

The Disciple

MAY 31, 2020

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Sermon for May 31, 2020

THE WEIGHT OF THE MATTER

We live in stressful times, and they are weighty. However, there is a reality that should weigh heavier on our minds, on our attitudes, and even give us joy. Some choices are difficult, but with the guidance of the Scriptures and power of the Holy Spirit, we will be more Christ-like.

THE STRESS WE FACE.

We live in a stressful time. It is not the worst time. But if we don't take into consideration o

our present reality, then we are pushing our minds into the dangerous arena of denial and false realities. We may not be wandering the wilderness for forty years on bread and water like the Israelites, but we do live in a stressful time.

The stress we live in is massive- it is weighty, and Paul ties times like this, right into the wilderness journey of the Old Testament (The Exodus). Moses describes the wilderness wanderers as a "warped and crooked generation." (Deuteronomy 32:5).

"...become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation."

Philippians 2:15

God expects the Christian in Philippi to be blameless, pure, and without fault amid a warped and crooked generation. Stress that comes into our marriages, our families, and our churches are real, and it is weighty. It is so weighty, in fact, that the very incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is brought up as the motivation that is meant to have a life-changing impact on us. (Philippians 2:1-11). Times are hard, and God is not unaware. In fact, God is sovereign. He isn't taken by surprise or caught off guard by our present reality. God is letting us know right here, that He knows what we are going through. He knows the weight of the situation, and He wants us to know that there is something much weightier still. There is a reality that should weigh heavier in our minds, on our attitude, and even give us joy. We are not alone because we have the Comforter, the Holy Spirit that is with us (John 14:26).



Peace I leave
with you. My
peace I give to
you: not as the
world gives do I
give to you. Let
not your heart
be troubled,
neither let it be
afraid.

John 14:27

The Choices We Make.

“Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.”

Philippians 2:14-15

Recently, with little time on our hands, Dana and I made a necessary trip to the DMV in Orange only to find that the lines were so long that we decided to drive to the DMV in Culpeper. We both felt a pressure to return home as soon as possible to get things done. On our way to Culpeper, I nonchalantly asked Dana if she brought the necessary paperwork to which she replied that she thought I had it. So, after leaving the Orange DMV and midway to Culpeper, we turned around with a cloud of frustration in the truck. Suddenly, a need to blame someone came out of nowhere. Why didn't she bring the paperwork? She **ALWAYS** takes care of the paperwork- I thought to myself with a distinct self-indignation. I was frustrated. The same needs seem to arouse in Dana: Why didn't he grab the paperwork? **It is his** truck! In that instant in time, we both made a choice. Fortunately, we both sat there in silence and prayed. Before long, we were confessing and gaining the upper hand on our emotions or, more specifically, our sinful natures. We would not give in to the grumbling and strife that was trying to come between us. And that is really what is at stake, isn't it? The issue at hand is unity.

Yes, times are hard. Yes, external stress affects the things we care about. Our marriages, our families, and our church. The pressure can weigh heavily upon you. But God is not surprised or caught off guard. We are supposed to work it out.

“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.”

Philippians 2:12-13

Not only is there outside stress, but there is also inside stress. Change is hard. As we pursue our hope to gather together to worship in June, may we not give in to the grumbling and strife that can cause disunity. And in reality, that is what is at stake, isn't it? The issue at hand is **unity**.

We are in a pool of stress, and it can weigh us down. But God is the One who gives us the energy and the will to fulfill His good purpose. So, it boils down to a choice for each of us. Yes, the decisions are complicated, but with the guidance of the Scriptures and power of the Holy Spirit, we will be transformed into people who act like Children of God.

“Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life.”

Philippians 2:15c-16a

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Zoom Bible Studies

Wednesday
10:30am

Thursday
7:00pm

Contact Pastor Vincent to get the Zoom information.

Devotional Books

Daily Bread
and
Secret Place

are in their boxes on a table in the fellowship hall.



Allen and Virginia Pippin celebrate 69 years of marriage on June 2.

Congratulations!

Reflections on Pentecost

From www.saltproject.org

Scripture:

- 1) The community of disciples are gathered because of the Festival of Weeks (Shavuot). Jesus had promised the arrival of the Holy Spirit not long after his departure - and sure enough, on the festival day itself, the Holy Spirit arrives. The scene is spectacular and chaotic: a violent, rushing sound like wind, and then "divided tongues, as of fire" - not a fire that destroys, but rather like the fire that Moses encountered at the burning bush, which was "blazing, yet it was not consumed" ([Exodus 3:1-2](#)). The Spirit's immediate effect is linguistic: many are empowered "to speak in other languages," and at the same time, each person hears the testimony in his or her native language. Think of a meeting at the United Nations, in which each person hears the proceedings (through a headset) translated into his or her mother tongue. The upshot of all of this is a sense of togetherness and unity: diverse as they are, everyone understands and can communicate. Accordingly, they're dazzled and taken aback, asking, "What does this mean?" ([Acts 2:12](#)).
- 2) As if to answer this question, Peter stands and speaks. He cites the prophet Joel, adapting those ancient words to illuminate the present: the final and decisive chapter of history has arrived, the dawn of God's joyous Jubilee that Jesus declared early in his ministry (see [Luke 4:18-19](#); Luke-Acts is one continuous story, written by the same author), and now comes the "pouring out" of the Holy Spirit upon "all flesh" ([Joel 2:28](#); [Acts 2:17](#)). Jesus both heralded and inaugurated this new era, and the Spirit will empower a community through whom the movement's message of healing, liberation, and joy will go out to the ends of the earth. The church is born!
- 3) On one level, from a Christian perspective these events provide a new layer of meaning for the ancient harvest festival: the Spirit comes in order to gather in the sheaves of God's great harvest of redemption. On another level, the story of Pentecost reverses the ancient story of Babel's Tower ([Gen 11:1-9](#)). In an arrogant attempt to "make a name for ourselves," humanity tries to build a tower with its top in the heavens - and God scatters them by diversifying their languages ([Gen 11:4](#)). Here in Acts, instead of humanity presumptuously ascending toward heaven, God graciously descends to Earth; and instead of humanity linguistically fragmenting, the Spirit brings us together, bridging divides so we can understand and connect.

Takeaways:

- 1) The birthday of the church is a perfect time to reflect on what "the church" is in the first place. This week's passage points toward a portrait of the church as a dynamic community of people following Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit to share the burden and responsibility of carrying out God's mission of healing, liberation, and joy for the sake of the world. This community is strikingly diverse, inclusive, and egalitarian. The Jews Peter addresses are immigrants from all over the known world ("known" to Luke, that is!) who now live in Jerusalem, and the Jesus movement will soon open up to include Gentiles as well ([Acts 10](#)). Accordingly, Luke casts the church as a spirited community of bridge-builders, visionaries, and dreamers, male and female, slave and free ([Acts 2:17](#)) - and soon enough, this egalitarian, communitarian ethos extends to the church's social organization: "they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need" ([Acts 2:43-47](#)).
- 2) Likewise, this is a perfect week to reflect on how we understand the Holy Spirit. The portrait of the Spirit in Acts draws on ideas at least as ancient as the vision in Numbers, in which God's "breath" or "spirit" - both *ru'ah* in Hebrew - brings renewal, insight, and responsibility, such that "all God's people were prophets" ([Numbers 11:29](#)). But for all the drama, Pentecost is only the beginning: throughout the Book of Acts, again and again, the Spirit mobilizes the church and opens up new horizons for ministry (see Acts 4, 8, 10, 13, 15, 19, and so on). Breath means new life - and new life means new growth, change, and ongoing development. The Spirit protects, but also challenges, provoking and pushing us along. And thinking this way about life in the Spirit is the perfect segue into the (nearly) six months ahead of Ordinary Time, the season of everyday life and growth.
- 3) So, "Happy Birthday," yes - and also, "Let's go!" The church is not a building, nor is it a particular membership or group of people - nor is it a *gathering* of people together in one place, a point worth underscoring in an age of pandemic and physical distancing. Rather, at its heart, the church is a mission, God's mission, loving and protecting our neighbors as we would love and protect ourselves - and the call, the challenge, the adventure continues. In an age of distance, fear, and fragmentation, the church's mission - the essence of Pentecost - has never been more pressing.



Understand and connect!

Update on Re-Opening

Dear Louisa Christian Church Family,

We wanted to give you an update on our activities on our journey to starting face to face services. We created an Executive Task Force to insure we open in the safest manner possible. We have had two Zoom meetings on May 19th and May 26th. Our first task was to make sure we meet the Governor's Office mandatory requirements for reopening. Below is a summary of the requirements:

1	Occupancy shall be limited to no more than 50% of the lowest occupancy load on the certificate of occupancy
2	Individuals attending religious services must be seated at least six feet apart at all times and must practice physical distancing at all times.
3	Persons attending religious services be encouraged to wear face coverings over their nose and mouth at all times (Changed 5/26)
4	No items must be passed to or between attendees
5	Any items used to distribute food or beverages must be disposable and used only once and discarded.
6	A thorough cleaning and disinfection of frequently contacted surfaces must be conducted prior to and following any religious service.
7	Post signage at the entrance that states that no one with a fever or symptoms of COVID-19,
8	Post signage to provide public health reminders regarding social distancing, gatherings, options for high risk individuals, and staying home if sick
9	If any place of worship cannot adhere to the above requirements, it must not conduct in-person services.

We contacted the County regarding our allowed occupancy in requirement #1. Based on the calculations we, in theory, could have up to 100 people attend at 50% occupancy. However, item #2 requires us to sit at least six (6) feet apart (families of course can sit together). We measured the sanctuary and determined that we seat up to 32 people safely in the sanctuary. If we include the choir lofts, balcony, and narthex we can seat up to 50 people during a service.

We are now trying to determine how many members would attend in June or July if we held a face to face service. Executive Task Force members graciously agreed to reach out 1 on 1 by phone to each member. You may have already received a call or you will be contacted shortly. This will help us to determine how to sit folks in the auditorium and if we need multiple services so thank you for your responses!

Our original goal was to open by Father's Day which is on June 21st. While we are on track to meet that goal, we still several details to resolve before we can announce our start date. For example, we have determined that we will need to change the worship service so that we meet many of the other requirements. (Even as we work the requirements have changed concerning masks so stay tuned) We plan to meet again this week to work the details and create detailed procedures for our new format.

Stay tuned for more details in the coming weeks for an official date and I look forward to seeing you then in an environment where everyone feels safe!

In Christian Love,
Greg Strickland

Call to Worship

All: Come, Holy Spirit, Come!

Leader: Renew the face of the earth.

All: Come, Holy Spirit, Come!

Leader: Renew our lives, inside and out.

Renew our faith, renew our relationships, renew our trust in your mercy.

All: Come, Holy Spirit, Come!

Leader: Renew our lives, inside and out.

Challenge us, comfort us, stir us up, calm us down.

All: Come Holy Spirit, Come!

Leader: Renew our lives, inside and out.

With fire and wind, come to this place; gather us in, send us out;

All: Come Holy Spirit, Come!

Leader: Renew our lives, inside and out.

Make our legs stronger, our hands firmer, our hearts wider in love.

All: Come Holy Spirit, Come!

Leader: Renew the face of the earth.

Prayer of the Day

Come, O Holy Spirit by John Henry Newman

Come, O Holy Spirit.

Come as Holy Fire and burn in us,

come as Holy Wind and cleanse us within,

come as Holy Light and lead us in the darkness,

come as Holy Truth and dispel our ignorance,

come as Holy Power and enable our weakness,

come as Holy Life and dwell in us.

Convict us, convert us, consecrate us,

until we are set free from the service of ourselves,

to be your servants to the world. Amen.

A PRAYER

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OFFERINGS

You can give online.

Visit our website,

louisachristianchurch.org

and click on

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You can also donate by mailing your contribution to:

Louisa Christian Church

P.O. Box 1344

Louisa, VA 23093

We thank you for your support.



Hymn as Poetry

Let Others See Jesus in You

B. B. MCKINNEY

While passing thro' this world of sin,
and others your life shall view,
be clean and pure without,
within, let others see Jesus in you.

Your life's a book, before their eyes,
they're reading it thro' and thro';
say, does it point them to the skies,
do others see Jesus in you?

What joy 'twill be at set of sun,
in mansions beyond the blue,
to find some souls that you have won;
let others see Jesus in you.

Then live for Christ both day and
night,
be faithful, be brave and true,
and lead the lost to life and light;
let others see Jesus in you.

Let others see Jesus in you,
let others see Jesus in you;
keep telling the story, be faithful and
true, let others see Jesus in you.

A Note to Recent Graduates

From Becky Cavanaugh

CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2020.

I am sure Graduation has been entirely different than what you had envisioned. You could not gather with your fellow classmates to celebrate because of the social distancing guidelines we have had to abide by due to COVID-19. BUT, you have been able to complete this school year with determination and grit. Be proud of yourselves. Now you will move on to the next chapter in your life. Your hard work has really paid off.

I have been involved with scholarship awards since 2001. The William A. and Alma A. Cooke Scholarship awards are supported by the William A. Cooke Foundation and have helped so many students. It has given them the opportunity to realize their dreams and has helped lessen the burden of rising tuition costs. In their scholarship applications they say that they want to give back to their community, and many of our recipients have come back to Louisa after obtaining their degrees and made their careers here. Thus far, the William A. Cooke Foundation has awarded \$3,027,479.00.

GRADUATES, may GOD be with you and give you strength for your future endeavors.

Becky Cavanaugh, Elder
LOUISA CHRISTIANCHURCH
And
SCHOLARSHIP CHAIRMAN
WILLIAM A COOKE FOUNDATION

*Hear Our
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on the Radio*

**Real Faith
Today**

Every Sunday

8:30 AM

WJMA

103.1 FM

I am the LORD
which exercise
*loving
kindness,*
judgment, and
RIGHTEDUSNESS
in the earth:
for in these
things I delight,
saith the **LORD**
Jeremiah 9:24