



St. John's Lutheran Church

1000 Bluff St., Beloit, WI 53511
www.stjohnsbeloit.com

**“Sharing the good news of forgiveness and eternal life
through Jesus Christ.”**

June 28, 2020

*Please take the bulletin with you
or dispose of it in our recycling bin.
Thank you.*

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Jesus Receives Sinners

“This man receives sinners and eats with them” (Luke 15:2). The Pharisees’ statement of judgment against Jesus is in fact a proclamation of Gospel truth. For our God is one who delights in mercy, who casts all our sins into the depths of the sea through the cross (Micah 7:18–20). “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15). Those who refuse to be counted as sinners also refuse Jesus who came only for sinners. Those like the older son (Luke 15:11–32), who think they are righteous of themselves, will not join in the heavenly celebration over the sinner who repents and so remain outside of the Father’s house. Let us therefore be on guard against self-righteously trusting in our own merits. “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you” (1 Peter 5:6). Rejoice that Jesus receives sinners like us and that He still sits at table with us in the Holy Supper, bestowing His forgiveness and life.

Announcements

Confession and Forgiveness

Stand

The sign of the cross may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

P In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

P Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C **who made heaven and earth.**

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

C **But with You there is forgiveness; therefore, You are feared.**

P 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.

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

P Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

Service of the Word

Lord, Have Mercy (Kyrie) *LSB 204*

C **Lord, have mercy;
Christ, have mercy;
Lord, have mercy.**

Salutation and Prayer of the Day

P The Lord be with you.

C **And also with you.**

P O God, the protector of all who trust in You, without whom nothing is strong and nothing is holy, multiply Your mercy on us that, with You as our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Let us pray.

C **Amen.**

Sit

Old Testament Reading

Micah 7:18–20

¹⁸Who is a God like you
who forgives iniquity and passes over the transgressions
of the remnant of his inheritance?

He does not hold onto his anger forever;
he delights to show mercy.

¹⁹He will have compassion on us again.

He will subdue our iniquities.

You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

²⁰You will give truth to Jacob and mercy to Abraham,
as you swore to our fathers from days of old.

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Epistle

1 Peter 5:6–11

⁶Therefore humble yourselves under God's powerful hand so that he may lift you up at the appointed time. ⁷Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. ⁸Have sound judgment. Be alert. Your adversary, the Devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. ⁹Resist him by being firm in the faith. You know that the same kinds of sufferings are being laid on your brotherhood all over the world.

¹⁰After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who called you into his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will himself restore, establish, strengthen, and support you. ¹¹To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Stand

Alleluia and Verse

C **Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.**

C **These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.**

C **Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.**

Holy Gospel

Luke 15:1–10

P The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the fifteenth chapter

C **Glory to You, O Lord.**

All the tax collectors and sinners were coming to Jesus to hear him. ²But the Pharisees and the experts in the law were complaining, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

³He told them this parable: ⁴“Which one of you, if you had one hundred sheep and lost one of them, would not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that was lost until he finds it? ⁵And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders ⁶and goes home. Then he calls together his friends and his neighbors, telling them, ‘Rejoice with me, because I have found my lost sheep!’ ⁷I tell you, in the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who do not need to repent.

⁸“Or what woman who has ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, would not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹And when she finds it, she calls together her friends and neighbors and says, ‘Rejoice with me, because I have found the lost coin.’ ¹⁰In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C **Praise to You, O Christ.**

Nicene Creed

C **I believe in one God,
the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth
and of all things visible and invisible.**

**And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only-begotten Son of God,
begotten of His Father before all worlds,
God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God,
begotten, not made,
being of one substance with the Father,
by whom all things were made;
who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary
and was made man;
and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.
He suffered and was buried.
And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures
and ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of the Father.
And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead,
whose kingdom will have no end.**

**And I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord and giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified,
who spoke by the prophets.
And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church,
I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins,
and I look for the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

Music for Reflection
Message

“In Christ Alone”
“God is Seeking His People”

Stand

Prayers of the Church

P. Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

Brief silence

P. Lord of heaven and earth, consider our afflictions and troubles, and forgive all our sins. To You, we lift up our souls. In You, we trust; let us never be put to shame. Seek us when we stray, work in us repentance, and by the voice of Your Son, our Good Shepherd, bring us back into the fold. Lord, in Your mercy,

C. hear our prayer.

P. Bless the pastors and teachers of Your Church. Preserve them from all error, false belief or other great shame and vice. Fortify them for their vital work through extraordinary difficulties and as they gather together Your congregation again around Your Word. Bless their preaching and teaching, that it would lead their hearers to confess, with St. Paul, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. Lord, in Your mercy,

C. hear our prayer.

P. Bless our country as we prepare to celebrate Independence Day, that we would cherish the freedoms we have and remember the sacrifices of those who secured them. Help us to achieve the full equality for all and equal justice under the law that reflect the values of a truly free society. Give wisdom to all those who have been placed in authority over us, that as they strive to preserve life and livelihood in our land, they would do it with an eye toward sustaining the freedoms enjoyed in our nation, especially our religious liberty. Lord, in Your mercy,

C. hear our prayer.

P. Support and defend all who face trials and tribulations of any kind; those in any want or need; those who are burdened with animosity in the home and community; those who are suffering from illness, loneliness, depression, anxiety, unemployment or any other affliction especially the family and friends of Lester Nyborg, all those whom we have named on our prayer list, and those we now name in the thoughts of our hearts Give strength and endurance in the midst of all difficulty and, if it be Your will, grant restoration and relief. Lord, in Your mercy,

C. hear our prayer.

P. Compassionate Father, have mercy on all who are suffering and desire Your aid at the present time especially those whom we have named on our prayer list and those we now name in the thoughts of our hearts According to Your gracious will, heal their infirmities and give them strength to bear all their crosses in Christian patience. Give continued wisdom to those who lead and those who serve, especially those in harm's way. Lord, in Your mercy,

C. hear our prayer.

P. Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C. Amen.

Sit

Offering - offerings will be received in the basket placed in the center aisle as worshipers come to the front for reception of the Lord's Supper.

Service of the Sacrament

Stand

Preface ***LSB 208***

P The Lord be with you.

C **And also with you.**

P Lift up your hearts.

C **We lift them to the Lord.**

P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C **It is right to give Him thanks and praise.**

P 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:

Holy, Holy, Holy (Sanctus) ***LSB 208***

C **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!**

Lord's Prayer

C **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

P 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."

Peace of the Lord (Pax Domini)

P The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C **Amen.**

Sit

Receiving the Lord's Supper - worshipers are asked to come to the front via the center aisle, while maintaining a six-foot distance between family units (please see the lines on the floor). Each communicant will receive first the bread and then the wine from the pastor. After the worshiper has communed, they are invited to return to their seat via the side aisles. Trays for receiving the empty cups will be placed at the front of each side aisle.

Communion Blessing (after everyone has received communion and returned to their seats)

- P** The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you in body and soul to life everlasting. Depart + in peace.
- C** **Amen.**

Stand

Post-Communion Prayer

- P** Let us pray.
O God the Father, the fountain and source of all goodness, who in loving-kindness sent Your only-begotten Son into the flesh, we thank You that for His sake You have given us pardon and peace in this Sacrament, and we ask You not to forsake Your children but always to rule our hearts and minds by Your Holy Spirit that we may be enabled constantly to serve You; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C** **Amen.**

Blessing (Benedicamus) LSB 212

- P** Let us bless the Lord.
- C** **Thanks be to God.**

Blessing (Benediction)

- P** 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 + give you peace.
- C** **Amen.**

Acknowledgments

Divine Service, Setting Four from Lutheran Service Book
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For announcements, please see this week's Communicator.

Roser's Reflection . . .

An increasing number of companies, like Nationwide Insurance, for example, are moving away from the model of employees working in office buildings to the model of asking them to work remotely from home. What had previously seemed like a risky experiment has now become mainstream in just a few months. Sure, many people have been working remotely for decades, but they weren't the norm. After a few months of being forced into the remote-work model, many companies have discovered that their employees are just as productive when working at home as they were in the pricey office spaces that they previously occupied. Company after

company has been announcing that they are going to shrink the physical footprint that they occupy and move more of their operations online. That is how disruption is distinguished from interruption. In an interruption, something that we were previously doing is put on hold and then resumes after a period of time. In a disruption, the resumption of “business as usual” doesn’t happen or at least not in a way that anyone would recognize.

We are living in a time of disruption. While many of the pre-COVID activities that we enjoy will return, the pre-COVID world is not going to return. When I say this, I am not talking about distancing protocols and masks - I am speaking about our society’s shift from physical to digital. In the pre-COVID world, much of life occurred in the physical world with a lot of things also happening online. During the shutdown, nearly all of life moved online to the digital world. Many people and organizations found the digital world to be quite homey and sometimes preferable to the physical world of long commutes, traffic, and difficult weather. In fact, to their surprise, many companies who were previously skeptical about the remote-work model found that their worst fears of this scenario were not realized. Consequently, many companies are eliminating their physical office presence or downsizing the spaces that they lease. In the post-COVID world, it appears that much of life is going to continue to occur in the digital world while a lot of things will also happen in the physical world. That’s the shift that is emerging - a movement from “physical with some digital” to “digital with some physical.”

How will this shift affect the Church? We could say that it won’t - just as the shopping mall owners argued in the early days of Amazon and other online retailers. They argued that people still want to see items in person before making significant purchases. Have you been to the malls lately? Many shopping malls across the country are going to close following the loss of business during the shut-down. However, the shut-down is not the cause of their demise - it simply accelerated the trends that were already occurring, and have been occurring for many years. The bankruptcies of anchor stores and the loss of many chain boutiques over the years have left many vacant spaces in our shopping malls. This trend was not reversing course but was plodding along in the same direction. The shutdown, unfortunately, pushed these trends into warp speed.

Are there long-term trends in the Church that we can identify? Will they too be hastened along by the shutdown? If we’re honest, worship attendance has been declining in many congregations for decades. When I was ordained 18 years ago, a family who attended worship once per month were considered infrequent worship attendees. In recent years, those same families are now considered active members because such patterns of attendance have become relatively normal among us. Fifteen years ago, almost every congregation was posting good numbers in their Sunday Schools and Bible Classes. Today, many congregations scramble to maintain some offering in each of these areas out of a sense of duty. It would be rather foolish for congregations to look around at all of the signs of disruption in our society and conclude that the Church will be unaffected.

Fortunately, we have choices. We can ignore the inevitable shifts that are occurring and hope that the previous trends will reverse themselves. That’s the approach that the shopping malls have taken. Or, we can see this as a time of opportunity for the mission of the Gospel. We can complain about those younger generations who “are always on their phones” or dream of how to get the Gospel onto those screens. We can eagerly await the return of the 1950s when families had multiple children and raised them to love the Lord and His Church - or - we can figure out how to connect the people around us with the God Who has died in their place and answered for their sins. I hope to remain in active ministry for at least 20 more years and so following the approach of the shopping malls is not an option for me.

Before I describe the wonderful opportunities for the mission of Christ that the digital world holds for congregations who do the hard work of learning to do ministry there, I want to clarify that I do not anticipate the physical presence of the Church going away - ever. I have every reason to believe that when my retirement comes in 2040 or so, that I will still be leading in-person worship services and Bible classes. God has chosen to work through the means of grace - Word and Sacrament - and while we are finding new ways to communicate the Word digitally this will never be the case with the Sacraments. By their very nature physical presence is required for there to be a Sacrament and all of the technological advances in the world aren’t going to change that.

One of the first places I stop when disembarking from the train in Chicago is the Amazon store. That’s right - “the Amazon store.” This is not something I do on my phone, but something that I do with my feet. I pull up

the Amazon Go app on my phone, scan it at the turnstile, and enter the store where I typically purchase a small package of Lindt white chocolate. Why would Amazon who mainstreamed online shopping open brick-and-mortar stores? Because there will always be things that cannot be done online. And so it goes with the Church. Baptism and the Lord's Supper will always be administered among God's people. Human touch which encourages and comforts will always be sought by people in the fellowship of congregations. The beauty and joy of congregational singing cannot be replaced by professional artists who do our singing for us. The need for people to gather in face-to-face worship and fellowship are not going away - and in fact, in the digital world, they may become more urgent. The Church will always have a physical presence, but woe to those congregations who think that they are going to thrive in our present/future reality while focusing exclusively on their physical presence.

The digital world is no longer a frontier for the brave and the bold, an increasing number of Americans are not only doing their shopping there but also their banking, entertainment viewing, insurance needs, transportation arrangements, and ordering delivery food from McDonald's (there's an app for that). Given these shifts, it is unreasonable to think that people's engagement with the Church will remain unchanged. It has been changing - changing for decades - but as long as congregations have maintained a critical mass of attendees to support what they are doing, change did not seem necessary. For thirty years or more, congregations have grown accustomed to disciplining fewer and fewer people and just hoping that the people will come back. The other day, I was looking up someone's baptismal record from the 1970s. While looking in the records, I stumbled upon the attendance record of a special service that was held that year. Five-hundred and eighteen worshipers attended that service, and it was not uncommon for St. John's to average 400 or more worshipers a Sunday at that time. Our average worship attendance today hovers around 72 to 73 worshipers. While this is a respectable number for an urban congregation today, the number of souls that we are reaching for the Kingdom is significantly lower than it used to be. The people who no longer frequent the shopping malls are still getting their stuff, but are those who no longer frequent congregations receiving what is needed for their souls?

If you are online, please visit the following sites.

SJ homepage - <https://www.stjohnsbeloit.com>

SJ Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/stjohnslutheranbeloit>

SJ Youtube channel - <https://tinyurl.com/stjohnsbeloit>

SJ Podcast channel - <https://stjohnbeloitmedia.podbean.com>

These four sites are at the heart of what we are doing digitally to reach people for Christ. However, we need your help in order to be successful. Please take some time to share this content with your friends, family, colleagues, neighbors, etc. We are working hard to upload solid content, but the people in your life will most likely never see it unless you share it with them. Please consider forwarding my emails that contain links to our programming. If you know how to start a watch party on Facebook, please host watch parties around our weekly services. If you don't know how to host a watch party, this video can show you: <https://youtu.be/EJSnOIE5FEI>. Please also consider sharing links to our content on your social media accounts on a regular basis. In the 1970s, St. John's members used to gather one evening per week to knock on doors throughout Beloit in order to share the good news of Jesus with our neighbors. Knocking on doors in the neighborhoods is no longer as effective as it once was. Perhaps it is because the front doors of people's lives have changed. The front doors are now online and God is calling us to work in His harvest.

*I am indebted to Carey Nieuwhof for his analogy of the shopping malls during the rise of Amazon. You can read his excellent article by going to <https://careynieuwhof.com/are-churches-behaving-like-malls-in-the-age-of-amazon-just-hoping-for-people-to-shop-again>.

In Christ Jesus,

Pastor

Contact Us

Rev. Dennis Roser, Pastor

dennismroser@gmail.com cell: (608) 713-2050

Mr. Isiah King, Principal

king@luminschools.org cell: (608)-346-8411

Mrs. Berta Eddy, Administrative Assistant

officestjohnsbeloit@gmail.com

St. John's Church Office (608)-362-8595

Communion Practices of this Congregation

The Lord's Supper is celebrated at St. John's every Sunday in the confession and glad confidence that, as he says, our Lord Jesus gives into our mouths not only bread and wine but his very body and blood to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of sins and to strengthen our union with him and with one another. Our Lord invites to his table those who trust his words, repent of all sin, and set aside any refusal to forgive and love as he forgives and loves us, that they may show forth his death until he comes. Because those who eat and drink our Lord's body and blood unworthily do so to their great harm and because Holy Communion is a confession of the faith which is confessed at this altar, any who are not yet instructed, in doubt, or who hold a confession differing from that of this congregation and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and yet desire to receive the Sacrament, are asked first to speak with the pastor or an elder. In addition to the members of this congregation, visitors from our sister LCMS congregations and other Lutheran denominations with whom we enjoy altar fellowship are invited to join us at the Lord's Table. For further study, please see Matthew 5:23; 10:32; 18:15-35; 26:26-29; 1 Cor. 11:17-34.