

Welcome to Worship at
Trinity Lutheran Church, Osceola, WI
Pentecost 14 - August 29, 2021

P: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer. Amen.

Hymn #556 - "Rise, Shine, You People"

**Rise, shine, you people! Christ the Lord has entered
Our human story; God in him is centered.
He comes to us, by death and sin surrounded,
With grace unbounded.**

**See how he sends the pow'rs of evil reeling;
He brings us freedom, light and life and healing.
All men and women, who by guilt are driven,
Now are forgiven.**

**Come, celebrate, your banners high unfurling,
Your songs and prayers against the darkness hurling.
To all the world go out and tell the story
Of Jesus' glory.**

**Tell how the Father sent his Son to save us,
Tell of the Son who life and freedom gave us.
Tell how the Spirit calls from ev'ry nation
His new creation.**

Confession of Sins:

P: Beloved in the Lord, let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins to God our Father, asking Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

C: **Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we poor sinners confess to You that we are by nature sinful and unclean and that we have sinned against You in our thoughts, words, and actions. Therefore we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy, seeking and imploring Your grace and**

forgiveness for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. O Lord, have mercy on us!

P: Upon this your confession, I as a called servant of Christ and His Word announce to you the grace of God, and in the place of and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

First Lesson: Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18

Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel at Shechem, and he summoned the elders of Israel, its heads, its judges, and its officers, and they presented themselves before God. Then Joshua told all the people, “Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve him wholeheartedly and faithfully. Remove the gods that your fathers served in the region across the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. But if you see no benefit in serving the Lord, then choose for yourselves today whomever you will serve - whether the gods that your fathers served beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household - we will serve the Lord!” The people responded by saying, “Far be it from us to forsake the Lord in order to serve other gods! For the Lord our God, he is the one who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, where we were slaves. He is the one who performed these great signs right before our eyes and protected us on the whole journey that we made and among all the peoples through whom we passed. The Lord drove out of our presence all the peoples and the Amorites who were living in the land. We too will serve the Lord, because he is our God!” (EHV)

Psalm 71

Refrain: Blessed are they who hope, who hope in the Lord.

**In you O LORD, I have taken ‘refuge;
Let me never be ‘put to shame.**

**Rescue me and deliver me in your ‘righteousness;
Turn Your ear to me and ‘save me.**

**Be my rock of refuge to which I can ‘always go;
For you are my rock and my ‘fortress.**

Refrain: Blessed are they who hope, who hope in the Lord.

**Since my youth, O God, you have ‘taught me,
And to this day I declare your mar’velous deeds.**

**Even when I am ‘old and gray,
Do not forsake ‘me, O God,**

**Till I declare your power to the next gener’ation,
Your might to all who ‘are to come.**

**Glory be to the Father and ‘to the Son
And to the Holy ‘Spirit,
As it was in the be’ginning,
Is now, and will be forever. ‘Amen.**

Refrain: Blessed are they who hope, who hope in the Lord.

Second Lesson: Ephesians 5:21-31

... submitting to one another in reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, just as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he himself is the Savior. Moreover, as the church submits to Christ, so also wives are to submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, in the same way as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, by cleansing her with the washing of water in connection with the Word. He did this so that he could present her to himself as a glorious church, having no stain or wrinkle or any such thing, but so that she would be holy and blameless. In the same way, husbands have an obligation to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. To be sure, no one has ever hated his own body, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will be one flesh.” (EHV)

Verse of the Day: Alleluia. Jesus Christ has destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Alleluia.

Gospel: John 6:60-69

When they heard it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching! Who can listen to it?” But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were

grumbling about this, asked them, “Does this cause you to stumble in your faith? What if you would see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? The Spirit is the one who gives life. The flesh does not help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. But there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning those who would not believe and the one who would betray him. He said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is given to him by my Father.” After this, many of his disciples turned back and were not walking with him anymore. So Jesus asked the Twelve, “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom will we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.” (EHV)

The Apostles’ Creed:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe 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 is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there 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 #506 - “*Oh, Blest the House, Whate’er Befall*”

**Oh, blest the house, whate’er befall,
Where Jesus Christ is all in all!
A home that is not wholly his -
How sad and poor and dark it is!**

**Oh, blest that house where faith you find
And all within have set their mind
To trust their God and serve him still
And do in all his holy will.**

**Oh, blest the parents who give heed
Unto their children's foremost need
And weary not of care or cost.
May none to them and heav'n be lost!**

**Blest such a house; it prospers well.
In peace and joy the parents dwell,
And in their children's lives is shown
How richly God can bless his own.**

**Then here will I and mine today
A solemn promise make and say:
Though all the world forsake his Word,
I and my house will serve the Lord!**

**The Sermon: Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18
"We Will Serve The LORD"**

The **Scripture** readings for the 14th Sunday after Pentecost are **special**, and they deserve to be **remembered**. Each one of our readings for today speaks about **rededication** - rededication to our **marriages**, to our study of **God's Word**, and most important of all, to the **LORD Himself**. Our sermon today takes us to a place called **Shechem**, where Joshua told the Israelites about the loving and powerful deeds which God had performed on their behalf. In response, they **rededicated** themselves to God by saying, "*We Will Serve The LORD.*"

Our text takes place very close to the **end** of Joshua's life. He is 110 years old. Most people today don't live that long, but even as they get to be 80 or 90 years old, many start to think, "What am I **doing** here? Why am I still **alive**? I want to go **home** and be with **Jesus**!" I think we need to remember that as long as the LORD allows us to live on this earth, He still has **work** for us to do, and Joshua was no exception. The events of our text mark the **final** opportunity for Joshua to address **all** the Israelites in a **formal** gathering at **Shechem**.

Our text begins, "*Then Joshua gathered **all** the tribes of Israel at **Shechem**, and he summoned the elders of Israel, its heads, its judges, and its officers, and they presented themselves **before God**.*" Shechem is a Hebrew word which means **shoulder**. It is a well-named city, because it is located on the **shoulder** of two mountains - Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal - about 35 miles **north** of Jerusalem. Locating this event at Shechem was a **natural** choice, because the **valley** between

the two mountains provided an excellent **arena** for a large gathering of people. It was **also** a natural choice because it happened to be where Joshua **was** at the time, and at the age of 110, he probably didn't care to do a lot of **traveling** any more.

Shechem was also a very **historic** location. It was there that God had promised Abraham, *"I will **give** this land to your descendants."* It was there that Abraham built his first **altar** to **worship** the LORD. But most important of all, it was there that Joshua had called the Israelites together shortly after they had **entered** the Promised Land, in order to **renew a covenant** with the LORD. For those who had been present, no doubt the **memories** came flooding back - the **blessings** which God had promised them if they remained **faithful** to Him, and the **curses** which He had promised if they **rebelled** against Him.

Now **once again**, Joshua had gathered the people to renew their **covenant** with the LORD - in the **presence** of the LORD. Although it is not specifically mentioned, it is very likely that the ark of the covenant had been brought from the tabernacle in **Shiloh**, about 12 miles away. It is even possible that the **entire tabernacle** had actually been moved to Shechem for this solemn occasion. At any rate, there in the presence of God, Joshua began his address to the people by saying, *"This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, has **said**."*

Joshua, who had long served the Israelites as their **political** and **military** leader, now served them also as a **prophet**. The words which he spoke to them were not **his** words, but rather, they were **God's** words. Joshua was simply serving as a **mouthpiece** for the LORD. Interestingly enough, what he had to say was not **new** to the people - it was a **history** lesson. Joshua reviewed the events of their history which focused on displays of God's **love** and **power** on behalf of the Israelites. He began with **Terah**, Abraham's father, and how the LORD took Abraham **out** of an environment where **idols** were worshiped. He then went on to tell how God had blessed Abraham with **Isaac**, and how He had blessed Isaac with **Jacob and Esau**. Of course one of the events with which they were all familiar was how the LORD had led them out of **Egypt** by opening a path through the Red Sea, and destroying the pursuing Egyptian army. And finally, Joshua reminded them of some **current** events - how the LORD had led them **into** the Promised Land, and had given them **victory** over their enemies, **cities** they had not built, and **food** they had not grown. The obvious purpose behind this history lesson was to make the people **realize** how richly they had been **blessed** by the LORD.

The blessings of **faith**, **family**, **freedom**, and a **future** are not unique to the **Israelites** either. **We** have them as well. The problem is that it is rather easy to

forget about how **wonderful** these blessings are - until they are in danger of being **lost**. For example, when your **faith** is shaken by the death of a loved one, or your **family** is rattled by stress and strife - when your **freedom** is threatened by tyrants and terrorists, or your **future** is in question because of the loss of your job - suddenly the enormous **value** of these blessings is seen **clearly**. But why does it usually take some kind of impending **doom**, before we open our eyes to see the **riches** which the LORD had bestowed on us? Thank the LORD that **whatever** it takes, He sees to it that we **do** recognize our blessings, and that we have the opportunity to **respond**.

After considering all the great things which the LORD had done for the Israelites, Joshua asked the people to do two things - **fear** the LORD, and **serve** the LORD. He said, *“Now, therefore, **fear** the LORD and **serve** him wholeheartedly and faithfully. Remove the gods that your fathers served in the region across the River and in Egypt, and serve the **LORD**.”* Ordinarily when we think of the word **fear**, it has a **negative** connotation - one of **terror** or **dread**. However, that’s **not** what it means here. A good example of the **correct** meaning can be found in the Scriptures themselves, when the Psalmist wrote, *“But with you there is **pardon**, so you are **feared**.”* Now obviously, receiving **pardon** or **forgiveness** from God is nothing of which to be **afraid**. Rather, it’s just the **opposite**. Receiving this gift makes us want to **honor** and **respect** the LORD who has removed the **burden** and **guilt** of sin from our lives. And that’s **exactly** what it means **here** when Joshua tells the people to **fear** the LORD. They are to **honor** and **respect** Him out of **love**.

Quite naturally, **serving** the LORD will **follow** that love and respect. Yet, Joshua left the **choice** up to the people themselves. He said, *“But if you see no **benefit** in serving the **LORD**, then **choose** for yourselves today whomever you **will** serve - whether the gods that your **fathers** served beyond the River or the gods of the **Amorites**, in whose land you are living. But as for **me** and **my** household - **We Will Serve The LORD**.”* The Israelites had a **choice** to make - a choice between **false** gods and the **true** God - a choice between powerless **idols**; whether from beyond the Euphrates **River**, or from **Egypt**, or from the **local** area; and the **Almighty God** who had brought them to where they were, and who **continued** to watch **over** them and **provide** for all their needs.

Joshua had **his** mind all made up. No matter **what** the Israelites chose for themselves, **he** and his **family** would serve the **LORD**. I’m sure that Joshua had hoped the Israelites would **emulate** his bold and sincere confession. But even if they **didn’t**, Joshua was ready to go it **alone**. It turned out that Joshua would have **lots** of company, for our text concludes, *“The people responded by saying, ‘Far be*

*it from **us** to forsake the LORD in order to serve **other** gods! For the LORD our God, he is the one who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, where we were **slaves**. He is the one who performed these great **signs** right before our eyes and **protected** us on the whole journey that we made and among all the peoples through whom we passed. The LORD drove out of our presence all the peoples and the **Amorites** who were living in the land. **We Too Will Serve The LORD**, because He is **our God!**”*

The choice was an **easy** one for the Israelites at **Shechem**, but it wouldn't **continue** to be so easy for the **future** generations. We soon hear the writer of the Book of Judges tell us, “*After that whole **generation** had been gathered to their fathers, **another** generation arose after them, who did not know the **LORD** or the deeds that he had **done** for Israel. The people of Israel committed **evil** in the eyes of the LORD. They served the **Baals**, and they **abandoned** the **LORD**, the God of their **fathers**, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after **other** gods from among the gods of the peoples who were **around** them. They bowed down to them, and they **angered** the LORD. They **abandoned** the LORD and served the **Baals** and the **Ashtartes**.” That sounds all too **familiar**, doesn't it? People start out **strong**, but their strength quickly **fades away**. Just to **illustrate** that, think about your **confirmation day**, and how **easy** it was for you to make that promise to suffer **all**, even **death**, rather than fall away from the LORD. And **compare** that with how many of your **friends** from your confirmation days no longer **follow** the LORD at **all**. Or, think about your **wedding day**, and how **easy** it was for you to promise to live together as husband and wife **regardless** of the circumstances, until parted by **death**. And **compare** that with how 1 out of every 2 marriages in our society **fails**, because of a lack of **commitment** to their marriage vows. All too often as time goes on, the realities of **sin** and **temptation** take their **toll**. People begin to **question**, to **doubt**, and to **wonder** whether they really made the **right** choices after all.*

How will **we** be sure? Our choices in life must find their foundation in the same thing which led to **Joshua's** bold and sincere confession of faith and trust. Joshua was moved **only** by what **God** had done - not by **any** other influences. **Nothing** can **change** what God has done for us - **nothing!** God the Father **created** and **preserves** us - that's a **fact**. Jesus loved us so much that He lived a perfect **life** for us, and then **offered** that life as a sacrifice on the **cross** to **pay** for our sins - **that's** a fact. And the Holy Spirit gave us our **faith** and keeps that faith **strong** through God's **Word** and **Sacraments** - that's a fact **too**. **Nothing** can **change** those facts, so shouldn't our choices always be **easy**? Today, let's **reconfirm** our commitment to God with **actions** - by getting **rid** of the false gods in our lives,

whether they are physical **objects**, or other **people**, or **attitudes** of the heart. If the things in our life don't fit into the **LORD's plan** for our life, then they don't **belong** in our life at **all**. God tolerates **no** rivals. So, let's **rededicate** ourselves to our **marriages**, to our study of God's **Word**, to the **work** which the LORD has given us to do for Him in this life, and indeed let us rededicate ourselves to the **LORD Himself**, as we say with Joshua and the Israelites in our text, "***We Too Will Serve The LORD.***" Amen.

Prayers:

O God our Father, we thank You for adopting us as Your **children**, making us **heirs** of everlasting life through Jesus Christ. As Your dear children, we have the **privilege** of bringing our sins to You for **pardon**, knowing that they have already been **paid for** by Jesus. We are confident that whatever things we ask of You in Jesus' name, You will **give** us; and that as a wise, kind, and concerned Father, You will **continue** to bless us. Therefore, we ask that You would **listen** to our troubles, and **bind up** our many hurts and wounds. Share all our burdens and cares, keep us from straying, and help and heal us. Father, in Your mercy dispel our **fears** and chase away our **worries**. You are always **faithful** to us - You have **never** betrayed our trust. Yet, **we** have often failed to trust **You** as we ought. For this, and all other sins, we ask Your **forgiveness**. Teach us that when we have You as our heavenly **Father**, and Jesus Christ as our **Savior** from sin, and the Holy Spirit as the giver and keeper of our **faith**, we have **everything** and lack **nothing**.

Through Your Holy Spirit, give us a **childlike** faith which does not **doubt** or **hold back**, but simply trusts You for **everything**. As Your children, may we learn to do good to **everyone**, especially to those who are fellow members in the **faith**. Teach us to **recognize** the needs of others, and to be **generous** in sharing our goods with them. May we not only **pray** on their behalf, but also be quick to offer them our **counsel** and **aid**. May our lives as Your spiritual children be avenues to others for the tender mercies with which You rule **all** Your works.

Dear Father, send the Word of Christ into **all** the world, converting the hearts of people **everywhere** - adding brothers and sisters in the faith, who together with us will lift up their hearts, hands, and voices in **prayer** and **praise** to You, our gracious God. Bestow Your many and varied **blessings** upon the household of faith, and teach us to always **thank** You for them. Amen.

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.**

Hymn #416 - *“How Firm a Foundation”*

**How firm a foundation, O saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in his excellent Word!
What more can he say than to you he has said
Who unto the Savior for refuge have fled?**

**In ev’ry condition, in sickness, in health,
In poverty’s vale, or abounding in wealth,
At home and abroad, on the land, on the sea -
The Lord, the Almighty, your strength e’er shall be.**

**“Fear not, I am with you. Oh, be not dismayed,
For I am your God and will still give you aid;
I’ll strengthen you, help you, and cause you to stand,
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.”**

**“When through the deep waters I call you to go,
The rivers of sorrow shall not overflow,
For I will be with you your troubles to bless
And sanctify to you your deepest distress.”**

**“Throughout all their lifetime my people shall prove
My sov’ reign, eternal, unchangeable love,
And then, when gray hair shall their temples adorn,
Like lambs they shall still on my shoulders be borne.”**

P: Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Your people Israel.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit! As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

The Blessing:

P: The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.

C: **Amen.**

Hymn #752 - "In Christ Alone"

**In Christ alone my hope is found.
He is my light, my strength, my song;
This cornerstone, this solid ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My comforter, my all in all,
Here in the love of Christ I stand.**

**In Christ alone - who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe,
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones he came to save.
Till on that cross, as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied;
For ev'ry sin on him was laid.
Here in the death of Christ I live.**

**There in the ground his body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain;
Then bursting forth in glorious day
Up from the grave he rose again!
And as he stands in victory,
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me.
For I am his and he is mine -
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.**

**No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the pow'r of Christ in me;**

**From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man
Can ever pluck me from his hand;
Till he returns or calls me home,
Here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand.**