



St. John's of Hatboro

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Faith - Service - Community



Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 20, 2026

The Good News for Today: God's grace is not earned. It is a free and limitless gift.

Thank you for worshiping with us at St. John's. Please fill out your yellow attendance card and place it in the offering plate when we collect the offering later in the service.

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 Music

STAND

Hymn: Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing – ELW 807 (Red Book)

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| <p>1 Come, thou Fount of ev'ry blessing,
tune my heart to sing thy grace;
streams of mercy, never ceasing,
call for songs of loudest praise.
While the hope of endless glory
fills my heart with joy and love,
teach me ever to adore thee;
may I still thy goodness prove.</p> <p>2 Here I raise my Ebenezer:
"Hither by thy help I've come";
and I hope, by thy good pleasure,
safely to arrive at home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger,
wand'ring from the fold of God;
he, to rescue me from danger,
interposed his precious blood.</p> | <p>3 Oh, to grace how great a debtor
daily I'm constrained to be;
let that grace now like a fetter
bind my wand'ring heart to thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it;
prone to leave the God I love.
Here's my heart, oh, take and seal it;
seal it for thy courts above.</p> |
|--|---|

Text: Robert Robinson, 1735-1790, alt.

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, who pours love into our hearts and healing upon the earth.

Amen.

Confident that God justifies us by grace through faith, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Compassionate God,

we confess that we struggle to embody your goodness in the world and in our own hearts. Creation groans from overuse. Jealousy and bitterness strain our relationships. Indifference keeps us from seeking justice. Divisions disrupt your call to show genuine love to others. Turn our hearts back to you. Restore our world and reconcile us to one another. Renew us to live as your holy people, following the way of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hear this good news: We have peace with God through † Jesus Christ, in whom there is no condemnation, but only forgiveness and the promise of eternal life.

Receive freely this healing gift of grace.

Amen.

Welcome & Greeting

Welcome to St. John's, where we are building a loving, accepting community centered on growing in Christ, and giving people a place to belong at any stage of their journey with God.

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.

Prayer of the Day

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.

Amen.

SIT

The Readings

Acts 2:14-21, 33-35

Peter's address on Pentecost

¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Fellow Jews and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵ Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ 'In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.

¹⁸ Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit,
and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹ And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

²⁰ The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.

²¹ Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

³³ Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you see and hear. ³⁴ For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

'The Lord said to my Lord,
"Sit at my right hand,

³⁵ until I make your enemies your footstool." '

The Word of the Lord,

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 145:1-8

¹ I will exalt you, my God and king,
and bless your name forever and ever.

² **Every day will I bless you
and praise your name forever and ever.**

³ Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised!
There is no end to your greatness.

⁴ **One generation shall praise your works to another
and shall declare your power.**

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

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

⁷ They shall publish the remembrance of your great goodness;
they shall sing joyfully of your righteousness.

⁸ **The Lord is gracious and full of compassion,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**

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.

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, yet I cannot say which I will choose. 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, by my presence again with you, your boast might abound in Christ Jesus because of me.

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 in no way frightened by those opposing you. 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.

The Word of the Lord,

Thanks be to God.

STAND

Gospel Acclamation — ELW p. 151 (Red Book)

Alleluia, Lord, to whom shall we go?
You have the words of eternal life.
Alleluia.

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.

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

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹ “For 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 a denarius for the day, 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 a denarius. ¹⁰ Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. 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 a denarius?’ 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.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SIT

Sermon – “The Economics of Grace” – Deacon Linda DiMeo

STAND

Hymn: Rejoice in the Mission — W&P 120 (Purple Book)

- 1 Oh, the Lord came down from heav'n,
tiny baby, great physician,
gave his body and his blood
to live out a holy mission.
His disciples, they went out
to fulfill the great commission;
with a seed of faith so small,
learned a diff'rent kind of fishin'.
Will we go?

Refrain

And we'll all share the vision,
who in Christ we all shall be.
Come, rejoice in the mission
of a new community.
In this place where we gather,
Jesus, still our restless souls;
to your Spirit we will listen.
We will go.

- 2 As we ponder and we plan
in this age of great transition,
we will keep the word of God
at the heart of each decision.
Praise the Father, Lord of love;
praise the Christ, in glory risen;
praise the Spirit, by whose pow'r
we will share the gifts we're given--
as we go. *Refrain*

Text: Dan Bielenberg
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Prayers of Intercession

Reminded of God's gracious and abundant love, we offer our prayers, confident that God hears us.

A brief silence.

Hold your church accountable for our unwillingness to share your good news and our anger at your generosity to others. Nourish us by your grace to be witnesses to your love. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Guide scientists and researchers studying responses to the climate crisis so that all your creation may inspire us to give thanks for your great goodness. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Show employers the benefits of equal pay standards for all their employees. Reconcile conflicts between employees. Fill places of employment with camaraderie, and bring an end to employment disparity. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Encourage any who cannot work or who cannot work a full day with the truth that their value comes from your everlasting love for them. Provide for those who are injured, ill, and for all in any need. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Strengthen all those in this congregation whose labor serves the needs of others in the community. Inspire all in this congregation to support community endeavors with our time and talents. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Comfort us with the promise of the resurrection as we remember all our loved ones whose desire to be with Jesus is fulfilled. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Grant the prayers we have offered, what we have forgotten to ask, and whatever else you see that we need. We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Peace

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

Please share a sign of peace with one another.

SIT

Announcements

Printed copies of our weekly announcements are available at the usher's stand in the Narthex, and monthly newsletters are on the Hospitality Table. Please include your email address on your yellow attendance card to receive announcements electronically.

Baptism: ***Declan Michael Sweeney, Jr***

In baptism, our gracious heavenly Father frees us from sin and death by joining us to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are born children of a fallen humanity; by water and the Holy Spirit we are reborn children of God and made members of the church, the body of Christ. Living with Christ and in the communion of saints, we grow in faith, love, and obedience to the will of God.

Parent: I present ***Declan Michael Sweeney, Jr*** for baptism.

Called by the Holy Spirit, trusting in the grace and love of God, do you desire to have **Declan** baptized into Christ?

Response: **I do.**

As you bring **Declan** to receive the gift of baptism, you are entrusted with responsibilities: to live with *him* among God's faithful people, bring *him* to the word of God and the holy supper, teach *him* the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments, place in *his* hands the holy scriptures, and nurture *him* in faith and prayer so that your child may learn to trust God, proclaim Christ through word and deed, care for others and the world God made, and work for justice and peace. Do you promise to help **Declan** grow in the Christian faith and life?

Response: **I do.**

Sponsors, do you promise to nurture **Declan** in the Christian faith as you are empowered by God's Spirit, and to help *him* live in the covenant of baptism and in communion with the church?

Response: **I do.**

People of God, do you promise to support **Declan** and pray for *him* in *his* new life in Christ?

Response: **We do.**

Profession of Faith

I ask you to profess your faith in Christ Jesus, reject sin, and confess the faith of the church.

Do you renounce the devil and all the forces that defy God?

Response: **I renounce them.**

Do you renounce the powers of this world that rebel against God?

Response: **I renounce them.**

Do you renounce the ways of sin that draw you from God?

Response: **I renounce them.**

Do you believe in God the Father?

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

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's 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 to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

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.

Thanksgiving at the Font

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Pour out your Holy Spirit, the power of your living Word, that those who are washed in the waters of baptism may be given new life. To you be given honor and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

Amen.

Baptism

Declan Michael, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

You belong to Christ, in whom you have been baptized. Alleluia.

Let us pray...We give you thanks, O God, that through water and the Holy Spirit you give your daughters and sons new birth, cleanse them from sin, and raise them to eternal life.

Sustain ***Declan*** with the gift of your Holy Spirit: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence, both now and forever.

Amen.

Declan, child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever.

Amen.

Welcome

Jesus said, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will have the light of life. Let us welcome the newly baptized.

We welcome you into the body of Christ and into the mission we share: join us in giving thanks and praise to God and bearing God's creative and redeeming word to all the world.

Offering

In thanksgiving for all God's benefits and for the strengthening of the work of God's church in the world, we receive your gifts.

STAND

Offertory Hymn: Praise God from Whom all Blessings Flow

– ELW 884 (Red Book)

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise him, all creatures here below;
praise him above, ye heav'nly host;
praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Text: Thomas Ken, 1637-1711

Offering Prayer

God of creation, you send rain and the earth springs forth abundantly. All blessings are from you; make us generous with what we have. Use our gifts, our abilities, and our hearts in service to you and in love to our neighbors, today and always.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

And now, as Christ taught us to pray, we say:

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.

Blessing

The God of love draw you into full accord and one mind, in the body of Christ Jesus.

Amen.

The God of hope grant you strength and joy in all circumstances through the interceding of the Spirit.

Amen.

The God of grace ☩ bless you now and forever.

Amen.

Hymn: On Our Way Rejoicing – ELW 537 (Red Book)

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| 1 On our way rejoicing
gladly let us go.
Christ our Lord has conquered;
vanquished is the foe.
Christ without, our safety;
Christ within, our joy;
who, if we be faithful,
can our hope destroy? | 2 Unto God the Father
joyful songs we sing;
unto God the Savior
thankful hearts we bring;
unto God the Spirit
bow we and adore,
on our way rejoicing
now and evermore. <i>Refrain</i> |
|---|--|

Refrain

On our way rejoicing;
as we forward move,
hearken to our praises,
O blest God of love!

Text: John S. B. Monsell, 1811-1875, alt.

Dismissal

Go out in joy. Be led forth in peace.

Thanks be to God. Alleluia!

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The Candles for the Month of September are given to the glory of God.

The altar flowers are dedicated by Cappy and Pat Adduci in honor of all brave and caring organ donors who not only save a life but add another anniversary, put another candle on a birthday cake, give more cuddles to a child and hugs to a friend, and give someone more time to appreciate the miracles on this side of heaven.

The red rose is dedicated by Gretchen Keller and family in loving memory of Derel Keller on his birthday, September 15th. Always in our hearts, miss you.

Today's reader is Alan Divver.

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