

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—PROPER 8

June 28, 2020 – 9:30 a.m.

PRELUDE

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

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

People: Amen.

Pastor: Our help is in the name of the Lord,

People: who made heaven and earth.

Pastor: If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?

People: But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared.

Pastor: Since we are gathered to hear God's Word, call upon Him in prayer and praise, and receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in the fellowship of this altar, let us first consider our unworthiness and confess before God and one another that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and that we cannot free ourselves from our sinful condition. Together as His people let us take refuge in the infinite mercy of God, our heavenly Father, seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, and saying: God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

People: Almighty God, have mercy upon us, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

Pastor: Almighty God, merciful Father, in Holy Baptism You declared us to be Your children and gathered us into Your one, holy Church, in which You daily and richly forgive us our sins and grant us new life through Your Spirit. Be in our midst, enliven our faith, and graciously receive our prayer and praise; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

People: Amen.

SALUTATION AND COLLECT OF THE DAY

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: Let us pray. Almighty God, by the working of Your Holy Spirit, grant that we may gladly hear Your Word proclaimed among us and follow its directing; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen.

FIRST READING *Ezra 3:8-13*

Now in the second year after their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak made a beginning, together with the rest of their kinsmen, the priests and the Levites and all who had come to Jerusalem from the captivity. They appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to supervise the work of the house of the Lord. And Jeshua with his sons and his brothers, and Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together supervised the workmen in the house of God, along with the sons of Henadad and the Levites, their sons and brothers. And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments came forward with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the Lord, according to the directions of David king of Israel. And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel." And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, for the people shouted with a great shout, and the sound was heard far away.

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

PSALM *Psalm 119:153–160; antiphon: v. 154*

¹⁵³Look on my affliction and deliver me, for I do not forget your law. ¹⁵⁴Plead my cause and redeem me; give me life according to your promise! ¹⁵⁵Salvation is far from the wicked, for they do not seek your statutes. ¹⁵⁶Great is your mercy, O LORD; give me life according to your just decrees. ¹⁵⁷Many are my persecutors and my adversaries, but I do not swerve from your testimonies. ¹⁵⁸I look at the faithless with disgust, because they do not keep your commands. ¹⁵⁹Consider how I love your precepts! Give me life according to your steadfast love. ¹⁶⁰The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your just and righteous decrees endures forever.

EPISTLE *Romans 7:1–13*

¹Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? ²Thus a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. ³Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress. ⁴Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. ⁵For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. ⁶But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit. ⁷What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” ⁸But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law, sin lies dead. ⁹I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. ¹⁰The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. ¹¹For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. ¹²So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. ¹³Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

HOLY GOSPEL *Matthew 10:34–42*

Pastor: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the tenth chapter.

People: Glory to You, O Lord.

³⁴[Jesus said:] “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. ³⁶And a person’s enemies will be those of his own household. ³⁷Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ⁴⁰Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. ⁴¹The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward. ⁴²And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.”

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to You, O Christ.

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.

SERMON "Rebuilding the Ruins" Ezra 3:8-13

I. Groundbreaking and Ruins

- What is Jerusalem and Judah like? What is the status?
- What ruins do we know?

II. The F_____ (Ez. 3:8-10)

- What did the people relay?
- What do we build on?

○ God's _____

"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock." Matthew 7:24-25

○ J _____

"For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 3:11

III. The F_____ (Ez 3:10-11)

- Why is this word "is" significant?
- What does *kessed* mean?

IV. The F_____ 's Response (Ez. 3:11-13)

- What are the two responses when rebuilding?

A few weeks ago, I was able to go back to Illinois and to see my brother Max confirmed. Before the service, it was nice to walk around and to visit the church I used to call "home." There's something nice and nostalgic about being back in places like that. I often see it here at Christmas and Easter when people roam the hall looking at the old Confirmation pictures. As I was recalling memories that morning, one memory popped into my head as I looked out the hallway window. It was an event that happened about 18 years ago at this point, just right outside it. It was when the congregation broke ground to celebrate the new sanctuary that would be built. I was one of the people chosen to help do that, and I remember my grandmother getting me a grey Ralph Lauren Polo to wear for it. That bright sunny day was a moment of great celebration and excitement. A new chapter was before us as a congregation. In our Old Testament text, we see a very similar event and celebration: the people celebrating the laying of the foundation for the temple that would be rebuilt. As we look at this text this morning, and as we dive deeper into it, we see how relevant and applicable this text still is for our lives some 2,500 years later!

In 2010, I had the chance to go to Germany, and one of the places that I went to was Dresden. Dresden is an important cultural city in Germany, and one of the country's largest. In World War II, it was controversially bombed and destroyed, and then occupied by the Soviets after the war. As we drove into the city, I was intrigued by what I saw. There were still ruins there some 65 years later! I saw the remains of bombed and burned buildings in the midst of overgrowth and unkept plant life. I couldn't believe that they hadn't cleared it out after all these years.

This is Jerusalem and Judah. Jerusalem and Judah had been captured and destroyed for a third and final time in 587 B. C. Solomon's temple had been looted and destroyed. Anything of value in it had been carried off to Babylon. The city was burned, homes and palaces were leveled. The important city wall was torn down,

and the gates charred and smashed. The people were exiled and sent over hundreds of miles away. This was 587 B. C.

In our text, which takes place 50 years later in April or May of 536, things aren't much different. Jerusalem and Judah are still in shambles and ruin. The gates are still unhinged and collapsed. The wall is still down. Parts of the city are still impassible (and will be for the next 100 years until Nehemiah comes!). The country and city is still in ruins. They are still conquered. They are still mocked and scorned among the nations. They are in economic ruin, social disarray, and on the verge of spiritual collapse. Their world and home is forever changed. To use the phrase of the age, this is their new "normal." Their lives are in ruins.

We know all about ruins, don't we? Our lives aren't that much different than the people of Judah. We know social ruins, don't we? We have been isolated and lonely over the last few months, separated from the ones we love and the friends we hold dear. Hugs pose a health risk, and hand shakes are a cultural no. Things like the State fair, vacations, festivals, fireworks, concerts, and carnivals are canceled. We know social ruin.

Like them, we know economic ruin. Businesses are closed, profits are down, jobs are lost; some maybe forever! We know health ruins, too. Maybe your health has been crumbling during this pandemic. Perhaps symptoms have exacerbated, maybe you can't see the doctor right now. Maybe your mental health is beginning to teeter and totter from the stress and uncertainty of it! And there can be spiritual ruins, too. Our faith can be shaken and weakened in the face of disappointment or unanswered prayers. It can feel fatigued, or hungry during this time of pandemic. We know all about ruins. So, what do we do? What did the people of Judah do?

King Cyrus gave a decree that allowed people to return back to the country and to rebuild the temple, and to rebuild their home. So, the people rebuilt, and rebuild they did. And first things first, to rebuild the temple, they needed to relay the foundation. The appointed Levites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, and others, supervised this important work. Once it was done, they had a celebration. The people of Judah rebuilt, and started with the foundation.

When our lives and worlds are in ruins, we, too, start with and build on the foundation. What do we build with? Simple. There are two stones. The first is God's Word. God's Word is the source of truth and knowledge in this world. It is powerful. God's Word contains His promises, promises like God does all things for our good, promises like we are forgiven, loved, and cared for by God. God's Word directs, empowers, enlightens, gives life, sustains faith, and nourishes it. Jesus describes this foundation by saying, **"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock."** This foundation block will last.

What is the other block that we build on? It is the one that this Word points to: Jesus Christ. Paul puts it this way in 1 Corinthians 3:11. **"For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."** We build on, live on, and stand on that fundamental truth: Jesus Christ crucified and risen for me! We build on, live on, and stand on our Savior and His work for us, His work which makes us right with God and gives life eternal! And we have been building on these blocks with our virtual services, haven't we? This is the foundation we have stayed on. The foundation of God's Word and Christ is the only foundation that will last and can stand. Just look at the world around us! When rebuilding, we start with the foundation: God's Word and His Son.

Once we have the foundation, we shift to the focus. That is what the people of Judah and Jerusalem did. With the foundation done and laid, there was a celebration. The vested priests came forward with trumpets. They were followed by the Levites and temple musicians, the sons of Asaph, with clanging cymbals. Praise was sung, and the favorite hymn of the OT shouted. It was the Amazing Grace or Abide with Me of the day. They sang responsively the most quoted song of the Old Testament. It is even surprising, and shocking given the context! Remember that everything is still in ruins!

They sing, **"For He is good"**. "Is." Notice that is present! It is not past, was, or future, will be. It is, is. It is now! In the midst of their crumbling economy, their wall-less city and temple, their broken homes, broken dreams, and broken identity, God is what? He is "good." Good in what way? **"His steadfast love endures forever toward Israel."**

The word for love here is special. It is *kessed*. I remember our professor jokingly saying to drink milk before Hebrew class so we could have the phelmgly sound to help pronounce this word. *Kessed*. You have to clear your throat to say it. What does *kessed* mean? It is a hard word to pin down. It can mean steadfast love,

loyal love, mercy, favor, faithfulness. One commentator helpfully puts it: the word often denotes “favor, kindness, faithfulness, and love expressed by God or a person even though he is under no obligation to do so.” This is *kessed*. This is the love that God has for Israel, undeserving, unbehaving, unimportant, unimpressive Israel! This is the love that God has for us...and shows us.

By faith, this is our song and our focus. **“He is good.”** It is a simple word of praise and affirmation of faith. By faith, we know and proclaim that God is good, even when our hearts are hurting and heavy, and we are unsure of the future or outcome. Our God is good, it is a present thing! And He is good precisely because **“His steadfast love endures forever!”** This steadfast love, this grace we get, we can count on! We can depend on it in the face of spiritual, social, financial, and health ruins. God’s love, His grace, His *kessed* is something we don’t have to worry about losing, worry about earning, or worry will run out. It is not something I can miss up or lose, or have it taken from me. It is given in baptism, confirmed at His Supper, and proclaimed in His Word. All of this is true for me in Christ and because of Christ. Is this not the Gospel message? This is our focus. In the midst of rebuilding in the ruins, we build on the foundation and then turn to the focus: “He is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!” The Gospel!

And what is the faithful’s response in the midst of rebuilding? We see two things. The first is joy! The people of Judah and Jerusalem were excited the house of God was being rebuilt again. Their joy expresses hope! Joy gives light in the midst of darkness, defeat, and disappointment. The other response is grief and sorrow. The older priests and people were weeping when they compared this foundation with the old temple! It wasn’t the same. It couldn’t compare with what they had and knew. What they lost couldn’t compare with what they were given.

Joy and sadness, the response of the faithful in the midst of rebuilding. And that is our response today, too, isn’t it? We can have a sense of joy during this time, but as faithful Christians, we can have that sense of sorrow. Things aren’t how they used to be, whether it is our worship service, or lives. It is okay to be sad about that, to grieve what has been lost. It is okay to not be okay! Tell your Lord what you are feeling and going through!

What do we do when rebuilding the ruins of our lives and world? In our joy and our sorrow, we keep building on the foundation: God’s Word and our Savior. We look to the focus, that Gospel message, and by faith, we say with all the saints of all: **“For He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever.”**

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

MUSIC DURING PREPARATION *(The offering will be collected at the back of the church.)*

PREFACE

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them to the Lord.

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

Pastor: It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, for the countless blessings You so freely bestow on us and all creation. Above all, we give thanks for Your boundless love shown to us when You sent Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, into our flesh and laid on Him our sin, giving Him into death that we might not die eternally. Because He is now risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity, all who believe in Him will overcome sin and death and will rise again to new life. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:

SANCTUS

People: Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth adored;
Heav'n and earth with full acclaim shout the glory of Your name.
Sing hosanna in the highest, sing hosanna to the Lord;
Truly blest is He who comes in the name of the Lord!

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Pastor: Blessed are You, O Lord our God, king of all creation, for You have had mercy on us and given Your only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

In Your righteous judgment You condemned the sin of Adam and Eve, who ate the forbidden fruit, and You justly barred them and all their children from the tree of life. Yet, in Your great mercy, You promised salvation by a second Adam, Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, and made His cross a life-giving tree for all who trust in Him.

We give You thanks for the redemption You have prepared for us through Jesus Christ. Grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may faithfully eat and drink of the fruits of His cross and receive the blessings of forgiveness, life, and salvation that come to us in His body and blood.

Hear us as we pray in His name and as He has taught us:

LORD'S PRAYER

People: 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 WORDS OF OUR LORD

Pastor: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My T body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me."

In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My T blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

PAX DOMINI

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

People: Amen.

DISTRIBUTION

You are invited to receive the Lord's Supper if you believe and confess that Jesus Christ is your Savior from sin, you are a baptized child of the Triune God, and you believe that He gives you His body and blood in the bread and wine you receive. White grape juice can be found in the center of each tray for those who cannot receive alcohol. Children are welcome to come forward for a blessing.

POST-COMMUNION COLLECT

Pastor: Let us pray. We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen.

BENEDICAMUS

Pastor: Let us bless the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

BENEDICTION

Pastor: The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and T give you peace.

People: Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

POSTLUDE “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty” LSB 790 sts. 1, 2 and 5

1 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!

O my soul, praise Him, for He is your health and salvation!

Let all who hear

Now to His temple draw near,

Joining in glad adoration!

2 Praise to the Lord, who o’er all things is wondrously reigning

And, as on wings of an eagle, uplifting, sustaining.

Have you not seen

All that is needful has been

Sent by His gracious ordaining?

5 Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore Him!

All that has life and breath, come now with praises before Him!

Let the Amen

Sound from His people again;

Gladly forever adore Him!

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