

# Liturgy for use at home for the Sunday "Trinity 17" (26.09.2021)

The **Watchword** for this week is found in 1 John 5, 4c: *This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.*

**Song/Hymn:** LH 185 Sun of Righteousness 1+4-6

1 Sun of righteousness divine,  
in these days of darkness shine;  
dawn upon your church, we pray,  
that the world may greet your day.  
Have mercy, Lord.

4. Let your kingdom spread and grow,  
and all evil overthrow;  
open doors, and let your light  
shine into the darkest night.  
Have mercy, Lord.

5. Give your pastors hope and love,  
faith and courage from above.  
When they sow the seed in tears,  
give them joy as fruit appears.  
Have mercy, Lord.

6. Let us all, in these our days,  
see your glory, sing your praise.  
Strengthen us by your great might,  
help us bravely fight our fight.  
Have mercy, Lord.1

Let us pray with words from **Psalm 138:**

*1 I will praise you, Lord, with all my heart; before the "gods" I will sing your praise.*

*2 I will bow down toward your holy temple and will praise your name for your unfailing love and your faithfulness, for you have so exalted your solemn decree that it surpasses your fame.*

*3 When I called, you answered me; you greatly emboldened me.*

*4 May all the kings of the earth praise you, Lord, when they hear what you have decreed.*

*5 May they sing of the ways of the Lord, for the glory of the Lord is great.*

*6 Though the Lord is exalted, he looks kindly on the lowly; though lofty, he sees them from afar.*

*7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life. You stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes; with your right hand you save me.*

*8 The Lord will vindicate me; your love, Lord, endures forever— do not abandon the works of your hands.*

**Prayer** (Let us pray)

Faithful God, Heavenly Father, we entrust ourselves to you in everything we are and what we do. Let us, through your grace, be certain of your love. Help us to be steadfast so that we do not waver, in order that we may confess your name among all people we meet. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and rules with you and the Holy Spirit now and forever. Amen

The **Epistle Reading** is found in Romans 10, 9-17

*9 If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. 11 As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." 12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." 14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15 And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" 16 But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" 17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.*

**Hymn:** O Holy Spirit, enter in (LH 124) 1-2

1 O Holy Spirit, enter in,  
and in our hearts your work begin,  
and make our hearts your dwelling.  
Sun of the soul, O Light divine,  
around and in us brightly shine,  
your strength in us upwelling.  
In your radiance  
life from heaven  
now is given  
overflowing,  
gift of gifts beyond all knowing.

2 Left to ourselves, we surely stray;  
O lead us on the narrow way,  
with wisest counsel guide us;  
and give us steadfastness, that we  
may follow you for ever free,  
no matter who derides us.  
Gently heal those  
hearts now broken;  
give some token  
you are near us,  
whom we trust to light and cheer us.

The **Gospel reading** is taken from the gospel of Matthew, chapter 15, verses 21-28

*21 Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. 22 A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly." 23 Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us." 24 He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." 25 The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. 26 He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." 27 "Yes it is, Lord," she said. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." 28 Then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that moment.*

Let us confess our faith with words from the **Apostolic 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, dead and buried.

He descended into the realm of the dead, 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.

**Hymn: LH415**

1What God ordains is always good:

his will is just and holy.

As he directs my life for me

I follow meek and lowly.

My God indeed

in every need

knows well how he will shield me;

to him, then, I will yield me.

2What God ordains is always good:

he never will deceive me;

he leads me in his own right way,

and never will he leave me.

I take content

what he has sent;

his hand that sends me sadness

will turn my tears to gladness.

3What God ordains is always good:

his loving thought attends me;

no poison can be in the cup

that my physician sends me.

My God is true;

each morning new

I trust his grace unending,

my life to him commending.

4What God ordains is always good:

he is my friend and father;

he will not let me come to harm

though many storms may gather.

Now I may know

both joy and woe;

some day I shall see clearly

that he has loved me dearly.

5 What God ordains is always good:  
this truth remains unshaken.  
Though sorrow, need, or death be mine,  
I shall not be forsaken.  
I fear no harm,  
for with his arm  
he shall embrace and shield me;  
so to my God I yield me.

**Sermon:** Trinity 17 Romans 10,9–17

Dear Congregation, last week the question came up whether Jesus could not strengthen our faith, and we heard that it is our trust in God, which should be strengthened. Today the theme continues: we heard the sermon text in the reading of the Epistle. In the letter to the Romans, his last, Paul reflects on, after many years of struggling with his faith, what faith is and what it brings me. What does trusting God bring me? Let's hear again what Paul says: *If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

This is one of the core sentences in the NT, a definition of faith if you will: Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised this Jesus from the dead - that is the centre of the Christian faith. I.o.w. believing in God, trusting in him, is not about a religious feeling or a religious experience; nor is it about fulfilling special commandments in order to earn God's love. No, believing in God is something existential. It's about salvation. Faith means being saved!

"... *you will be saved,*" is what it says at the end of this verse. This one word, *saved*, is crucial, because it tells me that this is not about a nice bonus that I get but actually can't use. It is about everything that is decisive in my life, what sets the direction for everything else in my life. But what exactly does it mean to be saved?

To me, to be saved means to be secure, accepted and not rejected; having arrived at a place where no one can drive me away from; an anchor in the midst of the many threats I face in life; freed from all that which should mean my end, death; freed from sin, which can only lead to death; freed from all the guilt that robs me of a meaningful life. The goal of faith is to be saved. Yes, the Christian faith is about saving our lives. Nothing less. Or in other words: saved to a life of fulfillment, where life makes sense, already now. Not only saved for eternity, but now! Not to be bound by laws, but to fulfil the laws out of love.

Faith does not just mean believing something, but believing in the one who can and will save me to such a life: in Jesus Christ, who does not just want to be a good person or an ethical example, but the one who decisively wants to intervene in my life; the one whose actions want to and can change my life existentially; the one who changed the world once and for all. He is the one who connects us with God, our Creator, who has overcome suffering and death and who makes and will make everything new. Jesus is the central figure who brought about this salvation and gives it to us. If we believe in him, no matter how small this faith, it will change our lives in concrete ways!

And how does that work in concrete terms in my life? How can I apply Jesus' salvation to my life? What is faith? - Paul mentions two aspects:

1. Trust! Trust that God raised Jesus from the dead. And that doesn't just happen in the head, but especially in the heart. Paul says: *from the heart*. For him it is something personal, something that affects us deeply, affects us on the inside. For anyone who truly trusts in God, it becomes a matter of the heart and it encompasses their whole life.

2. Confess! Confess with my mouth that Jesus is Lord, even if I only confess it to myself. That means that I no longer determine my life, but orientate my whole life around Jesus and live according to his will and make God's plans my guidelines. Paul emphasizes that this confession must be a public one - faith cannot be in the heart alone, but must be spoken on the lips and lived out. So, yes, it's something personal, but not something private that I can keep to myself. That I show that I belong to God belongs at centre of my life, in such a way that everyone around me can also see it.

And I know it's not always easy. We often ask ourselves: can I achieve this? Isn't my faith too small, too weak? Shouldn't I rather be silent? Paul would say no, because the sequence is also important to him in our text: he mentions confession first and then faith. This means that we trust that which we have heard from our ancestors, even if we do not believe it wholeheartedly. It is often a cautious belief, but it is one. And this grows and is consolidated when we enter into the words of the confession, when we first speak the words and then let the heart follow ...

But back to being saved. Paul continues:

*10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. 11 As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." 12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

Here Paul describes how to be saved: *Whoever will call on the name of the Lord ...* even if this calling is still filled with doubt and is still timid. We don't have to believe perfectly, we do not have to be heroes of faith from the start. We are allowed to bring our questions, our doubts, our fear and our need. The only thing that matters is that we call on the Lord and turn to him and not to any other saints or self-made gods. *Whoever calls on the name of the Lord ...* this means: Whoever puts his trust in this one God, this one Lord, is saved.

I quote words from the Heidelberg Catechism: *What is your one consolation in life and in death? - That I am in body and soul, both in life and in death, not mine own, but belong to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.*

That alone is important. Not good deeds, not excellent morals, not religious knowledge, or perfect wisdom. Not trusting in my own power and influence, my money or my health, but only the simple - sometimes fragmentary, doubtful, very timid - trust in the one God. This is what gives life. A trust that fills our heart. A trust that lets us join the confession that Christ is Lord, which sometimes precedes our faith.

So, what can we do to increase our faith? We can let ourselves be drawn into this confession, hear it over and over again, even if we don't really feel like it. We can join in the confession of faith and so practice our faith more and more. And God will keep his promise: "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Amen.

**Hymn:** O Holy Spirit, enter in (LH 124) 3

3 O mighty rock, O source of life,  
let your good word in doubt and strife  
be in us strongly burning,  
that we be faithful unto death  
and live in love and holy faith,  
from you true wisdom learning.  
Lord, your mercy  
on us shower;  
by your power  
Christ confessing,  
we will cherish all your blessing.

**Prayer of intercession**

Lord God, heavenly Father, you have revealed your salvation in Jesus Christ - we thank you for this. Although we know of your salvation and always seek your closeness, there is so much that hides you from us and makes it difficult to believe. That is why we turn to you and ask you: Look at the misery in our world: do not hide yourself from those, who have to live in poverty because they have become victims of profit maximization, who are sick and desperate because there is no prospect of a cure, who are inconsiderate because they do not recognize the needs of their fellow human beings, who have grown old and feel their age because their fellow human beings turn their backs on them, who don't expect anything from you because they think that too often they have believed in vain who lose sight of their neighbor because they can no longer love themselves, who are trapped in their arrogance because they think they can replace you. Lord, we doubt because we cannot see where in our world you are intervening and how. Let us be tools of your love so that there is no reason to give up our faith. We ask this of you through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen

**The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name  
Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven  
Give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those that sin against us.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil  
For yours is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory, Now and forever

**Blessing:**

The Lord bless us and keep us;  
The Lord make his face shine on us and be gracious to us;  
The Lord turn his face toward us and give us peace  
Amen

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The collection for this Sunday is for **the Solidarity Fund of NELCSA.**

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