



CHRIST OUR SAVIOR LUTHERAN CHURCH

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 3, 2023



INTRODUCTION TO THE DAY

CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS

GREETING

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, we thank you for your Son, who chose the path of suffering for the sake of the world. Humble us by his example, point us to the path of obedience, and give us strength to follow your commands, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Romans 12:9-21

Matthew 16:21-28

SERMON

APOSTLES' CREED

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.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

L: Merciful God: **C: Receive our prayer.**

COMMUNION

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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.

BLESSING **...AMEN.**

SENDING

GOSPEL MESSAGE: MORE THAN A LOGO

If the church has a universally recognized logo, it is probably the cross. But branding was probably not what Jesus was thinking about when he invited Peter and those who would come after him to take up their cross and follow. The cross that Jesus calls us to carry alongside him is instead the means by which God chooses to reveal grace in the midst of death.

Rather than follow in the way of Jesus, sometimes the church can simply get in the way. We want to be good followers. We want more people to experience what we have. But sometimes, in our desire to draw larger crowds, we end up putting ourselves—our music, our ministries, our outreach—at the center and subtly leaving God aside. In the midst of a world that drives us to always want more, Jesus invites us to deny ourselves. The denial to which Jesus calls us is not about putting ourselves down or neglecting our own needs. But it is about centering the cross of Christ in our lives so that our desires and dreams begin to arc ever more in the direction of God's love and mercy at work in the world.

The cross that Jesus took up didn't just belong to him. Two bandits were crucified with him, one on either side, and the Romans crucified many more. The cross is more than a logo; it is a symbol that joins us to a suffering world. The cross is not an individual burden to carry; it is the whole church's work. Crosses adorn our steeples and worship spaces, but worship also empowers us to take up the issues of the day that are matters of life and death for so many, such as war and violence, housing and food security, racism and climate change. When we shoulder these "crosses" together, the church doesn't make its own way; we follow the way of Jesus.

READING: Romans 12:9-21

Love from the center of who you are; don't fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good. Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle. Don't burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant. Don't quit in hard times; pray all the harder. Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality. Bless your enemies; no cursing under your breath. Laugh with your happy friends when they're happy; share tears when they're down. Get along with each other; don't be stuck-up. Make friends with nobodies; don't be the great somebody. Don't hit back; discover beauty in everyone. If you've got it in you, get along with everybody. Don't insist on getting even; that's not for you to do. "I'll do the judging," says God. "I'll take care of it." Our Scriptures tell us that if you see your enemy hungry, go buy that person lunch, or if he's thirsty, get him a drink. Your generosity will surprise him with goodness. Don't let evil get the best of you; get the best of evil by doing good.

GOSPEL: Matthew 16:21-28

Then Jesus made it clear to his disciples that it was now necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, submit to an ordeal of suffering at the hands of the religious leaders, be killed, and then on the third day be raised up alive. Peter took him in hand, protesting, "Impossible, Master! That can never be!" But Jesus didn't swerve. "Peter, get out of my way. Satan, get lost. You have no idea how God works." Then Jesus went to work on his disciples. "Anyone who intends to come with me has to let me lead. You're not in the driver's seat; I am. Don't run from suffering; embrace it. Follow me and I'll show you how. Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to finding yourself, your true self. What kind of deal is it to get everything you want but lose yourself? What could you ever trade your soul for? "Don't be in such a hurry to go into business for yourself. Before you know it the Son of Man will arrive with all the splendor of his Father, accompanied by an army of angels. You'll get everything you have coming to you, a personal gift. This isn't pie in the sky by and by. Some of you standing here are going to see it take place, see the Son of Man in kingdom glory."

A PRAYER FOR OUR NEXT SEASON

Loving God: Send your Holy Spirit to guide us as we move forward in faith. We place ourselves in your hands. May we be of one mind and one spirit. Prepare our hearts to live out your vision for us as one body in Christ. Continue to strengthen and inspire us for the journey ahead. Amen.