Not Orphaned

“I will not leave you orphaned,” Jesus promises us in today’s gospel. God is not some ruthless heavenly spectator judging us as on reality television, relishing our failures, wishing to exchange us for a better or more attractive child, no curmudgeonly “Daddy Warbucks” in the sky. Rather, God comes to love us in Jesus, singularly loving and accepting, seeking our trust, promising to be ever-present with us in the Holy Spirit. This Holy Advocate moves us even when we don’t recognize its power, even when it seems “an unknown God” (Acts 17:23). Though we might battle an elemental loneliness, we have not been abandoned.

Many life experiences can leave us feeling orphaned or abandoned. Family can ease that feeling but also magnify it if our family relationships are strained or if our families live far away. Think of those in your congregation who count deployed soldiers among their loved ones in recent years, or construction workers and tradesmen who need to live in hotels far away from their families to keep making money for their families in the recent difficult economy. The Internet, webcams, Skype, and social networking can link people across the miles but can further aggravate loneliness and isolation when these substitute for real intimacy in our highly connected world. How do we experience this loneliness and this longing for home and belonging? How does Jesus’ promise that he will not leave us orphaned speak to these real-life concerns?

When Jesus makes this string of promises in John 14, saying that he will remain with us in the Holy Spirit as our Advocate, it’s hard to envision how this support comes to us sometimes. When we do not get to see or hear those we love, the simple gifts Jesus offers in body and blood, bread and wine shared with real warm neighbors have great power. Even when life keeps delivering bad news about how far apart we are from another, how broken our relationships are, “I will not leave you orphaned” is the godly reassurance that we are not alone.
Gathering

*You may wish to prepare for worship by lighting a candle and/or placing a small bowl of water nearby as a remembrance for baptism.*

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude

*This Joyful Eastertide,* arr. Dale Wood

Thanksgiving for Baptism

*During the thanksgiving, you may wish to gesture to remember your baptism:*
  
  *A light splash of water,*
  
  *Use water to trace a cross on your forehead*
  
  *Make a sign of the cross across your body*

Look at the rainfall, it’s beautiful.
And yet, we can’t control it when it falls from the sky
or jumps the river banks, or even pours into our basement.

Water is a precious gift,
And yet, it can be deadly.
Water is both a blessing and a judgement.
We remember the world being judged by a flood,
and Noah and his family being blessed and preserved in an ark.
Baptism is the working out of God’s judgement,
The drowning of our old sinful self.

But it’s also a mark of God’s blessing as we rise from that water cleansed, filled with
God’s spirit, and marked by the cross of Christ forever, being given full identity as a
child of God.

We recognize this entire experience as we are washed in the waters of baptism. We
are free to receive his grace and his spirit.
Water … it’s beautiful.

*Amen.*
Gathering Hymn

*Children of the Heavenly Father / Tryggare kan ingen vara*, ELW 781
Karen Mears, soloist

*The assembly joins in singing stanzas 1, 3 and 4:*

![Music notation]

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Greeting and Prayer of the Day

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

**Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

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.**

Almighty and ever-living God, you hold together all things in heaven and on earth. In your great mercy receive the prayers of all your children, and give to all the world the Spirit of your truth and peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**
Reading

Acts 17:22-31

In Athens, Paul faces the challenge of proclaiming the gospel to Greeks who know nothing of either Jewish or Christian tradition. He proclaims that the “unknown god” whom they worship is the true Lord of heaven and earth who will judge the world with justice through Jesus, whom God has raised from the dead.

22Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, “Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. 23For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. 24The God who made the world and everything in it, the one who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, 25nor is God served by human hands, as though needing anything, since that very God gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. 26From one ancestor God made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, 27so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for and find God—though indeed God is not far from each one of us. 28For ‘In God we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we too are the offspring of God.’

29Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. 30While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now God commands all people everywhere to repent, 31because God has fixed a day on which to judge the world in righteousness by a man whom God has appointed, and of this God has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

As we welcome the gospel, we sing:

Be not a-fraid, sing out for joy! Christ is ris-en, al-le - lu - ia!

Be not a-fraid, sing out for joy! Christ is ris-en, al-le - lu - ia!
Gospel

The holy gospel according to John.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

[Jesus said:] 15“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16And I will ask the Father, who will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. 17This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, whom the world neither sees nor knows. You know the Spirit, because the Spirit abides with you, and will be in you.

18“I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. 19In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. 20On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. 21They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sermon

Pastor Elizabeth Palmer

Prayers of Intercession

As we begin our prayers, together, we join in singing:

Hear our prayer, hear our prayer, Lord, make us whole:

peace to all people, hope for each soul.

God of grace, in this place, hear now our prayer.

After each petition, the assembly responds:

For this we pray:

**O God, hear us!**
We continue to hold in prayer:
Our bishops, Elizabeth Eaton and the ELCA Churchwide staff;
   Yehiel Curry, and the Metropolitan Chicago Synod staff
Missionaries throughout the world especially Pr. Mawien Ariik and
   Pr. Wal Luot Reat in South Sudan; and Pr. Alex LaChapelle in Nairobi,
   whom we support
Our ecumenical brothers and sisters in the countries of Indian Ocean
   Islands: Comoros, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles
Our community of faith, especially our pastors and staff, leadership and
   volunteers.

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

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.

Sending

Blessing

The God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing,
so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

The God of all grace ✩ bless us now and forever.
Amen.

Sending Song

Let Not Your Hearts Be Troubled

The cantor introduces the song. The assembly joins in singing the second time.

Let not your hearts be troubled.
Be not afraid.

Heaven and earth have been gathered.
Be not afraid.
Dismissal

Christ is risen, just as he said.
Share the good news. Alleluia!
Thanks be to God. Alleluia!

As our service concludes, we share the peace with each other near and far.

Postlude

Trumpet Tune, Jeremiah Clarke
Jim Cross, trumpet

Special thanks to our leaders this morning:
The Rev. Richard Johnson
Michael Busbey, pastoral intern
Anne Krentz Organ, director of music ministries
Pastor Elizabeth Palmer
Janet Hoiberg, reader and intercessor
Karen Mears, soloist

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