

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

For I am the LORD, your God, who takes
hold of your right hand and says to you,
Do not fear, I will help you.

-Isaiah 41:13-

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost
September 19, 2021



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.



We welcome you to worship here at the Lutheran Church of the Covenant! Here are a few notes to make you feel more at home as we praise this God of new life together!

- Bulletins and Communion (wheat or gluten-free wafers, wine or grape juice options) are available to be picked up at the back of the sanctuary.
- Portions marked with * are when we invite you to stand as you are able to do so.
- We encourage you to participate throughout the worship by speaking the **bold** print and singing along with the hymns!
- There will not be a separate time for an offering, so a basket is placed in the back for those who wish to support our local ministry as well as the wider church.
- We will commune from our respective seats, where the presiding minister will invite you to open your respective cups with the Communion elements. We believe this meal is for everyone who wishes to partake, regardless of church affiliation or lack thereof. This tangible gift of God's love is meant for the world to enjoy!
- Following the recommendation of the Cuyahoga County Board of Health regarding COVID-19, we ask that you wear a mask for the duration of your time in the building.

Our Worship Leaders & Staff

Ministers

Presiding Minister

Organist

Lector

Parish Administrator

Custodian

All People

The Rev. Bradley Ross

Robin Crawford

Ted Lockmiller

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

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

Today we hear James warn against selfish ambition, while the disciples quarrel over which one of them is the greatest. Jesus tells them the way to be great is to serve. Then, to make it concrete, he puts in front of them a flesh-and-blood child. We are called to welcome the children God puts in front of us, to make room for them in daily interaction, and to give them a place of honor in the assembly.

Prelude *Prelude on "Le P'ing" (Greet the Rising Sun)* (THOMPSON)

Welcome & Announcements

*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,
whose teaching is life,
whose presence is sure,
and whose love is endless.

Amen!

Let us confess our sins to the one who welcomes us with an open heart.

Silence is kept for reflection.

God our comforter:

like lost sheep, we have gone astray.

We gaze upon abundance and see scarcity.

We turn our faces away from injustice and oppression.

We exploit the earth with our apathy and greed.

Free us from our sin, gracious God.

Listen when we call out to you for help.

Lead us by your love to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Amen.

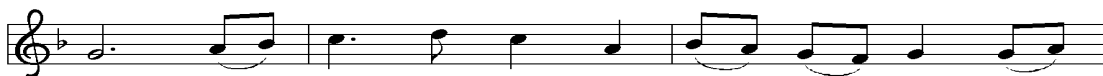
All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
 but the gift of grace in † Christ Jesus,
 God makes you righteous.
 Receive with glad hearts the forgiveness of all your sins. **Amen!**

*Gathering Hymn *All Are Welcome*

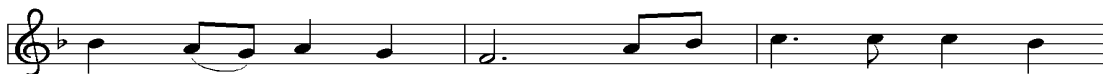
#641



1 Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safe - ly
 2 Let us build a house where proph-ets speak, and words are strong and
 3 Let us build a house where love is found in wa - ter, wine and
 4 Let us build a house where hands will reach be - yond the wood and
 5 Let us build a house where all are named, their songs and vi - sions



live, a place where saints and chil - dren tell how
 true, where all God's chil - dren dare to seek to
 wheat: a ban - quet hall on ho - ly ground where
 stone to heal and strength - en, serve and teach, and
 heard and loved and trea - sured, taught and claimed as



hearts learn to for - give. Built of hopes and dreams and
 dream God's reign a - new. Here the cross shall stand as
 peace and jus - tice meet. Here the love of God, through
 live the Word they've known. Here the out - cast and the
 words with - in the Word. Built of tears and cries and



vi - sions, rock of faith and vault of grace; here the love of
 wit - ness and as sym - bol of God's grace; here as one we
 Je - sus, is re - vealed in time and space; as we share in
 strang-er bear the im - age of God's face; let us bring an
 laugh-ter, prayers of faith and songs of grace, let this house pro -



Christ shall end di - vi - sions:
 claim the faith of Je - sus:
 Christ the feast that frees us: All are wel - come,
 end to fear and dan - ger:
 claim from floor to raf - ter:



all are wel - come, all are wel - come in this place.

*Prayer of the Day

O God, our teacher and guide, you draw us to yourself and welcome us as beloved children. Help us to lay aside all envy and selfish ambition, that we may walk in your ways of wisdom and understanding as servants of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen!**

First Lesson

Jeremiah 11:18-20

Today's reading tells of the suffering of the prophet Jeremiah, who announced God's word to Judah but was met with intense opposition and persecution. Jeremiah continues to trust in God in the midst of his suffering.

¹⁸It was the LORD who made it known to me, and I knew;
then you showed me their evil deeds.

¹⁹But I was like a gentle lamb
led to the slaughter.

And I did not know it was against me
that they devised schemes, saying,
"Let us destroy the tree with its fruit,
let us cut him off from the land of the living,
so that his name will no longer be remembered!"

²⁰But you, O LORD of hosts, who judge righteously,
who try the heart and the mind,
let me see your retribution upon them,

Word of God, word of life!

Thanks be to God!

Psalm

Psalm 54

Save me, O God, by your name;
in your might, defend my cause.

**Hear my prayer, O God;
give ear to the words of my mouth.**

For strangers have risen up against me, and the ruthless have sought my life,
those who have no regard for God.

**Behold, God is my helper;
it is the Lord who sustains my life.**

Render evil to those who spy on me;
in your faithfulness, destroy them.

**I will offer you a freewill sacrifice
and praise your name, O Lord, for it is good.**

For you have rescued me from every trouble,
and my eye looks down on my enemies.

Second Lesson

James 3:13—4:3, 7-8a

The wisdom God gives unites our hearts and minds. Instead of living to satisfy our own wants and desires, we manifest this wisdom in peace, gentleness, mercy, and impartiality toward others.

¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. ¹⁴But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. ¹⁵Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. ¹⁶For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. ¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. ¹⁸And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.^{4:}

¹Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? ²You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures. ⁷Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ^{8a}Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

Word of God, word of life!

Thanks be to God!

*Gospel

Mark 9:30-37

Jesus' teaching and action in this text are directed to the church whenever it is seduced by the world's definition of greatness: prestige, power, influence, and money. The antidote to such a concern for greatness is servanthood.

The Gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord!

³⁰[Jesus and the disciples went on] and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it;³¹ for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, “The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.”³² But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

³³Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the way?”³⁴ But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest.³⁵ He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.”³⁶ Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them,³⁷ “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.

This is the holy Gospel of our Lord!

Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon

*Hymn of the Day *How Firm a Foundation*

#796



1 How firm a foun - da - tion, O saints of the Lord,
2 "Fear not, I am with you, oh, be not dis - mayed,
3 "When through fi - ry tri - als your path - way shall lie,
4 "Through - out all their life - time my peo - ple shall prove



is laid for your faith in Christ Je - sus, the Word!
for I am your God and will still give you aid;
my grace, all - suf - fi - cient, shall be your sup - ply.
my sov - 'reign, e - ter - nal, un - change - a - ble love;



What more can he say than to you he has said
I'll strength - en you, help you, and cause you to stand,
The flames shall not hurt you; I on - ly de - sign
and then, when gray hairs shall their tem - ples a - dorn,



who un - to the Sav - ior for ref - uge have fled?
up - held by my righ - teous, om - nip - o - tent hand."
your dross to con - sume and your gold to re - fine."
like lambs they shall still in my bo - som be borne."

Text: J. Rippon, *A Selection of Hymns*, 1787, alt.
Music: FOUNDATION, Early American

*Prayers of Intercession

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

A brief silence.

God of community, watch over your whole church around the world. Unite us in our love for you. Help us overcome any divisions, that we are encouraged to work together for your sake. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of creation, continue to tend this hurting earth. Awaken in us a new desire to care for this world and empower us to support agencies, organizations, and individual efforts to heal our environment. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of cooperation, we lift up the nations of the world embroiled in conflict, including Afghanistan. Inspire leaders to listen to each other and work towards peaceful solutions to disagreements. Protect the vulnerable, especially children, who cannot find safety in their home or country. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of comfort, nourish those with mental or physical illness. Help them find appropriate care. Bring healing and wholeness when the path forward seems bleak. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of consolation, we give you thanks for our loved ones who have died and pray for all who grieve today. Shine your grace on all your saints. 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 Bread of life, our Table, and our Food,
you created a world in which all might be satisfied by your abundance.

You dined with Abraham and Sarah, promising them life,
and fed your people Israel with manna from heaven.
You sent your Son to eat with sinners
and to become food for the world.

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 life given for us
and his rising from the grave,
we await his coming again to share with us the everlasting feast.

Holy Spirit, nurture and sustain us with this meal:
strengthen us to serve all in hunger and want,
and by this bread and cup make of us the body of Christ.

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 *Reflection on "Lord, Revive Us"* (PAXTON)

*Prayer after Communion

Lord of life,
in the gift of your body and blood
you turn the crumbs of our faith into a feast of salvation.
Send us forth into the world with shouts of joy,
bearing witness to the abundance of your love
in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen!

*Blessing

People of God,
you are Christ's body,
bringing new life to the world.
The holy Trinity, † one God,
bless you now and forever!
Amen!

*Sending Hymn *Children of the Heavenly Father*

#781



Tryg - ga - re kan ing - en va - ra än Guds lil - la bar - na - ska - ra,
1 Chil - dren of the heav'n-ly Fa - ther safe - ly in his bo - som gath - er;
2 God his own doth tend and nour-ish, in his ho - ly courts they flour - ish.
3 Nei - ther life nor death shall ev - er from the Lord his chil - dren sev - er;
4 Though he giv - eth or he tak - eth, God his chil - dren ne'er for - sak - eth;



stjär - nan ej på him - la - fäs - tet, få - geln ej i kän - da näs - tet.
nest - ling bird nor star in heav - en such a ref - uge e'er was giv - en.
From all e - vil things he spares them, in his might - y arms he bears them.
un - to them his grace he show - eth, and their sor - rows all he know - eth.
his the lov - ing pur - pose sole - ly to pre - serve them pure and ho - ly.

Text: Carolina Sandell Berg, 1832–1903; tr. Ernst W. Olson, 1870–1958
Music: TRYGGARE KAN INGEN VARA, Swedish folk tune
Text © 1925 Board of Publication, Lutheran Church in America, admin. Augsburg Fortress

*Dismissal

Go in peace. The living Word dwells in you!

Thanks be to God!

Postlude *How Firm a Foundation* (WOOD)

Praying Together

... for those who are homebound, ill, hospitalized or recuperating: Gayle Agg, Vince Besednjak, 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, Jane Skowronski, 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 9/12/2021: \$972

**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.

Our next FREE community meal is this Thursday, September 23 (4:30-6pm). We continue

to serve the food in a drive-thru format from the back of the church. Stop by yourself, or let someone else know who may need dinner taken care of Thursday evening!

FREE
community
MEAL



**SUNDAY
SCHOOL**

The class led by Pastor Harry is tentatively planned to start Sunday, October 3, following worship in the parlor behind the sanctuary. Please join us for the enlightening and nurturing discussion!

Lectionary Blog: The Great Reversal



Milan - Jesus and apostle - fresco from Saint Simpliciano church

Across from Tennessee State University in Nashville, there is a congregation that has the longest name I've ever seen on a church sign: *The House of the Lord, Which is the Church of the Living God, The Pillar and Ground of the Truth, Without Controversy, Incorporated.*

Without controversy! Whoever heard of a church without controversy? A church sign I saw in Decatur, Ga., seems more accurate to me. This church said it was "*Free For All Baptist Church*" When I saw that sign, I imagined elderly deacons in their Sunday suits engaged in an ecclesiastical version of a bar fight, throwing down their Bibles and wrestling each other to the floor in front of the communion table.

Even a cursory look at the Bible and church history shows that the people of God have always been—and probably always will be—a contentious lot, given to fussing and fighting with each other about all sorts of things, some of which matter and most of which don't. In today's Gospel lesson, Jesus finds his disciples arguing about one of those things that do not matter, not in the family of God, anyway. They have been fussing and fighting over which one of them is "the greatest."

It is particularly ironic and disappointing that they are arguing about this right after Jesus has told them that as the Messiah he will have to suffer and die for the world, and that as his followers they will need to “deny self and take up a cross” as well. He presents them with a model of complete helplessness and weakness, and they respond by contending for positions of power and influence. In other words, they simply don’t get it.

In his commentary on Mark, N.T. Wright points out that not everyone believed that God would send a messiah, and among those who did believe a messiah was coming, no one believed that the messiah would have to suffer, much less die. Most believed that “the one” would come in power and might and strength. They believed the messiah would come as a military leader, smiting the Romans and their evil, pagan allies, conquering the world in the name of Truth, Justice and the YHWH Way.

Jesus said in Mark 9:31, *“The son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.”* If the disciples heard his words, they certainly didn’t hear his meaning. They had figured out he was the Messiah, but instead of thinking about service, they were trying to sort out their positions of importance in the new administration.

Jesus overheard the argument and asked, “What were you talking about?” At least they had enough understanding to be ashamed and be quiet. No one even tried to answer him. Could it be that, looking into Jesus’ face, it began to dawn on them just how wrong they were, just how far they had strayed from the path Jesus had called them to follow? I imagine Jesus taking a deep breath, sighing and with a somewhat forced smile, saying, “Come here y’all, sit down, let’s talk. Let me see if I can find a better way to explain this to you.”

He proceeded to tell them that whoever wants to be first must be last and a servant of everyone. This “great reversal” is consistent with many other things Jesus has said over and over throughout the Gospels about how in the kingdom of God things are almost the mirror opposite of how they are in the world. Then, our Lord did a monumentally important thing in the history of the church. There, on the spot, Jesus invented the children’s sermon, complete with an actual child as the object in the object lesson. Jesus and the disciples were in the ground floor room of a house, it had open windows and doorways, and a crowd had gathered to listen to him teach his disciples. Jesus reached into the crowd and pulled a child, probably a toddler, into the room. Then he said,

“Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me, but the one who sent me.”

With these words, Jesus proclaims the ultimate great reversal. In the ancient world, children were symbols of powerlessness. Outside of normal parental affection, children were, almost literally, nothing. Pastor Peter Marty says that “in the Greco-Roman world a father could punish, sell, pawn off or even kill his own child” (*The Lectionary Commentary*, Eerdmans, 2001, p. 244).

It is interesting to note that the Greek words for child and servant have the same root and that Jesus used both these images, child and servant, as symbols of who the Messiah is and who we, the followers of the Messiah, are called to be. Children and servants, powerless and defenseless ones, that’s us.

Our modern world gives highest honor and respect to those with power and authority and importance. People in our world seek positions of strength from which they can control and manage others. And the call of the gospel to us today is the same as it was to those to whom Jesus spoke personally. It may be that way in the world, but it must not be that way among you my followers.

It may not be possible for the church to be the church, and also be, as the sign said, “without controversy.” On the other hand, just because we have controversy, it is not necessary that we be a “free for all” either. Through his teaching about the great reversal, the call to child-like-ness, to servant-hood, to powerlessness and humility, most of all though his own humiliation and death on the cross, Jesus has shown us the way forward through our disagreements and controversies.

Rather than aspiring to power and influence and control within the world and within the community of the faithful, our calling is to seek to be servants of one another, actively loving one another other in the name of the one who first loved us.

Amen and amen. (*originally published Sept. 17, 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.