



## Sunday Devotion for Martin Luther Church

8th Sunday after Pentecost, July 26, 2020

**A warm welcome to watch this devotion and related videos at**

**<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIjEQnirqCMN9LIRPbxqoxKjbiM15VKhb>**

### A. GATHERING

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

#### Words of Welcome

Hello and welcome in the summer with Romans at the Martin Luther Church. My name is Iris Schweiger and I am a lay preacher. Today's sermon will focus on Paul's letter to the Romans as the spirit helps us in our weakness.

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



#### Prayer of the Day

Let us Pray:

Beloved and sovereign God, through the death and resurrection of your Son you bring us into your kingdom of justice and mercy. By your Spirit, give us your wisdom, that we may treasure the life that comes from Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

### B. WORD

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

#### Psalm 119:129-136

<sup>129</sup>Your decrees are wonderful;  
therefore I obey them with all my heart.

<sup>130</sup>When your word is opened it gives light;  
it gives understanding to the simple.

<sup>131</sup>I open my mouth and pant  
because I long for your commandments.

<sup>132</sup>Turn to me and be gracious to me,  
as you always do to those who love your name.

<sup>133</sup>Order my footsteps in your word;  
let no iniquity have dominion over me.

<sup>134</sup>Rescue me from those who oppress me,  
and I will keep your commandments.

<sup>135</sup>Let your face shine upon your servant  
and teach me your statutes.

<sup>136</sup>My eyes shed streams of tears,  
because people do not keep your teaching.

## Reading: Romans 8:26-39

<sup>26</sup>The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. <sup>27</sup>And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

<sup>28</sup>We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup>For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. <sup>30</sup>And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

<sup>31</sup>What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? <sup>32</sup>He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? <sup>33</sup>Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup>Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. <sup>35</sup>Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>36</sup>As it is written,

"For your sake we are being killed all day long;  
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered."

<sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup>For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup>nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## Sermon by Iris Schweiger, Lay Preacher

Gracious God, give us open ears and mind to hear and understand. Amen

26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; (Paul says) for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.

About 8 weeks ago, when I preached the last time at the Martin Luther Church, it was all about prayer. When I opened the passage for this week, Paul writes to the young church in Rome and the first line is about prayer. I guess, we are not done with prayer yet. It follows us into the summer.

Paul adds two new elements. Weakness and the Spirit. Even in all my weakness, even when I cannot find the right words, the Spirit steps in to help. The Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. That is a very calming thought.

Especially during these turbulent times of uncertainty due to Covid 19 and the voices of Anti-Black Racism. In both cases I stand before God speechless. My weakness is quite the burden as I do not know how to be helpful in this situation and how I can influence change. I am very much bothered by the question what to do with helping refugees as that is one of the ministries at our church. How can I answer to God about bringing refugees into Canada while I know full well that many of them will be discriminated against because of their skin colour, orientation, culture? Many will fall into the category of the underprivileged. These thoughts really get to me.

An e-mail in June from the Institute for Canadian Citizenship re-enforced these worries. New Canadians were asked how Covid-19 affects their lives. The survey shows that 64 percent of new Canadian citizens fear **increased discrimination** due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They do not fear discrimination, they fear increased discrimination. Furthermore one in ten reported to have been targeted during the crisis. Every 10<sup>th</sup> new Canadian suffers discrimination of some sort or another.

In the last weeks I have started extensive research into the subject of discrimination. I have only just begun reading, listening and learning and noticed this is reality. Refugees, wonderful people we are helping to come to Canada to start a better life in peace and harmony, people of darker skin colour, with a different outlook and lower income are systematically treated poorly. This did not start today. It is deeply engraved into the makeup of our society.

During a seminar on discrimination I was asked to do a simple test as discrimination is often hidden and does not appear on the radar in daily life.

If you like, please also try it. Take a magazine, any magazine. I took the car magazine from the CAA and rifled through. On the pages I found pictures over pictures of white people. Only one advertising piece showing a father and daughter as well as the introduction of the chief editor showed photos of people of different races.

What do your magazines look like? Do you find the multicultural make-up of Canada on your pages or is your magazine just as uni-coloured as mine? What does it do to us? To our thinking, to our subconscious, our doings?

The next example really brought it home for me. Imagine walking into the house of a family of five. All over the walls are pictures of the father, the mother and two of the three children. It does not matter which room you enter; you will find photos of those four people but not one picture of the third child. What does that do to the child? What does that do to the family? How does it reflect into the greater mesh of society?

This is really a very simple experiment and only a tiny beginning to look at society anew, and how to see myself in this society from a different perspective. Who and what am I really to my neighbour? As Christians we have the responsibility to become active advocates. As the racial Advisory Committee of the Easter Synod writes: We, the committee that represents your Synod, feel called to use our pulpits and platforms to speak out against racism. To shine a light on the ways in which racism exists in our community, and to pledge to do the work to make changes. To stand in solidarity with all who live with racial injustice as a daily reality. We feel called to pray fervently, to write persistently, and to encourage one another to allow God to work in us and through us for equity, love and an end to all forms of discrimination and racism.

Until recently, I really believed that Canada was the country of openness and acceptance. Now I have to and would like to revise this attitude and try to realign myself. It is time to start the next attempt to walk in Jesus' footsteps. The footsteps of love for **every** neighbour. And as a beginning, hear my prayer.

Spirit, help me out of my weakness of ignorance. Help my prayer so that my eyes are wide

open to see the need in the here and now. Give me the courage to listen when it gets uncomfortable and then the chance to grow beyond myself. God, you promised that we could start anew. Please let me start again like Jesus did and as I have read in Romans: Jesus met everyone with love and that is my job as described in verse 29. ... God proclaimed that we should be like his son.

The peace of God, which is higher than all reason, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.  
AMEN

### **Hymn: Shall We Gather at the River ELW 423**

Shall we gather at the river, / where bright angel feet have trod,  
with its crystal tide forever / flowing by the throne of God?

#### **Refrain**

Yes, we'll gather at the river, / the beautiful, the beautiful river;  
gather with the saints at the river / that flows by the throne of God.

On the margin of the river, / washing up its silver spray,  
we will walk and worship ever, / all the happy golden day. **Refrain**

Ere we reach the shining river, / lay we ev'ry burden down;  
grace our spirits will deliver, / and provide a robe and crown. **Refrain**

Soon we'll reach the shining river, / soon our pilgrimage will cease;  
soon our happy hearts will quiver / with the melody of peace. **Refrain**

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Confident of your care and helped by the Holy Spirit, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

Merciful God, your reign is revealed to us in common things: a mustard shrub, a woman baking bread, a fishing net. Help your church witness to the surprising yet common ways you encounter us in daily life.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

When your word is opened, it gives light and understanding. Increase our understanding and awe of your creation; guide the work of scientists and researchers. Treasuring the earth, may we live as grateful and healing caretakers of our home.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

As the birds of the air nest in branches of trees, gather the nations of the world into the welcoming shade of your merciful reign. Direct leaders of nations to build trust with each other and walk in the way of peace and healing in the midst of a pandemic and awareness as we listen to our indigenous and black sisters and brothers.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Your Spirit helps us in our weakness and intercedes for the saints according to your will. Help us when we do not know how to pray. Give comfort especially to Frau Pahnke in her loneliness, refuge to the weary, justice to those who are oppressed, and healing to the sick.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You show steadfast love and direct us to ask of you what we need. Help this congregation ask boldly for what is most needed. Refresh us with new dreams of being your people in this place and time.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for birthday child Horst who celebrated his special day last week, be with him during these trying times. Hold your protective hand over him.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In you our lives are never lost. Strengthen us by the inspiring witness of your people in all times and places. Embolden our witness now and one day gather us with all your saints in light. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

**The Lord's Prayer**  
**Our Father, who art in heaven**  
**Hallowed by 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**

Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. God, the creator, Jesus, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the comforter, bless you and keep you in eternal love. **Amen.**

### **Dismissal**

Go in peace. Christ is with you.

**Thanks be to God.**

## Announcements

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

- Sunday [Video Devotions](#): Live-streamed at 10:00 am on Facebook and Zoom at Redeemer Lutheran Church and shared 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](#) (April-June) on our website
- [Virtual Coffee Shop Talk](#), Mondays 7:00-9:00 pm on Zoom led by Vicar Silke Fahl. Email [vicarfahl@martinluther.ca](mailto: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](mailto:prayers@martinluther.ca).
- A Summer with Romans:
  - ◊ Sermon Series until August 30
  - ◊ Bible Study on Sunday's sermon text: Wednesdays until 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](mailto: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.
- [Masks for Good](#) - 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](mailto: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 or to give feedback on what we're offering
  - ◊ if you'd like to volunteer by reading during Sunday services
  - ◊ 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, Cell: (416) 567-2487, [churchoffice@martinluther.ca](mailto:churchoffice@martinluther.ca), [www.martinluther.ca](http://www.martinluther.ca)

Vicar Silke Fahl, [vicarfahl@martinluther.ca](mailto:vicarfahl@martinluther.ca), Cell: 905-717-5937

Vicar Adam McComb, [vicarmccomb@martinluther.ca](mailto:vicarmccomb@martinluther.ca), Vicar Jordan Smith, [vicarsmith@martinluther.ca](mailto:vicarsmith@martinluther.ca)

Organist & Choir Director: Linda Marcinkus

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