

Easter 5 - May 10, 2020

Pre-service Music: "Blessed Jesus at Your Word" *LSB* 904

- 1 Blessed Jesus, at Your Word
 We are gathered all to hear You.
 Let our hearts and souls be stirred
 Now to seek and love and fear You,
 By Your teachings, sweet and holy,
 Drawn from earth to love You solely.
- 2 All our knowledge, sense, and sight
 Lie in deepest darkness shrouded
 Till Your Spirit breaks our night
 With the beams of truth unclouded.
 You alone to God can win us;
 You must work all good within us.
- 3 Gracious Savior, good and kind,
 Light of Light, from God proceeding,
 Open now our heart and mind;
 Help us by Your Spirit's pleading.
 Hear the cry Your Church now raises;
 Hear and bless our prayers and praises.
- 4 Father, Son, and Spirit, Lord,
 Praise to You and adoration!
 Grant that we may trust Your Word,
 Confident of our salvation,
 While we here below must wander,
 Till we sing Your praises yonder.

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Opening Address

Hymn: "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" *LSB* 809

- 1 Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father;
 There is no shadow of turning with Thee.
 Thou changest not: Thy compassions, they fail not;
 As Thou hast been, Thou forever wilt be. Refrain
- ref Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
 Morning by morning new mercies I see;
 All I have needed Thy hand hath provided;
 Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

2 Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,
 Sun, moon, and stars in their courses above
Join with all nature in manifold witness
 To Thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love. Refrain

3 Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
 Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
 Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside! Refrain
Text: Public domain

The Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Confession: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Let us then confess our sins to God our Father. Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. 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. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. 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.

The Absolution: In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for His sake, God forgives us all our sins. To those who believe in Jesus Christ, He gives the power to become the children of God and bestows on them the Holy Spirit. May the Lord, who has begun this good work in us, bring it to completion in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer of the Day: Let us pray: Almighty God, You have given all authority on heaven and on earth to Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord. We give you thanks that in the Great Commission that we have been made Your Children through the waters of baptism and have been sustained by Your mighty and life-giving Word; bless the mission and labors of your Church and our congregation that we may boldly live out our callings and find strength in our Savior's promise that He is with us always; In His name we pray, Amen.

The First Reading is written in the book of Acts, chapter 6, verses 1 to 9, and chapter 7, verse 2 and 51 to 60.

Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on

them. And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen.... And Stephen said: "Brothers and fathers, hear me.... "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it." Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

The Epistle Reading is from St. Peter's first letter, chapter 2, verses 2 to 10.

² Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— ³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. ⁴ As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵ you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." ⁷ So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," ⁸ and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. ⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

The Holy Gospel is according to St. Matthew, chapter 28, verses 16 to 20.

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.

¹⁷ And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in ^[a] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Apostles' Creed: I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His 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 into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of

God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

Hymn: "Stand Up Stand Up For Jesus" *LSB* 660

1 Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
 Ye soldiers of the cross.
Lift high His royal banner;
 It must not suffer loss.
From vict'ry unto vict'ry
 His army He shall lead
Till ev'ry foe is vanquished,
 And Christ is Lord indeed.

2 Stand up, stand up for Jesus;
 The trumpet call obey;
Stand forth in mighty conflict
 In this His glorious day.
Let all His faithful serve Him
 Against unnumbered foes;
Let courage rise with danger
 And strength to strength oppose.

3 Stand up, stand up for Jesus;
 Stand in His strength alone.
The arm of flesh will fail you,
 Ye dare not trust your own.
Put on the Gospel armor;
 Each piece put on with prayer.
Where duty calls or danger,
 Be never wanting there.

4 Stand up, stand up for Jesus;
 The strife will not be long;
This day the din of battle,
 The next the victor's song.
The soldiers, overcoming,
 Their crown of life shall see
And with the King of Glory
 Shall reign eternally.
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The Sermon: ALL

The other day on Facebook, I saw some friends and various people posting word searches with the instructions of noting the first three words you see, whatever they might be. I found it quite amusing. It was fun to see what words I noticed right away. It was also neat to see the

words that others noticed, along with intriguing to see how far or how little some had to go to find three words. I found it fascinating to see which words jumped out at people from looking at the same thing.

When I look at our Gospel text, Matthew 28:16-20, something similar occurs. Four words jump out to me in our text, or, rather, one word jumps out at me four times. What is it? Its synonym siblings include total, complete, entire, and everything. Country cousins would be the whole hog, the whole shebang, the whole enchilada and the whole ball of wax. What is the word? ALL. As the Resurrected Lord stands on a hill in Galilee, He stresses the word *all*. All authority. All nations. All that I have commanded you. All days. All. Today we will see why He stresses (all of) these things.

Have you ever had someone give you a name that gives you access to a deal or something special? When we were looking for a car, Pastor Klaus told me to go to his brother-in-law's dealership and to ask for Lenz to get a deal like none other! Have you ever had a similar experience? Maybe someone's name gave you access to a food special at a restaurant, a unique promotion, or generous repair discount. Maybe someone's name gave you access to club level at a sporting game or behind stage access when you said it. Why do some names have this? It is because the person has authority, right? They have the power to grant what they say and wish. What they say goes in that sphere or area of influence.

Jesus says, "**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.**" In other words, Jesus has authority. His human nature, which refrained exercising the divine authority belonging to His person, now is fully exalted and given free and full use. He displays it. He shows it. In fact, authority means, "legitimate power from a competent source." Let me repeat that: "legitimate power from a competent source." But what does this authority look like? What is it over? *All* can be a little vague. *All* is a little bold. Does *all* mean *all*? Let's see.

In Matthew, what does Jesus have authority or legitimate power over? He has authority to forgive sins, to heal every disease and affliction, to cast out unclean spirits, and to teach. John, in his Gospel, adds that Jesus has authority to judge, to lay down and take up His life, and to give eternal life. Paul, in Colossians, succinctly says, Jesus "**is the head of all rule and authority.**" The Formula of Concord connects the dots and explains what this means when it says, "He can also powerfully effect and do everything He says and promises." Does *all* mean *all*? You bet it does. Jesus has power and authority *over all things*. That's significant.

We have a King, a Lord, Who is truly above and over *all* things. He has power over them. Power over your fears and concerns? You betcha. Is your sin too big or great? Not a chance. The powers of hell, Satan and his minions, and death scare you? Jesus has got their number and beat them by His cross and empty tomb. There is nothing too big or great for our Savior. Nothing He cannot conquer, defeat, or subdue. Bring your prayers, requests, hopes, dreams, fears, and concerns to the One Who has been given all authority in heaven and earth that acts on your behalf.

Jesus continues by saying, "**Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.**" Jesus gives the Church authority, legitimate power from a competent source, to make disciples by baptizing and teaching. There is an old saying that goes, "You can tell a lot about a person from the company that he or she keeps." Let's test that with Jesus. He says He wants disciples of *all* nations, *all* people. But does He really? Who did He interact with and hang out with in Matthew? He hung out with tax collectors, prostitutes, lepers, the lame, deaf, disabled, diseased, and blind. He conversed with the normal, fisherman,

zealots, and thieves. He was friends with widows, the worried, anxious, poor, and rich. He knew the Pharisees and elites of His day, both social and religious. He walked with Galileans, Gentiles, Greeks, and girls. He blessed babies, toddlers, and children, and did not turn them away. When Jesus says *all* nations, He means it! His track record shows it. *You*, you singular, are included.

Jesus wants *all* nations baptized in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, God's name was placed over Israel, and thus they became the people of His possession, they belonged to *Him*. In the Old Testament, God's name was associated with His presence among His people and His saving work. What does Jesus want? His name placed on you, on all people.

In baptism, God's name is placed on you, signifying that you belong to Him. What does God do for those who belong to Him? He fights for them. He cares for them. He loves them fiercely and eternally. He dies for them. He never gives up on them. He *always* does what is for their eternal good. That's a God I want to belong to. That is the God that we belong to because of Jesus' saving death and resurrection for us.

What is more is that He comes to us in baptism. It is there in those waters that we are united with Jesus in His death and resurrection, giving us new life in Him. It is there in those waters that we receive His saving presence and receive all of God's grace, all of God's love and His Fatherly care. In fact, it really is a bit overwhelming and mind boggling once we think about it! No wonder He wants *all* baptized!

He also wants all nations taught all that He has commanded and said. Last week, we were looking at a dog that we were interested in adopting for our family. The dog was a beagle and said to be good with young kids, knew the basic commands, and was about three years of age. It seemed to be an ideal animal. As the dog was brought to us in the visit room, it saw another dog by the bench next to us, and wouldn't stop barking and trying to go near it. I couldn't calm it down. It wouldn't take any treats. Mia threw a bone and ball for it, but it don't budge or bother. Dawn, who used to work at a veterinary clinic and is an animal whisperer, had no success either. It barked so much, so loud, and for so long that we both got headaches from it. We asked the caretaker, "Is she normally like this?" She said, "Yep, that is why she is here. The owners couldn't handle all of the non-stop barking." We quickly figured out that we weren't told *everything* about the dog, and that was part of the reason why.

Jesus doesn't want this to happen to His people. He wants us to know *all* that He commanded and said (essentially everything in Matthew). He doesn't ever want us to say, "Jesus, I never knew that. Why didn't you tell me that would happen if I followed you?" Jesus wants us to know Him; that is why He revealed His Word and wants it taught! That is why He wants disciples through baptism and His Word. He wants it for all people, and wants it for you! We can see why.

He finishes it by saying, "**Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age,**" or, literally, very literal and rough, I must add, "**And behold, I, with you, I am, all the days until the end of the age.**" Jesus gives what I call the "I" sandwich, here. What is framed, or "sandwiched" around the phrase "with you?" "I" "I," the presence of Jesus, surrounds the phrase "with you." "I," "with you," "I am." It is incredibly awkward and Greeks would never say it this way, but Jesus does it to make His point. He can't stress it enough that He is with us, so He surrounds "with you," with "I."

He is with us *all* the days of the age. There is never a moment or day without Him. Never a day without His loving, gracious presence. Our closing hymn puts it so well

“I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.

Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies.
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.”

And what does Jesus say to that? “**And behold, I am with you always, all the days, to the end of the age.**”

Prayer of the Church

As newborn infants who long for the pure spiritual milk, so let us come before the Lord seeking His mercy with confidence that His grace will be sufficient for all our needs.

Brief silence

Almighty Father, everlasting God, Your Son has revealed You to us as a merciful Lord. Give to us Your Holy Spirit, that we may believe in Him whom You have sent and do the greater works He has told us we will do in His name. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, You have promised to build up Your Church to be a holy priesthood, that Your people might offer the spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving acceptable to You. Bless Your Church and bring all congregations back together again. Bless all pastors who proclaim Christ to us. Bless all church workers and those preparing for full-time church vocations, that Your Church may be supplied with faithful leaders and servants of Your Word. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Holy God, Your power brought all things into being and still You preserve what You have made. Bless our president, the Congress of these United States, our governor, and all elected and appointed civil servants so that they may honor You and Your purpose, establishing order and justice, encouraging virtue and protecting all life. Give wisdom and moderation to them in their leadership for the well-being of the nation. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O merciful Father, You have compassion upon the sick and those in need and have promised not to ignore them in their afflictions. Turn back the pandemic across the globe, and give us relief. Bless the sick with healing, those who suffer with strength and patience, and the dying with peace. Hear us on behalf of those who have requested our prayers [*especially* _____]. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Eternal Father of an eternal mercy, You have raised up witnesses in every age and blessed us with those who endured suffering and even death in faithfulness to Christ. We give You thanks for these faithful saints and martyrs, and we pray You to make us strong when we face the day of test, that at length we may be brought with them into the joy of Your presence and the glory of everlasting life. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We praise You, God, for Your goodness in hearing the prayers of Your people and granting us confidence to approach Your throne of mercy. Hear us now in the name of and for the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, through whom, with whom and in whom, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory is Yours, almighty Father, both now and forevermore. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer: Let us pray the prayer Jesus has taught us to pray: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom 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 kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The Benediction: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious unto you. The Lord look on You with His favor and give you peace. Amen.

Final Hymn: "Abide With Me" *LSB* 878

1 Abide with me, fast falls the eventide.
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

2 I need Thy presence ev'ry passing hour;
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's pow'r?
Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me.

3 Come not in terrors, as the King of kings,
But kind and good, with healing in Thy wings;
Tears for all woes, a heart for ev'ry plea.
Come, Friend of sinners, thus abide with me.

4 Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.

5 I fear no foe with Thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still if Thou abide with me!

6 Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies.
Heav'n's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.
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Closing Address and Announcements

Postlude: "Thy Word Is a Lamp" *LSB* 973

ref Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path.

Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path.

1 When I feel afraid, think I've lost my way,
Still You're there right beside me.
And nothing will I fear as long as You are near.
Please be near me to the end. Refrain

2 I will not forget Your love for me, and yet
My heart forever is wandering.
Jesus, be my guide and hold me to Your side;
And I will love You to the end. Refrain

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