



**Midweek Service of Word and Prayer
Grace Lutheran Church
Lincoln, Nebraska**

Opening Dialog

Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. **Alleluia!**

We are enlightened by the brightness of his rising. **Alleluia!**

Death's darkness has no power over us. **Alleluia!**

Introduction to Sunday

This Sunday's image of the life the risen Christ shares with us is the image of friendship. We are called to serve others as Jesus came to serve; but for John's gospel, the image of servanthood is captured in the image of friendship. The Greeks believed that true friends are willing to die for each other. This is the mutual love of Christian community commanded by Christ and enabled by the Spirit. So, celebrate the friends you have and try to make a new friend this week.

Prayer of the Day

O God, you have prepared for those who love you joys beyond understanding. Pour into our hearts such love for you that, loving you above all things, we may obtain your promises, which exceed all we can desire; through Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Readings

Acts 10:44

44 While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word.

When you hear a congregation claim that "All are Welcome", what comes to mind?

1 John 5

⁴for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith.

What victories has your faith given to you?

John 15

¹⁵I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.

How does the word "friend" impact our relationship to Jesus and others we may know or not know?

Reflection

Invited into Friendship

Ask any child who has moved to a new place and they will probably confirm that their biggest worry was if they'd make new friends. Parents worry for their teenager and young adult in each stage of growth, wondering if new friends will be kind and generous, if their daughter or son will find mutually beneficial relationships.

Adults are not immune from their own relationship trials. Busy lives, competing priorities, transitions and death can mean the end of sustaining relationships. Bullying, fear-tactics and misuse of others are common problems, so friendship is precious. We treasure new friendships and work to keep tending those that last for many years—because we need them.

Today's readings inspire and compel us to love one another and see one another as God does. As the Holy Spirit falls on those outside the inner circle of original believers, Peter asks how the water of baptism can be withheld. In 1 John we hear that those who love the parent love the child. Jesus says followers are no longer servants but friends.

So, whether they are a stranger with different customs and practices, our family member, or closest friend, we are called today with the challenge and opportunity to love them. The promise is that this unconditional love that comes first from our Creator and Parent, expressed through the person of Jesus and through the Spirit, is splashed all over us, and will make our joy complete.

For those who have experienced great relationships in their lives and for those who have never yet quite tasted that sustaining fruit of true friendship, Jesus shows how much he loves us and the ways to cultivate deeper relationships. Jesus laid down his life to show his great love. We're invited to love expansively and experience the joy of friendship with Jesus and others through the body of Christ.

Lord's Prayer (together)

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Apostle's Creed (together)

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 to the living, 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.

Responsive Prayer

Show us your mercy, O God,
and grant us your salvation.

Give us the joy of your saving help again,
and sustain us with your bountiful Spirit.

Give peace in all the world;
for only in you can we live in safety.

Keep the nations under your care,
and guide us in the way of justice and truth.

Let your way be known upon earth;
your saving health among all nations.

Let not the needy be forgotten,
nor the hope of the poor be taken away.

Create in us a clean heart, O God,
and sustain us with your Holy Spirit.

Lord, hear my prayer,
and let my cry come before you.

Closing Prayer

O God, in you we live and move and have our being. Guide and govern us every day by your Holy Spirit, that in all the cares and occupations of our life we may not forget you, but remember that always we are walking in your promises; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Blessing

Almighty God (+) bless us, defend us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.
Amen.