love knows how, by saving word and faithful life.

Refrain

Text: Frederick W. Faber, 1814-1863, alt. (video)

Greeting Pastor Liz Frey

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

Prayer of the Day Pastor Liz Frey

P: Let us pray. God of compassion, you have opened the way for us and brought us to yourself. Pour your love into our hearts, that, overflowing with joy, we may freely share the blessings of your realm and faithfully proclaim the good news of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C: Amen.

Children's Message Pastor Jack Horner

✝ Word ✝

We listen to the story of God's mighty acts for the sake of God's people.

Solo: "My Souls Waits For the Lord" Roger Lentz Amy Yovanovich, soloist

Sermon and Scripture reflection: Pastor John Brock One Congregation: One Book: Acts "When **** Hits the Fan" (Sermon and reading reflection for Acts of the Apostles, chapter 6&7)

Solo: "Reach Out Your Hand, Lord" Rolla Lehman Amy Yovanovich, soloist

Apostles' Creed Pastor Liz Frey I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the ✝ resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer Pastor Liz Frey

Lord's Prayer Pastor Liz Frey

P: Let us pray the prayer our Lord taught us.

C: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kinGodom 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 kinGodom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Passing of Peace

Pastor Liz Frey

P: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

✠ Meal ✠

When we celebrate communion we remember that Jesus died for us and we experience His love and forgiveness. As we eat the bread and wine Christ is present with us.

Eucharistic Prayer

Pastor Liz Frey

P: Holy God, our Maker, Redeemer, and Healer, in the harmonious world of your creation, the plants and animals, the seas and stars were whole and well in your praise. When sin had scarred the world, you sent your Son to heal our ills and to form us again into one.

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.

P: Remembering, therefore, his acts of healing, his body given up, and his victory over death, we await that day when all the peoples of the earth will come to the river to enjoy the tree of life.

P: Send your Spirit upon us and this meal: as grains scattered on the hillside become one bread, so let your Church be gathered from the ends of the earth, that all may be fed with the Bread of life, your Son. Through him all glory and honor is yours, Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit, in your holy Church, both now and forever. Amen

✠ Sending ✠

We have heard the Word of God and offered our gifts. Now we are sent out, strengthened by the Holy Spirit to be God's people in the world.

Blessing of Communion to the Homebound

Pastor Liz Frey

P: Compassionate God, we are all homebound during this time. Bless those who receive your word and sacrament at home. May these gifts be signs of our love and prayers, that through the sharing of the body and blood of Christ, all may know your grace and healing revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Blessing

Pastor Liz Frey

P: The Lord be near you at all times, the Lord walk beside you so that you will not be troubled, the Lord fill your hearts with gladness, and your mouth with joyful song; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, ✠ the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with you always. Amen.

Dismissal

Pastor Liz Frey

P: Go in peace. Christ is with you.

C: Thanks be to God.

Postlude "Final" (excerpt)

Louis Vierne

United and empowered to worship, connect, serve.

worship leaders

Presiding Minister: The Rev. Elizabeth E. Frey

Preacher: The Rev. John H. Brock

Children's Message: The Rev. Dr. Jack M. Horner

Music: H. Timothy Koch, Debbie D Wilson

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One Congregation: One Book: Acts "When **** Hits the Fan"

The Reverend John H. Brock

Don't just listen to the Sermon...Ponder how you can live it!

Use these questions as a starting point to dive deeper into the sermon each week. Can be used individually, with family and friends, or with your Life-group!

1. When have you caused the biological waste matter to contact the oscillating rotors?
 - a. Did you do it on purpose?
 - b. Did any good come out of it
 - c. Could it have been avoided?
 - d. Did conditions leading up to the event improve afterwards?
2. Stephen gave a bold witness, a declaration of faith, in the face of strong opposition.
 - a. We would all like to think we could rise to such an occasion. Have you ever had opportunity to do so?
 - b. How did it go?
 - c. Were you ridiculed? Praised?
3. Do you give verbal witness to your faith?
 - a. Do you give silent witness (actions, not word)?
 - b. One is not "better" than the other; which are you more comfortable with? Why?
4. Are you able to succinctly and relatively quickly state your faith?
 - a. Think of the Apostle's Creed. Can you remember it (doesn't have to be verbatim)?
 - b. If Stephen would have used something similar to the Apostle's Creed, would his outcome have been any different?

Grace to you and peace, from God who is, who was, and who is to come. Amen.

Starting something new is not always an easy thing. This Covid is causing all kinds of things, all kinds of new experiences. It's causing things to be different. And, sometimes, when things are different than what we are accustomed to, things can also go wrong. An incident to occurs, things spiral out of control, and (and I'll paraphrase here) the crap hits the fan.

In our reading for today, from the book of Acts, we need to remember that the believers in that First Century Church came from a variety of backgrounds. They were living in community. And, much like the church today, it didn't take the early church very long for things to start going sideways; for the excrement to hit the ventilator. Because, Chapter 6 begins with a problem of . . . *discrimination*.

In the early church, all of those first followers of Jesus were of Jewish heritage. Some of these ethnic Jews were *culturally* Hebrew. They had been born and raised there in Israel; they had Hebrew names; they probably spoke primarily Arabic. Some of that first church, though, while *ethnically* Jewish, were *culturally* Greek. That meant that those folks had been born to Jewish parents, but apparently raised in primarily culturally Greek areas (remember, the New Testament was written in Greek, because Greek was the dominant language of that Mediterranean area, thanks to Alexander the Great conquering that entire area about three hundred years prior).

While the First Church was living in community, supposedly sharing all their resources, some believers were seen as *more equal* than others. The widowed Greek believers (they were called Helenists), even though they are ethnically Jewish, they are being "overlooked", "neglected," in the daily distribution of food. Some Bible scholars attempt to pass this off as a simple oversight, due to the number of believers. I, personally, haven't really seen it that way. I think those widows were purposefully *discriminated* against, because they spoke a different language; because they dressed differently; because they weren't, in the eyes of the culturally Hebrew people, "real" believers. The apostles get wind of what's happening, and they get rather ticked off: Verse 2 –

² *And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. (Acts 6:2 NRS)*

In other words:

We shouldn't have to be waiters, people! We have to fix this.

So, the apostles tell the group to select seven people to oversee food distribution, while they - the apostles - devote themselves to "prayer and serving the word," not "prayer and serving lunch." The people like this idea.

⁵ *What (the apostle's) said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. ⁶ They had these men*

stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. (Acts 6:5-6 NRSV)

So, *this load avoids* hitting the blades.

This new plan of food distribution works out well enough. As it turns out: verse 8:

⁸ *Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.*

Stephen is not only a good worker; he is *also* a great speaker. He often goes to a nearby synagogue, and debates with folks there over the message of Jesus.

Stephen is *so good* at debate, that he ticks off the leaders of the synagogue. Those leaders make up some false news about him:

"We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." (verse 11)

The synagogue leaders get him arrested and brought before the religious council, where (does any of this sounds familiar?)

¹³ *They set up false witnesses who said, "This man never stops saying things against this holy place and the law; ¹⁴ for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses handed on to us." (verses 13-14)*

By bringing Moses into this, though, these religious leaders are backing up that manure truck, getting themselves into a corner, and they are about to get it all dumped on them.

Because, what they don't realize is verse 15

¹⁵ *And all who sat in the council looked intently at (Stephen), and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.*

What these religious leaders don't understand is, the **Spirit** is with Stephen. And Stephen is about to *own* these yahoos, using their own history.

Starting, then, in Chapter 7 verse 2, Stephen gives them a crash course, a reminder, of how God called Abraham from the land of the Chaldeans to Harran. How God promised Abraham that his descendants would possess the land, even though Abraham and Sarah had no offspring. How the covenant was reinforced through the act of circumcision. How the sons of Jacob, Abraham's grandson, turned on their brother Joseph, and sold him into slavery. But God made Joseph second only to the pharaoh in all of Egypt, so that when the famine hit, Joseph reconciled with his brothers, and brought the entire family, Jacob and everyone, into the safety of Egypt, where they rode out the famine. It was while they were there in Egypt, they were eventually forced into servitude, after several hundred years.

It was Moses who eventually arose as a leader. Moses, who, even though he was raised in pharaoh's household, was a one of the People of Israel; Moses, who was rejected originally by his own people, but after standing in the very presence of the burning bush, a physical manifestation of the Living God,

Moses returned to Egypt to lead the people away from bondage. And to show their appreciation, the people **rejected** the Lord God Almighty and instead created a *golden calf* to worship instead.

How. Many. Times, Stephen asks them, during that six hundred years of history, did, again and again and again, the fecal matter hit the propellers, all because of the *obstinance* and *stupidity* of the people, and **still**, Stephen reminds them, the Lord God **remains** faithful to them?

Finally, Stephen reminds them That David found favor with God, and Solomon built the temple:

48 Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made with human hands; as the prophet says, 49 'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? 50 Did not my hand make all these things?'

It is at *this* point when, in my mind, when Stephen is at the crux of his argument with all these religious leaders, I can almost see Stephen's posture straighten. I hear his voice change; I imagine him as he looks around at all those sanctimonious, self-righteous, hypocritical religious leaders. And like the prophets of old, Stephen drops the wagon load of horse manure onto the windmill:

*51 "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you are forever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do. 52 Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? They killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, and now you have become his betrayers and murderers. 53 You are the ones that received the law as ordained by angels, and yet **you have not kept it.**"*

Have you ever let it hit the fan? Have you been involved in something that went so drastically wrong, something that was *completely* mishandled, or so misconstrued, or so absolutely inept, that the resulting spray just went **Everywhere**? Or maybe you've been on the *receiving* end of a botched plan at work, or school, or in your social life? What have you done? How have you handled it? Did whatever that event was, change your life? Positively? Negatively? Do you live differently now, because of that event?

For Stephen, when he radically pointed out the truth to the religious leaders of his day - the truth of their own history, the truth of how they - **repeatedly** - rejected the Lord God - when he confronted them with truth, those leaders chose to respond with *violence*.

For Stephen, speaking that truth; for Stephen, speaking the message of God's grace and love and forgiveness; for Stephen, when it hit the fan . . . it cost him his life.

54 When they heard these things, they became enraged and ground their teeth at Stephen.

What happens to Stephen?

55 But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

56 "Look," he said, "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"

The religious leaders responded in a way all too many leaders respond, all too many of **us** respond, when confronted with news they do not want to hear, with facts that do not accommodate our own narrative:

57 But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. 58 Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him.

Is that where we are at? Have we, as individuals, become so divided that we *cannot* hear one another? That we *won't* hear each other? Have we, as a congregation, become so accustomed to having things a certain way, that the thought of doing something in a manner other than what we have always done, is so anathema, so reprehensible, to us, that we respond by denigrating, insulting, belittling, abusing *whatever* that "other" might be?

Yet, what does Stephen say, while he's being murdered?

59 While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he died.

Is that what it's going to take, for us to realize, that we are, *all of us*, sin-filled? What needs to happen, for us to figure out, that hate is **not** God's answer to our differences? How do we face issues of race, and gender, faith, abilities, economics, and *Still* honestly proclaim the gospel?

Stephen preached God's word. He let the proclamation of his faith, his witness of Christ's love, he let it all loose upon those who needed to hear it. When they did not *want* to hear it, they dumped onto him their *own* hate, and they let their hate spread all over Stephen.

Stephen paid for his witness with his life. Most of us, myself included, may not be that bold. Maybe, it's that **lack** of *standing up to hate* that needs to hit the fan, so that together, we *will* stand up against the hate.

Amen.