



Queen Anne

LUTHERAN CHURCH

Called to Proclaim God's Love in Christ for Every Person

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✘ *Staff* ✘

Pastor	The Rev. Dr. Dan Peterson
Cantor	Kyle Haugen
Children's Ministry Coordinator	Terry Anderson
Parish Administrator	Barbara Bash
Sexton	John Bryant

✘ *In Worship Today* ✘

Pastor	The Rev. Dr. Dan Peterson
Cantor	Kyle Haugen
Lector	Lori Lynn Phillips
Piano (Postlude)	Annika Lundsgaard

This service of worship can also be heard as audio online. Go to queenannelutheran.org and click on "WORD OUT" to find audio, video, and print resources for worship at home.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 30, 2020

"Word Out #26 audio transcript



Prelude

Flute Piece
William Hine (1687-1730)

Welcome


- ☐: Welcome, this thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost. Wherever you are listening, however you may be struggling, we invite you into this space: one where you can hear the good news in proclamation, spoken and sung; a time where you can be still and know God is God.
- ☐: In today's Gospel, when Peter doesn't grasp Jesus' words about suffering, Jesus tells the disciples they will find their lives in losing them. Such is the "cost of discipleship," as Dietrich Bonhoeffer refers to it, living no longer simply for oneself, but for others. In worship we gather in spirit as a community, that we might offer ourselves for the sake of our suffering world.

Greeting

- ☐: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
- ☑: And also with you.


Gospel Acclamation

Ephesians 1:17-18


G: 
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Repeat alleluia


Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

P: May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our hearts,
so that we may know the hope to which God has called us.

G: 
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.


Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

The Holy Gospel:

Matthew 16:21-28

P: The Holy Gospel according to Matthew, the sixteenth chapter.

G: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

²¹From that time on, [after Peter confessed that Jesus was the Messiah,] Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²²And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to

you.” ²³But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

²⁴Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. ²⁶For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?

²⁷“For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. ²⁸Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

Caught in the Orbit of the Lectionary
Pastor Dan Peterson

Over the summer I have a tradition at Queen Anne Lutheran Church three years in the making. I invite suggestions from you for sermon topics. I do this because I want to meet you where they are, to hear and address your questions instead of simply responding to mine.

The suggestions have quite a range. Sometimes they are controversial. The summer before last I was asked to preach, for example, on immigration. I preached on it again last summer following the decision of the ELCA to become a sanctuary church.

Sometimes your sermon suggestions have been *extremely* controversial. Last August, I preached the longest sermon of my life – 34 minutes – in response to the suggestion that I address the topic of homosexuality. I did so with trepidation, but not over what you might think. I was afraid of how the congregation would react...*to a 34 minute sermon*. Beyond that, I found myself wondering, WWDSS?

That is, *what would Dan Squires say?*

(Dan, a faithful attendee of our 8am service, has helped me become more concise over the last few years by timing my sermons. We will, sadly, be wishing Dan and Deb farewell as Deb, having completed her internship to become a pastor, will be taking a call at another church. You can read more about their time at Queen Anne Lutheran and the transition they are making in the September edition of *The Quill*.)

Other sermon suggestions, unlike the topic of immigration or homosexuality, have been more abstract. One submission I received a couple years ago asked about hell – “what it’s like, whether it exists, and why so many *Calvinists* end up there.”

It’s a question, after years of study and a PhD in theology that even I can’t answer.

This summer the suggested topics have been consistently more concrete. One person asked about how the Christian faith views success and ambition, which I addressed briefly in a sermon I preached a few weeks back. Another person, shortly after the death of George Floyd, wondered if I would consider preaching about reparations to the African American community for slavery, a topic *The Washington Post* identified in January of this year as possibly “the single most divisive idea in American politics” (Thai Jones, 1/31/20).

So wait – the single most divisive idea in American politics? Not exactly something a majority of pastors would want to address from the pulpit!

That said, it’s a fantastic question: how might our values as Followers of the Way (see Acts 24:14), especially the commitment we have to social justice, inform a truly *Christian* response to the issue? Fortunately, our first forum series this fall on race and religion will provide the time and space to address a question of this magnitude far more adequately than I can do here.

Today, then, I want to try something different. I want to address a topic that, were I sitting in the pew this Sunday, I would want to hear about from another preacher.

Selecting my own topic means I will have to break with a second tradition as well, a tradition I have observed almost every Sunday since I began my ministry at Queen Anne Lutheran in 2016: I must break from preaching on the lectionary.

Now, as you can imagine, departing from the lectionary to preach on a topic of my own choosing has a couple potentially negative consequences. It not only renders the content of my message inconsistent with the hymns our cantor and I selected for this service. It also means I am going to skip a Gospel reading – Matthew 16:21-28 – rich in significance. After all, this is the passage where Jesus rejects the same temptation he encountered in the wilderness, the temptation to worldly power, which is why, when Peter gives voice to it again, Jesus says, “Get behind me, Satan!”

That’s right. Peter, the man the Catholic Church, based on this passage, claims to be the *first pope*, was *momentarily* the mouthpiece of Satan! He echoes the same temptation Jesus encountered and overcame in the wilderness. That doesn’t mean, of course, that the Catholic Church continues to be the mouthpiece of the evil one! It certainly has its problems, but it has another side too, one I was fortunate enough to encounter as a student at two Catholic universities and a professor at one.

What I *do see* in this passage is Peter’s humanity. Libby Barlow of *The Christian Century* (August 30, 22A) explains: “Mere moments after Jesus praises [Peter] as a star pupil, the foundation from which every generation of believers will be built, *Peter messes up in grand fashion*. He refuses to believe that Jesus’ ministry will end with betrayal and crucifixion, and he begs Jesus not to speak of such nonsense anymore.”

We mess up this way too, don’t we? We refuse sometimes to see the vulnerability and humiliation of Jesus. We forget that he was once called the Man of Sorrows. We celebrate the power and the glory, counting Easter with its empty tomb and Christ’s triumph over death as the most important “holiday” of the church year, neglecting Ash Wednesday and forgetting Good Friday.

Skipping today's lectionary reading means, unfortunately, that we miss the insight Jesus squeezes out of Peter's all-too-human mistake. Jesus there invites us to "define divine things differently." "It turns out," Barlow writes, that Peter's daydreams of the divine are, instead, human things: our own projection of who God is. Like Peter, we imagine a God who is remote and magical, invincible and impeccable. A God far removed from our concerns, perpetually triumphant. This is not the God revealed by and in Jesus: instead, it's a work of our human imagination."

The scandalous truth of God in Christ, it turns out, is that God dwells in places where we least expect God to be. "God enters every mean and awful thing," Barlow says, "so that what seems like the worst of our world might be the very places where we meet the most holy." This is Martin Luther's theology of the cross, which he retrieved from the Apostle Paul after centuries of neglect.

According to Paul in 1 Corinthians, God has thwarted the wisdom of the wise by dwelling in places that hide God's presence – places that require faith; places, as the historian of religion Mircea Eliade observes, that "camouflage" the sacred, places where we would least expect God to be, places like the crucifixion and with it the broken body of an innocent human being. (An observation that becomes all the more real when we think of broken bodies like George Floyd's.)

Now perhaps you can see why I wanted to avoid the lectionary today.

It is *hard* to find God in the lowly places: in pain, in suffering, and in weakness. When I find myself in these places, when the chronic pain I experience spikes, or when I think of those tucked away in hospitals, drained of life to stave off death in chemotherapy, or mourning the loss of a loved one alone in their home, I often feel, and this is probably strange for a pastor to admit, like *God is absent* and that I as a pastor am powerless to do anything.

Let me repeat that: it's in the lowly places where I'm told to find God, that I least experience God. I feel like God is absent in these places, and I'm reminded of how powerless I truly am.

Yes, Peter has his mind set on human things, the wrong things, destructive things. He idolizes power. History teaches us that s/he who idolizes power claims it at the expense of others, lording it over them and making them suffer for it.

But turning one's gaze from *power to pain* and seeking God there – that requires *faith*, trust that God is there in spite of what you feel. And I confess: it remains the biggest hurdle in my own faith journey. Perhaps it is yours too. And perhaps this is why we need one another especially when we find ourselves in these “lowly places” as reminders that God, somehow, is present to us through each other, especially in moments where we feel otherwise. This is what makes our faith community so important, for it is here that God promises to be present, camouflaged by a kind word, a helping hand, a meaningful card, or a phone conversation with a friend.

Jesus tells us today to take up our cross and follow him. He doesn't say, however, that we have to do it alone. May we have the courage to reach out to others when we feel we are, and may we have the compassion to reach out to others when we feel *they are*.

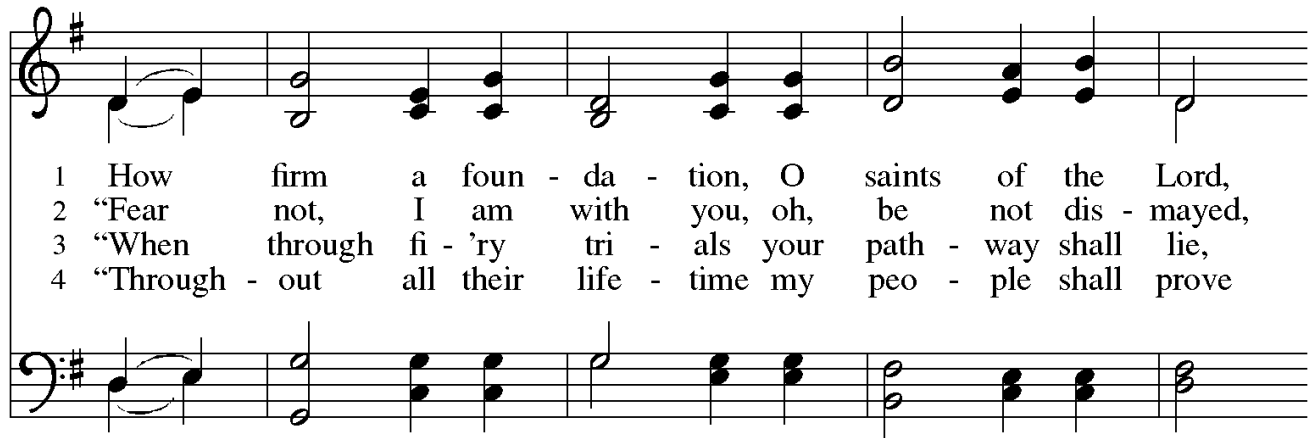
So, yes, the lectionary. My intentions were good: I was fascinated by something Luther wrote in his Small Catechism, so much so that I shared it at last Sunday's coffee hour and resolved then to make it the focus of today's message. But that quote from Luther can wait, for he was as I am here: captive to the Word of God. Caught, you might say, in the orbit of the lectionary.

Amen.

Hymn of the Day

How Firm a Foundation

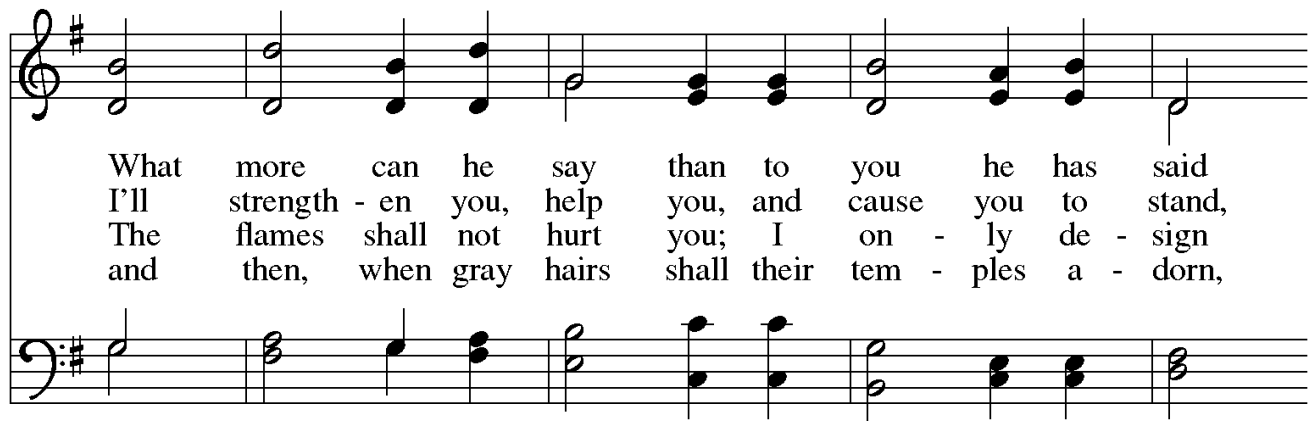
ELW 796




1 How firm a foun - da - tion, O saints of the Lord,
2 "Fear not, I am with you, oh, be not dis - mayed,
3 "When through fi - 'ry tri - als your path - way shall lie,
4 "Through - out all their life - time my peo - ple shall prove



is laid for your faith in Christ Je - sus, the Word!
for I am your God and will still give you aid;
my grace, all - suf - fi - cient, shall be your sup - ply.
my sov - 'reign, e - ter - nal, un - change - a - ble love;



What more can he say than to you he has said
I'll strength - en you, help you, and cause you to stand,
The flames shall not hurt you; I on - ly de - sign
and then, when gray hairs shall their tem - ples a - dorn,



who un - to the Sav - ior for ref - uge have fled?
up - held by my righ - teous, om - nip - o - tent hand."
your dross to con - sume and your gold to re - fine."
like lambs they shall still in my bo - som be borne."

Prayers of the Church

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

A brief silence.

P: God of faithfulness, you bid your people to follow Jesus. Set the mind of your church on divine things. Grant us trust in you, that we may lose our lives for the sake of Christ and thereby discover joy in life through him. Lord, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: God of wonder, the earth is yours and all that is in it. Heal your creation and give us eyes to see the world as you do. As the seasons change, pattern the rhythm of our lives in harmony with all creation. Lord, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: God of all nations, you call us to live peaceably with others. Give us ears to hear one another, even those we name as enemies. Fill all leaders with mercy and understanding, that they advocate and genuinely care for those who are poor and most vulnerable in their communities. Lord, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: God of salvation, you promise to deliver us. Give those who suffer a strong sense of your presence and love. Accompany those who are uncertain, raise the spirits of those who are despairing, and heal the sick, especially those who have fallen ill due to Covid-19. Lord, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: God of community, you call us to rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, and persevere in prayer. Make our congregation a workshop of your love. When we quarrel, bring reconciliation. Help us overcome evil with good. Lord, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: For whom or what else do the people of God pray?

A silence is given so that your prayers may be offered.

P: Lord, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: God of all grace, you give us everlasting life. In love we recall your holy ones who live now in other ways. In our remembering, give us hope and courage.
Lord, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

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

C: **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

P: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

C: **Our Father in heaven,**

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come, your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,

now and forever.

Amen.

Announcements

P: We thank you for joining us for this service. If you would like to hear other services or access the newest edition of *the Quill*, our newsletter, we invite you to go to our website at queenannelutheran.org.

P: Receive now the blessing:

Benediction

A: Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

P: Almighty God, the Father, † the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
bless and preserve you.

C: Amen.

Dismissal

P: Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Postlude

Promenade I from Pictures at an Exhibition
Modest Mussorgsky (1839–1881)
Annika Lundsgaard, piano