

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

MERCY & TRUTH
HAVE MET TOGETHER

RIGHTEOUSNESS & PEACE
HAVE KISSED EACH OTHER

PSALM 85:10

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost
July 11, 2021



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.



We welcome you to worship here at the Lutheran Church of the Covenant! As long as the weather cooperates, we gather outside in God's Creation so that we may more safely come together and worship with singing and loud shouts of praise.

- Bulletins and Communion (wheat or gluten-free wafers, wine or grape juice options) are available to be picked up at the side driveway. Please keep in mind potential wind that may affect your Communion cups.
- You may stay in your vehicle or setup a chair anywhere you like. Speakers will be set up front by the worship leaders so that everyone can hear and participate from their respective spots.
- It is your choice whether you wear a mask or not, as well as how much distance you wish to keep from others. We are mindful of everyone's varying comfort levels with what we hope to be improving circumstances with COVID-19.
- We encourage you to participate throughout the worship by speaking the **bold** print and singing along with the hymns!
- You will not be asked to stand during the worship, so feel free to remain seated throughout.
- An offering basket is placed up-front by the podium.

Our Worship Leaders & Staff

Ministers
Presiding Minister
Pianist
Lector
Parish Administrator
Custodian

All People
The Rev. Richard Israel
Robin Crawford

Jennifer Lasher-Dobush
Vince Besednjak

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Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

When Amos reports his vision of God judging Israel for its mistreatment of the poor, he becomes a threat to the power of the priests and the king. John the Baptist also speaks truth to power, and Herod has him killed. In Herod's fear that Jesus is John returned from the dead, we may hear hope for the oppressed: all the prophets killed through the ages are alive in Jesus. We are called to witness to justice in company with them, and to proclaim God's saving love.

Prelude *Something for Thee* (KRIEGER)

Confession & Forgiveness

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at our baptism, remembering our everlasting bond with our Risen Lord.

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
the God of manna,
the God of miracles,
the God of mercy.

Amen!

Drawn to Christ and seeking God's abundance,
let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

God, our provider,

help us.

It is hard to believe there is enough to share.

**We question your ways when they differ
from the ways of the world in which we live.**

**We turn to our own understanding
rather than trusting in you.**

**Share with us the words of eternal life
and feed us for life in the world.**

Amen.

Beloved people of God:
in Jesus, the manna from heaven,
you are fed and nourished.
By Jesus, the worker of miracles,
there is always more than enough.
Through Jesus, † the bread of life,
you are shown God's mercy:
you are forgiven and loved into abundant life.
Amen!

Gathering Hymn *Christ is Made the Sure Foundation*

#645



1 Christ is made the sure foun - da - tion, Christ, our head and
2 To this tem - ple, where we call you, come, O Lord of
3 Here be - stow on all your ser - vants what they seek from
4 Praise and hon - or to the Fa - ther, praise and hon - or



cor - ner - stone, cho - sen of the Lord and pre - cious,
hosts, and stay; come with all your lov - ing - kind - ness,
you to gain; what they gain from you, for - ev - er
to the Son, praise and hon - or to the Spir - it,



bind - ing all the church in one; ho - ly Zi - on's
hear your peo - ple as they pray; and your full - est
with the bless - ed to re - tain; and here - af - ter
ev - er three and ev - er one: one in might and



help for - ev - er and our con - fi - dence a - lone.
ben - e - dic - tion shed with - in these walls to - day.
in your glo - ry ev - er - more with you to reign.
one in glo - ry while un - end - ing a - ges run!

Text: Latin hymn, c. 7th cent.; tr. John Mason Neale, 1818–1866, alt.
Music: WESTMINSTER ABBEY, Henry Purcell, 1659–1695; arr. Ernest Hawkins, 1802–1868

Prayer of the Day

O God, you inspire all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works. Give to us, your disciples, that peace which the world cannot give, that our hearts may be set to follow your ways of love and live in wholeness, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen!

First Lesson

Amos 7:7-15

Amos is not the kind of prophet attached to temples or royal courts. Rather, he is an ordinary farmer from Judah (the southern kingdom) called by God to speak to Israel (the northern kingdom). God's word of judgment through Amos conflicts with the king's court prophet Amaziah, whom Amos encounters at Bethel.

⁷This is what [the Lord God] showed me: the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. ⁸And the Lord said to me, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A plumb line." Then the Lord said,

"See, I am setting a plumb line

in the midst of my people Israel;

I will never again pass them by;

⁹the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate,

and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste,

and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword."

¹⁰Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent to King Jeroboam of Israel, saying, "Amos has conspired against you in the very center of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words. ¹¹For thus Amos has said,

'Jeroboam shall die by the sword,

and Israel must go into exile away from his land.'

¹²And Amaziah said to Amos, "O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, earn your bread there, and prophesy there; ¹³but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom."

¹⁴Then Amos answered Amaziah, "I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees, ¹⁵and the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'"

Word of God, word of life!

Thanks be to God!

- ⁸I will listen to what the Lord God is saying;
for you speak peace to your faithful people and to those who turn their hearts to you.
- ⁹**Truly, your salvation is very near to those who fear you,
that your glory may dwell in our land.**
- ¹⁰Steadfast love and faithfulness have met together;
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.
- ¹¹**Faithfulness shall spring up from the earth,
and righteousness shall look down from heaven.**
- ¹²The Lord will indeed grant prosperity,
and our land will yield its increase.
- ¹³**Righteousness shall go before the Lord
and shall prepare for God a pathway.**

Second Lesson

Ephesians 1:3-14

In Jesus, all of God's plans and purposes have been made known as heaven and earth are united in Christ. Through Jesus, we have been chosen as God's children and have been promised eternal salvation.

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹²so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹³In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

Word of God, word of life!

Thanks be to God!

As Jesus and his disciples begin to attract attention, Mark recalls the story of John the Baptist's martyrdom. Like John, Jesus and his disciples will also suffer at the hands of those opposed to the gospel of salvation.

The Gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord!

¹⁴King Herod heard of [the disciples' preaching,] for Jesus' name had become known. Some were saying, "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him." ¹⁵But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." ¹⁶But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised."

¹⁷For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod had married her. ¹⁸For John had been telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." ¹⁹And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, ²⁰for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him. ²¹But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. ²²When his daughter Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it." ²³And he solemnly swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom." ²⁴She went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" She replied, "The head of John the baptizer." ²⁵Immediately she rushed back to the king and requested, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." ²⁶The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her. ²⁷Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, ²⁸brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. ²⁹When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.

This is the holy Gospel of our Lord!

Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon

Hymn of the Day *Listen, God Is Calling*

#513

Refrain
Leader All

Ne - no, ne - no la - ke Mu - ngu la - ku - i - ta we - we,
Lis - ten, lis - ten, God is call - ing, through the Word in - vit - ing,

ne - no la wo - ko - vu, te - na je - ma. ma.
of - fer - ing for - give - ness, com - fort, and joy. joy.

Leader All

Ye - su a - li - se - ma, Mka - hu - bi - ri.
1 Je - sus gave his man - date: share the good news
2 Let none be for - got - ten through - out the world.
3 Help us to be faith - ful, stand - ing stead - fast,

Leader All Refrain

Ne - no la - ke Mu - ngu la wo - ko - vu.
that he came to save us and set us free.
In the tri - une name of God go and bap - tize.
walk - ing in your pre - cepts, led by your Word.

Text: Tanzanian traditional; tr. Howard S. Olson, b. 1922
 Music: NENO LAKE MUNGU, Tanzanian tune; arr. Austin C. Lovelace, b. 1919
 Text © 1968 Lutheran Theological College, Makumira, Tanzania, admin. Augsburg Fortress.
 Arr. © 1968 Austin C. Lovelace, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

Prayers of Intercession

Let us come before the triune God in prayer.

A brief silence.

Holy God, you welcome your people into one family and gather all things to yourself. Bestow your grace upon your beloved church, lavish your wisdom upon us, and redeem us from our faults, that by our witness more might see your glory. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Awesome Creator, you steadfastly tend to the smallest of seeds and the mightiest of sycamore trees. Spring up green growth from the earth, nourish the growth of fruit, grain, and other crops, and bless the work of farmers and laborers. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of the oppressed, turn the ears of those who are in power to the voices of prophets in our own day. Protect those who speak difficult truths when it is risky to do so. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of strength, you are near to those who endure difficulty. Comfort all who are survivors of violence, guard the refugee and the immigrant, and protect all those who are victims of prejudice and discrimination. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of love, we lift up all who worship here and our entire Covenant family, including for those whose efforts behind the scenes often go unnoticed; for our staff, Jen, Vince, and Robin, and all our volunteers. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We thank you, God, for the saints, martyrs, and prophets who have died in the faith. United with them as God's children, assure us that we are yours forever. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We lift our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your abiding grace. **Amen!**

Thanksgiving at the Table

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, bless us through 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 *Take Time to Be Holy* (LARSON)

Prayer after Communion

Jesus, Bread of life,
we have received from your table
more than we could ever ask.
As you have nourished us in this meal,
now strengthen us to love the world with your own life.
In your name we pray.
Amen!

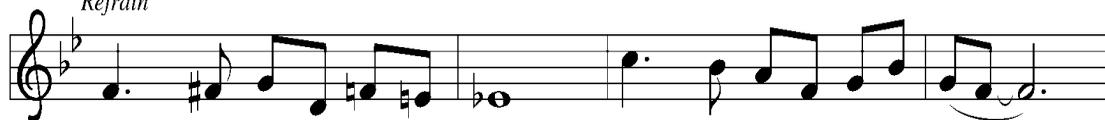
Blessing

The blessing of God,
who provides for us, feeds us, and journeys with us,
✠ be upon you now and forever!
Amen!

Sending Hymn *Just a Closer Walk with Thee*

#697

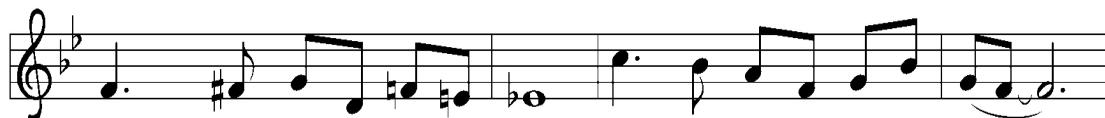
Refrain



Just a clos-er walk with thee, grant it, Je-sus, is my plea;



dai - ly walk-ing close to thee, let it be, dear Lord, let it be.



- 1 I am weak but thou art strong: Je - sus, keep me from all wrong;
- 2 Through this world of toil and snares, if I fal - ter, Lord, who cares?
- 3 When my fee - ble life is o'er, time for me will be no more;

Refrain



I'll be sat - is - fied as long as I walk, let me walk close to thee.
Who with me my bur - den shares? None but thee, dear Lord, none but thee.
guide me gent - ly, safe - ly o'er to thy king - dom shore, to thy shore.

Text: North American traditional

Music: CLOSER WALK, North American traditional

Dismissal

Go in peace. You are the body of Christ!

Thanks be to God!

Postlude *O God Beyond All Praising* (LARSON)

Praying Together

... for those who are homebound, ill, hospitalized or recuperating: Gayle Agg, Bob Buettner, Joan Clarke, John Crawford, Nicole Crawford, Barbara Fossa, Carolyn Frajter, Ken Frajter, Donna Franz Nealie Gage, Barb Gaglione, Michelle Garnett, Rosa Garnett, Judy Jones, Matt Jones, Dylan King, Jason Lanese, Andrea Lanzalaca, Heather Lasher, Sara Mendes, Phyllis Nemeth, Bernice Novak, Robert Ridgell, Don Rusher Jr, Arlene Stoltz, Marie Storms, 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

LAST WEEK

General Fund receipts for week ending 7/4/2021: \$2423



For our latest video recordings of worship, bulletins, newsletters, as well as links to daily devotions and other resources, please visit: covenantmaplehts.org.

Check us out on Facebook for the latest updates for community activities and a dose of Good News on your news feed!





We greatly appreciate Pastor Israel for returning to Covenant and leading us in worship this morning! Thank you, Pastor Israel!

Lectionary Blog: Sitting on Two Chairs

Paul Harvey had a long-running radio program called *The Rest of the Story*. It was always fun to listen to. He would tell, in somewhat breathless fashion, little known facts about some historical event or person, withholding identifying information until the end when he would say something like, "... and that little boy grew up to be Abraham Lincoln! And now (breathless pause) you know the rest of the story."

Our Gospel lesson has a "rest of the story" feel to it. It starts out talking about Jesus and about how people are wondering who Jesus is. They are speculating that he is Elijah. This is not a random name—according to 2 Kings, Elijah did not die but was taken into heaven in a whirlwind after the appearance of "chariots of fire," so maybe he has come back. Or maybe he was another of the prophets, resurrected and sent to preach to Israel? King Herod leaps to an interesting, guilt-driven, tell-tale heart conclusion—"It's John the Baptist, whom I beheaded." Mark then shifts and tells us "the rest of the story."

"King Herod" is a familiar name in the Gospels because there was more than one ruler with the name. Herod the Great was king when Jesus was born. He was the one who met the magi and had all the babies in Bethlehem killed. Herod the Great had three sons named Herod: Herod Archelaus, Herod Philip, and Herod Antipas. Also, there's a woman in this story named Herodias. Confused yet? Just wait. Herodias who was married to Herod Philip, had an affair with Herod Antipas, divorced Herod Philip, and then married Herod Antipas.

There's more. Herodias had a daughter. Jewish historian Josephus tells us she was named Salome. She's the one dancing in the story, and she was 1) Herod Antipas's niece, 2) Herod Antipas' brother Herod Philip's daughter and 3) eventually she became Herod

Antipas' sister-in-law by marrying one of his half-brothers—Herod Philip II. Wow—that feels like an episode of *The Jerry Springer Show* doesn't it?

Into the midst of all this mess, John the Baptist came preaching. He called Herod and Herodias by name. He lambasted them on issues of morality and leadership. He pointed out where Herod had failed to be a good king—politically and in his personal life. Herod's wife, Herodias, reacted with fury; she wants John executed. Herod reacts cautiously. On the one hand, he does have John arrested and put in jail, but on the other hand, he protects him from his wife's revenge, being more afraid of John than he is of his wife. As the text says, "*Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him*" (Mark 6:20).

Herod is probably thinking something like: "What if John is right? What if I do need to repent? What if God is real and is really displeased with the way I am leading my life?"

Herod is the central figure in this tale. He is a perplexed seeker, a dabbler in the mysteries of God. He believes just enough to keep himself awake at night but not enough to change his way of living. He fears doing the wrong thing, but he hasn't enough moral will to do the right thing.

He stands on the precipice of disaster, the way of moral ruin yawning wide in front of him. But he does not plunge in; he teeters there, barely holding on to his dignity and his sense of right and wrong. He does not love God, but at least he fears God's prophet and God's judgment. He is unwilling to embrace the call to repentance and discipleship—but he is not ready to turn his back upon it either.

And then comes the fateful day. Herod throws a party with lots of important and influential people as his guests. A lot of food is eaten; a lot of wine is drunk. Salome dances. Men leer and cheer. Herod shows off by promising to reward her with "anything she wants."

His wife seizes the moment. "Ask for John's head!" And the perplexed Herod is befuddled and overwhelmed once more. He can't back down; he's already promised. How would it look? He falls off the cliff; he loses what little moral compass he has left—he orders John murdered and his head brought to Salome on a platter. Then, some months

later, Jesus comes along, preaching repentance and forgiveness and the kingdom of God. Intense guilt and remorse strike at Herod's heart and his withered, fearful soul screams out, "It's John the Baptist, whom I beheaded!"

Opera singer Luciano Pavarotti often told a story about taking voice lessons while also attending teacher's college. At graduation, he said to his father, "What shall I do, be a singer or a teacher?"

His father said, "Luciano, if you try to sit on two chairs, you will fall between them. For life, you must choose one chair." Herod tried to sit on more than two chairs. He tried to please his wife; he tried to please his Roman bosses; he tried to please his friends; he tried to appease his enemies; he tried to quiet his conscience without either obeying or offending God. And in the end, he fell and fell hard.

At this point Paul Harvey would say, "And now, you know the rest of the story," but we don't really do we? Herod's story has ended—ours is still going on. Every day the world presents us with a hundred ways, both big and small, that we can serve ourselves instead of serving others.

We are constantly confronted with a metaphorical choice between chairs, and we must decide in which chair we are going to sit. Amid perplexity and confusion, the noise and distraction of many voices telling us what we can and should do, we are invited to listen for the "righteous and holy" voice of God. When we hear that voice calling us to repentance, forgiveness, joy, love and a life of service, that is when the rest of our story begins.

Amen and amen.

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Delmer Chilton is originally from North Carolina and received his education at the University of North Carolina, Duke Divinity School and the Graduate Theological Foundation. He received his Lutheran training at the [Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary](#) in Columbia, S.C. Ordained in 1977, Delmer has served parishes in North Carolina, Georgia and Tennessee.