

Order of Teaching and Prayers for Sunday, May 17, 2020
Zion Lutheran Church, Ridgeville Corners, Ohio

This Order of Teaching and Prayers (adapted from Matins) is part of Zion Lutheran's ministry during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic and "Stay at Home" orders in the state of Ohio. Orders for festival days and Sundays will continue to be made available as long as normal worship opportunities are not available. I will post audio recordings of these orders on the appointed day on www.zionrco.org. You are invited to listen and pray with me and my wife at that time, or any time after. Thank you to Zion's musicians and choir for the music on these recordings! Pastor Carl Rockrohr

The teaching for this week continues with the sermon series "God's and His People" started at Zion Lutheran on January 26th. This week we consider the promises of God to Abraham in Genesis 15. Next week the topic will be God's test of Abraham in the sacrifice of his son, Isaac as recorded in Genesis 22:1-18.

Prelude *Faith of Our Fathers* *Hymns You Like to Sing #10* Public Domain

1. Faith of our Fathers! Living still In spite of dungeon, fire, and sword:
O how our hearts beat high with joy Whene'er we hear that glorious word!
Faith of our fathers! Holy faith! We will be true to thee till death!

2. Our fathers, chained in prisons dark, Were still in heart and conscience free:
How sweet would be their children's fate, If they, like them, could die for thee!
Faith of our fathers! Holy faith! We will be true to thee till death!

3. Faith of our fathers! we will love Both friend and foe in all our strife:
And preach thee, too, as love knows how, By kindly words and virtuous life:
Faith of our fathers! Holy faith! We will be true to thee till death!

Invocation and Opening Verses

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare Your praise.

Make haste, O God, to deliver me;
make haste to help me, O Lord.

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. Praise to You, O Christ, Lamb of our salvation.

Scripture Reading Genesis 15:1-19 ESV

1 After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." 2 But Abram said, "O Lord God, what will you

give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." 4 And behold, the word of the Lord came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." 5 And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." 6 And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

7 And he said to him, "I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess." 8 But he said, "O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" 9 He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." 10 And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. 11 And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

12 As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. 13 Then the Lord said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. 14 But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. 15 As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. 16 And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

17 When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. 18 On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, 19 the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, 20 the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, 21 the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites."

O Lord, have mercy on us. **Thanks be to God.**

Scripture Reading Romans 4:1-8

1 What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." 4 Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. 5 And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, 6 just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:

7 "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,
and whose sins are covered;

8 blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin."

O Lord, have mercy on us. **Thanks be to God.**

Responsory

Sing to the Lord and bless His name, proclaim His salvation from day to day.

Give to the Lord all glory and strength, give Him the honor due His name. Alleluia, Alleluia.

Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that sleep.

Give to the Lord all glory and strength, give Him the honor due His name. Alleluia, Alleluia.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

Give to the Lord all glory and strength, give Him the honor due His name. Alleluia, Alleluia.

Apostles' Creed

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

And 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 sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

From thence 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.

Teaching

Genesis 15:4-6 And behold, the word of the Lord came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer.

The title of today's teaching could be "Only God Can Keep Impossible Promises."

Abraham obeyed the Lord God's call to take his household and move to a new land which he did not know before. He moved his family. Abraham also believed the Lord would fulfill the promises to make Abraham's descendants to be a great nation and a blessing to all nations. But Abraham had no child yet, even in old age.

In our reading today, the Lord appeared to Abraham and promised to continue to take care of Abraham. But Abraham wondered how he could have many descendants if he still did not have any children. So, Abraham proposed to the Lord that a member of his household, not a direct son, should receive His blessings.

The Lord told Abraham, no, Abraham would have his own son. In fact, through that son would be many descendants, as many of stars of the sky. (Between 2,500 to 5,000 stars can be seen at one time with the naked eye. <https://earthsky.org/astronomy-essentials/how-many-stars-could-you-see-on-a-clear-moonless-night>)

The next statement is a *very* important teaching in all of the Bible! “*And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.*”

The Bible teaches that Abraham was not counted righteous and holy before the Lord because of Abraham’s good works; Abraham was counted righteous because he believed the Lord’s promise. The Lord promised that Abraham’s descendants would be a great nation, something that was impossible for Abraham’s situation. Abraham saw no way to have his own son through which many descendants would come. But the Lord promised He would work in Abraham’s life and bless him, Abraham believed and trusted in the Lord. This trust and faith of Abraham was his relationship with the Lord.

The next part of the reading shows the Lord’s reassurance to Abraham that He would keep this promise to him. It was a common practice at Abraham’s time that covenants were established between parties by each walking between halves of killed animals. If any party of the covenant should break the covenant, then they should become like the dead animals. After Abraham killed the animals as the Lord commanded, Abraham did not walk and make the oath. But in Abraham’s vision the smoking pot and flaming torch passed based between the dead animals. This vision showed that the Lord took the oath to keep the covenant, not Abraham. Moreover, the Lord made further promises about the future of Abraham’s descendants.

In Romans chapter 4 St. Paul carefully notes the significance of God’s covenant with Abraham. Abraham did nothing in the covenant; the covenant was not a work of Abraham. Rather the covenant was a gift of God to Abraham. Abraham believed and received God’s covenant and that faith in God was counted as Abraham’s righteousness.

God promises and does things for we sinful humans that we could never do ourselves. When we trust and believe in these promises we are counted as righteous and holy before God. Faith is relying on God, and not on our own sinful thinking and imperfect works. God constantly calls all people to look to His final gift, Jesus Christ, the Son of God:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

Think of how the angel directed the shepherds to look for the baby Jesus. Don’t look to yourselves for salvation, look to Jesus!

And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” Luke 2:10-12

Please pray with me: Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for giving Abraham such great faith to believe promises that were impossible for him to do, but You could do in his life. There are also things in my life that are impossible for me to do alone. Bring Your word and promises to me. Build up faith in me to trust You to save me and work out all things according to Your will. Help me to firmly believe that You hold all things in Your hands. Amen.

Now may the peace of God that passes all understanding guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

Hymn *The Lord's My Shepherd*

Lutheran Service Book 710 Public Domain

1 The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green; He leadeth me
The quiet waters by.

For Thou art with me, and Thy rod
And staff me comfort still.

2 My soul He doth restore again
And me to walk doth make
Within the paths of righteousness,
E'en for His own name's sake.

4 My table Thou hast furnished
In presence of my foes;
My head Thou dost with oil anoint,
And my cup overflows.

3 Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,
Yet will I fear no ill;

5 Goodness and mercy all my life
Shall surely follow me;
And in God's house forevermore
My dwelling place shall be.

Prayers

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs. *Brief silence*

For the faithful proclamation of Jesus Christ to those who do not know Him, that through hearing the Word of the Lord many may be brought to faith and to the knowledge of the truth, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the Church of God here and everywhere, that all who confess Jesus Christ may be united in doctrine and witness, defended against all the assaults of the enemy, and eager to gather together around Your Word and Sacrament in love for one another, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For this congregation, Zion Lutheran Church, we thank the Lord for the work of His Kingdom that He enables us to do in our community. We pray for the resources to accomplish all that He desires, so that His name may be glorified among us and His purpose be fulfilled in our words and works, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the agencies and institutions through which we love our neighbor and provide for those in need, for the destitute and homeless, and for everyone who suffers unemployment and underemployment, that we may aid them in their needs and assist them to find honorable labor to supply all their needs, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those who help us every day and in times of trouble, that the Lord would daily protect, guide and strengthen them and their families: for firefighters, law-enforcement, emergency workers, doctors, nurses and all medical workers, for utility workers, food producers, retail and transportation workers, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the lonely who suffer the burdens of life without friendship or family, for those depressed or weary of pandemic measures, and for the fellowship of the Church, that we may bear one another's burdens and live in community with Christ as our head, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the sick and those who suffer, [*especially* _____,] that God would grant healing to their bodies, peace for their minds, and consolation in their grief and sorrows, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

(In Zion Lutheran's prayers: Margaret; Norma; Lillian; Carolyn; Charlotte; Henry; Lincoln; Isaac; Julie; Loretta; Cathie; Karlyn; Mark; Dan; Kathy; Shirley; David; Carlton; daughter of Julie; Bill; and Pastor Berlin.)

For love of godly things, that we may delight in God's Word and walk in His ways; and for the Spirit, that we may be led into all truth and kept from error and false doctrine, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the nation, for those who lead our nation, for the end of the pandemic, for peace among nations, and for an end to terror and violence, that we may work for the common good so that justice may prevail, life be protected and truth abound, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

O Lord, our God, as we recall the obedient life and life-giving death of Your Son for our salvation, we pray You to strengthen our faith and to make our hearts bold, that we may not fear but address our prayers to You in all humility. Hear us on behalf of Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, who even now stands before You on our behalf, pleading our cause with His own blood, until that day when we are delivered from the changes and chances of this mortal life and stand before You in heaven; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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

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.

O Lord, hear my prayer. **And let my cry come to You.**

Let us bless the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

You are invited to listen to hymns and use other resources at www.zionrco.org.

Order of Prayer adapted from "Matins," *Lutheran Service Book*, Concordia Publishing House. Prayer adapted from LC-MS Three-Year Series Prayers for May 17, 2020. <https://www.lcms.org/worship/three-year-series-prayers>

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all. **Amen.**