

Messiah Lutheran Church

GATHER, EMPOWER, SERVE



✝ Holy Communion ✝

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 20, 2026



SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Matthew narrates one of Jesus' controversial parables in which Jesus says that the reign of God is like that of a landowner who pays his workers the same wage no matter what time of day they began to work. When God changes God's mind about punishing Nineveh for their evil ways, Jonah is angry. Yet God is gracious and merciful, abounding in steadfast love. In baptism we receive the grace of God that is freely given to all. As Martin Luther wrote, in the presence of God's mercy we are all beggars.

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 hear 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!

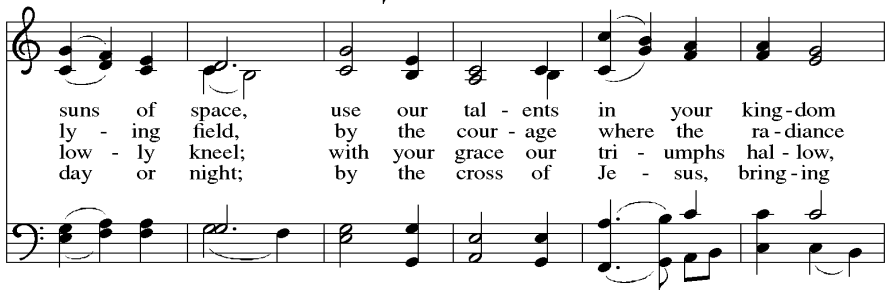
P: Almighty God, our Father in Heaven, has given his Son to die for us, and for his sake forgives us all our sin. As a Called and Ordained minister of the Church of Jesus Christ, and by his authority, I declare to you the forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and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

C: Amen.

Stand

GATHERING HYMN*Lord of Light*


1 Lord of light, your name out - shin - ing all the stars and
 2 By the toil of faith - ful work - ers in some far out -
 3 Grant that knowl - edge, still in - creas - ing, at your feet may
 4 By the prayers of, faith - ful watch - ers, nev - er si - lent



suns of space, use our tal - ents in your king - dom
 ly - ing field, by the cour - age where the ra - diance
 low - ly kneel; with your grace our tri - umphs hal - low,
 day or night; by the cross of Je - sus, bring - ing



as the ser - vants of your grace; use us to ful -
 of the cross is still re - vealed, by the vic - to -
 with your char - i - ty our zeal; lift the na - tions
 peace to all and heal - ing light; by the love that



fill your pur - pose in the gift of Christ your Son.
 ries of meek - ness, through re - proach and suf - f'ring won:
 from the shad - ows to the glad - ness of the sun:
 pass - es knowl - edge, mak - ing all your chil - dren one:

Refrain



Fa - ther, as in high - est heav - en, so on earth your will be done.

Text: Howell E. Lewis, 1860-1953, alt.

Music: ABBOT'S LEIGH, Cyril V. Taylor, 1907-1991

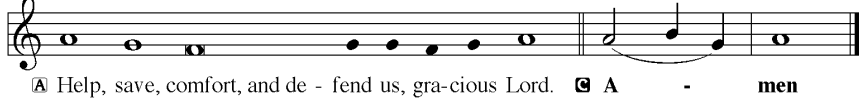
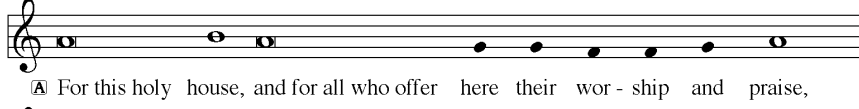
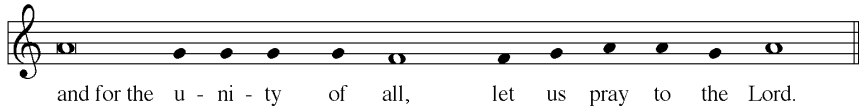
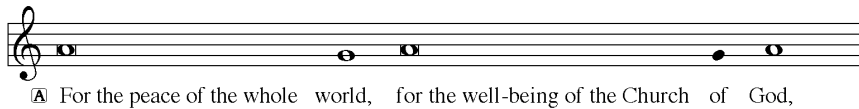
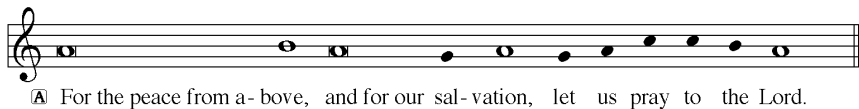
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APOSTOLIC GREETING

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

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.



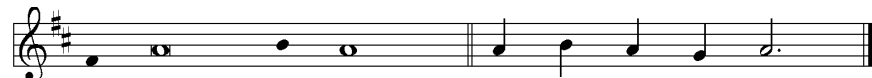
For you a-lone are the Ho-ly One, you a-lone are the Lord,



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.

Almighty and eternal God, you show perpetual lovingkindness to us your servants. Because we cannot rely on our own abilities, grant us your merciful judgment, and train us to embody the generosity of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C: Amen.

WORD**FIRST READING: Jonah 3:10-4:11**

After Jonah's short sermon in 3:4, the Ninevites all repented and God decided to spare the city. Jonah objected to this and became even more angry when God ordered a worm to destroy a plant that was providing shade. The book ends with a question that challenges any who are not ready to forgive: You, Jonah, are all worked up about a bush, but shouldn't I be concerned about a hundred and twenty thousand Ninevites?

A: A Reading from Jonah:

¹⁰ When God saw what the people of Ninevah did,
how they turned from their evil ways,
God changed his mind about the calamity
that he had said he would bring upon them,
and he did not do it.

^{4:1} But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry.

² He prayed to the LORD and said,
"O LORD! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country?
That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning,
for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful,
slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love,
and ready to relent from punishing.

³ And now, O LORD, please take my life from me,
for it is better for me to die than to live."

⁴ And the LORD said, "Is it right for you to be angry?"

⁵ Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city,
and made a booth for himself there.

He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city.

⁶ The LORD God appointed a bush and made it come up over Jonah,
to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort;
so Jonah was very happy about the bush.

⁷ But when dawn came up the next day,
God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered.

⁸ When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind,
and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint
and asked that he might die.

He said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

⁹ But God said to Jonah,
"Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?"
And he said, "Yes, angry enough to die."

¹⁰ Then the LORD said,

"You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night.

¹¹ And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left and also many animals?"

A: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

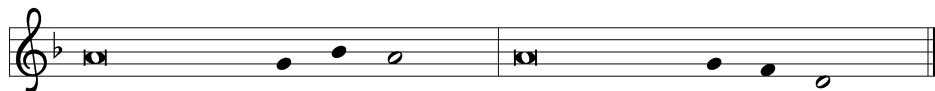
PSALM: Psalm 145:1-8

Sung by the cantor and repeated by the congregation.



The LORD is slow to an-ger and a-bound-ing in stead-fast love.

Sung responsively between the cantor and congregation.



¹I will exalt you, O God my King,
and bless your name fore- | er and ever.

²**Every day | will I bless you
and praise your name fore- | er and ever.**

³Great is the LORD and greatly | to be praised;
there is no end | to his greatness.

⁴**One generation shall praise your works | to another
and shall de- | clare your power.**

⁵I will ponder the glorious splendor | of your majesty
and all your | marvelous works.

⁶**They shall speak of the might of your | wondrous acts,
and I will tell | of your greatness.**

⁷They shall publish the remembrance of | your great goodness;
they shall sing of your | righteous deeds.

⁸**The LORD is gracious and full | of compassion,
slow to anger and | of great kindness. R.**

SECOND READING: Philippians 1:21-30

Paul writes to the Philippians from prison. Though he is uncertain about the outcome of his imprisonment, he is committed to the ministry of the gospel and calls on the Philippians to live lives that reflect and enhance the gospel mission.

A: A Reading from Philippians:

²¹ For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain.

²² If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me,
and I do not know which I prefer.

²³ I am hard pressed between the two:

my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better,

²⁴ but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you.

²⁵ Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain

and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith,

²⁶ so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus
when I come to you again.

²⁷ Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ,
so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you,

I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit,

striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel

²⁸ and are in no way intimidated by your opponents.

For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation.

And this is God's doing.

²⁹ For he has graciously granted you the privilege

not only of believing in Christ,

but of suffering for him as well—

³⁰ since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had
and now hear that I still have.

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.

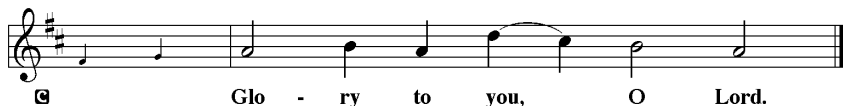
CANTOR: Open our | hearts, O Lord, to give heed to what is said | by your Son.

C: Repeat the Alleluias.

GOSPEL: Matthew 20:1-16

Jesus tells a parable about God's generosity, challenging the common assumption that God rewards people according to what they have earned or deserve.

[P]: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the twentieth chapter.



Jesus said to the disciples:

¹ "The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.

² After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard.

³ When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

⁴ and he said to them,

'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went.

⁵ When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same.

⁶ And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around, and he said to them,

'Why are you standing here idle all day?'

⁷ They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.'

⁸ When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.'

⁹ When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage.

¹⁰ Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage.

¹¹ And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, ¹² saying,

'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.'

¹³ But he replied to one of them,

'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage?'

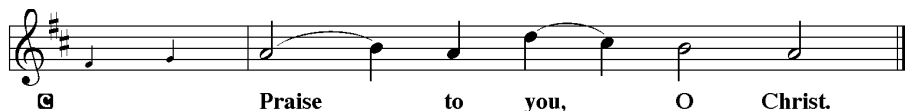
¹⁴ Take what belongs to you and go;

I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you.

¹⁵ Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me?
Or are you envious because I am generous?

¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

[P]: The Gospel of the Lord.



Sit

SERMON.....**Pastor Klinner**

Stand

HYMN OF THE DAY *Hark, the Voice of Jesus Calling*



1 Hark, the voice of Je - sus call - ing, "Who will go and work to - day?
2 If you can - not speak like an - gels, if you can - not preach like Paul,
3 If you can - not be a watch-man, stand - ing high on Zi - on's wall,
4 Let none hear you i - dly say - ing, "There is noth - ing I can do,"

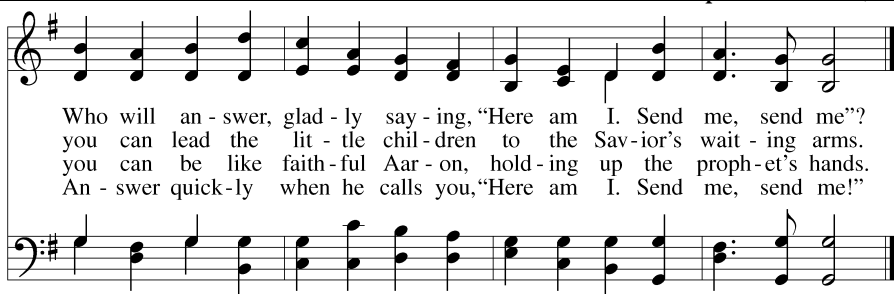


Fields are white and har - vests wait - ing, who will bear the sheaves a - way?"
you can tell the love of Je - sus; you can say he died for all.
point - ing out the path to heav - en, of - f'ring life and peace to all,
while the mul - ti - tudes are dy - ing and the mas - ter calls for you.



Loud and long the mas - ter calls you; rich re - ward he of - fers free.
If you can - not rouse the wick - ed with the judg - ment's dread a - larms,
with your prayers and with your boun - ties you can do what God de - mands;
Take the task he gives you glad - ly; let his work your plea - sure be.





Text: Daniel March, 1816–1909, alt.

Music: GALILEAN, Joseph Barnby, 1838–1896

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.

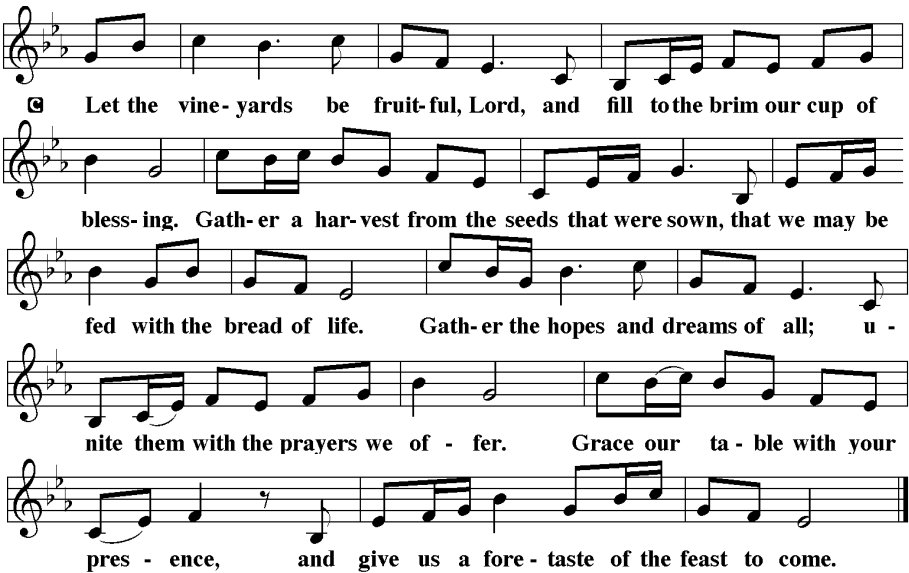
Anthem

Just for You..... Robert Lau

Stand

OFFERTORY

As the gifts are presented, the Offertory is sung



C 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**

P The Lord be with you. **C** And al - so with you.
P Lift up your hearts. **C** We lift them to the Lord.
P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
C It is right to give him thanks and praise.

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...

C Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might:
 Heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry.
 Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes
 in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

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!

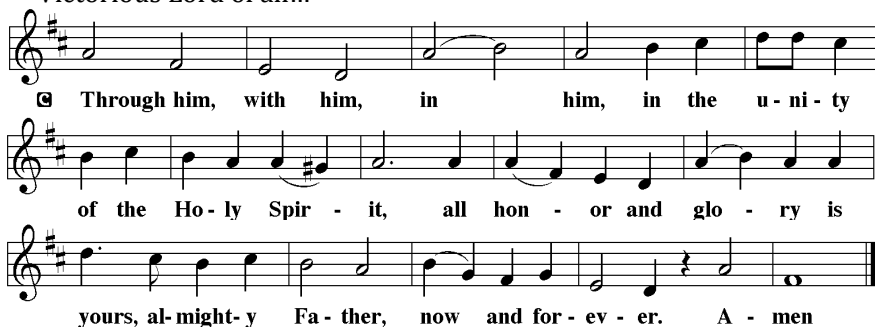
C: Christ has died! Christ is risen! Christ will come again!

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...



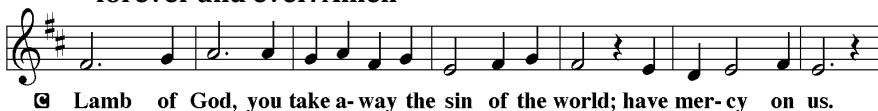
LORD'S PRAYER

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





Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on us.



Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world;



grant us peace, grant us peace.

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

O Living Bread from Heaven



- 1 O liv - ing Bread from heav - en, how well you feed your guest!
- 2 My Lord, you here have led me with - in your ho - liest place,
- 3 You gave me all I want - ed; this food can death de - stroy.
- 4 Lord, grant me then, thus strength - ened with heav'n - ly food, while here



The gifts that you have giv - en have filled my heart with rest.
and here your-self have fed me with trea - sures of your grace;
And you have free - ly grant - ed the cup of end - less joy.
my course on earth is length - ened, to serve with ho - ly fear.



Oh, won-drous food of bless - ing, oh, cup that heals our woes!
 for you have free - ly giv - en what earth could nev - er buy,
 My Lord, I do not mer - it the fa - vor you have shown,
 And when you call my spir - it to leave this world be - low,

My heart, this gift pos - sess - ing, with prais - es o - ver - flows!
 the bread of life from heav - en, that now I shall not die.
 and all my soul and spir - it bow down be - fore your throne.
 I en - ter, through your mer - it, where joys un - min-gled flow.

Text: Johann Rist, 1606–1667; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1829–1878, alt.
 Music: AURELIA, Samuel S. Wesley, 1810–1876

Stand

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

C: Amen.

BLESSING OF THE SCHOOL KITS

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

SENDING OF THE EUCHARISTIC MINISTERS

P: Gracious God,

loving all your family with a mother's tender care:

As you sent the angel to feed Elijah with heavenly bread,
 assist us in this ministry on which we are sent forth.

In your love and care, nourish and strengthen those to whom
 we bring this sacrament, that through the body and blood of
 your Son we may all know the comfort of your abiding
 presence.

C: Amen.

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

Rise Up, O Saints of God!

The musical score is written for a four-part choir (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) in the key of D major (two sharps) and 4/4 time. It consists of two systems of music. The first system contains the first five lines of the hymn, and the second system contains the remaining lines. The lyrics are printed below the vocal staves. The music features a mix of single notes, chords, and rests, with a final double bar line at the end of the second system.

1 Rise up, O saints of God! From vain am - bi - tions turn;
2 Speak out, O saints of God! De - spair en - gulf's earth's frame;
3 Rise up, O saints of God! His king - dom's task em - brace;
4 Give heed, O saints of God! Cre - a - tion cries in pain;
5 Com - mit your hearts to seek the paths which Christ has trod

Christ rose tri - um - phant that your hearts with no - bler zeal might burn.
as heirs of God's bap - tis - mal grace, his word of hope pro - claim.
re - dress sin's cru - el con - se - quence; give jus - tice larg - er place.
stretch forth your hand of heal - ing now, with love the weak sus - tain.
and quick - ened by the Spir - it's pow'r, rise up, O saints of God!

Text: Norman O. Forness, b. 1936
Music: 173rd STAL. SONG; William H. Walter, 1825–1893

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: Dave Bausinger; **Comm. Assist.:** Sherri Holtzman
Acolyte: Doriann Morris; **Altar Guild:** Jody Fullmer, Jeannie Bower
Greeters/Presenters: Georgette Copp, Ray Demarest
Cantor: Mike Yoder; **Flower Delivery:** Paul Weaver

IN BLESSED MEMORY

The Altar Flowers are given to the Glory of God and in loving memory of James D. Wither III (Jamie) by his daughter and son-in-law, Vanessa and Brett Hollfelder and grandchildren, Ali Rudinski and Gordie Emick.

The Bud Vase is given to the Glory of God and in loving memory of James D. Wither III (Jamie) on the anniversary of his birth into heaven, September 20, 2014 by his wife, Kathy, son Sean Wither and grandson, Jackson Summers.

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.

Eucharistic Ministers will be sent out this morning.

MLP Gift Card Bingo is Saturday, October 24 at 11:30 am.

Presale tickets are \$20 and at the door \$25. Tickets will be available before and after each service in the Narthex this morning and **Sunday, September 27th or anytime in the church office. To make this event a success we are asking the congregation for your support. Ways you can help:** donate a gift card of your choice for our Gift Card Bingo; make a themed basket to donate for our Chinese Auction; or make baked goods to sell during the event. Deadline for gift cards and themed baskets is **October 16th**. Baked good items are due **Friday, October 23rd by NOON** in the church office. **PLEASE DROP OFF ALL DONATIONS TO THE CHURCH OFFICE.**

Harvest Home is Sunday, October 4, 2026. Worshipers will be invited to bring forward their gifts of canned goods, boxes of pasta, or monetary offerings for the hungry during the singing of the Offering . **Donations of fresh produce (pumpkins, potatoes, apples, squash, etc.), cornstalks and gourds to use in decorating are very much needed. All perishable items** may be dropped off at the church office any time Thursday-Friday, October 1-2, or you may bring the day of the set-up on Saturday, October 3, at 10:00 am.

Blanket Sunday: Donated blankets and quilts will be distributed by Lutheran World Relief. Please place clean blankets or quilts in the **gray bin** located in the elevator entrance **no later than October 4. Monetary gifts may be placed in an envelope on which you mark “Blankets.” Checks should be made payable to “Messiah Lutheran Church.”** These monetary gifts also will be received during the singing of the offertory.

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

Scandalous Grace

Jesus loved to tell strange, unsettling stories to illustrate God's grace. Theologians and biblical scholars have wrestled with the parables of Jesus for centuries, trying to make them make sense. But perhaps the beauty of these strange illustrations is that they refuse to succumb to our need for logic or neat conclusions. They are wild, confusing, and often scandalous—much like God's love for God's people.

This parable is one such story that has the power to offend us with its backward-seeming logic. A landowner who keeps inviting new laborers to join the workforce, paying them the same amount for different amounts of work? To be sure, this is not a commentary on how to run a business or abide by fair labor practices. Instead, it is a reminder of the outrageousness of God's kingdom or reign and the scandal of God's grace.

The kingdom of God functions by its own rules: It is a table where there is always room for more people, and an endless supply of bread and wine. It is a font where all are welcome, where all are invited to splash in the waters of baptism and be named children of God. It is a realm where our rules of space and time no longer apply, as we enter into ancient story and liturgy alongside the saints who have come before us. It is a sanctuary where we find the courage to confess our sins and receive God's extravagant, scandalous forgiveness. It is a community where love and justice supersede force and greed. It is a safe place where the most vulnerable are the most cared for, and generosity abounds so that all have enough. And it is a kingdom where all are invited to participate. Much like how the landowner hired new laborers until the end of the day, it's never too late to be welcomed by God's mercy!

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