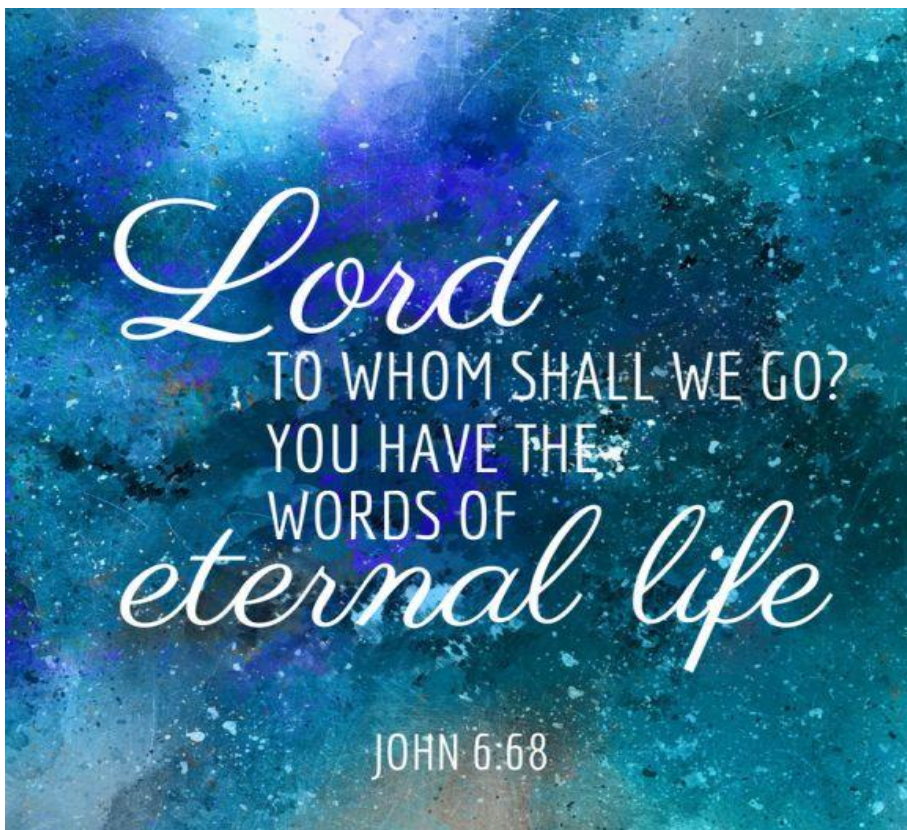


**The Lutheran Church of the Covenant**  
*“Reaching Out, Reflecting Christ, Renewing Lives”*



*Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost*  
*August 22, 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

Bert Zahn

Jennifer Lasher-Dobush

Vince Besednjak

*The Lutheran Church of the Covenant*

*19000 Libby Rd.*

*Maple Heights, OH 44137*

*Phone: 216-662-0370*

*Email: [covenantlc@sbcglobal.net](mailto:covenantlc@sbcglobal.net)*

## Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

*In today's gospel many people take offense at Jesus' invitation to eat his flesh and drink his blood; even many of Jesus' disciples peel off. This is the backdrop in John's gospel for Peter's confession of faith. "To whom can we go?" asks Peter, in words we sometimes sing just before the gospel is read. "You have the words of eternal life." In order to take such a stand, as Peter and Joshua did, Paul tells us to arm ourselves with the word of God. We pray in the Spirit that we might be bold ambassadors of the gospel.*

Prelude *Beloved, God's Chosen* (HANSEN)

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 *Blessed Assurance*

#638



- 1 Bless-ed as-sur-ance, Je-sus is mine! Oh, what a fore-taste of glo-ry di-vine!
- 2 Per-fect sub-mis-sion, per-fect de-light, vi-sions of rap-ture now burst on my sight;
- 3 Per-fect sub-mis-sion, all is at rest; I in my Sav-ior am hap-py and blest,



Heir of sal-va-tion, pur-chase of God, born of his Spir-it, washed in his blood.  
 an-gels de-scend-ing bring from a-bove ech-oes of mer-cy, whis-pers of love.  
 watch-ing and wait-ing, look-ing a-bove, filled with his good-ness, lost in his love.

*Refrain*



This is my sto-ry, this is my song, prais-ing my Sav-ior all the day long:



this is my sto-ry, this is my song, prais-ing my Sav-ior all the day long.

Text: Fanny J. Crosby, 1820–1915

Music: ASSURANCE, Phoebe P. Knapp, 1830–1908

## Prayer of the Day

Holy God, your word feeds your people with life that is eternal. Direct our choices and preserve us in your truth, that, renouncing what is false and evil, we may live in you, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen!**

## First Lesson

Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18

*In the Near East, covenant means “agreement” or “alliance.” It describes relationships and is the primary word used to characterize the relationship between God and Israel. By delivering Israel, God has already begun the relationship. Joshua calls upon the people to respond.*

<sup>1</sup>Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God. <sup>2a</sup>And Joshua said to all the people, <sup>14</sup>“Now therefore revere the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. <sup>15</sup>Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”

<sup>16</sup>Then the people answered, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods; <sup>17</sup>for it is the Lord our God who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight. He protected us along all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed; <sup>18</sup>and the Lord drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God.”

Word of God, word of life!

**Thanks be to God!**

## Psalm

Psalm 34:15-22

<sup>15</sup>The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous,  
and God’s ears are open to their cry.

<sup>16</sup>**The face of the Lord is against those who do evil,  
to erase the remembrance of them from the earth.**

<sup>17</sup>The righteous cry, and the Lord hears them  
and delivers them from all their troubles.

**<sup>18</sup>The Lord is near to the brokenhearted  
and saves those whose spirits are crushed.**

<sup>19</sup>Many are the troubles of the righteous,  
but the Lord delivers them from every one.

**<sup>20</sup>God will keep safe all their bones;  
not one of them shall be broken.**

<sup>21</sup>Evil will bring death to the wicked  
and those who hate the righteous will be punished.

**<sup>22</sup>O Lord, you redeem the life of your servants,  
and those who put their trust in you will not be punished.**

Second Lesson

Ephesians 6:10-20

*Like a general giving a rousing speech to troops before battle, this letter closes by calling on Christians to be equipped for spiritual warfare against evil. The full armor of God includes truth, righteousness, peace, faith, the gift of salvation, and the word of God inspired by the Spirit.*

<sup>10</sup>Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. <sup>11</sup>Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. <sup>12</sup>For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. <sup>13</sup>Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. <sup>14</sup>Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. <sup>15</sup>As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup>With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup>Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

<sup>18</sup>Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. <sup>19</sup>Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup>for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

Word of God, word of life!

**Thanks be to God!**

Gospel

John 6:56-69

*The “hard saying” that offends Jesus’ disciples is his claim that his followers must eat his flesh and drink his blood. The followers who return to their old lives know something about how odd this sounds. Simon Peter, on the other hand, knows something about the scarcity of living, gracious words. He asks the most important question: “To whom shall we go?”*

The Gospel according to John.

**Glory to you, O Lord!**

[Jesus said,] <sup>56</sup>“Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. <sup>57</sup>Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. <sup>58</sup>This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever.” <sup>59</sup>He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

<sup>60</sup>When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?” <sup>61</sup>But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, “Does this offend you? <sup>62</sup>Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? <sup>63</sup>It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. <sup>64</sup>But among you there are some who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. <sup>65</sup>And he said, “For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.”

<sup>66</sup>Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. <sup>67</sup>So Jesus asked the twelve, “Do you also wish to go away?” <sup>68</sup>Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. <sup>69</sup>We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”

This is the holy Gospel of our Lord!

**Praise to you, O Christ!**

Sermon

Hymn of the Day *Eat this Bread, Drink this Cup*

#492

*Refrain*



Eat this bread, drink this cup. Taste and see the good-ness of God.



Bread of life, cup of love, we re-joice in your pres-ence.



- 1 I will bless the Lord at all times, praise with heart and voice;
- 2 Look up - on the Lord, be ra - diant, nev - er turn a - way.
- 3 An - gels fold their wings a - round us, guard through good and ill.
- 4 Saints of God, bow down and wor - ship, bless the ho - ly name.

*Refrain*



in my God I glo - ry for - ev - er: lis - ten and re - joice!  
God will save in ev - 'ry af - flic - tion, hear us when we pray.  
Those who seek the Lord will lack noth - ing; taste, and have your fill.  
Rise to tell God's great - ness for - ev - er, won - drous deeds pro - claim!

Text: Jeremy Young, b. 1948, refrain; *With One Voice*, stanzas, based on Ps. 34  
Music: STONERIDGE, Jeremy Young  
Text and music © 1995 Augsburg Fortress.



## Prayers of Intercession

Made children and heirs of God's promise, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

*A brief silence.*

God of courage, bless all leaders of your church. Make them ready to proclaim the gospel of peace and strengthen them to proclaim your loving word. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of creation, bless fields and orchards. Protect the land from drought and bring life-giving rain to support growth. Instruct your people in wise treatment of the world you have provided for all your creatures. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of community, bless all who seek justice between nations and peoples. Give guidance to bridge-builders, heal divisions, and inspire cooperation in times of crisis, disaster, and war. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of compassion, bless all who are in any need. Accompany all who are lonely and feeling abandoned and remind them of your abiding presence. Accompany all who are persecuted and exploited and open us to their cries. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of change, bless our transitions. Guide all who are embarking on new stages in life such as a new job, new school, or new community. Sustain enduring friendships and kindle new relationships and interests. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of comfort, bless all who mourn the deaths of their beloved ones. We give you thanks for the saints who have gone before us. Renew our confidence in your promise of resurrection and life in the world to come. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Receive these prayers, O God, and those in our hearts known only to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **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 *Blessed Assurance* (SHACKELY)

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 *You Are the Way*

#758



1 You are the way; to you a - lone from sin and death we flee;  
2 You are the truth; your word a - lone true wis - dom can im - part;  
3 You are the life; the rend - ing tomb pro - claims your con - qu'ring arm;  
4 You are the way, the truth, the life; grant us that way to know,



all those who search for God, you find and by your grace set free.  
you on - ly can in - form the mind and pu - ri - fy the heart.  
and those who put their trust in you not death nor hell shall harm.  
that truth to keep, that life to win, whose joys e - ter - nal flow.

Text: George W. Doane, 1799–1859, alt.  
Music: DUNDEE, *Psalter*, Edinburgh, 1615

Dismissal

Go in peace. You are the body of Christ!

**Thanks be to God!**

Postlude *In Christ There is No East or West* (HAYES)

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, Tammie Keller, Dylan King, Jason Lanese, Andrea Lanzalaca, Heather Lasher, Sara Mendes, Phyllis Nemeth, Don Rusher Jr, Arlene Stoltz, Marie Storms, Tom Susaneck, 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 8/15/2021: \$1685

*\*FREE Community Meal here this  
Thursday, Aug. 26, 4:30-6pm\**



**VISIT OUR  
WEBSITE**

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

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

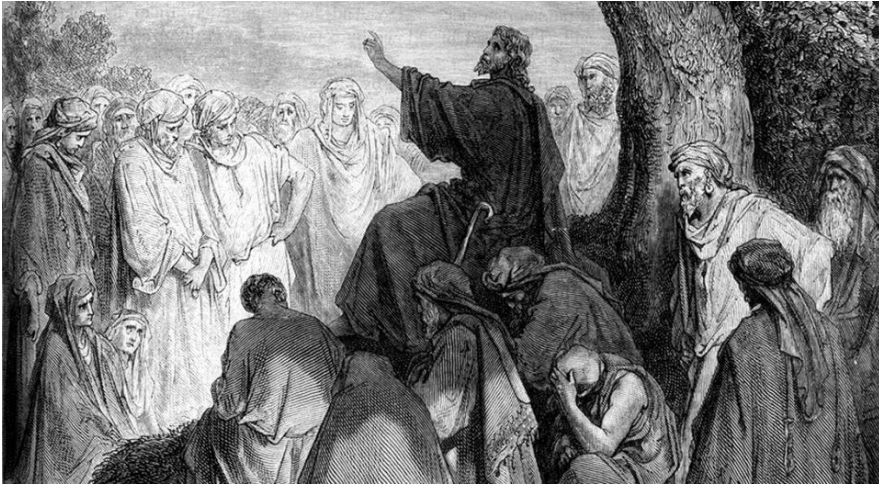


**facebook**

A BIG  
thank  
you  


*We greatly appreciate Pastor Israel for leading us in worship this morning! Thank you, Pastor Israel!*

## *Lectionary Blog: Whom You Gonna Serve*



*“Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve.” — Joshua 24:15a*

*“Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. So Jesus asked the twelve, ‘Do you also wish to go away?’” — John 6:66-67*

Bob Dylan, in his song “Gotta Serve Somebody,” clearly lays out the options presented to the Israelites in Joshua, the disciples in the Gospel lesson and to each of us this, and every, day: *“Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord, but you’re gonna have to serve somebody.”*

When I was a student in the divinity school at Duke University, there was a “shaggy dog” story going the rounds about a fraternity hazing prank. Seems the frat brothers kidnapped a pledge from his dorm, took him way out into the North Carolina countryside and put him out of the car with nothing on but a Duke Blue Devil mascot outfit. The young man trudged through the night, calculating how long it would take him to walk the 30 miles back to campus. After an hour or so, he saw some lights back in the woods, then he heard music and singing. It was a country church in the midst of a revival meeting. He thought to himself, “Church people are good people. Surely someone will give me a ride back to Duke.” So he walked across the parking lot and in the front door. The preacher stopped

his preaching and stared. Everyone else turned to look at what the preacher was looking at, and then they stared too. Suddenly, the preacher dove out the window. The other folk began diving out windows too, until there was only one person left. She was too old and too frail to dive out the window, and the devil was standing between her and the church's only door. She began to sidle down the aisle while talking in a soft voice, "Mr. Devil, my husband, bless his heart, was a deacon in this church for almost 40 years, one of my sons is a missionary, and my daughter is married to a pastor, and I was president of the Women's Missionary Society for 20 years, but I just want you to know—I been on your side all along!"

*"Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord, but you're gonna have to serve somebody."*

Forty years after their ancestors left Egypt, the Israelites are about to enter the promised land. The people are a bit unsure about the future. It has become clear that God's gift comes with a few strings attached. There is still much work to be done and obstacles to be overcome, not the least of which is the fact there are already people living there.

In the verses we didn't read, Joshua lays out for the people a history of God's saving acts beginning with the calling of Abram and Sarai and moving through their liberation from Egypt, and their wandering in the wilderness. He reminds the people of their sacred history, of how God has seen them through, God has provided, God has made a way. Then he puts their choice, before them: Joshua 24:15—*"Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve."* Choose this day. Decide. "You gonna have to serve somebody." Who's it going to be?

For the last month or so the lectionary has led us through the sixth chapter of John. We have seen Jesus preaching to large crowds, feeding the 5,000, being followed about by crowds from here to there. The Jesus movement has begun to pick up steam. Jesus appears to have folk in palm of his hand. They are ready to follow him anywhere ... except where he is actually going.

When Jesus tells them, "I am not just another rabbi, a faith healing miracle man. I am the Son of God. I am the Living Bread from Heaven, I am the Christ," the people say, "Whoa, this is heavy. This is—this is weird. This is hard. This is leading somewhere I'm not sure I want to go."

It is becoming clear to the people who have been following Jesus around, listening to him talk, watching him heal people and eating at his overflowing table that to follow Jesus from here on out will be to go against their culture. It will make them religious and social outcasts. They are being asked to “choose this day,” and they do. They choose to go away, in droves. This is too hard, too difficult for them.

Jesus then turns to the twelve, to his closest companions, to the chosen ones. He looks them in the eye and ask them directly what they are going to do, “Do you also wish to go away?”

*“Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord, but you’re gonna have to serve somebody.”*

The Israelites chose to follow the Lord. *“Then the people answered, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods” (Joshua 24:16).*

The twelve decided to stay with Jesus. *“Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe that you are the Holy One of God” (John 6:68-69).*

The Israelites and the twelve made their decision years ago. Today these questions are before each of us: How do we decide? Whom will we serve? Do we wish to stay with Jesus, or go away?

Amen and amen.

*Originally published August 18, 2018, on LivingLutheran.org.*



*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.*