

June 1, 2020 Devotion: Scripture John 7:37-39 and Song “Come Holy Ghost and Lord”

Yesterday we celebrated Pentecost Sunday, virtually for the first time, which does not, of course, mean that the Holy Spirit (or Ghost) as we used to know him) wasn't there. We still sang hymns about the Holy Spirit, though virtually. We still heard the readings about the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, predicted by Jesus in the Gospel lesson from John 7 quite a bit before he went to the cross for us. And we heard Pastors preach about the Holy Spirit from churches across the world, even though many of them were empty but for a few leaders of the service. But we rejoiced because it was the Holy Spirit who brought us to faith and continues to keep us in the faith. As John 7:37 and 39, our Gospel from Pentecost says, anyone who is thirsty let him come to Jesus to drink. And then he went on about us today in verse 38 “Whoever believes in me as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him. By this, he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given since Jesus has not yet been glorified. Then it was Pentecost in Acts 2 and the Holy Spirit came in the sound of the wind and as a flame on the disciples' heads (more about that tomorrow) and the living water was flowing. And over 3,000 believed. One of the great Pentecost hymns is “Come Holy Ghost and Lord,” and the hymn I have chosen for today. And the Holy Spirit has been with us through the Covid-19 crisis and continues to encourage us so that “we in living faith abide and let none but Christ the Master be,,” as the hymn says. Not COVID-19, not the government, not Satan, none but Christ, until the crisis is over and beyond is our master but Christ. Listen and sing along with the hymn and praise Jesus that he sent the Holy Spirit to bring us to faith and keep us in the faith despite all the tough changes we are dealing with now.

URL for Song: ["Come Holy Ghost and Lord"](#)

June 2, 2020 Devotion: Scripture Acts 2:1-4 and Song “Spirit of the Living God”

Yesterday, we heard a Pentecost hymn, today we will continue our Pentecost hymns, but we will use something a bit more contemporary, maybe a bit less formal. Pentecost flamed into being 10 days after Jesus ascended into heaven and literally it flamed as those present from all over the known world of that time saw tongues of fire on the disciples' heads as recorded in Acts 2. And the Spirit fell afresh on the disciples in the form of wind as well. The Spirit came with power, Verse 4 of Acts 2 puts it this way, “All of them (the disciples) were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.” And if you look further on in Acts 2, over 3,000 men and many women and children as well were melted and molded and believed. Our song for today, “Spirit of the Living God,” described this day clearly. The Spirit of the Living God fell afresh on these men, women, and children and changed them, melted them and molded them into believers, something they couldn't do on their own. Just like we can't rescue ourselves from the Covid-19 crisis, let alone our sins. If you are remaining faithful and worshiping virtually and studying God's Word and still have hope, it's because this same Holy Spirit who came on the disciples at Pentecost and came on us in our baptisms. Listen to the song, “Spirit of the Living God,” and feel the peace of the Holy Spirit fall afresh on you. God has sent his Holy Spirit to give us faith, to keep us

in the faith, to help us know everything about Jesus, especially that he loved us enough to die for us. Because of that, everything will be all right. Heaven awaits.

URL for Song: ["Spirit of the Living God"](#)

June 3, 2020 Devotion: Scripture Psalm 121:1-2 and Song "Praise You in the Storm"

By the time you read this, we will most likely have a better picture of what Governor Whitmer is going to do with the sheltering in place order and if we will be back in the sanctuary a week from Sunday. The Covid-19 crisis, the flooding in many parts of the state, the financial crisis caused by so many having to stay home, and not being able to work has been described as the perfect storm. And it has caused so much worry, so much family stress, so much depression and just about any other negative emotion you could list. The group Casting Crowns recently began performing a new song called, "Praise You in the storm" which covers a lot of those emotions and worries and they share their faith in God as they "Praise Him in the Storm." They ask the legitimate question, where is God in all of them and they quote the words of our Scripture text for today, Psalm 121: 1 and 2" for the answer, the same answer we need to hear in these difficult times. The Psalmist says, "I lift up my eyes to the hills- where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven, and earth." In the perfect storm that 2020 has brought on our world and especially it seems on Michigan, our help does come from the Lord. He made us and he promised to be with us every day. He is here with us through all of this and the best things we can do as Casting Crowns says is "to praise Him in the storm" for he will get us through. As I often say, heaven waits. Listen to the words of this song and be encouraged. Pray that we can gather to worship together soon but, in the meantime, praise him in the storm.

URL for Song: ["Praise You in the Storm"](#)

June 4, 2020 Devotion: Scripture Matthew 28:20 and Song “Everything”

55 songs have come and gone after today since I started these devotions and songs to encourage you. We have done sacred hymns and contemporary songs and everything in between. Today I wanted to choose a song from one of my favorite contemporary Christian singers, one who has been around a long time and gone through a lot in his life. His name is Toby Mac and he has been in the news in the last 6 months because his 21-year-old son who was just coming into his own as a Christian rapper died tragically. We used to take our youth group kids to Toby Mac concerts and generations of Christian teens have been inspired by him. His lyrics focus on Jesus in a simple but impactful way. With all that has been going on, many are asking where God is. Of course, our Scripture for today tells us where he is, with us, of course. Jesus promised in his last words before ascending back to heaven in Matthew 28:20: “Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.” As awful as things have been, the age hasn’t closed yet, so Jesus is where he said he would be, “with us.” Toby Mac’s song, “Everything” reminds us that if we look, “everything that we see, everything that happens, reminds of that fact. Jesus is with us. As we continue to struggle with the Covid-19 crisis, it’s time to, as Toby Mac” look for God in everything, in a sense to focus on the positive, that God created us and everything else, and that despite sin, he is still in control, still in charge of “Everything.” It will make a difference in your attitude. Take the time to listen to the song, and then look for God in “Everything.”

URL for Song: ["Everything"](#)

June 5, 2020, Devotion Ephesians 2:8-9 and Song “Flawless”

I have been introducing you to some of my favorite contemporary Christian artists and groups over the past 9 weeks. Today is Friday, and quite often on Fridays, we involve ourselves in the fruitless activity of looking back over the week and seeing how well we performed, how well we measured up. And let me tell you, it’s not an exercise, I would recommend because it is always going to be frustrating, disappointing because we continually mess up., we just can’t measure up. Mercy me is one of my long-time favorite groups and they have recently brought out a song called “Flawless” that speaks to folks who are trying to measure up, who are looking for a good performance. After explaining that there are folks like that and how much of a farce trying to measure up is, because the only way it would work is if our performance was “flawless,” they sing in the chorus, “ Let me introduce you to Amazing Grace. And they go on to share Jesus with those trying to measure up, a great evangelism approach in today’s day and age. Of course, Paul had already introduced us to grace in our Bible text for today from Ephesians 2:8 and 9, a passage I’m sure you are familiar with. Let me remind you what it says again though to refresh your memory: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith- and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God= not by works, so that no one can boast.” Everything contained in the song comes from this verse. Getting ahead by looking back at how we did this week, doesn’t help, Thankfully, being right with God is not from ourselves. It is because Jesus died and rose for you that you are saved, that heaven awaits. As we head into another weekend not being able to worship together in person, let this group introduce you again to “Amazing Grace.” Grace is, of course, God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense. G-R-A-C-E. Enjoy your weekend and don’t forget to worship with us online.

URL for Song: ["Flawless"](#)

June 8, 2020 Devotion: Scripture Isaiah 6:2 and 3 and Song "Holy, Holy, Holy"

Yesterday the church celebrated Trinity Sunday, the day we celebrate our one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One of the hymns we sang was "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty. And the end of the last verse echoes why. As we sang, "God in three persons, Blessed Trinity." It's hard for us to understand as much about God because he is perfect and we are not. He knows everything and we do not. The second verse talks about Cherubim and Seraphim, and I think most of you know those are classes of angels. God's creatures who worship God and occasionally in the Bible are found intervening in the lives of God's people. Today, many see angels as more than creatures created by God to worship him. They see them as almost gods, rescuing them and doing all kinds of other things that the Bible doesn't ascribe to them. Some of that comes from "It's a Wonderful Life," where the false idea that angels are just people gone into heaven. You know the phrase, something about a bell ringing and an angel up to heaven springs??? That's wrong. Our Bible reading for the devotion from Isaiah 6 helps us understand who angels really are and what they do. It talks about Seraphs (plural seraphim from our hymn). They were created to worship God. In Isaiah 6:2 and 3, It talks about how Isaiah saw two Seraphs above the Lord, covering him with their wings and they were singing the words of our hymn for today, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory." Whenever we hear folks speaking wrongly about who the angels are, we need to point them to Scripture. We too are created to worship our Triune God, Father, son, and Holy Spirit. As we think about our Trinity Sunday celebration yesterday, sing along with the words of our hymn, and worship our God again. Forget about all the trials, troubles, and pandemic stuff and worship your God, who reigns forever. Praise his that because Jesus died for you, you will spend forever in heaven with the angels worshipping.

URL for Song: ["Holy, Holy, Holy"](#)

June 9, 2020 Devotion: Scripture John 16:7 and Song "Come Thou Almighty King"

In the week after Trinity Sunday I wanted to choose one more Trinity hymn. Today's hymn is one we sang Sunday, Come, O Almighty King, The hymn has a verse about God the Father, the Ancient of Days, one about the God the Son, and one about the Counselor or Comforter and John 16 is sometimes translated. I want to focus on that third verse in this devotion. It seems like things would be easier as Governor Whitmer has finally relaxed the Shelter in place order and restaurants opened yesterday many other things are loosening up. But that isn't happening is it? Everyone seems to be all over the place on their opinions and misgivings about how things are going? Protests are all over about equal rights and unequal treatment by the police. Some folks are still staying home, scared to come out and others are acting like Covid-19 never happened. We are looking forward to worshipping together Sunday and some of us are not sure we should come. That's because we have been looking to human reason and human advice for how to live our lives in these Covid-19 times. In John 16:7 Jesus says, "Unless I go away, the Counselor (or comforter) will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you." Post Ascension, we know did go, and post Pentecost we know he did send the Counselor or the Holy Spirit talked about in the hymn. He is here to teach us the truth of Jesus. He is here to counsel us in these Covid-19 times that Jesus is with us even though we don't see him in the Words of Scripture and his body and blood that

come Sunday we will finally be able to receive again. When you are struggling, listen to this hymn, Come, O Almighty King, and invite the Counselor to come and share the truth that Jesus died for you, your sins are forgiven and heaven awaits. Listen to the hymn know and worship our God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

URL for Song: ["Come Thou Almighty King"](#)

June 10, 2020 Devotion: Scripture: Psalm 46:10 and Song "Word of God Speaks"

In the next 3 days, I have chosen some more contemporary songs for our devotions. By now, if you are like me, you are tired of zoom conversations and listening to the government and everyone else gives advice about what to do, where to go and not go, and a million other things which seem to infringe on our rights as citizens of the United States. Just remember they don't infringe on your right to be a Child of God. Today's song is called "Word of God Speaks," by Mercy Me. This beautiful haunting song reminds us the best advice for us in this time of confusion is to listen to the Word of God and not to look in the powerful things of this world like the government and such but as our verse, today's reading from Psalm 46:10 reminds us, "Be Still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." The song reminds us to be still and know that God is in this place. And if we are still, we hear God reminding us that he is in control and that we can be at peace, not stressed or troubled or depressed or whatever emotion the devil is using to separate you from the peace that Jesus offers. As we get closer to gathering in church again on Sunday, the devil will be working hard to tempt you to stay away. Listen to the song and know that the Word of God speaks, to all of our troubles and stress and depression. Be at peace. God is in control.

URL for Song" ["Word of God Speaks"](#)

June 11, 2020 Devotion: Scripture John 15:13-15 and Song "Who Am I?"

4 more days and we get to worship together again. And the forces of evil are gathering to tell we aren't worthy and it's too dangerous. "You might have Covid-19 so stay home." "You might get Covid-19 so stay away." You haven't missed anything while there was no live church don't go back. God doesn't care about you or he wouldn't have let Covid-19 get loose on the earth. Our song for today by Casting Crowns "Who Am I?" and our Bible verse from John 15 remind us not to listen to the devil. The song says, "Who Am I? that you look at me with love and watch me rise again?" And Jesus says in John 15:13 to 15: "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command." Jesus calls us his friends. He laid down his life for his friends on the cross. He invites us to worship together. Don't let the devil's excuses get in the way of you coming back to church. If you are concerned for your health, stay home but if it's something else, listen to the words of the song "Who Am I?" and know that you are God's child, created to worship him and Sunday is your first time in a long time to do that together with your friends at St. Andrew.

URL for Song: ["Who Am I?"](#)

June 12, 2020 Devotion: Scripture John 15:13-15 and Song "Who Am I?"

4 more days and we get to worship together again. And the forces of evil are gathering to tell we aren't worthy and it's too dangerous. "You might have Covid-19 so stay home." "You might get Covid-19 so stay away." You haven't missed anything while there was no live church don't go back. God doesn't care about you or he wouldn't have let Covid-19 get loose on the earth. Our song for today by Casting Crowns "Who Am I?" and our Bible verse from John 15 remind us not to listen to the devil. The song says, "Who Am I? that you look at me with love and watch me rise again?" And Jesus says in John 15:13 to 15: "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command." Jesus calls us his friends. He laid down his life for his friends on the cross. He invites us to worship together. Don't let the devil's excuses get in the way of you coming back to church. If you are concerned for your health, stay home but if it's something else, listen to the words of the song "Who Am I?" and know that you are God's child, created to worship him and Sunday is your first time in a long time to do that together with your friends at St. Andrew.

URL for Song: ["Who Am I?"](#)

June 15, 2020 Devotion: Scripture Matthew 11:28 and "Come Unto Me"

It's June 15th and this COVID-19 has been changing our lives, mostly in negative ways, for over 3 months. There are some small victories, we were able to gather to worship in church for the first time yesterday, the shelter-in-place order is history, at least for now and we can back and eat inside restaurants again, if we dare. As of today we can get our hair cuts at our favorite salon or barber shop, if we can get an appointment. But we still have so many mixed emotions about it all and still have so many things we can't do. Everywhere I go, I see weary people, people at the end of their ropes. They are worried about finances, worried about school in the fall for their kids, worried about their elderly loved ones and more. Today's song by Nicole C. Mullen, describes so well, what I hear everyone expressing. The song is called "Come unto Me." And the center of the song is our Bible reading for today. It's Matthew 11:28 which we may have used before as a text but not with this song. Jesus says, "Come to me all who are weary, and I will give you rest." It's also the chorus of the song. If you are feeling any of the emotions described above, it may be because you have depending on yourselves to solve all the Covid-19 problems. I've said it before and I say it again, it won't work. We are sinful creatures who aren't able to save ourselves, from Covid-19 or our sins. God knew that and that's why he sent Jesus to die for our sins and to put us right with him. It's why Jesus said, "Come to me all you who are weary and I will give you rest." It's why he reminded before ascending not heaven that he would be with us always to the close of the age." When you get down, and you will, turn to him, and turn your burdens over to Him. He is in control, he will take care of you as he did your sins on the cross. Listen to today's song and lay your burdens down. They are all temporary and eternity in heaven awaits. God bless your day as you listen.

URL for Song: ["Come Unto Me"](#)

June 17, 2020 Devotion: Scripture John 1:29 and Song “Just As I Am Without One Plea”

You may have noticed that now that we have gone back to live church services, I am now only sending out 3 devotions a week instead of 5. Just because we are back to church doesn't mean everyone is coming back and the way things are right now, I believe we can still use the encouragement of Scripture and God's gift of song to keep us going. A Pastor told me two weeks ago when we waiting to hear what Governor Whitmer would say that to release some of the restrictions something that has proven true. He said, "I've come to believe that no matter how good it will sound, it won't be as good as we think it will be." That's has proven true more than once since. That day, shelter-in-place ended but still, then it was no restaurants and no hair-cuts and no movies. And then it was yes to restaurants but not are opening right away and lots of folks aren't ready to go into restaurants. And Monday it was hair cuts but there is still a long list of do not's. We are tempted to say, we aren't we worthy if other states are? And that is the wrong way of looking at the big picture. None of us are worthy. We need to remember as the title of today's hymn says that we aren't worthy and God still accepts us that way because of Jesus. The hymn title is "Just As I am Without One Plea," and that is the way we need to look at ourselves. We are not worthy. We are righteous only because Christ's righteousness covers our sins. The chorus of the hymn is "O Lamb of God, I Come, I Come." And our Bible verse from John 1:39 explains what that means. John told his disciples when he saw Jesus, "Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.' The perfect Lamb, Jesus, was sacrificed for us. he made us worthy, just as we are, sinful and unrighteous. As the struggles of Covid-19 continue, realize that Jesus won the eternal victory over sin, the one thing we can't overcome. Listen to the words of the hymn and turn it all over to Jesus. Come to him as you are, without one plea. It's the only way. He will give you peace, both now and for eternity.

URL for Song: ["Just As I am Without One Plea"](#)

June 19, 2020 Devotion: Scripture Galatians 2:20 and Song: "Crucified with Christ"

As hard as it is sometimes to believe. God is capable of and does make good things happen out of the most tragic events in people's lives. For example, God used Joseph being sold into slavery and being taken away from his father by his own brothers to provide food an entire nation and more, including those same brothers into slavery. And Joseph realized that and was not angry with his brothers. What good can come out of the Pandemic many ask? Our song today by Philips, Craig, and Dean may give us a clue. The song begins by talking about what the group thought was important and found out wasn't. Mostly, it was worldly things, small g, gods we often call them. Covid-19 sure exposed all of those, didn't it? In a blink, they were all gone. Sports, from little league baseball to the NCAA "big dance" basketball tournament to pro sports gone. For many, it was their jobs, and for months and longer for many gone. Going to concerts, going out to eat, going to anyplace but the grocery store, all gone, in a minute. No, more trips to cabins, no more snowmobiling or camping or boating, all gone. It exposed the hollowness of our lives. In some cases, as it did with Philips, Craig, and Dean, it pointed them to Galatians 1:20 which is the chorus of the

song: "For I am crucified with Christ, yet I live, not I but Christ that lives in me." It's a hard way to learn, to lose so much like that. But like Philips, Craig, and Dean sing, it really isn't worth much compared to being crucified with Christ and having him live in us. If we survived Covid-19 and every I am close to has so far, it is by the grace of God. If you are not mentally down, it's because you put your hope in Christ and not men and things. Thank God that he revealed that to us through Covid-19 as you listen to the encouragement of Paul in the words of our text and in our song in the words and music of Philips, Craig, and Dean. Looking forward to seeing many of you in church Sunday, maybe more of you than last week!
URL for Song: ["Crucified with Christ"](#)

June 22, 2020 Devotion: Scripture: Isaiah 53:3 and Song "O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing" (contemporary, David Crowder)

Sometimes it is difficult to listen to someone take an old hymn and blend it with some new words and some modern instruments if we have listened to the hymn one way for years. David Crowder band is well known for doing this and always in a way that glorifies God and still honors the hymn. Today's hymn is one of those hymns, O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing. I love to listen to it because the focus is on Jesus in all the choruses. The third verse talks about making all our sorrows cease and points us to our Bible verse for today. The reason all our sorrows cease has nothing to do with earthly things like the Covid-19 pandemic ending and all its crazy rules or the end of racism which all would agree would be a good thing but rather because Jesus carried our sorrows to the cross. In Isaiah 53:3 Isaiah predicted what Jesus would do when he wrote: "Surely he took our iniquities and carried our sorrows." Because Jesus died for our sins we have heaven to look forward to and because Jesus carried our sorrows, we can rejoice in that and in the fact that rising from the dead, he is with us always, even during the Covid-19 pandemic or through a contentious election or through riots that many of our cities have been experiencing. Listen to the song as sung by the David Crowder band and focus on Jesus, the one who carried our sorrows so that as the song says, "our sorrows cease." What a blessing that good news is. May it sustain you during these difficult times.

URL for Song: ["O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing"](#)

June 24, 2020 Devotion: Scripture Psalm 25:6 and Song “Today Your Mercy Calls Us”

In the early weeks of the second half of the church year, called the Sundays after Pentecost, today's hymn, "Today Thy Mercy Calls us," is suggested often for use by worship planners. It fits the theme of many of the lessons and I want to use it to encourage us today. Almost daily it seems, something happens that the devil uses to pull us away from Jesus and his great mercy for us. One of the best ways to combat the devil is to look to Scripture and use God's promises, some already fulfilled and some still to be fulfilled, to overcome his temptations. If we are worried that we have done things or our country has done things that will anger God and keep him from showing mercy to us, we can like the Psalmist ask God to act in mercy toward us. As the Psalmist, says in Psalm 25:6, "Remember, O Lord, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old." If we look back through Scripture we will find an example of God's great mercy in people's lives. Moses, who led Israel after losing his temper and killing an Egyptian guard. David, who became a great King after committing adultery and murder with Bathsheba and her husband, Uriah. Jesus dying on the cross for us, to wash away our sin, as our hymn assures us in the end of the first verse. If you are down and struggling because the devil is trying to separate you from God's mercy, look to the past and see all of the times God has shown you his mercy and gotten you through some very difficult times. Listen to the hymn and be encouraged. God deals with you in mercy and not as you deserve. What a blessing this is!

URL for Song: ["Today Your Mercy Calls Us](#)

June 26, 2020 Devotion: Scripture I Timothy 4:16 and Song “Thank You”

Sometimes it seems like it gets tiring and frustrating, giving as God encourages us to do. Because he loves us first, we want to love other people but often it doesn't seem like it makes a difference. When we teach Sunday School, the kids don't seem to listen. When we give food or gifts to people, they don't seem to appreciate it. When we share Jesus and invite people to church, they don't seem to respond, at least not right away. We forget it isn't our job, to convert anyone, just to plant the seed so the Holy Spirit can work in people's hearts and bring them to faith. The devil tries to convince us to just give up and quit giving, whether it be of our time, talents, or treasures. I Timothy 4:16 encourages not to quit, not give up as Paul writes, "Watch your life and your doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you save both yourself and your hearers. Ray Boltz sings a song called "Thank You" that spells out what can happen when we carry out what this passage encourages us to do. Now he doesn't clearly show the part of the Holy Spirit in the process of coming to faith, but he makes it clear why God asks us to give, to persevere in our lives and doctrine. We want to take as many of our family members, friends, and those we meet on the way with us, and giving to them, may allow us to develop a relationship that gives the Holy Spirit a chance to touch hearts. It's

Friday, we may see folks who need Jesus socially or at church. Let the words of Ray Boltz encourage you and motivate you to follow the words of Paul in our Scripture for today. That is so clear as we celebrate the life of Nancy's father now, the best thing he did for us of us who were close to him was share Jesus with us and live Jesus for us. Pray for our safe travels and hope to see you in church a week from Sunday.!

URL for Song: ["Thank You"](#)