



The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Our Savior

Sabbath Survival Kit



FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SUNDAY, JULY 1, 2007

As we are called by Jesus, we leave one life behind and take up another. The readings for this day invite us to take the bold step that brings us into a new world - one that asks of us a radical commitment to the freedom and risk of the gospel. Today the church commemorates two translators who made hymns accessible to English-speaking worshippers: Catherine Winkworth, who died on this day in 1878 and who translated many German texts; and John Mason Neale, who translated ancient Greek and Latin hymns. Often treasures from the past can open God's people to the future.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Sovereign God, ruler of all hearts, you call us to obey you, and you favor us with true freedom. Keep us faithful to the ways of your Son, that leaving behind all that hinders us, we may steadfastly follow your paths, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

WORD

FIRST LESSON - 1 KINGS 19:15-16, 19-21

Then the Lord said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram. Also you shall anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel; and you shall anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as prophet in your place. So he set out from there, and found Elisha son of Shaphat, who was plowing. There were twelve yoke of oxen ahead of him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle over him. He left the oxen, ran after Elijah, and said, "Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." Then Elijah said to him, "Go back again; for what have I done to you?" He returned from following him, took the yoke of oxen, and slaughtered them; using the equipment from the oxen, he boiled their flesh, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out and followed Elijah, and became his servant.

SECOND LESSON - GALATIANS 5:1, 13-25

For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.

HOLY GOSPEL - LUKE 9:51-62

When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; but they did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" But he turned and rebuked them. Then they went on to another village. As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." But Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

Members and visitors come to the church for worship on Sunday mornings on a regular or not as regular basis. It's strongly encouraged; it's the main event we do together as God's people. We celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion; our children are baptized, the other Sacrament of the church, normally during a Sunday service. Being together to sing and celebrate God's goodness, to hear God's Word and reflections on it, to pray as guided by the Spirit, to be renewed and refreshed, have our batteries recharged with the hope and grace that only God can give. It is necessary; it's the main event; but it's not the main calling Jesus would have us involved in. What will we do with the remaining 6 and a half days of the week?

At the end of the service, one of the pastors says, "Go in peace, serve the Lord." And the people respond, probably without thinking, "Thanks be to God." It's our command to be disciples; it's what we should do when we leave here; it's a commitment to Jesus' invitation, "Follow me;" it's rewarding in ways that aren't always obvious; it's difficult for us to submit to because it becomes by necessity a priority and takes our time and energy away from pursuing selfish goals.

Jesus has a definitive purpose; he doesn't ask us to do something that he doesn't first model. Twice our GL says 'he set his face to go to Jerusalem;' meaning, Jesus knew his mission was to suffer and die out of unselfish love for sinners like you and I. We then are to take up our cross; to serve in his name; to be available to the needs of others.

It isn't a question of enthusiasm, but of commitment. Whether one volunteers, as our first would-be disciple in today's lesson from Luke, or is personally invited. There is still today a sense of urgency of the mission. There are people without hope and a true sense of peace (as in Bosnia); there are people without the bare necessities of life (as in Habitat for Humanity homes - where some of our youth have been serving this past week in NC); there are people who are drowning.

A navy chaplain told a story; he said he was on the USS Midway steaming off the coast of Japan. It was winter and the water was so cold a person could survive only 15 or 20 minutes in it. And, wouldn't you know, during the middle of the night came that dreaded signal 'man overboard.' The ship's captain ordered a "Richardson turn," a maneuver that turns the ship around so that it heads directly back on its original course. The emergency crews got themselves ready in a hurry. Helicopters took off and played their lights on the ocean's surface. It was an eerie sight; the searchlights shining on the water, while the rotors of the helicopters beat up the swirling mist from the surface. The Lord was with them and after about 10 minutes they spotted the sailor in the icy water. A scuba diver jumped in, attached a harness around the sailor's chest, and the nearly frozen young man was pulled up into the helicopter. Later the chaplain asked him when he was sure he would be rescued. The young man answered, 'when the diver was in the water with me.'

Jesus says to us today, "but as for you, go and proclaim the Kingdom of God." Jesus wants us to share his good news with those who are drowning. Not so much the criminal types, the hopeless sinners, the seemingly unlovable, but basically ordinary people who have allowed themselves to be lured away from God's loving presence by the temptations, the false gods of this world. They're drowning and they don't even know it.

We can provide quite a witness of God's saving, healing love to such people. We may work with them, recreate with them, socialize and enjoy all kinds of activities with them; they may even be in our family. But we have to get into the water. Sometimes it's one on one; it's always risky.

In this world where people are drowning in oceans of grief and pain and loneliness, God shifted the way he works with people. In Jesus Christ, God jumped into the water with us. And that's what Christ calls us to do; get into the water, in whatever way we can, and help Him save people from drowning.

"Go in peace; serve the Lord." So what will you do between now and next Sunday morning?

Amen.

BLESSING

Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. May you be rooted and grounded in his love. Amen.