

Holy, Holy, Holy, The World is Full of God's glory.  
Trinity Lutheran Church Service  
July 11, 2021  
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Good Morning and may God's blessings be upon you this Seventh Sunday After Pentecost.

I am once again humbled to be standing before you and a little intimidated. Special thanks to Pastor Hahn and this church community for allowing me to come before you today. I also appreciate the helpful guidance from the Lutheran Lectionary notes, provided by Gail Ramshaw.

When I sat down to compose today's sermon with today's readings, I said a little prayer that went something like, "okay God, let your words be my words so that those who hear today's message may be filled with the same love and compassion that you have bestowed on so many through your son, Jesus Christ. Amen."

Similar to Amos, who was just an ordinary farmer from Judah, "I am no prophet, nor a prophets son: but I am a herdsman and addresser of sycamore trees and the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lords said to me, Go prophesy to my people Israel." Likewise, I am no theologian nor scholar, nor are most I meet on a daily basis, but I am child of God like all of you here today. I believe that we all have the opportunity to share God's love by showing kindness, compassion, and understanding through our words and actions.

Sometimes I don't live up to what God knows I am capable of whether it be through my actions and/or words towards others, but there's not a moment that I don't believe my faith will pull me through. And therein lies the rich blessing of forgiveness and the promise of eternal salvation. It is through forgiveness that we can seek and receive "another chance" a "do over" a "I will do better next time."

Psalms 85 resonated for me, "I will listen to what the Lord God is saying; for you speak peace to your faithful people and those who turn their hearts to you." And in Ephesians we hear, "in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us." Sometimes when I am tempted to respond to something in anger it helps me remain silent or, if responding, to speak with kindness and respect and love.

The last 15 months have been a challenge adjusting to shutdowns, cancelled events, death of loved ones, reimagining the work day, how TLC can still minister to those who come to King's Kupboard for help with food, the disappointment of not being able to physically celebrate family reunions, weddings, graduation parties, birthdays, sporting

events, theater, attend church and not being able to share a hug and words of encouragement to those who lost loved ones and couldn't host a memorial or funeral to honor a life well lived. It has impacted all of us. Add to this the political unrest that swept the nation and the division, and corresponding cacophony of injustices, it created between neighbors and families, left me, on more than one occasion, feeling disheartened and, at times, as if things and relationships would never be the same again.

In today's Gospel, the head of John the Baptist served on a platter is a memorable image of this cruel and unjust world. However as with most martyrs, John's voice has survived his decapitation and centuries later we continue to hear his preaching. In Ephesians we are encouraged that in becoming children of God, marked with the seal of the holy spirit and receiving wisdom from God, we are able to work for justice and peace, renouncing the powers of this world that rebel against God. That even in difficult moments when we want to falter and stand by when others are being wrongfully accused and judged -God knows our hearts. We are called then, to be that voice in the darkness and, as in our hymn of the day,

"Let justice flow like streams of sparkling water pure, enabling growth, refreshing life abundant, cleansing sure. Let righteousness roll on as others' cares we heed, an ever-flowing stream of faith translated into deeds. So may God's plumb line, straight, define our measure true, and justice right and peace pervade this world our whole life through."

To be an "ever-flowing stream" of "faith translated into deeds" reminded me of those wise words of Mother Theresa who said, "The smallest act of kindness is better than the grandest intention." Oftentimes I think about doing Random Acts of Kindness and remember a time when this church for a while had a RAK – Random Acts of Kindness ministry. Not sure whether it was the youth group who participated or our congregation. Likely some of you may remember – believe once it was passing out water bottles to strangers on a hot day, to cleaning people's windshields at Walmart, however I do believe there were some car owners that took offense to the latter.

Got me thinking about how the littlest acts of kindness oftentimes make the biggest impact. I realize it doesn't take a ministry of Random Acts of Kindness to share your own. I've been both on the giving and receiving line in the McDonalds drive thru where I have paid for the person behind me and another time, had the person in front pay for my meal. Either way it always makes me smile.

God's love in action if you ask me.

A small deed of kindness may go farther than you will ever know. A place like the Dairy Queen in Brainard Minnesota. Last December- in the heart of the holiday season and the third wave of Covid-19 illnesses – the kindness almost never stopped. In fact, it

lasted for two days and over 900 cars. Or, put another way, people bought \$10,000 of ice cream for strangers. Heidi Bruse was one of those people in the line and she said, "during times like these it kind of restores your faith in humanity, the way the world is now you see a lot of anger, tension and selfish behavior, what we witnessed was pure kindness and it was a breath of fresh air really." To be a JOY maker instead of a JOY taker.

In full disclosure, I have a Good Intention wicker basket at home that's filled with cards and gifts that I haven't sent yet, sympathy cards to those who have lost a loved one, congratulations to those who have welcomed the arrival of a new baby, a marriage, a book for a friend who is still mourning the loss of her daughter two years ago, get well wishes for those struggling with medical challenges, thank you's for small acts of kindness I want to recognize, and cards for those I know could use a few words of encouragement. And every time I pull something out and send it off, I know that, especially when I am feeling oppressed, depressed and defeated, that small act of kindness gives me hope and the sense that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (Philippian's 11:13)

And it had me thinking, how do we take God's message to those who are in need of hearing or better yet, how do we, who are sealed with the mark of the Holy Spirit, let God's light shine in the lives of those we meet, outside of these church walls?

And so today I challenge you to grab a card that already has a stamp and send a note of thanks to someone you know who may appreciate an encouraging word, a thank you, a blessing. And know that your "faithfulness shall spring up from the earth and righteousness shall look down from heaven. The Lord will indeed grant prosperity and our land will yield its increase."

Let your deeds speak your creed. Let the light of God shine through your everyday actions and bring light to those who have yet to know the peace and salvation that being a child of God brings.

Let us face the Herod's of this world with a,

**Holy. Holy. Holy. the earth is full of God's Glory.**

Thanks be to God! Amen.