

Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church
BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,
ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKEY
5th May Sixth Sunday of Easter

HYMNS: 503 322 162 175 848 459

INTROIT: Psalm 98

Sing to the LORD a new song! For He has done wonderful things! His right hand and His holy arm have gained the victory for Him.

The LORD has made His salvation known. He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations.

He has remembered His mercy and His faithfulness to the family of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Be peaceful, shout with joy, and make music!

Make music to the LORD with a lyre, with a lyre and the sound of music; with trumpets and the sound of a horn. Shout joyfully before the King, the LORD!

Let the sea roar, and everything in it, the world and those who live in it. Let the rivers clap their hands, and let the mountains shout with joy together

before the LORD. For He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with justice.

COLLECT: O God, the giver of all that is good, by Your holy inspiration grant we may think those things that are right and by Your merciful guiding accomplish them; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

READINGS

Acts 10:44-48 The gift of the Spirit and baptism for the first Gentile household.

1 John 5:1-8 Faith in the Son of God.

John 15:9-17 Jesus calls us His friends.

Welcome to all worshipping with us!

Pastor Ziebell can be contacted via phone/text at 0407 583922.

Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.

Email him at paziebell@gmail.com or to the church office at ddaelc@gmail.com.

Pastor is usually in his office Tuesday-Wednesday for anyone who would like to call in. Other days of the week are set aside for visits.

Acts 10:44-48

⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all who were hearing the Word. ⁴⁵ The believers who had been circumcised, namely, all those who had come with Peter, were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and glorifying God. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷ “Surely no one can refuse water, that these people should not be baptised? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we also have.”

⁴⁸ He ordered that they should be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay for a few days.

1 John 5:1-8

¹ Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born from God, and everyone who loves the Father also loves the child who has been fathered by Him. ² This is how we know that we love the children of God: when we love God and carry out His Commandments. ³ For this is love for God: that we keep His Commandments. His Commands are also not burdensome. ⁴ For whatever has been born from God conquers the world, and this is the victory that has overcome the world: our faith. ⁵ Who is the one who conquers the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? ⁶ This is the One who has come through water and blood: Jesus Christ. He has not come by water only but by water and by blood. Moreover, it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is the Truth. ⁷ There are three who are giving witness: ⁸ the Spirit, the water and the blood, and these three have one purpose.

John 15:9-17

⁹ “As the Father has loved Me, so I have loved you. Remain in My love! ¹⁰ If you keep My Commandments, you will remain in My love, as I have also kept My Father’s Commandments and remain in His love. ¹¹ I have told you these things that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹² This is My Commandment, that you should love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ No one has greater love than this, to lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are My friends if you continue to do what I command you. ¹⁵ I no longer call you ‘servants,’ because a servant does not know what his master is doing. However, I have called you ‘friends’ because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from My Father. ¹⁶ You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you and appointed you that you may go and bear fruit and that your fruit may remain, that the Father may give you whatever you ask for in My name. ¹⁷ This is what I command you: Love one another!

THE SPIRIT, THE WATER AND THE BLOOD
Sermon for the 6th Sunday of Easter 2024
1 John 5:1-8

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is the Second Reading from before 1 John 5:1-8: **Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born from God, and everyone who loves the Father also loves the child who has been fathered by Him. ² This is how we know that we love the children of God: when we love God and carry out His Commandments. ³ For this is love for God: that we keep His Commandments. His Commands are also not burdensome. ⁴ For whatever has been born from God conquers the world, and this is the victory that has overcome the world: our faith. ⁵ Who is the one who conquers the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? ⁶ This is the One who has come through water and blood: Jesus Christ. He has not come by water only but by water and by blood. Moreover, it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is the Truth. ⁷ There are three who are giving witness: ⁸ the Spirit, the water and the blood, and these three have one purpose.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

John's First Letter includes a section that, at first glance, may seem a little puzzling. But when we look at it a little more closely, we see how it really does make sense. Indeed, it makes quite clear the *very heart of our faith and salvation*.

The passage in question is verses 6-8 which reads, **“This is the One who has come through water and blood: Jesus Christ. He has not come by water only but by water and by blood. Moreover, it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is the Truth. ⁷ There are three who are giving witness: ⁸ the Spirit, the water and the blood.”**

John writes of **“the Spirit, the water, and the blood.”** What does it have to do with us? Everything. Why? Because it's all about Jesus, and, as you know, without Jesus, we have no faith and no salvation at all. This passage has everything to do with who Jesus is. This passage has to do with who Jesus is for

us, and if we don't get this Jesus right, we don't have anything! The **“the Spirit, the water, and the blood”** all bear witness to who the real Jesus is.

Now, to understand our text, it's helpful to know the kind of errors that were being taught about Jesus, which John is writing against. Earlier, John had said, **“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born from God,”** and, **“Who is the one who conquers the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”**

These two things, that Jesus is the Christ and that He is the Son of God, are what John says any true child of God believes about Jesus. We believe that Jesus is both the Christ and the Son of God. This fits very well with what John wrote near the end of his Gospel, in John 20: *“These things have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, you may have life in His name”* (v. 31). You see, these basic truths about Jesus are not some obscure, trivial niceties like it really doesn't matter what you believe about Jesus. No! Who Jesus is, the person of Christ *is a matter of the utmost importance.* It's a matter of life or death. And it's not just what you believe “about” Jesus. It's that you believe “in” Jesus, that you trust in Him, and precisely as He really is. Only this Jesus - the Christ, the Son of God - only He can save you.

However, not everyone at the time when John wrote his Letter believed these things about Jesus. True, they may claim to know God and to have fellowship with him, and maybe they say some things about Jesus, even calling Him the “Christ,” but they could not say, as John says here, that the man Jesus is, in fact, the Christ, **“the Son of God.”**

People who claim to teach the truth about God but who cannot confess the *person* of Christ are given the title of being heretics. One of the main heretics at the time John is writing this letter was a man named Cerinthus. We first heard his name back on the Second Sunday of Easter. What John writes about **“the Spirit, the water, and the blood”** would especially go against the heresies that Cerinthus taught.

We find out about those false teachings from the early church father, Irenaeus (pronounced I-ran-e-us). Irenaeus lived a couple of generations after the apostle John and was taught the faith by a man named Polycarp. Polycarp, in turn, had been a student of John himself. I guess you could say that Irenaeus was kind of a spiritual grandson of John, and the history had been passed on to him. That's

how Irenaeus could write about the situation John was dealing with in combating the heresies of Cerinthus.

Here, then, is a description, according to Irenaeus, of what Cerinthus taught: “*Cerinthus . . . represented Jesus as having not been born of a virgin, but as being the son of Joseph and Mary according to the ordinary course of human generation, while he nevertheless was more righteous, prudent, and wise than other men. Moreover, after his baptism, Christ descended upon him in the form of a dove from the Supreme Ruler, and that then he proclaimed the unknown Father, and performed miracles. But at last Christ departed from Jesus, and that then Jesus suffered and rose again, while Christ remained impassible [that is, incapable of suffering], inasmuch as he was a spiritual being.*”

Do you understand that? The false teaching was as follows: The man Jesus was just an ordinary man – albeit a really good man - but not the Son of God. At His baptism, the divine Christ-spirit came upon Jesus and enabled Him to do all kinds of good things. But before Jesus entered into His suffering, the Christ-spirit left Jesus since a divine being could not suffer. That was the false teaching of Cerinthus, and it was misleading many people.

So now here comes John, and he blows Cerinthus and his ilk right out of the water. Those heretics who do not believe that Jesus is the Christ in His person, those false teachers who do not believe that Jesus is the eternal Son of God who comes from heaven, come in the flesh, are liars who will lead you straight to hell. Don't listen to them, for “**the Spirit, the water and the blood**” all speak against them.

With that background then, now we can make sense of what John is saying when he writes: “**This is the One who has come through water and blood: Jesus Christ. He has not come by water only but by water and by blood.**” “This is Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God. The heretics couldn't handle the idea of God coming in the flesh. They had to make a *separation* between the ordinary man Jesus and the spiritual “Christ,” as they imagined it. But John is saying that *Jesus is the Christ in His very person*. He is the divine Messiah come from heaven. It wasn't just that at His baptism, the Christ-spirit came on Jesus for a while and then left Him before His suffering. To be sure, at His baptism, Jesus was publicly attested as the Messiah, and the Spirit did come upon Him in the form of a dove, but the man Jesus *is* the Christ, in His very person.

So Jesus is the Christ, in His person, as was declared at His baptism in the water of the Jordan. That takes care of the reference to the “water.” But why does John then add the “blood”? **“He has not come by water only but by water and by blood.”** You see, this is another thing the heretics could not handle: that the Christ shed His blood and died. God’s Son, suffering on the cross and dying? That was repulsive to them.

And so it is today for a lot of people, and here’s why.

People don’t want to think it took the death of God’s only Son to pay the price for their sins. They don’t want to hear that they need to be rescued from God’s judgment. They don’t want to think that they are that bad and that they can’t please God on their own. They think there must be some other way, or that they’re already good enough, or that God’s just an old softie who will wink at their sin, or that there’s no such thing as God or sin or heaven and hell. That is what a lot of people think. They think their big problem isn’t sin. It’s something else. So they go searching for happiness in all the wrong places. Or they come up with some made-up, so-called “spirituality” that appeals to their sense of self-worth. But what they cannot abide, what they cannot believe, is that this man Jesus is, in fact, the very Son of God come in the flesh to be their Saviour, and that it took His holy blood, shed on the cross, to take away their sin and win their salvation.

You see, the truth is, our big problem is sin, our own sin. We cannot atone for that. We cannot dig our way out of or rise above it. The only remedy is the one that God Himself provides in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, and **“the Spirit, the water, and the blood”** all attest to this one great Saviour. At Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan, the Father had declared Jesus to be His beloved Son and the Spirit testified to Him being the Christ, as Jesus went in the water with sinners and set out on His saving mission. John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and said, *“Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29). So the blood that Christ would shed as the sacrifice for sin was in view from the outset. Indeed, Jesus is Christ most as He is hanging on the cross, suffering and bleeding and dying as the Saviour of the world. **“This is the One who has come through water and blood: Jesus Christ. He has not come by water only but by water and by blood.”**

Dear friends, the Holy Spirit is revealing this to us this very day. Through the Letter that John has written, through the preaching of the Gospel you’re hearing right now, the Spirit is calling you to trust in Jesus Christ and in nothing else.

The-water-and-the-blood Jesus, the One who went from His watery baptism to His bloody death - this Jesus, and no one else, is the only One who can save you. Not some false christ who is just a good teacher or a moral example. The-water-and-the-blood Jesus, the real Jesus - *trust in Him*. Outside of Him, apart from faith in Him, there is no salvation.¹ But in Him, through faith in Him, you are saved. You do have life.

“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born from God.”
We are God’s children, dearly loved by Him. God has taken us as His own. We have been washed clean in the blood of Christ and have been gifted with the Spirit, given in the water of our baptism. We who believe in Jesus, the Son of God, have overcome the world with all of its false teachings. We have overcome by the blood of the Lamb, the same blood we receive in the blessed Sacrament. Because of the-water-and-the-blood Jesus, we have life now and life forever. For this same Jesus Christ rose from the dead in victory over sin and death, and now He shares this resurrection life with us and all who trust in Him. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER.

Lord, our God, You alone know the plans that You have for us and our world, but we rejoice and worship You because we know that they are loving plans. In Your goodness, You spread life, love, beauty, and joy throughout Your creation. In Your grace, You lighten the misery of our sinful lives, and bless us with pardon and peace. If it is your will that we must pass through troubles, enable us to turn them into opportunities, for Your glory.

We give You our warmest thanks for the precious gift of Your Son, Jesus, whom You have sent that we may have life in all its fullness. We praise You that He has humbly come into our world, has taken on Himself our sins, and has carried them to death on the cross. We glorify Your name for our release from the power of death, and for our sure hope of heaven through His resurrection.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the privilege of being Your spiritual priests, as we pray in Jesus’ name. We thank You for Your promise to hear all our prayers. Keep us close to Jesus each day in faith and love, gladly hearing His Word and following Him, wherever He leads us. Send Your Word out into the

¹ Acts 4:12

whole world, that it may achieve what You have planned for it. Let us as Your representatives, whom You have called out of darkness, proclaim Your light in this dark world. Give us the courage also to speak Your word of judgment when people reject Christ, the Cornerstone.

Bless Your Church on every continent. Renew Your people to be a loving fellowship of believers, a family of trust and prayer, and people who are ready to serve the needy in love.

Lead all the nations of the earth along the ways of justice, righteousness, and peace. Look with special favour on our country. Give to our Prime Minister, to the Premiers of each State, to our cabinets and parliaments, to our police and to our courts, such qualities of heart and mind that they may carry out their duties earnestly, wisely, and fairly. Protect us from all enemies, both within and without our country. Remove all strife from us. Inspire obedience to all law and order. Fill all citizens with love of holiness and moral purity. Grant that all who work in industry may find joy in their work and receive proper rewards for their efforts. Give satisfaction to those who work in the professions, as they work for the good of all. Give those who farm the soil favourable weather. Bless their work of feeding the world.

Bless all our loved ones, and make our homes places of peace. We remember especially the sick, the troubled, and the bereaved. In Jesus' name free them from the burdens of their pain and sadness.

Keep us standing strong and steady in faith. Since serving You is never useless, give us the opportunity to be busy in Your work. In Jesus' saving name we offer You these prayers. Amen.

The Lord's Supper has always been seen as a sign of unity between those who commune together at the Lord's table (1 Cor. 10:17). When Christians partake of the Lord's Supper in a church body that has a confession of faith, they thereby declare that they believe that they are one in faith with those who commune with them. Since people cannot honestly hold two differing confessions at the same time, they cannot honestly commune with those whose confession is in conflict with their own. If any do this nevertheless, they deny their own confession, and so deny Christ Himself (2 Cor. 6:14-18). **We ask visitors who are communicant members in a church not in fellowship with the AELC, or are not familiar with the *AELC Statement of Faith*, to refrain from communing today. If you have questions, please speak with the pastor after service.**

Article: “Too Much to Do.”

Why pray? Because our loved ones suffer illness and disease and sorts of trials and tribulations. Yes, of course, there are doctors, technicians, specialists, injections, and immunisations. But even if Christ uses them, it is still the healing that He brings. In Mark 1, Jesus is moved by the needs of those who suffer. He heals the mother-in-law of Peter without being asked. And no matter what you think of your mother-in-law, it is still a demonstration of His care for those who suffer. He heals those who crowd into the walled compound that surrounded Peter’s house in Capernaum. Every request for healing is an urgent prayer. He hears and brings the blessing of crosses to us as He sees fit. But He does not heal everyone! He slips away from Capernaum in the cold, grey hours before morning, leaving behind the eager crowd. There was something more important for Him to do at that moment. He needed to pray. Why pray? Because our loved ones are suffering.

Why pray? Because it’s a good way to get away from people who are demanding your time. Want a foolproof way to get some time by yourself? When someone demands your time that you don’t want to deal with, just tell them that you are praying right now, and I guarantee they will leave you alone. (Seriously!) Mark tells us: “*And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, He departed and went out to a desolate place, and there He prayed. And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him, and they found Him and said to Him, ‘Everyone is looking for You’*” (Mark 1:35-37) He replied, “Well yes, and they are expecting from Me all the wrong things. I am not a wonderworking medicine man; I am God’s Son. I must be about My mission to preach life to the world.” And so Jesus used prayer as a way to get away from people making demands that had little to do with His mission from His Father. Why pray? To gain a time of peace to talk to your heavenly Father.

Jesus, in preparation for His life’s mission, dedicated time to prayer. “Jesus said to them, “*Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.*”³⁹ *And He went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons*” (Mark 1:38-39).

A close pastor friend of mine shared the curiosity of the members in his first parish, questioning why he spent so much time secluded in his church office. When he told them he was spending his time praying for them, they looked at him with some greater puzzlement, and after a couple of moments, they asked, “Wouldn’t you like us to install a TV in your office?” He realised that they thought watching TV was more important and more useful than praying. Martin Luther said that when he knew he had too much to do, he would pray longer before he began his labour. He said that when he prayed too long, he would inevitably accomplish far more than he would have otherwise.

Why pray? You have too much to do, not to.

Of course, you have a mission, too. You are a parent, a teacher, a child, a friend, a wife. Your mission in life is tied to your God-given calling, your vocation. You will be more useful in your labour if you stop doing it to pray. Less work is more when you labour with prayer. This is what organisational gurus call: “working smarter.” Why pray? Because Christ Jesus has given you a mission. Why pray? Because Christ Jesus prays, and we should imitate Him.



Children's Message:

A balloon is useless without air being blown into it. I mean, what good is having a balloon if it's just sitting there all flattened out? It has no life in it. It's much better with air inside!

Ezekiel had a similar problem in our Old First Reading for today. He saw a whole lot of people in the middle of a valley, and there was one big problem: these people were dead. They were just dry bones in the dirt. There was no life in them.

The Lord told Ezekiel to preach to these bones, and they came back together. They were reconnected, and they grew flesh again. Then the Lord said to Ezekiel, "Preach some more!" Then the flesh and bones received air, breath, like a balloon being blown up, and they came back to life, back from the dead! What an amazing miracle.

The Holy Spirit breathes life into us. Imagine taking a balloon with no air in it. You take a deep breath, blow some air into it and then say, "*I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*" Then blow some more air into it and say, "*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life*" (John 3:16). Again, blow some more and say, "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (1 Jn 1:9). Now, the balloon is full of air! It has come to life!

When we were baptised, as we continue to learn God's Word, and as we come to church, the Holy Spirit fills us up with Himself so that we're full of life. We're full of God's love, God's peace, and God's forgiveness.

There will come a day when this balloon will pop. We shall die. But because of all the work the Holy Spirit has been doing in our lives, creating faith through His Word and Sacrament, the Lord promises to put the pieces back together. We, just like those dry bones in Ezekiel, will be raised again to eternal life. Until then, we keep coming back to church, and we spend time reading our Bibles to let the Holy Spirit keep filling us up, making us ready for when He brings us back to life to live forever with Him.

Thank You, Holy Spirit, for the faith that you have given me. Continue to fill me with the love of Christ for one another! Amen.

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

9 May (Thursday) Ascension Day	12 May 7 Easter	19 May Pentecost
7.30pm OAK HC	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA LR 9.00am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am MARBURG HC (Ascension Day Service)	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA HC 9.00am GRN LR 10.45am AUB HC 9.00am LOWOOD LR
Thursday, 9 May		
READINGS: Acts 1:1-11; Ephesians 1:15-23; Luke 24:44-53		
HYMNS: 110 169 771 410 291 106		
Sunday, 12 May		
READINGS: DOWNS: Acts 1:12-26; 1 John 5:9-15; John 17:11b-19 MARBURG: Acts 1:1-11; Ephesians 1:15-23; Luke 24:44-53		
HYMNS: Downs: 516 186 494 870 Marburg: 110 169 771 410 291 106		
Sunday, 19 May		
READINGS: Ezekiel 37:1-14; Acts 2:1-21; John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15		
HYMNS: 116 121 774 (306 313) 129		

Today, at midday, a luncheon will be held at Bethlehem Lutheran Church Toowoomba to celebrate Allen Beutel's 90th birthday. Everyone is invited to attend. Please bring a plate to share and something sweet for dessert.

Saturday, 12 May, 1:00 p.m. Fellowship afternoon at Bethlehem Toowoomba. All are welcome to attend. Please bring a plate for afternoon tea.

Saturday, 12 May, 7.30pm. Youth at Bethlehem Toowoomba. Please bring something for supper.