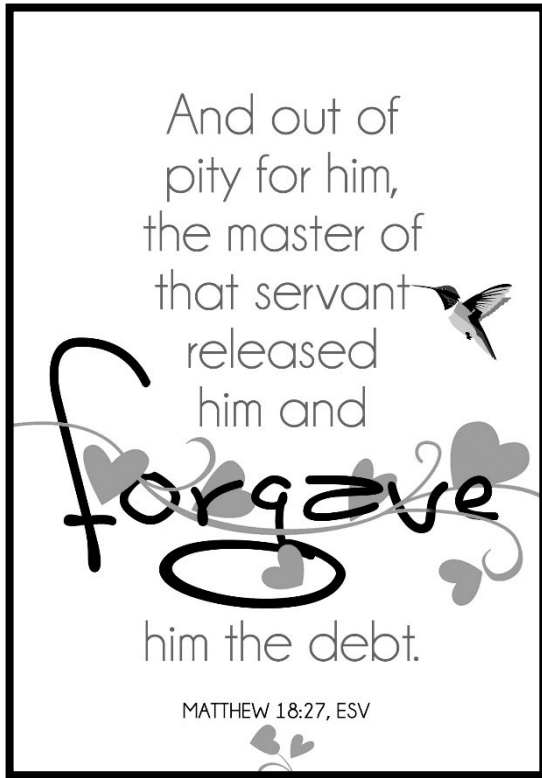


# Messiah Lutheran Church

GATHER, EMPOWER, SERVE



✝ Holy Communion ✝

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 13, 2026



## SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

*In today's second reading Paul questions why we judge one another, since we all stand before the judgment of God. Yet we do sin against one another, and Jesus' challenge that we forgive seventy-seven times reveals God's boundless mercy. When we hear the words of forgiveness in worship and sign ourselves with the cross, we are renewed in baptism to be signs of reconciliation in the world.*

### GATHERING

#### PRELUDE

*Stand*

#### CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

**P:** In the name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**C:** Amen.

**P:** Let us pray...

Dear Father in Heaven—to whom all hearts are open and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that we might perfectly love you and worthily magnify your Holy Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**C:** Amen.

**P:** If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the Truth is not in us. But we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Therefore, let confess all our sins to God, so that we may heart his forgiveness and know his mercy...

*Kneel*

*Silence is kept for meditation...*

**P:** Almighty God, merciful Father:

**C:** I have sinned against you in thought, in word, and in deed;

By what I have done and what I have left undone.

I have not loved you with my whole heart, mind, and strength.

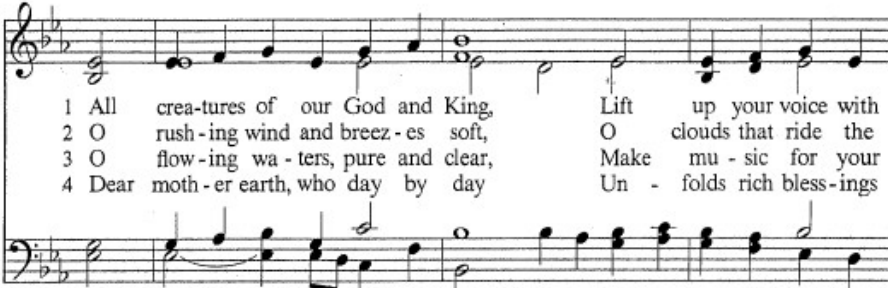
I have not loved my neighbor as myself.

For the sake of your beloved Son, who suffered upon the cross for me, have mercy upon me and forgive me all my sin!

**P:** Almighty God, our Father in Heaven, has given his Son to die for us, and for his sake forgives us all our sin. As a Called and Ordained minister of the Church of Jesus Christ, and by his authority, I declare to you the forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**C:** Amen.

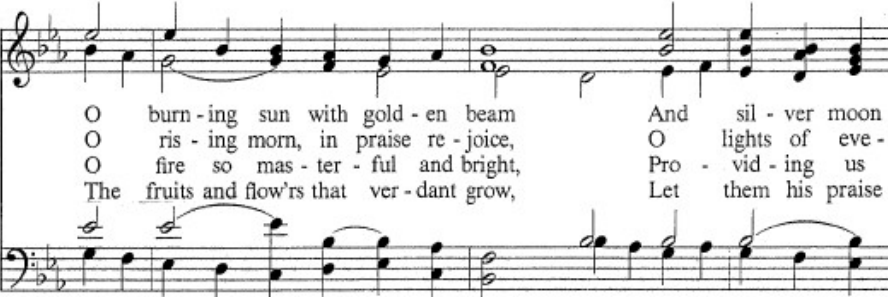
Stand

**GATHERING HYMN***All Creatures of Our God and King, st. 1, 2, 5-7*


1 All crea-tures of our God and King, Lift up your voice with  
 2 O rush-ing wind and breez-es soft, O clouds that ride the  
 3 O flow-ing wa-ters, pure and clear, Make mu-sic for your  
 4 Dear moth-er earth, who day by day Un-folds rich bless-ings



us and sing: Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!  
 winds a - loft: Oh, . . . praise him! Al - le - lu - ia!  
 Lord to hear. Oh, . . . praise him! Al - le - lu - ia!  
 on our way, Oh, . . . praise him! Al - le - lu - ia!



O burn-ing sun with gold-en beam And sil-ver moon  
 O ris-ing morn, in praise re-joice, O lights of eve-  
 O fire so mas-ter-ful and bright, Pro-vid-ing us  
 The fruits and flow'rs that ver-dant grow, Let them his praise



with soft-er gleam:  
 ning, find a voice. Oh, praise him! Oh, praise him!  
 with warmth and light,  
 a - bun-dant show.

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

A musical score for a two-part setting of 'Alleluia'. The top part is in treble clef and the bottom part is in bass clef. Both parts are in a key with two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The melody is simple and homophonic, with the lyrics 'Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!' written below the notes.

- 5 O ev'ryone of tender heart,  
Forgiving others, take your part,  
Oh, praise him! Alleluia!  
All you who pain and sorrow bear,  
Praise God and lay on him your care. *Refrain*
- 6 And you, most kind and gentle death,  
Waiting to hush our final breath,  
Oh, praise him! Alleluia!  
You lead to heav'n the child of God,  
Where Christ our Lord the way has trod. *Refrain*
- 7 Let all things their Creator bless  
And worship God in humbleness.  
Oh, praise him! Alleluia!  
Oh, praise the Father, praise the Son,  
And praise the Spirit, Three in One, *Refrain*

**APOSTOLIC GREETING**

**P:** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.  
**G:** And also with you.

**KYRIE**

A In peace, let us pray to the Lord. G Lord, have mer - cy.

A For the peace from a - bove, and for our sal - vation, let us pray to the Lord.

G Lord, have mer - cy.

A For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God,  
and for the u - ni - ty of all, let us pray to the Lord.

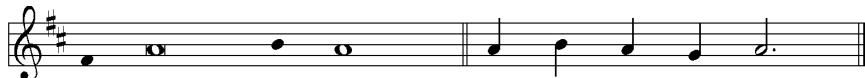
G Lord, have mer - cy.

A musical score for a Kyrie. It consists of six staves of music. The first staff has two parts: 'A In peace, let us pray to the Lord.' and 'G Lord, have mer - cy.' The second staff has one part: 'A For the peace from a - bove, and for our sal - vation, let us pray to the Lord.' The third staff has one part: 'G Lord, have mer - cy.' The fourth staff has two parts: 'A For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God,' and 'and for the u - ni - ty of all, let us pray to the Lord.' The fifth staff has one part: 'G Lord, have mer - cy.'

**A** For this holy house, and for all who offer here their wor-ship and praise,  
 let us pray to the Lord. **C** Lord, have mer - cy.  
**A** Help, save, comfort, and de - fend us, gra-cious Lord. **C** A - men

**HYMN OF PRAISE**

**A** Glo-ry to God in the high-est, and peace to his peo-ple on earth.  
**C** Lord God, heav-en-ly king, al-might-y God and Fa-ther:  
 We wor-ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glo-ry.  
 Lord Je-sus Christ, on-ly Son of the Fa-ther, Lord God, Lamb of God:  
 You take a-way the sin of the world; have mer - cy on us.  
 You are seat-ed at the right hand of the Fa-ther; re-ceive our prayer.  
 For you a-lone are the Ho-ly One, you a-lone are the Lord,  
 you a-lone are the Most High, Je-sus Christ, with the Ho-ly Spir-it,  
 in the glo - ry of God the Fa-ther. A - men

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

**P** The Lord be with you.

**C** And al - so with you.

**P**: Let us pray.

O Lord God, merciful judge, you are the inexhaustible fountain of forgiveness. Replace our hearts of stone with hearts that love and adore you, that we may delight in doing your will, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**C**: Amen.

*Sit*

**WORD****FIRST READING: Genesis 50:15-21**

*After Jacob's death the brothers of Joseph begged for forgiveness for the crime they had done against him. You intended to do me harm, Joseph said, but God used this as an opportunity to do good and save many lives.*

**A**: A Reading from Genesis:

<sup>15</sup> Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said,

"What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us  
and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?"

<sup>16</sup> So they approached Joseph, saying,

"Your father gave this instruction before he died,

<sup>17</sup> 'Say to Joseph: I beg you,

forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming  
you.' Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of  
your father."

Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

<sup>18</sup> Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said,

"We are here as your slaves."

<sup>19</sup> But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid!

Am I in the place of God?

<sup>20</sup> Even though you intended to do harm to me,

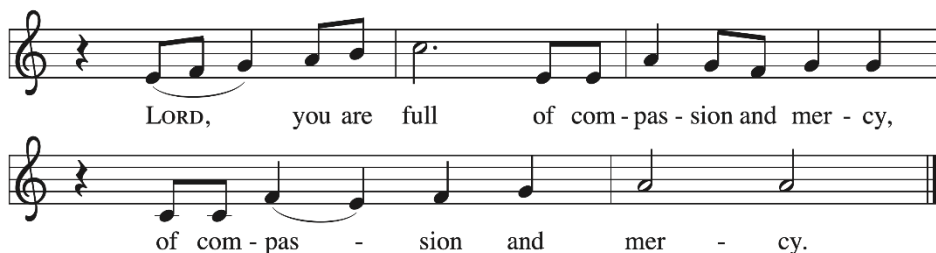
God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people,  
as he is doing today.

<sup>21</sup> So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones."

In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

**A**: The word of the Lord.

**C**: Thanks be to God.

**PSALM: Psalm 103:1-13***Sung by the choir and congregation.**Sung responsively between the choir and congregation.*

<sup>1</sup>Bless the LORD, | O my soul,  
and all that is within me, bless his | holy name.

<sup>2</sup>**Bless the LORD, | O my soul,  
and forget not | all his benefits.**

<sup>3</sup>He forgives | all your sins  
and heals all | your infirmities;

<sup>4</sup>**he redeems your life | from the grave  
and crowns you with mercy and | lovingkindness;**

<sup>5</sup>he satisfies you | with good things,  
and your youth is renewed | like an eagle's.

<sup>6</sup>**The LORD ex- | ecutes righteousness  
and judgment for all who | are oppressed.**

<sup>7</sup>He made his ways | known to Moses  
and his works to the chil- | dren of Israel.

<sup>8</sup>**The LORD is full of compas- | sion and mercy,  
slow to anger and | of great kindness.**

<sup>9</sup>He will not al- | ways accuse us,  
nor will he keep his an- | ger forever.

<sup>10</sup>**He has not dealt with us according | to our sins,  
nor rewarded us according | to our wickedness.**

<sup>11</sup>For as the heavens are high | above the earth,  
so is his mercy great upon | those who fear him.

<sup>12</sup>**As far as the east is | from the west,  
so far has he removed our | sins from us.**

<sup>13</sup>As a father cares | for his children,  
so does the LORD care for | those who fear him. **R.**

**SECOND READING: Romans 14:1-12**

*This Christian community has significant struggles with diversity. Here Paul helps us understand that despite different practices in worship and personal piety, we do not judge one another. All Christians belong to the Lord Jesus Christ who died for all of us and will judge each of us.*

**A:** A Reading from Romans:

- <sup>1</sup> Welcome those who are weak in faith,  
but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions.
- <sup>2</sup> Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables.
- <sup>3</sup> Those who eat must not despise those who abstain,  
and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat,  
for God has welcomed them.
- <sup>4</sup> Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another?  
It is before their own lord that they stand or fall.  
And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.
- <sup>5</sup> Some judge one day to be better than another,  
while others judge all days to be alike.  
Let all be fully convinced in their own minds.
- <sup>6</sup> Those who observe the day, observe it in honor the Lord.  
Also those who eat, eat in honor the Lord,  
since they give thanks to God;  
while those who abstain, abstain for the Lord and give thanks to God.
- <sup>7</sup> For we do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves.
- <sup>8</sup> If we live, we live to the Lord,  
and if we die, we die to the Lord;  
so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.
- <sup>9</sup> For to this end Christ died and lived again,  
so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.
- <sup>10</sup> Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister?  
Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister?  
For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.
- <sup>11</sup> For it is written,  
"As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,  
and every tongue shall give praise to God."
- <sup>12</sup> So then, each one of us will be accountable to God.

**A:** The word of the Lord.

**C:** Thanks be to God.

Stand

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia.

**CANTOR:** We have an advocate, Jesus | Christ the righteous; your sins are forgiven on account | of his name.

**C:** Repeat the Alleluias.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 18:21-35**

*When Peter asks about the limits of forgiveness, Jesus responds with a parable that suggests human forgiveness should mirror the unlimited mercy of God.*

**P** The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the eighteenth chapter.

Glo - ry to you, O Lord.

<sup>21</sup> Peter came and said to Jesus,

“Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?”

<sup>22</sup> Jesus said to him,

“Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

<sup>23</sup> “For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves.

<sup>24</sup> When he began the reckoning,

one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him,

<sup>25</sup> and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions and payment to be made.

<sup>26</sup> So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying,

‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’

<sup>27</sup> And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt.

<sup>28</sup> But that same slave, as he went out,

came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him by the throat he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’

<sup>29</sup> Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him,

‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’

<sup>30</sup> But he refused;  
then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt.

<sup>31</sup> When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed,  
and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place.

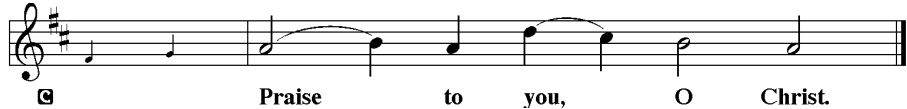
<sup>32</sup> Then his lord summoned him and said to him,  
‘You wicked slave!  
I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.

<sup>33</sup> Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’

<sup>34</sup> And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt.

<sup>35</sup> So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you,  
if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

**P**: The Gospel of the Lord.



Sit  
**SERMON**.....**Pastor Kliner**



Stand

**HYMN OF THE DAY*****How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds.....LBW 345***

1 How sweet the name of Je - sus sounds in  
 2 It makes the wound - ed spir - it whole and  
 3 Dear name! The rock on which I build, my  
 4 By thee my prayers ac - cep - tance gain al -



a be - liev - er's ear! It soothes our sor - rows,  
 calms the heart's un - rest; 'tis man - na to the  
 shield and hid - ing place; my nev - er - fail - ing  
 though with sin de - filed. The dev - il charg - es



heals our wounds, and drives a - way all fear.  
 hun - gry soul, and to the wea - ry, rest.  
 trea - sury, filled with bound - less stores of grace.  
 me in vain, and I am owned a child.



5 O Jesus, shepherd, guardian, friend,  
 my prophet, priest, and king,  
 my Lord, my life, my way, my end,  
 accept the praise I bring.

6 How weak the effort of my heart,  
 how cold my warmest thought;  
 but when I see thee as thou art,  
 I'll praise thee as I ought.

7 Till then I would thy love proclaim  
 with every fleeting breath;  
 and may the music of thy name  
 refresh my soul in death!

**APOSTLES' CREED**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.**

**He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit  
and born of the virgin Mary.**

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

**He descended into hell.**

**On the third day he rose again.**

**He ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen**

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

*A brief silence is held after the introduction.*

**[P]:** Let us pray for the Church, the world, and all people according to their need...

*After each petition:*

**[P]:** Lord, in your mercy,

**[C]: hear our prayer.**

*The prayers conclude:*

**[P]:** All these things, most merciful God, we commend into your hands,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**[C]: Amen!**

**PEACE**

**[P]:** The peace of Christ be with you always.

**[C]: And also with you.**

*The pastor and congregation greet one another in the name of the Lord.*

Peace be with you. R: Peace be with you

*Sit*

MEAL

**OFFERING**

*The Offering is received as the Lord's table is prepared.*

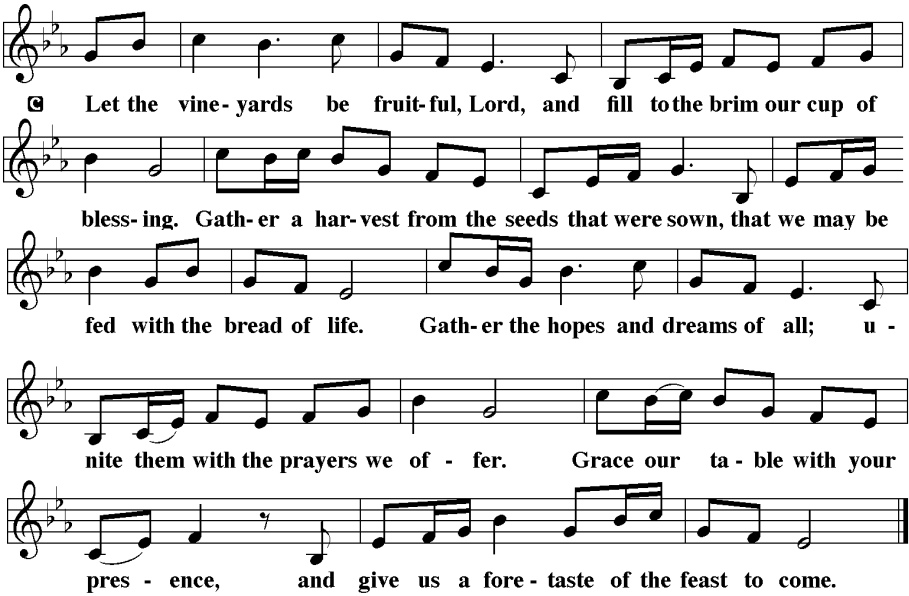
**Anthem**

**Day By Day** ..... Oskar Ahnfelt

*Stand*

**OFFERTORY**

*As the gifts are presented, the Offertory is sung*



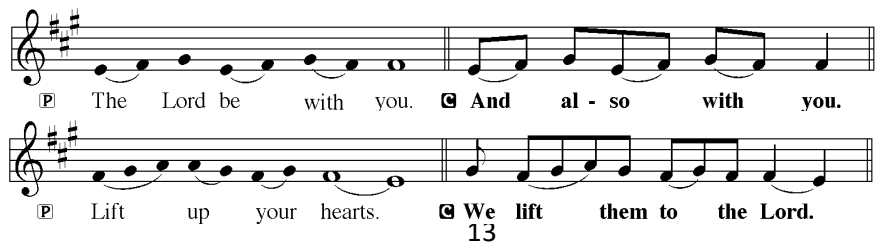
Let the vine-yards be fruit-ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of  
bless-ing. Gath-er a har-vest from the seeds that were sown, that we may be  
fed with the bread of life. Gath-er the hopes and dreams of all; u -  
nite them with the prayers we of - fer. Grace our ta - ble with your  
pres - ence, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

**OFFERING PRAYER**

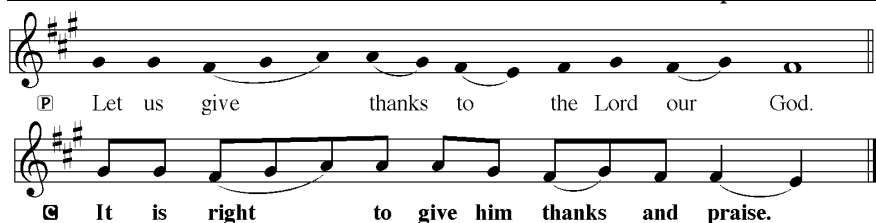
**A**: Let us pray... Merciful Father,

**C**: We offer you with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us—ourselves, our time, and our possessions—signs of your gracious Love. Receive them for the sake of him who offered himself to us, + Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**GREAT THANKSGIVING**

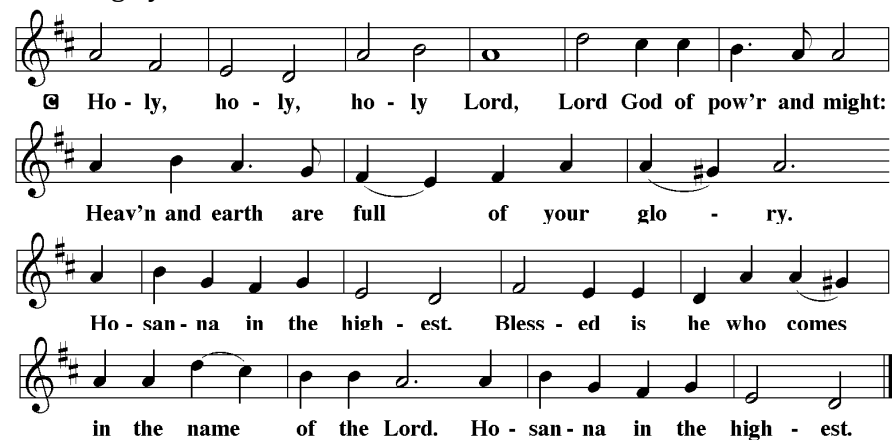


The Lord be with you. **C** And al - so with you.  
Lift up your hearts. **C** We lift them to the Lord.



## **PREFACE**

It is indeed right and salutary, that we should at all times and in all places, offer thanks and praise to you, O Lord, Holy Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord; who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious Resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. And so, with the Church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your Name and join their unending hymn...



## **EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER**

**P:** Holy God, mighty Lord, gracious Heavenly Father: endless is your mercy, and eternal is your reign. You have filled all creation with light and life; heaven and earth are full of your glory!

Through Abraham you promised to bless all nations. You rescued Israel, your chosen people. Through the Prophets, you renewed your promise; and at this, the end of the ages, you sent your only begotten Son, who in words and deeds proclaimed your Kingdom and was obedient to your will, even to giving his life upon the Cross.

Send your Holy Spirit upon these the gifts of your Church, that they may be for us the very Body +and Blood + of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us who receive our Lord's Body and Blood live to the praise of your glory

and receive our inheritance with all your Saints in Light.

**C Amen! Come Holy Spirit!**

**P:** For, in the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples saying:  
TAKE AND EAT.

THIS IS MY BODY WHICH IS GIVEN UP FOR YOU.

DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.

After supper He took the cup. Again, he gave thanks and praise to you and gave it them to drink saying:

DRINK OF THIS, ALL OF YOU:

THIS CUP IS MY BLOOD OF THE NEW AND EVERLASTING COVENANT.

IT WILL BE POURED OUT FOR YOU AND FOR MANY FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN.

DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.

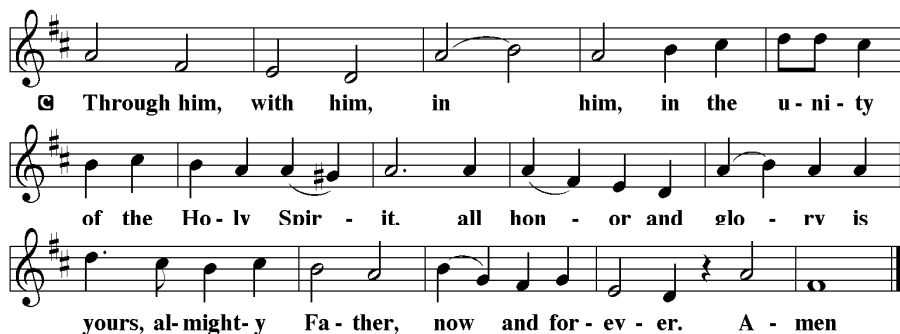
For as often as we eat of this bread and drink of this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes again in his glory!

**C Christ has died! Christ is risen! Christ will come again!**

**P:** And so, Father Most Holy, calling to mind the death your Son endured for our salvation, his glorious Resurrection and his ascension into heaven, we pray: Look with favor on your Church, and see him whose death has reconciled us to yourself. Grant that we who are nourished by our Lord's body and blood, may be filled with his Holy Spirit, and become one body, one spirit in Christ Jesus, and believing the witnesses of his Resurrection, be sustained in the Faith and Hope of our Lord's coming in power and glory to share with us the great and promised Feast.

**C Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!**

**P:** Join now our prayers with those of your servants of every time and every place, and unite them with the prayers of the Faithful throughout the ages—the Patriarchs and Prophets, the Holy Apostles and Martyrs, and all your Saints in Light who lived and died in Faith. Strengthen in faith and love your pilgrim Church here on earth—together with our Bishops, Pastors, Deacons and the entire people your son has won for you through his Passion, Death, and Resurrection. Welcome into your Kingdom all our departed brothers and sisters, and all who have left this world in your friendship. Unite all these prayers with the ceaseless petitions of our great high priest, Jesus Christ, until he comes as Victorious Lord of all...

**LORD'S PRAYER**

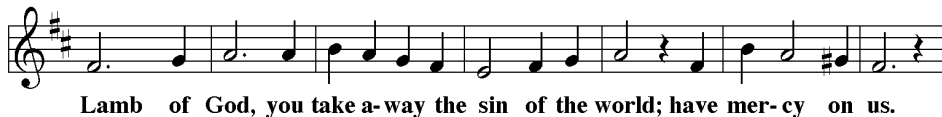
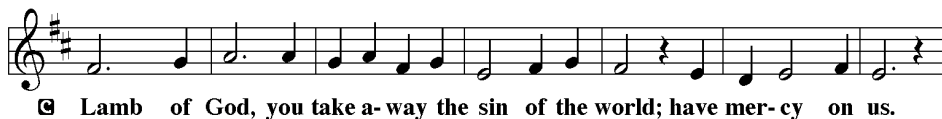
**P:** Let us pray with confidence in the words that our Lord Jesus Christ has given us...

**C:** Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us;

and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever. Amen



INVITATION TO COMMUNION

*The Pastor lifts the Bread and Chalice and says:*

**P:** Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

**C:** Thanks be to God!

**P:** The Holy Things for the Holy people:

**C:** One is Holy, one is Lord, Jesus Christ, to the glory of God!

Sit

COMMUNION

*All baptized believers are invited to this holy meal. Those not communing are invited for a blessing. Please follow the instructions of the ushers to gather at the altar table. As the ministers give the bread and wine, they say these words to each communicant:*

**The body of Christ, given for you. The blood of Christ, shed for you.**

*The communicant may say: Amen*

COMMUNION HYMN

Let Us Break Bread Together.....LBW 212



1 Let us break bread to - geth - er on our knees;  
2 Let us drink wine to - geth - er on our knees;

let us break bread to - geth - er on our knees.  
let us drink wine to - geth - er on our knees.

*Refrain*

When I fall on my knees, with my face to the ris - ing  
sun, O Lord, have mer - cy on me.

3 Let us praise God to - geth - er on our knees;  
let us praise God to - geth - er on our knees.

Text: African American spiritual  
Music: BREAK BREAD TOGETHER, African American spiritual

*Stand*

**P:** The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

**C:** Amen.

**POST-COMMUNION PRAYER****A:** Let us pray

Let us pray... Father in Heaven, you provide the true Bread from heaven, your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Grant that we who have received the Sacrament of his Body and Blood, may abide in him, and he in us, so that we might abound in Faith, Hope, and Love; to the glory of your name.

**C:** Amen.**SENDING****BENEDICTION**

**P:** The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine upon you and gracious unto you. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace. And may almighty God—the Father, † The Son, and The Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

**C:** Amen.**SENDING HYMN*****In Thee Is Gladness*..... LBW 552**

1 In thee is glad-ness a-mid all sad-ness, Je-sus, sun-shine of my heart.  
 2 If he is ours, . . we fear no pow-ers, not of earth or sin or death.



By thee are giv-en the gifts of heav-en, thou the true re-deem-er art.  
 He sees and bless-es in worst dis-tress-es; he can change them with a breath.



Our souls thou wak-est; our bonds thou break-est. Who trusts thee sure-ly  
 Where-fore the sto-ry tell of his glo-ry with heart and voice;



has built se-cure-ly and stands for-ev-er: Al-le-lu-ia!  
 all heav'n re-joic-es in him for-ev-er: Al-le-lu-ia!



Our hearts are pin-ing to see thy shin-ing, dy-ing or liv-ing,  
 We shout for glad-ness, tri-umph o'er sad-ness, love him and praise him



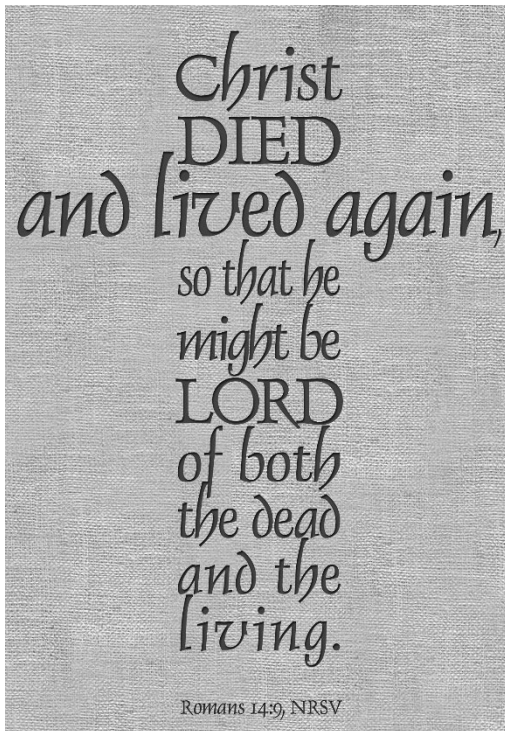
to thee are cleav-ing; naught us can sev-er: Al-le-lu-ia!  
 and still shall raise him glad hymns for-ev-er: Al-le-lu-ia!

**DISMISSAL**

**A:** Go in Peace. Serve the Lord.

**C:** Thanks be to God.

**POSTLUDE**



### **SERVICE ASSISTANTS**

**Ushers:** Mike Larson, Brian Bair, Al Cole, Sally Congdon, Kim Brofee

**Lay Assistant:** Georgette Copp; **Comm. Assist.:** Fred Harbaugh

**Acolyte:** Doriann Morris; **Altar Guild:** Susan Bryan

**Greeters/Presenters:** April and Mike Gardner

**Cantor:** Bob Schweppenheiser; **Flower Delivery:** Charles Luppert

### **IN BLESSED MEMORY**

**The Altar Flowers** are given to the Glory of God and in loving memory of loved ones.

**The Basket of Flowers** is given to the Glory of God and in loving memory of Sam Hessert's 85<sup>th</sup> birthday on September 13<sup>th</sup>, by his wife Carol and family.

**The Basket of Flowers** is given to the Glory of God and in celebration of the birth of Luke James Gardner on August 31<sup>st</sup>. With love from his family and his grandparents on this grandparent's day.

**The Sanctuary Lamp burns in** memory of my father Sam Hessert, with love Pam.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Welcome to Messiah Church!** It is our joy to have you worship with us. If you are visiting, please make yourself known and leave your name & information to a congregation member. We hope to see you again.

**Join us immediately after worship for** our Church Picnic in Shaheen Hall.

**Lutheran World Relief School Kits Pack-a-Sack Events:** So many school supplies came in over the summer that we will be packing school kits in two sessions this year. There will be jobs available for every skill and ability level, both active and sit-down. ***We need you!***

**Wednesday, September 16, 9:00 a.m.** – a more “low-key” session to get a head start on packing the kits in advance of the main event. Join us for a time of fellowship and service!

**Saturday, September 19, 5:00 p.m.** – Join us for a pizza supper followed by our service project to pack the school kits. Open to all – children under grade 3 must be accompanied and supervised by an adult family member.

Question? See Kathy Wither/Sally Congdon. Please sign up in the narthex to help us prepare.

**Preschool Mum tickets** are still available after worship this morning or in the church office. ***THANK YOU for your support.***

**Eucharistic Ministers** will be sent out Sunday, September 20<sup>th</sup>. Please let the office know if you are not available to take communion. If anyone is homebound, can't get to church and would like to receive Communion please notify the church office.

**MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**Rev. Gerald Kliner, STS, Senior Pastor**  
**JARED GIST, ORGANIST**

324 South Howard Street | South Williamsport, PA 17702  
(570) 326-9171 | [www.messiahsouth.org](http://www.messiahsouth.org)

## **Forgiven and Freed**

Today's gospel reading is all about forgiveness. In the complex web of human relationships, forgiveness often feels messy. We may not understand it, and it may at times feel entirely out of reach. Yet, as Christians, we are called to wrestle with the promise that even when forgiveness feels impossible, there is room for us and for others in the wideness of God's mercy. How do we make sense of this?

We might begin by experiencing God's forgiveness ourselves. Many worshiping communities begin the service with a time of confession and forgiveness. Together we name out loud the ways we have failed to love God and neighbor, the ways we have failed to recognize ourselves or one another as beloved children of God. We name how we have been complacent in systems of injustice, how we have harmed one another directly, and the hurtful things we don't even know we've done.

This practice may seem deeply unsettling; after all, where else do we greet each other with a list of all the things we've done wrong? But confession is also freeing. It gives us permission to stop pretending we have it all together. It allows us to shed the weight of our mistakes and lay down our burdens so our hands and hearts are ready to receive God's mercy.

And then, week after week, we hear God's words of forgiveness for us and for our neighbors. We are reminded that there is always and forever enough of God's grace and forgiveness to go around. The public declaration of our forgiveness frees us to enter into the rest of our worship service with open and grateful hearts. And then God's forgiveness sends us out in the world to practice the hard work of forgiving others and receiving their forgiveness in turn, knowing that God will meet us again and again with mercy and grace.

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