

Lutheran Church of the Master
580 Kuhn Road, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188
Curt Gerald, Interim Pastor
MAY 8/9, 2010
Sixth Sunday of Easter
“So that you may believe...”

Visions are the distinctive mark of this day. Paul receives a vision from God telling him that he needs to leap from one continent to another to take the good news abroad. John the Seer shares his vision of the new Jerusalem—an image of what it means to live with God. Jesus is the reflection of God's plan for the world and for our lives.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Bountiful God, you gather your people into your realm, and you promise us food from your tree of life. Nourish us with your word, that empowered by your Spirit we may love one another and the world you have made, through Jesus Christ the Lamb, whom with you and the Holy Spirit we worship and praise, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

FIRST READING *Acts 16:9–15*

⁹ During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰ When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.

¹¹ We set sail from Troas and took a straight course to Samothrace, the following day to Neapolis, ¹² and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city for some days. ¹³ On the sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there. ¹⁴ A certain woman named Lydia, a worshiper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. ¹⁵ When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home." And she prevailed upon us.

PSALM *Psalms 67*

May God be merciful to | us and bless us,*
show us the light of his countenance, and | come to us.

**²Let your ways be known | upon earth,*
your saving health a- | mong all nations.**

³Let the peoples praise | you, O God;*
let all the | peoples praise you.

**⁴Let the nations be glad and | sing for joy,*
for you judge the peoples with equity and guide all the nations | upon earth. R**

⁵Let the peoples praise | you, O God;*
let all the | peoples praise you.

⁶The earth has brought | forth her increase;*
may God, our own God, give | us his blessing.

⁷May God give | us his blessing,*
and may all the ends of the earth stand in | awe of him. **R**

SECOND READING *Revelation 21:10, 22—22:5*

Chapter 21

¹⁰ And in the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. ²² I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³ And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. ²⁵ Its gates will never be shut by day and there will be no night there. ²⁶ People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. ²⁷ But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Chapter 22

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. ³ Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; ⁴ they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

GOSPEL *John 14:23–29*

²³ Jesus answered him, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. ²⁴ Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

²⁵ I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. ²⁸ You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. ²⁹ And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.

Some of us here tonight/this morning may remember the 1963 hit "**Can I Get a Witness**" ... it is a song by Marvin Gaye on the Tamla (Motown) label. Written and produced by Motown songwriting and producing team Holland–Dozier–Holland, the song was built among gospel-styled music and heralded Gaye's beginnings in the church with a rhythm and blues/rock and roll setting. The song featured Gaye on piano, playing a boogie pattern, The Funk Brothers, and members of The Supremes in the background accompanying Gaye. The song became a hit in both the U.S. and the United Kingdom, and British musicians Lulu, Dusty Springfield, The Rolling Stones, and Steampacket (which featured a very young Rod Stewart) recorded cover versions of the song. Gaye's version peaked at number twenty-two on the Pop Singles chart and its title soon became a catch phrase. Lee Michaels' 1971 version reached number thirty-nine on the pop chart; both his and Gaye's versions peaked during Christmas week. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Can_I_Get_a_Witness)

Like a lot of music, this song doesn't have a lot of lyrics ... the main words are the words that form the title of the song ... the first "chorus" (if it is one) says three times "I want a witness" ... the second "chorus" says "Can I get a witness? I want a witness" ... and the third "chorus" repeats four times "I want a witness."

In a way, that is what Paul's vision in this reading from Acts is about ... the people from Macedonia are pleading "we need a witness." And so Paul goes ... he becomes the witness that the guy from Macedonia was pleading for . And having been there, the witness of Lydia ... the woman from Thyatira ... the woman forever identified with purple cloth ... is all that it took to persuade Paul and his traveling missionary band ... to stay there for a while.

All that we know about Lydia is what we can read in Acts 16:11-40 ...this text is one of the "proofs" of infant baptism because it says that "she and her household were baptized" ... so then Paul and Timothy stayed in her home ... and it is during that visit that Paul and Timothy are thrown into prison for disturbing the peace after they had healed the demoniac woman ... and then you may remember the event when an earthquake in the middle of the night opens the prison's doors ... but Paul and Timothy remain where they are ... and when the jailer comes to and sees the doors open he is about to take his own life when Paul says "here we are ... " ... and then the jailer comes to faith and asks "what must I do to be saved?" ... and the civil authorities just want the two guys to leave but instead they say: "no ... we were falsely accused ... now we want an apology" ... so they remain until the governmental authorities arrive and apologize ... and then Paul and Timothy return to Lydia's house for a meeting with the congregation that was forming there ... and off they went.

This congregation became known as the Church in Philippi ... and it was one of Paul's major supporting congregations to which his letters often refer. It was kind of like the congregation that was a pastor's "first call" ... Zion Lutheran in Cottage Grove, Minnesota, will always be a special congregation for me. This congregation will always be a special congregation for Pat and Jim.

“Witness” ...in Greek, the word is “*martos*” from which we get the word “*martyr*.” Its definitions include:

- (a) To witness to ascertainable facts – from his/her own direct knowledge – like in legal proceedings.
- (b) To Witness to truths.
- (c) Making known and confessing of convictions –in Luke, (Luke/Acts) = Evangelistic Confession.

Today we are reminded that one of the strongest witnesses of the church is the home – today we remember and rejoice in the witnesses of our mothers.

May 4th – the church remembered Monica, the mother of St. Augustine - I wish we could move it to 2nd Sunday. Augustine was quite a hell-raiser in his youth – did everything he could to abandon the faith of his parents. But his mom never quit praying for him – and after he had come back to faith and as death drew near for his mom, she said to him and to his brother: “One thing only I ask of you, that you remember me at the altar of the Lord wherever you may be.” Augustine went on to become one of the greatest leaders within the Christian community to this day! And today millions of Christians around the world give thanks for their moms – especially for those moms who never give up on their children and pray for them constantly.

Without Lydia, the dealer in purple cloth, the congregation in Philippi might never have been established. Without Monica, the mother who never gave up on her son, Augustine might never have become one of the greatest figures in the Christian Church whose writings influence people like Martin Luther. Without the willingness of a young woman named Mary, the Savior of the World might not have been born ...a least not in Bethlehem in the year 3BC.

The Sixth Sunday of the Season of Easter is always a continuation of the Easter message ... in which the Church continues to say that HE IS RISEN ... HE IS RISEN INDEED.

But this year the Sixth Sunday of Easter is also the day rooted in human history ... possibly emerging from ******a custom of mother worship in [ancient Greece](#), which kept a festival to [Cybele](#), a great mother of Greek gods.{Encyclopædia Britannica|(1959)Vol.15,p. 849} This festival was held around the [Vernal Equinox](#) around Asia Minor and eventually in Rome itself from the [Ides of March](#) (15 March) to 18 March.

The [ancient Romans](#) also had another holiday, [Matronalia](#), that was dedicated to [Juno](#), though mothers were usually given gifts on this day.

In Europe there were several long standing traditions where a specific Sunday was set aside to honor motherhood and mothers such as [Mothering Sunday](#). Mothering Sunday celebrations are part of the liturgical calendar in several Christian denominations, including Anglicans, and in the Catholic calendar is marked as [Laetare Sunday](#), the

fourth Sunday in Lent to honour the Virgin Mary and your "mother" church (the main church of the area). Historians think that children who served in houses were given a day off on that date so they could visit their families. The children would pick wild flowers along the way to place them on the church or to give them to their mothers as gifts.

Anna Jarvis was born in the tiny town of [Webster](#) in [Taylor County, West Virginia](#). She was the daughter of [Ann Maria Reeves Jarvis](#). The family moved to nearby [Grafton, West Virginia](#) in her childhood. She graduated from what is now [Mary Baldwin College](#) in 1883.

On May 12, 1907, two years after her mother's death, she held a memorial to her mother and thereafter embarked upon a campaign to make "Mother's Day" a recognized holiday. She succeeded in making this nationally recognized in 1914. The International Mother's Day Shrine was established in Grafton to commemorate her accomplishment.¹

[International Women's Day](#) was celebrated for the first time in 28 February 1909, in the US, by which time Anna Jarvis had already begun her national campaign in the US. It is now celebrated in many countries on March 8.

The "[Mother's Day Proclamation](#)" by [Julia Ward Howe](#) was one of the early calls to celebrate Mother's Day in the United States. Written in 1870, Howe's Mother's Day Proclamation was a pacifist reaction to the carnage of the American Civil War and the Franco-Prussian War. The Proclamation was tied to Howe's feminist belief that women had a responsibility to shape their societies at the political level.

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Today, the proclamation is included in the [Unitarian Universalist](#) hymnal, [Singing the Living Tradition](#).

Mother's Day Proclamation

*Arise, then, women of this day!
Arise, all women who have hearts,
Whether our baptism be of water or of tears!*

Say firmly:

*"We will not have great questions decided by irrelevant agencies,
Our husbands will not come to us, reeking with carnage, for caresses and applause.
Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn
All that we have been able to teach them of charity, mercy and patience.*

*We, the women of one country, will be too tender of those of another country
To allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs."*

*From the bosom of the devastated Earth a voice goes up with our own.
It says: "Disarm! Disarm! The sword of murder is not the balance of justice."
Blood does not wipe out dishonor, nor violence indicate possession.
As men have often forsaken the plough and the anvil at the summons of war,
Let women now leave all that may be left of home for a great and earnest day of counsel.*

*Let them meet first, as women, to bewail and commemorate the dead.
Let them solemnly take counsel with each other as to the means
Whereby the great human family can live in peace,
Each bearing after his own time the sacred impress, not of Caesar,
But of God.*

*In the name of womanhood and humanity, I earnestly ask
That a general congress of women without limit of nationality
May be appointed and held at someplace deemed most convenient
And at the earliest period consistent with its objects,
To promote the alliance of the different nationalities,
The amicable settlement of international questions,
The great and general interests of peace.*

(Source of hymn - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mother%27s_Day_Proclamation)

Nine years after the first official Mother's Day, commercialization of the U.S. holiday became so rampant that Anna Jarvis herself became a major opponent of what the holiday had become and spent all her inheritance and the rest of her life fighting what she saw as an abuse of the celebration.

Later commercial and other exploitations of the use of Mother's Day infuriated Anna and she made her criticisms explicitly known throughout her time. She criticized the practice of purchasing greeting cards, which she saw as a sign of being too lazy to write a personal letter.

*A printed card means nothing except that you are too lazy to write to the woman
who has done more for you than anyone in the world. And candy! You take a
box to Mother—and then eat most of it yourself. A pretty sentiment.*

—Anna Jarvis.

She was arrested in 1948 for disturbing the peace while protesting against the commercialization of Mother's Day, and she finally said that she "wished she would have never started the day because it became so out of control ...".

Mother's Day continues to this day to be one of the commercially most successful U.S. occasions. According to the [National Restaurant Association](#), Mother's Day is now the most popular day of the year to dine out at a restaurant in the United States.

For example, according to [BISWorld](#), a publisher of business research, Americans will spend approximately \$2.6 billion on flowers, \$1.53 billion on pampering gifts—like spa treatments—and another \$68 million on greeting cards.

Mother's Day will generate about 7.8% of the U.S. jewelry industry's annual revenue in 2008, with custom gifts like [mother's rings](#).

It's possible that the holiday would have withered over time without the support and continuous promotion of the florist industries and other commercial industries. Other Protestant holidays from the same time, like [Children's Day](#) and [Temperance Sunday](#), do not have the same level of popularity. Mother's Day is also prominent in the Sunday Funnies of the United States, being a rich source of humor concerning mothers, children and husbands ranging from sentimental to wry to caustic.**

(**= the source for the information between these asterisks is: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mother%27s_Day.)

Biblically speaking, I think we could make a case for the primary goal of parenting to be what we find in Proverbs 22:6 –
6 Train ^[a] a child in the way he should go,
and when he is old he will not turn from it.

And today we gather together, as men and women of faith, to say thank you to God for those godly women known to each of us as “mother.” This day feels different once Mom passes over from being a member of the Church Militant (living on earth now) to being a member of the Church Triumphant (at heaven with Jesus).

Some of you last week could still write a letter, send an email, call on your cellphone ... or (yes, Anna Jarvis) ... buy a card, sign it, seal it, stamp it, and send it ... to your Mom. Some of us can only remember ... and look at pictures flashing by on our computer screens or in our scrapbooks ... and try to think what their voices sounded like.

A Litany of Thanks for Bold Women

(Source: <https://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Ministry/Women-of-the-ELCA/Worship-and-prayer/Litanies/Bold-Womens-Day-Litany.aspx>)

Leader: Lord our God, we give thanks today for the witness of bold women. From the earliest times until today and on into the future, bold women show all of us how to live as God's beloved children in God's beloved creation, carrying out our baptismal call to work for justice and peace for all God's creatures.

Leader: For Eve, mother of us all, sinful and beloved, we say:

All: Thank you, Lord!

Leader: For Miriam, who danced beside the Red Sea, we say:
Young women: Thank you, Lord!

Leader: For Mary, mother of Jesus, who pondered the angel's words in her heart, we say:
Mothers: Thank you, Lord!

Leader: For Mary Magdalene, first to hear the voice of the Risen Christ, we say:
Single women: Thank you, Lord!

Leader: For Naomi, who rejoiced in her grandson Obed, we say:
Grandmothers: Thank you, Lord!

Leader: For the Syro-Phoenician woman, bold enough to challenge Jesus himself for her child's sake:
Daughters: Thank you, Lord!

Leader: For Mary and Martha of Bethany, who served the Lord together in their different ways, we say:
Sisters: Thank you, Lord!

Leader: For the persistent widow, who would not rest until she won justice, we say:
Widows: Thank you, Lord!

Leader: For Katharine von Bora Luther, who ran to embrace change in her world, we say:
Married women: Thank you, Lord!

Leader: There have been bold women all around us on our way, if only we look for them. For whom do we thank the Lord today? Name her aloud and let us thank God for her witness.

(Members of the assembly may speak the names of other bold women aloud, briefly describing her witness. After each one, the group responds:)

All: Thank you, Lord!

(When the group is done naming bold women, the leader concludes:)

Leader: For the witness of all bold women, yesterday, today, and tomorrow, Lord our God, we thank you and we praise you. Lord our God, let their boldness flourish in our own hearts as we live out our baptismal call to serve you and our neighbor, with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our strength.

All: Thank you, Lord! Alleluia, Amen!