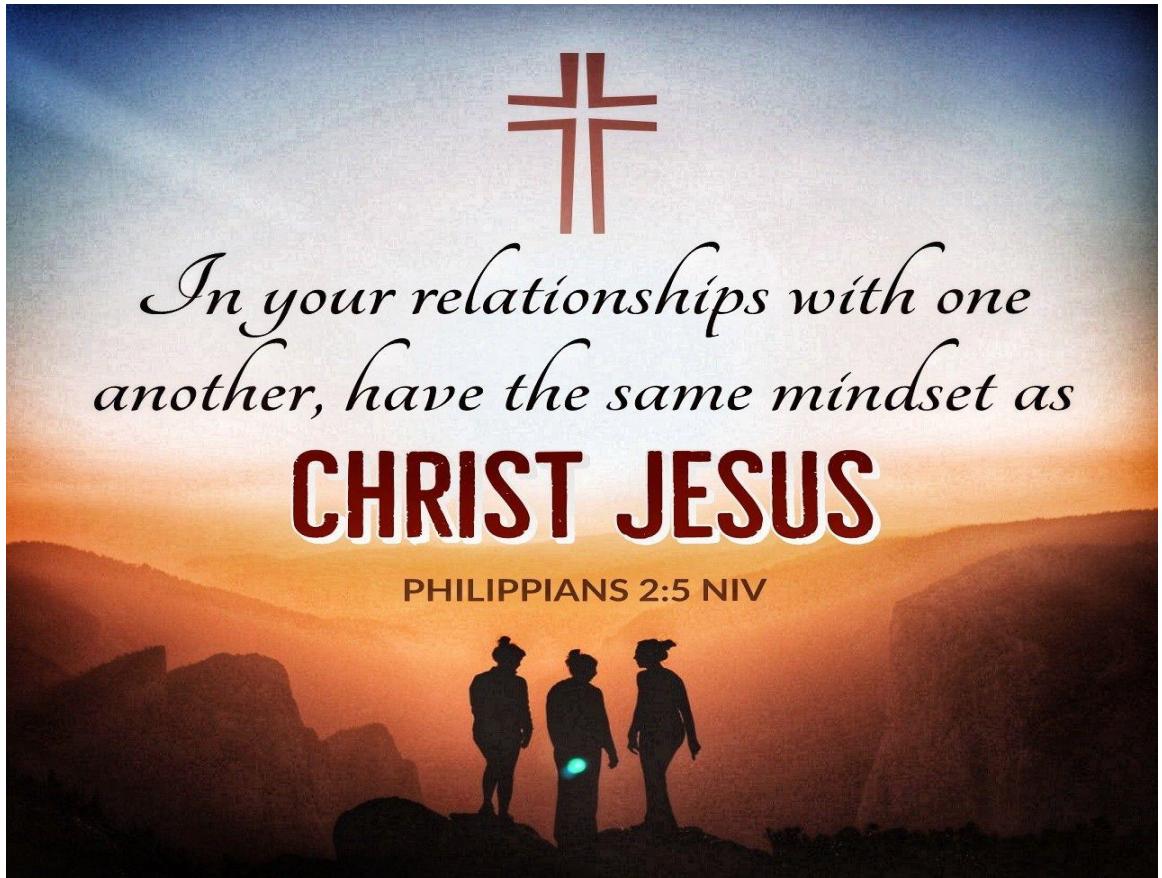


The Lutheran Church of the Covenant
“Reaching Out, Reflecting Christ, Renewing Lives”



Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost
September 27, 2020



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

Jesus' parable about two sons who don't do what they say reveals surprises in the reign of God. In the reading from Ezekiel the people claim the ways of the Lord are unfair, while God offers repentance and new life. Paul urges us to look to Christ as a model of humility, putting the interests of others above our own. Nourished by the broken bread and shared cup, we offer our lives for the sake of our needy world.

Prelude *Wonderful Peace* (MCKIBBEN)

Confession & Forgiveness

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as we take time to recognize our shortcomings, while also remembering God's relentless grace.

Blessed be the holy Trinity, \ddagger one God,
whose steadfast love is everlasting,
whose faithfulness endures from generation to generation.

Amen!

Trusting in the mercy of God, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Reconciling God,
we confess that we do not trust your abundance,
and we deny your presence in our lives.

We place our hope in ourselves
and rely on our own efforts.

We fail to believe that you provide enough for all.
We abuse your good creation for our own benefit.

We fear difference and do not welcome others
as you have welcomed us.

We sin in thought, word, and deed.

By your grace, forgive us;
through your love, renew us;
and, as the Holy Spirit, lead us;
so that we may live and serve you in newness of life. Amen!

Beloved of God,
 by the radical abundance of divine mercy
 we have peace with God through \ddagger Christ Jesus,
 through whom we have obtained grace upon grace.
 Our sins are forgiven.
 Let us live now in hope.
 For hope does not disappoint,
 because God's love has been poured into our hearts
 through the Holy Spirit.
Amen!

Gathering Hymn *Come, Ye Disconsolate*

#607

1 Come, ye dis - con - so - late, wher - e'er ye lan - guish;
 2 Joy of the des - o - late, light of the stray - ing,
 3 Here see the Bread of life; see wa - ters flow - ing

come to the mer - cy - seat, fer - vent - ly kneel.
 hope of the pen - i - tent, fade - less and pure;
 forth from the throne of God, pure from a - bove.

Here bring your wound - ed hearts, here tell your an - guish;
 here speaks the Com - fort - er, ten - der - ly say - ing,
 Come to the feast of love; come, ev - er know - ing

earth has no sor - row that heav'n can - not heal.
 "Earth has no sor - row that heav'n can - not cure."
 earth has no sor - row but heav'n can re - move.

Text: Thomas Moore, 1779–1852, sts. 1–2; Thomas Hastings, 1784–1872, st. 3
 Music: CONSOLATOR, Samuel Webbe Sr., 1740–1816

Prayer of the Day

God of love, giver of life, you know our frailties and failings. Give us your grace to overcome them, keep us from those things that harm us, and guide us in the way of mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen!**

First Lesson

Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

Ezekiel challenges those who think they cannot change because of what their parents were and did, or who think they cannot reverse their own previous behavior. God insistently invites people to turn and live.

¹The word of the Lord came to me: ²What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, “The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge”? ³As I live, says the Lord God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. ⁴Know that all lives are mine; the life of the parent as well as the life of the child is mine: it is only the person who sins that shall die.

²⁵Yet you say, “The way of the Lord is unfair.” Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair? ²⁶When the righteous turn away from their righteousness and commit iniquity, they shall die for it; for the iniquity that they have committed they shall die. ²⁷Again, when the wicked turn away from the wickedness they have committed and do what is lawful and right, they shall save their life. ²⁸Because they considered and turned away from all the transgressions that they had committed, they shall surely live; they shall not die. ²⁹Yet the house of Israel says, “The way of the Lord is unfair.” O house of Israel, are my ways unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair?

³⁰Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, all of you according to your ways, says the Lord God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity will be your ruin. ³¹Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? ³²For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord God. Turn, then, and live.

The word of the Lord!

Thanks be to God!

¹To you, O Lord,
I lift up my soul.

**²My God, I put my trust in you; let me not be put to shame,
nor let my enemies triumph over me.**

³Let none who look to you be put to shame;
rather let those be put to shame who are treacherous.

**⁴Show me your ways, O Lord,
and teach me your paths.**

⁵Lead me in your truth and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation; in you have I trusted all the day long.

**⁶Remember, O Lord, your compassion and love,
for they are from everlasting.**

⁷Remember not the sins of my youth and my transgressions;
remember me according to your steadfast love and for the sake of your goodness, O Lord.

**⁸You are gracious and upright, O Lord;
therefore you teach sinners in your way.**

⁹You lead the lowly in justice
and teach the lowly your way.

Second Lesson

Philippians 2:1-13

As part of a call for harmony rather than self-seeking, Paul uses a very early Christian hymn that extols the selflessness of Christ in his obedient death on the cross. Christ's selfless perspective is to be the essential perspective we share as the foundation for Christian accord.

¹If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, ²make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

⁶who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
⁷but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
⁸he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.

⁹Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

¹²Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence,
but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and
trembling; ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for
his good pleasure.

The word of the Lord!

Thanks be to God!

After driving the moneychangers out of the temple (21:12), Jesus begins teaching there. His authority is questioned by the religious leaders, who are supposed to be in charge of the temple.

²³When [Jesus] entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?” ²⁴Jesus said to them, “I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?” And they argued with one another, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ ²⁶But if we say, ‘Of human origin,’ we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet.” ²⁷So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And he said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

²⁸“What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ ²⁹He answered, ‘I will not’; but later he changed his mind and went. ³⁰The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, ‘I go, sir’; but he did not go. ³¹Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. ³²For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.”

This is the holy Gospel of our Lord!

Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon

Hymn of the Day *Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service*

#712



1 Lord, whose love in hum - ble ser - vice bore the weight of hu - man need,
2 Still your chil - dren wan - der home-less; still the hun - gry cry for bread;
3 As we wor - ship, grant us vi - sion, till your love's re - veal-ing light
4 Called by wor - ship to your ser - vice, forth in your dear name we go,



who up - on the cross, for - sak - en, worked your mer-cy's per - fect deed:
still the cap - tives long for free - dom; still in grief we mourn our dead.
in its height and depth and great-ness dawns up - on our quick-ened sight,
to the child, the youth, the a - ged, love in liv - ing deeds to show;



we, your ser - vants, bring the wor - ship not of voice a - lone, but heart;
As you, Lord, in deep com-pas - sion healed the sick and freed the soul,
mak - ing known the needs and bur - dens your com-pas - sion bids us bear,
hope and health, good-will and com - fort, coun - sel, aid, and peace we give,



con - se - crat - ing to your pur - pose ev - 'ry gift which you im - part.
by your Spir - it send your pow - er to our world to make it whole.
stir - ring us to ar - dent ser - vice, your a - bun - dant life to share.
that your ser - vants, Lord, in free - dom may your mer - cy know and live.

Text: Albert F. Bayly, 1901–1984

Music: BEACH SPRING, *The Sacred Harp*, Philadelphia, 1844

Text © Oxford University Press

Apostles' Creed

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

**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.**

**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

Drawn together in the compassion of God, we pray for the church, the world, and all those in need, responding to each petition with “and receive our prayers.”

A brief silence.

Faithful God, we are thankful that throughout the globe is your church. And yet, many assemblies are postponed by the virus, our songs quieted, leaders searching for new ways forward. Continue to inspire all the baptized with the mind of Christ. Hear our laments, **and receive our prayers.**

Mighty God, we know around us nature is strained: polar ice is melting, excessive rains ravage the land, fires consume forests, fields, and homes, and animals are deprived of habitat. Preserve and protect your entire Creation. Hear our laments, **and receive our prayers.**

Compassionate God, we are fully aware that around us is a needy world: violence threatens stability, people experience prejudice, reforms are thwarted, workers are unemployed, medical facilities are strained. Save your precious children in all the nations of the world. Hear our laments, **and receive our prayers.**

Merciful God, around us are the sick: there is starvation, the virus continues, many persons receive no medical attention, our own neighbors and dear ones are ill. Bless all ministries of care and relieve the suffering of those who are ill in body, mind, or spirit. Hear our laments, **and receive our prayers.**

Benevolent God, nearby are needs of which we are unaware. As the Holy Spirit, uphold all who face personal troubles, as they wonder where to turn. Hear our laments, **and receive our prayers.**

Eternal God, before us lived countless of the faithful — the famous and the forgotten, our relatives and strangers. We lament their deaths, and we praise their witness. Empower us to confess Jesus Christ as Risen Lord through our life and at our death. Hear our laments, **and receive our prayers.**

All these things and whatever else you see that we need, we entrust to your mercy; through Christ our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Thanksgiving at the Table

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.
Lift up your hearts!
We lift them to the Lord!
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God!
It is right to give our thanks and praise!

Holy God,
our Maker, Redeemer, and Healer,
in the harmonious world of your creation,
the plants and animals,
the seas and stars
were whole and well in your praise.

When sin had scarred the world,
you sent your Son to heal our ills
and to form us again into one.

In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore,
his acts of healing,
his body given up,
and his victory over death,
we await that day when all the peoples of the earth
will come to the river to enjoy the tree of life.

Holy Spirit, be immersed in this meal:
as grains scattered on the hillside become one bread,
so let your church be gathered from the ends of the earth,
that all may be fed with the Bread of life, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Through him all glory and honor is yours,
Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit,
both now and forever.
Amen!

**Our Father in heaven,
 hallowed be your name,
 your kingdom come,
 your will be done,
 on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
 as we forgive those
 who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
 and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
 and the glory are yours,
 now and forever. Amen.**

Communion

Music Interlude *O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee* (OSMAN)
Please, use this time to meditate or pray for those dear to your heart.

Prayer after Communion

God of the welcome table,
in this meal we have feasted on your goodness
and have been united by your presence among us.
Empower us to go forth sustained by these gifts
so that we may share your neighborly love with all,
through Jesus Christ, the giver of abundant life. **Amen!**

Blessing

Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers,
nor things present, nor things to come,
nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation,
will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.
God, the creator, + Jesus, the Christ,
and the Holy Spirit, the comforter,
bless you and keep you in eternal love. **Amen!**

Sending Hymn *Let Us Talents & Tongues Employ*

#674

1 Let us tal - ents and tongues em - ploy, reach-ing out with a shout of joy:
 2 Christ is a - ble to make us one, at the ta - ble he sets the tone,
 3 Je - sus calls us in, sends us out bear-ing fruit in a world of doubt,

bread is bro-ken, the wine is poured, Christ is spo - ken and seen and heard.
 teach-ing peo - ple to live to bless, love in word and in deed ex - press.
 gives us love to tell, bread to share: God (Im-man - u - el) ev - 'ry - where!

Refrain

Je - sus lives a-gain, earth can breathe a-gain, pass the Word a-round: loaves a - bound!

Text: Fred Kaan, b. 1929

Music: LINSTEAD, Jamaican folk tune; adapt. Doreen Potter, 1925–1980

Text and music © 1975 Hope Publishing Company, Carol Stream, IL 60188. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Christ is with you!

Thanks be to God!

Postlude *Voices Raised to You* (JENNINGS)

Praying Together

...for those who are homebound, ill, hospitalized or recuperating: Gayle Agg, Bob Buettner, Alexis Carr, Joan Clarke, Steve Dobush, Barbara Fossa, Carolyn Frajter, Ken Frajter, Nealie Gage, Barb Gaglione, Michelle Garnett, Rosa Garnett, Alex Hohenstein, Judy Jones, Tom Juhasz, Ralph Kane, Dylan King, Jason Lanese, Andrea Lanzalaca, Sara Mendes, Phyllis Nemeth, Bernice Novak, Don Rusher Jr., Marie Storms, Arlene Stoltz, Tim Susanek, Tom Susanek, Phyllis Treichel, Phyllis Welker, Linda Wright, Wilma Dancy, Bill Helmick, Nancy Helmick, Robert Lambrecht, Kim (Novak) Leonhardt, Laura Mele, Judy Morgan, Kris Sandor, Bill Wilkens, Eugene Winfrey, the Copeland/Lane Family, the Schuette Family

LAST WEEK

General Fund receipts for week ending 9/20/2020: \$1372

Lectionary Blog: Jesus' Authority



It can be no secret by now to anyone reading this column for more than a few weeks that I love how the Gospel of Matthew presents Jesus as a compassionate master teacher. He has been healing, feeding and exorcising, to be sure. But all of that has been secondary to him teaching about, and living out, the reality of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus has compared God's kingdom to strange things: mustard, yeast, treasure, a merchant, a net, children and a landowner. Even more dramatically, he has and will continue to teach about who and how people will become citizens of the kingdom.

But where, when and how did this son of a carpenter from Galilee acquire the authority to speak about such things?

Just before this week's Gospel reading, Jesus had arrived in Jerusalem for the final time in his earthly life. He was greeted triumphantly by huge crowds as he descended the Mount of Olives. He then chased out people buying and selling in the temple (Matthew doesn't say they were dishonest in their trade). Then people who were blind and disabled came to him and were healed in the temple. Suddenly, assembled children spontaneously sang loud songs of praise to him. When the chief priests (Joseph ben Caiaphas and his father-in-law Annas) and their attendants heard the children's songs, they challenged Jesus just before he left the temple for the day.

After that momentous entry into Jerusalem and exuberant reception, Jesus returned the next day to teach in the temple. The chief priests and elders came to ask the famous itinerant preacher—who had just taken Jerusalem by storm and had set up shop in *their* temple—by whose authority he had done “these things” (presumably everything from the previous day, as well as his ongoing teaching).

Jesus, ever the brilliant pedagogue, asked them a question that put the answers in their own mouths no matter how they would respond. He told them explicitly what he was doing: “I will also ask you one word, which if you tell me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things” (Matthew 21:24).

In other words, the answer to Jesus' question will be the answer to their question about the source of his authority. Jesus asked where John's baptism had come from: heaven or humans? The answer is, of course, both. Recalling Matthew's baptism narrative (3:13-17), both John and God's Spirit touched (I argue, ordained) Jesus at his baptism in the Jordan.

But for the chief priests and elders, answering either way, let alone both, spelled trouble. The Gospel gives a privileged insight into their deliberations on how to respond. If they said "humans," then the people would riot because John was still a popular figure, especially after his assassination by the Herod family. On the other hand, if the chief priests and elders were to reply that John's baptism came from heaven, they knew that Jesus would ask why they had not followed him. So, instead of answering either of the correct responses, the chief priests and elders simply refused to answer. Jesus, playing along, also refused to answer them, though, of course, he had already answered them with his question.

Just to drive the point home, Jesus likened the people who followed John the Baptizer to initially disobedient sons who have a change of heart and then do their father's will. They may have worked as tax collectors and prostitutes, but they repented and entered the kingdom of heaven before the chief priests and elders. Jesus compared the respectable leaders to a son who says he will do his father's will but then *does not do the work*. Jesus has said (Matthew 7:21) and will continue to say (Matthew 25) that entering the kingdom of heaven requires humans to respond to God's gracious outreach by continually doing the work of repentance.

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus does the work. He travels throughout the Holy Land (and notably, outside it as well) to proclaim and demonstrate the kingdom of heaven. Jesus heals, feeds and exorcises in order to teach about life in God's kingdom. Jesus' authority to do this comes from his relative John, who shunned polite society, warned the comfortable about coming wrath, and was murdered for speaking about leaders abusing their powers. And Jesus' authority to do this comes from the Creator of the universe, who sent the Human One to proclaim the kingdom of heaven come to earth

Jesus has authority to teach because he was sent by God and humans both. Thanks be to God!

Philippians 2:1-11

T R Y G M E G D E L W O N K C A D
M T T N E M E G A R U O C N E F Z
O S Y P N T E S D N I M X U W J A
P A P U W A W G G E J I U X E F L
D E J I L I N U F T Y R O L G V M
J Y Q W R I G E P V Q C W K F P P
E C U Q R I E I P G R V L X U J C
S Q O A W T T U C U G I A V K N T
U I H M N X F I C Q F N T L Y O N
S S M D P I N M Q Q D R Y T U A E
L J N E W A E V O L O S I S D E I
M E A T Z Y S U G F J L N A E W D
O Z I L Y X Y S M R I F B I T G E
T U L A N W A O I M A K Z T I J B
H H K X P O C K U O H Q R P N O O
Z V E E W B M H X A N X Y B U Y X
S T C F F F S E R V A N T P Q I D

comfort	glory	bow	value
love	mindset	acknowledge	compassion
spirit	Jesus	exalted	obedient
servant	humility	joy	sharing
united	encouragement		