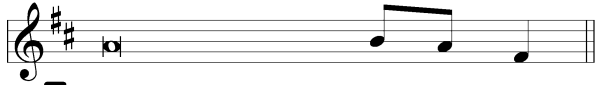


Service of Matins
 September 20, 2020 -- the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

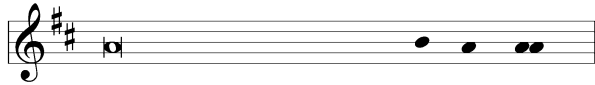
Opening Verses



L O Lord, o - pen my lips,



C and my mouth will de - clare Your praise.



L Make haste, O God, to de - liv - er me;



C make haste to help me, O Lord.



C Glo - ry be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spir - it;



as it was in the be - gin - ning, is now, and will be for - ev - er. A - men.



Common: Praise to You, O Christ. Al - le - lu - ia.

Advent: Praise to You, O Christ, King who comes to save us.

Lent: Praise to You, O Christ, Lamb of our sal - va - tion.

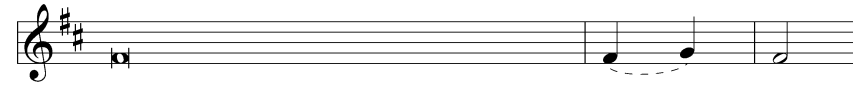


L Blessed be God, the Fa - ther, the Son, and the Ho - ly Spir - it.

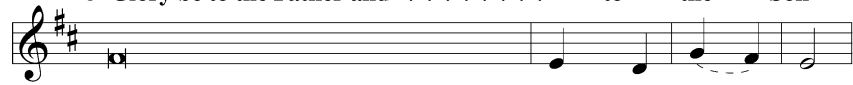


C O come, let us wor - ship Him.

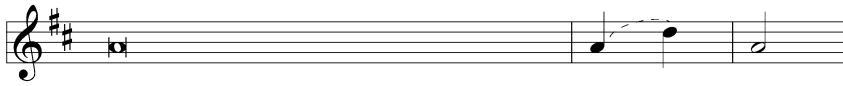
Venite *Psalm 95:1-7*



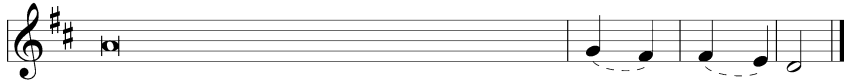
C 1 O come, let us sing to the Lord,
 2 For the Lord is a great God
 3 The sea is His, for He made it,
 5 Glory be to the Father and to the Son



1 let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our sal - va - tion.
 2 and a great king a - bove all gods.
 3 and His hand formed the dry land.
 5 and to the Ho - ly Spir - it;



1 Let us come into His presence with thanks - giv - ing,
 2 The deep places of the earth are in His hand;
 3 O come, let us worship and bow— down,
 4 For He is our God,
 5 as it was in the be - gin - ning,



1 let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise.
 2 the strength of the hills is His— al - so.
 3 let us kneel before the Lord, our mak - er.
 4 and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep— of His hand.
 5 is now, and will be for - ev - er. A - men.



L Blessed be God, the Fa - ther, the Son, and the Ho - ly Spir - it.



C O come, let us wor - ship Him.

Hymn: LSB 555, Salvation Unto Us Has Come (v. 1-2, 6-7)



1 Sal - va - tion un - to us has come By God's free grace and
 2 What God did in His Law de - mand And none to Him could
 3 It was a false, mis - lead - ing dream That God His Law had
 4 From sin our flesh could not ab - stain, Sin held its sway un -



fa - vor; Good works can - not a - vert our doom, They
 ren - der Caused wrath and woe on ev - 'ry hand For
 giv - en That sin - ners could them - selves re - deem And
 ceas - ing; The task was use - less and in vain, Our



help and save us nev - er. Faith looks to Je - sus
 man, the vile of - fend - er. Our flesh has not those
 by their works gain heav - en. The Law is but a
 guilt was e'er in - creas - ing. None can re - move sin's



Christ a - lone, Who did for all the
 pure de - sires The spir - it of the
 mir - ror bright To bring the in - bred
 poi - soned dart Or pu - ri - fy our



world a - tone; He is our one Re - deem - er.
 Law re - quires, And lost is our con - di - tion.
 sin to light That lurks with - in our na - ture.
 guile - ful heart— So deep is our cor - rup - tion.

- 6 Since Christ has full atonement made
And brought to us salvation,
Each Christian therefore may be glad
And build on this foundation.
Your grace alone, dear Lord, I plead,
Your death is now my life indeed,
For You have paid my ransom.
- 7 Let me not doubt, but truly see
Your Word cannot be broken;
Your call rings out, "Come unto Me!"
No falsehood have You spoken.
Baptized into Your precious name,
My faith cannot be put to shame,
And I shall never perish.

Readings from Holy Scripture

Isaiah 55:6-9

"Seek the Lord while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near;
let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

P: O Lord, have mercy on us.

C: Thanks be to God.

Philippians 1:12-14, 19-30

I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

For I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

P: O Lord, have mercy on us.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Matthew 20:1-16

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and to them he said, ‘You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.’ So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’ They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too.’ And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.’ And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, 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.’ But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?’ So the last will be first, and the first last.”

P: O Lord, have mercy on us.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Responsory

Verse *To Refrain*

- 1 Forever, O Lord, Your Word is firmly set in the heavens.
- 2 Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep— it.
- 3 Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spir - it.

Refrain

- Lord, I love the habitation of Your house and the place where Your glo-ry dwells.

Sermon

One of the things that we're taught when we're young is how to take our turn and how to wait in line. Most people know the rules about lines: it's not okay to cut in front of others, but at least sometimes it might be okay to save spots for other people in your group. If there are multiple lines, like at the grocery store, you can hop between them if you like, but you're taking a risk by giving up your place in one and going to another; you can't reclaim your previous place if you change your mind, you just have to get at the back again. Then there's situations that work alphabetically: as someone whose last name begins with a "W" I was often at the back of the line. Learning the unwritten rules about waiting in line is a part of learning how to function in one aspect of everyday life.

And a fundamental truth about lines is that those who are at the front of the line get to go first, whether it's checking out at Wal-Mart, doing your business at the bank, or getting your food first at McDonald's. Those who have waited the longest go before those who showed up at the end. The first are first, the last are last. That's just how lines work, and it's fair.

Except for when Jesus is making a point to us about how things work in God's kingdom, because often things don't work the way we expect them to work. Being first and last in the Kingdom of Christ isn't the same as we think it should be according to the standards of the world. The Gospel reverses the normal, expected order of things, turns things upside down - we want everyone to get what they deserve, but in Christ, through God's grace, that's not how it works out.

So let's look at this parable. Different workers all come and work together in the same vineyard, some for the whole day, some for half a day, some for just an hour in the evening - yet they all get the exact same wage. And what they all receive is the wage that was promised to the first workers who started at the crack of dawn. The owner agrees on the wage with these first workers at the beginning, but he never names a price to the later workers; he just calls them to work, and they do.

I think we can all understand why the first workers, the ones who worked all day, are upset. It doesn't seem fair; they got the exact same pay, but for a whole lot more work. Whatever happened to equal pay for equal work, or a fair hourly wage? How would you feel if someone else got paid like that, when you worked much, much harder for it? There's a good chance you'd feel cheated, and that's exactly how these workers feel. "If I'd known that that was an option, I'd have sat around and relaxed all day, then worked a single hour to get the same wage!" It's exactly why those who work resent those who don't, yet benefit from welfare; or the overpaid CEOs whose work couldn't possibly be worth so many billions. We feel that it's unfair when the work doesn't match the wage.

But this parable isn't about labor relations and worldly economics; it's about divine economy and the abundance of God's grace. Also, the master of the vineyard didn't cheat those early workers. They agreed on the wage at the beginning, and they got it; the owner kept his contract with them. Can't he decide to be generous to the other workers, if he wants to? Today, that would probably result in a lawsuit against him from the first workers; this kind of disparity in pay probably violates some kind of employment law or another. Still, the point stands, that the master was faithful to his agreement. Maybe it feels unfair, but he hasn't cheated anybody or broken his word.

The kingdom of heaven doesn't make sense from an earthly point of view. It's not fair. Our salvation is not "fair" at all. The creator of the universe took on human flesh, suffered, and died so that sinners can have eternal life; the punishment for sins was placed on the innocent Son of God instead of on those who truly deserved it. How is that fair? Even on the cross, one of the criminals crucified beside Jesus sees the injustice. He says that he's suffering the just penalty for his crime, but Jesus next to him was not - and to that man, Jesus said "Today you will be in Paradise." The criminal goes to heaven because of the innocent Christ beside him.

Is that fair, that even at the very point of death, the Holy Spirit can still work in a person and bring them to faith? That a convicted criminal on death row, at the moment of his execution, after who knows how much evil and hurt against others, can be forgiven, redeemed, and enter eternal life with the Lord? The criminal who repents at the last moment is saved through faith, but a good, righteous, kind person who nevertheless does not believe in Jesus is not?

When you think about it, the Gospel message of salvation by grace through faith can start to sound anything but fair. Last-minute faith leads to a better eternal result than a lifetime of good behavior. Do we feel sometimes like we've "missed out" on some kind of fun by not indulging in sin now in our lives, that if we could repent at the very end we could have our cake and eat it too? Of course, none of us knows the exact time of our death, so that's one problem with putting off repentance and faith too long. Still, some people wonder that: if I could get the same salvation by being a Christian now, or twenty years from now, shouldn't I enjoy life now and repent later?

Aside from the risk of suddenly having that option removed from you by unexpected tragedy, that way of thinking shows another mistake: it looks at the life of a Christian as being a burden. People who think that way are still caught in the mindset that sin is fun, and Christians don't get to have fun. They don't really understand the consequences for sin, and the peace and joy that Christians have in knowing that that burden has been lifted from them, that the real burden lies not living a Christian life now but that Christ already bore the true burden for you two thousand years ago. They don't know what they're missing.

So we shouldn't have to think it through too much further to realize that we don't want things to be fair. If it was really and truly fair, we would all deserve punishment, because as we remember when we confess our sins, "If we say we have no sin, the truth is not in us." To the workers in the vineyard, it seemed unfair that they got the same wage as someone who had served their master for far less time. And maybe it seems unfair that others can be saved at the last moment when you've been a faithful, obedient Christian your whole life.

But we remember that if it's all unfair, then the unfairness really is in our favor, every one of us. The really unfair part is that Christ bore the consequences of our sin, instead of us. If we want it to be "fair," then what we're really asking for is hell, either for ourselves or for other sinners who have benefitted from God's grace. Up against all of eternity with God, does it matter whether a person was faithful for sixty seconds or sixty years here on earth? If we imagine that it does matter, then what we're really saying is that we should be earning our salvation from God during this life. If it comes as a gift, by grace through faith, on account of Christ alone and what he unfairly bore to redeem us, then it's ridiculous to complain about this disparity as the workers in the parable do.

Can we begrudge God showing such grace to others when we have benefitted from it just as much? As in this parable, God continues to search through the market place of this world to find workers for his vineyard. Some start as infants as they're baptized, raised in faith, and can't remember a time when they weren't faithful Christians. Some come into the kingdom at all different times of life, as the master brings in more workers throughout the day. And yes, some enter right at the very end, and in the master's grace and generosity, they are given the same as those who worked hard from the very start. We're called into the service of God in His kingdom, but it's purely by His grace and not our own hard work when we receive all that He offers us.

This parable also reminds us where to keep our eyes: we should be focused on serving our Lord in whatever way and at whatever time He has chosen to call us, not in comparing ourselves with our fellow servants and believers. We heard it in Romans last week too: a servant is accountable only to his master, not to the other servants. This is the trap that the disciples fell into all too often, as we also heard just a couple of weeks ago, how they compared themselves to each other and argued over who the greatest was among them. Jesus reminds and warns us multiple times to not fall into this trap, creating rivalry and one-upping others in matters of faith, but to follow him alone.

When God gives, He gives in great generosity and abundance, treating all the followers of Christ the same in His gift of forgiveness and life. I pray that this overflowing generosity of God in redeeming and blessing others is always a source of joy and faithfulness, and never a cause of conflict or jealousy, as we keep our eyes on Christ, to follow him alone.

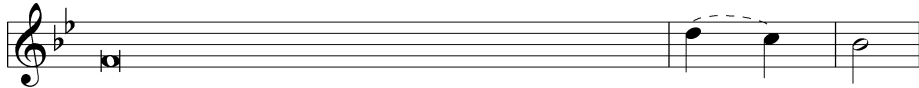
Confession of Faith *Apostles' Creed*

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
Born of the virgin Mary,
Suffered under Pontius Pilate,
Was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
And sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

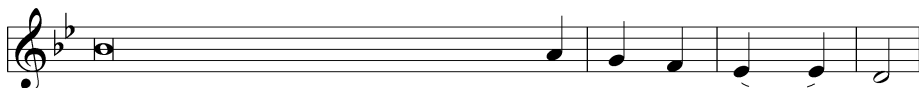
Offering

At this point in our worship, we would ordinarily collect an offering. We are called to be good stewards of the things God has given to us, which includes helping others and supporting the proclamation of the Gospel; we worship the Lord with our songs, our prayers, and also our offerings. If you would like to make an offering to help support our ministry, you can do that at www.christlutheranchurchms.org/ Scroll down to the bottom of the page, and you will see the link to give via PayPal.

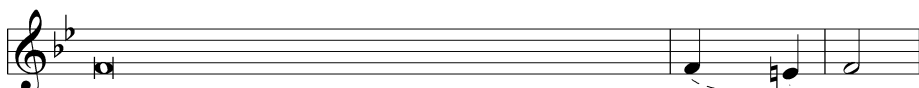
Canticle *Te Deum, LSB 223-225*



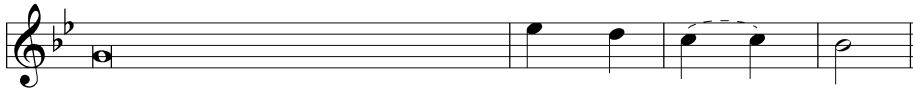
- 1 We praise You, O God; we acknowledge You to be the Lord.
- 2 Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sab - a - oth;
- 3 The noble army of martyrs praise — You.



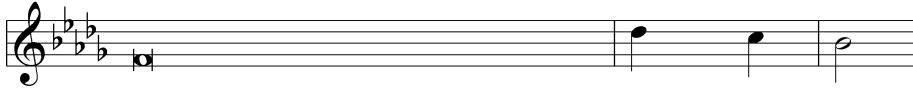
- 1 All the earth now worships You, the Fa-ther ev - er - last - ing.
- 2 heaven and earth are full of the majes - ty of Your glo - ry.
- 3 The holy Church throughout all the world does ac - knowl-edge You:



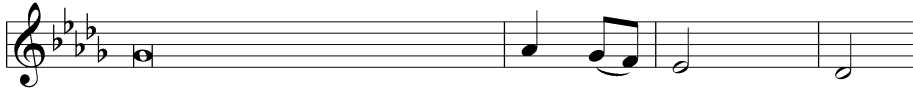
- 1 To You all angels cry aloud, the heavens and all the pow'rs there-in.
- 2 The glorious company of the apostles praise — You.
- 3 The Father of an infinite majesty; Your adorable, true, and on - ly Son;
- 4 You are the king of glory, O — Christ;



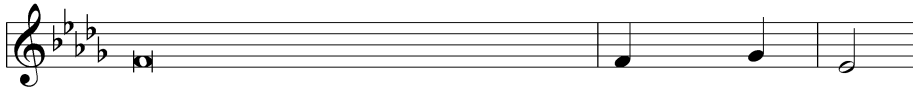
1 To You cherubim and seraphim con - tin - ual - ly do cry:
 2 The goodly fellowship of the proph - ets praise You.
 3 also the Holy Ghost, the Com - fort - er.
 4 You are the everlasting Son of the Fa - ther.



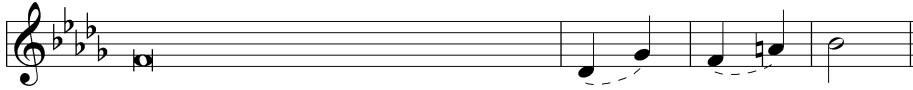
5 When You took upon Yourself to de - liv - er man,
 6 You sit at the right hand of God



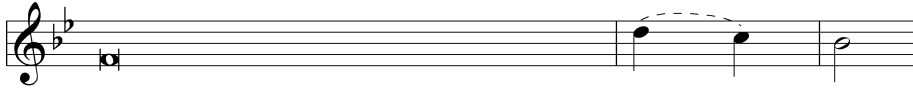
5 You humbled Yourself to be born of a vir - gin.
 6 in the glory of the Fa - ther.



5 When You had overcome the sharpness of death,
 6 We believe that You will come



5 You opened the kingdom of heaven to all be - liev - ers.
 6 to be our judge.



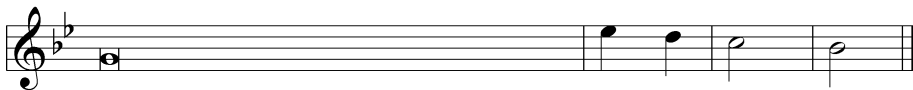
7 We therefore pray You to help Your ser - vants,
 8 O Lord, save Your people and bless Your . . . her - i - tage.
 9 Grant, O Lord, to keep us this day with - out sin.



7 whom You have redeem - ed with Your pre - cious blood.
 8 Govern them and lift them up for - ev - er.
 9 O Lord, have mercy upon us, have mercy up - on us.



7 Make them to be numbered with Your saints
 8 Day by day we magni - fy You.
 9 O Lord, let Your mercy be upon us, as our trust is in You.



7 in glory ev - er - last - ing.
 8 And we worship Your name for - ever and ev - er.
 9 O Lord, in You have I trusted; let me never be con - found - ed.

Kyrie



☐ Lord, have mer-cy; Christ, have mer-cy; Lord, have mer-cy.

Lord's Prayer

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.



L O Lord, hear my prayer.



C And let my cry come to You.

P: Lord God, heavenly Father, since we cannot stand before You relying on anything we have done, help us trust in Your abiding grace and live according to Your Word; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

P: Lord, in Your mercy...

C: **Hear our prayer.**

P: O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, You have safely brought us to the beginning of this day. Defend us in the same with Your mighty power and grant that this day we fall into no sin, neither run into any kind of danger, but that all our doings, being ordered by Your governance, may be righteous in Your sight; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

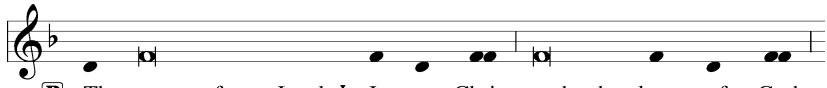
Benedicamus and Benediction



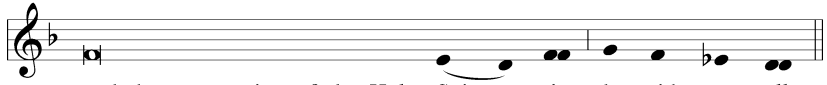
L Let us bless the Lord.



C Thanks be to God.



P The grace of our Lord † Je - sus Christ and the love of God
L The grace of our Lord † Je - sus Christ and the love of God



and the communion of the Holy Spir - it be with you all.
and the communion of the Holy Spir - it be with us all.



C A - men.

Go in peace! Serve the Lord!
Thanks be to God!