



Sunday Devotion for Martin Luther Church

4th Sunday after Pentecost, June 28, 2020

A warm welcome to watch this devotion and related videos at
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIjEQnirqCMNPBFHMs4oYY30Mg-6fNerB>

A. GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

Words of Welcome

Grace and peace to you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Good morning,

as the ministry team from Martin Luther Church and Redeemer Lutheran we decided that we are going to start a summer series called "Summer with Romans". Till the end of August we'll preach every Sunday, both in our video and radio devotions, about a different part of Paul's letter to the Romans. And starting on July 8th we'll have a new mid-weekly bible study called "Roman Coffee" and "Roman Lunch".



The text for this Sunday is from Romans 6 and I'm going to explore with you what it means to be a "weapon of justice" and therefore will not only have a look at justice, but at discrimination and equality as well.

Let us celebrate this service in the name of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Prayer of the Day

Let us pray:

O God, you direct our lives by your grace, and your words of justice and mercy reshape the world. Mold us into a people who welcome your word and serve one another, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord.

Amen.

B. WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18, read by Jocelyn

1 Your love, O Lord, forever will I sing;
from age to age my mouth will proclaim your faithfulness.
2 For I am persuaded that your steadfast love is established forever;
you have set your faithfulness firmly in the heavens.
3 "I have made a covenant with my chosen one;



I have sworn an oath to David my servant:
4'I will establish your line forever,
and preserve your throne for all generations.'"
15Happy are the people who know the festal shout!
They walk, O Lord, in the light of your presence.
16They rejoice daily in your name;
they are jubilant in your righteousness.
17For you are the glory of their strength,
and by your favor our might is exalted.
18Truly, our shield belongs to the Lord;
our king to the Holy One of Israel.

Reading: Romans 6:12-23, read by Tanya (*The Inclusive Bible*)

12So don't let sin rule your mortal body and make you obey its lusts; 13don't offer the members of your body to sin as weapons of injustice any more. Rather, offer yourselves to God as people alive from the dead, and your bodies to God as weapons for justice. 14Sin no longer has power over you, for you are now under grace, not under the Law. 15Where does all this lead? Just because we are not under the Law but under grace, are we free to sin? By no means! 16You must realize that when you offer yourselves to someone else in obedience, you are bound to obey that person, whether you subject yourself to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to justice. 17Thanks be to God, that though once you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that rule of teaching imparted to you; 18freed from your sin, you became forever committed to justice. 19I use the following example from human affairs because of your weak human nature. Just as you used to enslave your bodies to impurity and licentiousness for their degradation, now make them stewards of justice for their sanctification. 20When you were slaves to sin, you felt no need to work for justice. 21What benefit did you enjoy from these things that you are now ashamed of, all of which lead to death? 22But now that you are freed from sin and have offered yourselves to God in obedience, your benefit is that you are being made holy; your outcome is eternal life. 23The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Savior.

Sermon by Vicar Silke Fahl

"offer [...] your bodies to God as weapons to justice"

That is the sentence that stuck out to me during my sermon prep this week. And I don't even like weapons. In fact, I sometimes wish there were none at all. Especially not those used to hurt and kill people. And yet this sentence practically jumped at me. Though with it came a lot of associations like how to use weapons for justice or what weapons of justice might be.

One of the things that came to mind right away was a quote from the prophet Micah, chapter 4, verse 3. It says, *"They will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; one nation will not raise the sword against another, and never again will they train for war."*

"Swords into plowshares" was the motto and symbol of the peace movement in the DDR, the German Democratic Republic. And while the part of the letter to the Romans we just heard isn't explicitly about peace, I believe the two are interconnected.

Only where there is true justice can there be peace. And the foundation for true justice is full



equality for all people. Irrespective of a person's skin colour, gender, sexual orientation, social standing, age, where they were born and/or raised, educational background, if they are disabled. You name it. The list of things for which people are discriminated against is very long and many people face not only one type of discrimination, but several. That is called intersectional discrimination. And more often than not it then almost impossible discern why exactly someone is being discriminated.

A black woman for example experiences racism and sexism. Often at the same time. They are interconnected and can't be separated from one another. Though the focal point may shift, meaning that sometimes it's racist sexism and other times sexist racism. A black woman told me that at her workplace, where she is in a leadership position, she has been addressed by her first name from the beginning. At the same everyone talks about her white, male predecessor by his last name. It's not clear if it is because of her race or her gender, which means it is an example of intersectional discrimination and it doesn't matter whether it's mostly sexist or mostly racist.

What matters is that we realise and recognise that we can't only try and get rid of racism, or sexism, or ableism or homophobia. We need to address all those sources of discrimination. Only then can this world become a better, safer place for all people. A place where Martin Luther King's speech "I have a dream" finally comes true. A place where BIPOC or people with a foreign sounding name don't have to worry that they won't even get invited to a job interview or to look at an apartment. A place where a transgender person can express their identity without being afraid of getting beaten up or worse. A place where a woman doesn't have to be afraid to walk home alone at night.

"offer [...] your bodies to God as weapons to justice"

When I read that sentence, I think of the fight for social justice and equality for all people. But what does that actually mean? What can we do to make it reality?

Joining sit-ins and demonstrations, signing petitions and speaking up publicly is one way to go. Yet at the end of the day it's not merely – I would even say predominantly – about those public statements.

I think it's much more important to reflect on and work on our thought processes and everyday behaviours. To consider if a well-meant question or comment isn't actually racist or sexist or whatever. Like asking BIPOC, "Where are you really from?" Would you want to answer those kinds of questions every day of your life? I hazard to guess that the answer is no.

When in doubt think of the golden rule from Matthew 7, "*In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.*" Or of Immanuel Kant's categorial imperative: "Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law."

If we try and act according to that and to love our neighbours as ourselves, it doesn't mean that we won't make mistakes. Yet I believe that it helps us to work towards justice and equality. And while Paul speaks of offering our bodies as weapons, I don't think that that necessarily means an offensive weapon. The idea of using or being a weapon to administer justice isn't related to violence at all, but in using the love of God to combat wrongs or



injustice. Thus it can also mean being a shield as long as we don't drown out the voices of the people we want to help. The goal has to be to make their voices heard and to stand next to them, support them.

Minorities and marginalised people have been invisible long enough. We, who are privileged, have the obligation to be quiet sometimes, to really see them and to listen to their voices. Yet not listen to answer or defend, but listen to understand.

Amen.

"And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your mind in Christ Jesus."

Amen.

Hymn: Holy Spirit, Ever Dwelling ELW 582

Holy Spirit, ever dwelling / in the holiest realms of light;
Holy Spirit, ever brooding / o'er a world of gloom and night;
Holy Spirit, ever raising / those of earth to thrones on high;
living, life-imparting Spirit, / you we praise and magnify.

Holy Spirit, ever living / as the church's very life;
Holy Spirit, ever striving / through us in a ceaseless strife;
Holy Spirit, ever forming / in the church the mind of Christ:
you we praise with endless worship / for your gifts and fruits unpriced.

Holy Spirit, ever working / through the church's ministry;
quick'ning, strength'ning, and absolving, / setting captive sinners free;
Holy Spirit, ever binding / age to age and soul to soul
in communion never ending, / you we worship and extol.

Prayers of Intercession, read by Iris

Called into unity with one another and the whole creation, let us pray for our shared world.

God of companionship, encourage our relationships with our siblings in Christ. Bless our conversations. Shape our shared future and give us hearts eager to join in a festal shout of praise.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of abundance, you make your creation thrive and grow to provide all that we need. Inspire us to care for our environment and be attuned to where the earth is crying out.
Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of mercy, your grace is poured out for all. Inspire authorities, judges, and politicians to act with compassion. Teach us to overcome fear with hope, meet hate with love, and welcome one another as we would welcome you.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of care, accompany our daycare board members and staff as they are working tirelessly to follow the very stringent regulations of the ministry to open the much-needed mission of providing care to children and families in the Martin Luther Church day care. God of



Community, we give thanks for this congregation. Give us passion to embrace your mission and the vision to recognize where you are leading us. Teach us how to live more faithfully with each other.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of life, we pray for all who celebrated their birthdays in the past week, especially for Ralph, Annette, Frank, Anitta, Christel, Peggy, and Carmen. Bless them as they walk into a new year of their lives. Surround them with your love and your grace.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of love, you gather in your embrace all who have died. Keep us steadfast in our faith and renew our trust in your promise.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Receive these prayers, O God, and those too deep for words; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

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.**

C. SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.
The Lord look upon you and give you peace.
Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Share the good news.

Thanks be to God.



Announcements

In light of the current COVID-19 outbreak, **all meetings and worship services are taking place virtually.**

- Sunday [Video Devotions](#) are on our [YouTube Channel](#). Please subscribe and comment.
- German [Radio Devotions](#) on our website and Sundays at 9.30 am on CHLO Radio AM 530
- [Virtual Sunday Coffee Hour](#) at 11:00 am on Zoom (invitation sent by office)
- [Sunday School lessons](#) on our website (April-June)
- [Virtual Coffee Shop Talk](#), Mondays 7:00-9:00 pm on Zoom led by Vicar Silke Fahl. Email vicarfahl@martinluther.ca to sign up.
- [Virtual Prayer Circle](#), Wednesdays 5:30-6:00 pm through Zoom led by Solveig Christina Voss; we also have a Prayer Request Wall in the Church Foyer To request a prayer or join our prayer circle, email prayers@martinluther.ca.
- A Summer with Romans:
 - ◊ Sermon Series until August 30
 - ◊ Bible Study: Wednesdays July 8-August 26. A 30-minute weekly discussion of Paul's letter to the Romans. Two opportunities: Roman Coffee at 8:30 am and Roman Lunch at 12:15 pm. Email vicarsmith@martinluther.ca to sign up.
- [Give Peas a Chance](#)- A grow some, give some movement hosted by Martin Luther and Redeemer Lutheran with donated seeds.
- A Facemask for Everyone - a project to ensure that everyone who wants to protect themselves from the virus has access to masks. Everyone who wants to get involved can find an activity that suits them . Contact Vicar Adam McComb if you'd like to volunteer, vicarmccomb@martinluther.ca
- [Corona-Care Calls](#)- Volunteers are continuing to call you with more information and to understand your needs. Let us know if you'd like to join the call team!
- Please phone or email the church office:
 - ◊ if we can help you in any way
 - ◊ if you'd like to volunteer by doing Sunday readings
 - ◊ with feedback on what we're offering
 - ◊ to support our church and [donate](#). Best ways are PAR or send cheque to church office.

Martin Luther Evangelical Lutheran Church

2379 Lake Shore Blvd. W, Toronto, ON M8V 1B7

Office: (416) 251 8293, churchoffice@martinluther.ca, More information: www.martinluther.ca

Pastoral Care: Cell (416) 567-2487, pastor@martinluther.ca

Vicar Silke Fahl, vicarfahl@martinluther.ca, Cell: 905-717-5937

Vicar Adam McComb, vicarmccomb@martinluther.ca, Vicar Jordan Smith, vicarsmith@martinluther.ca

Organist & Choir Director: Linda Marcinkus

Member of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) &
Partnered with Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD)