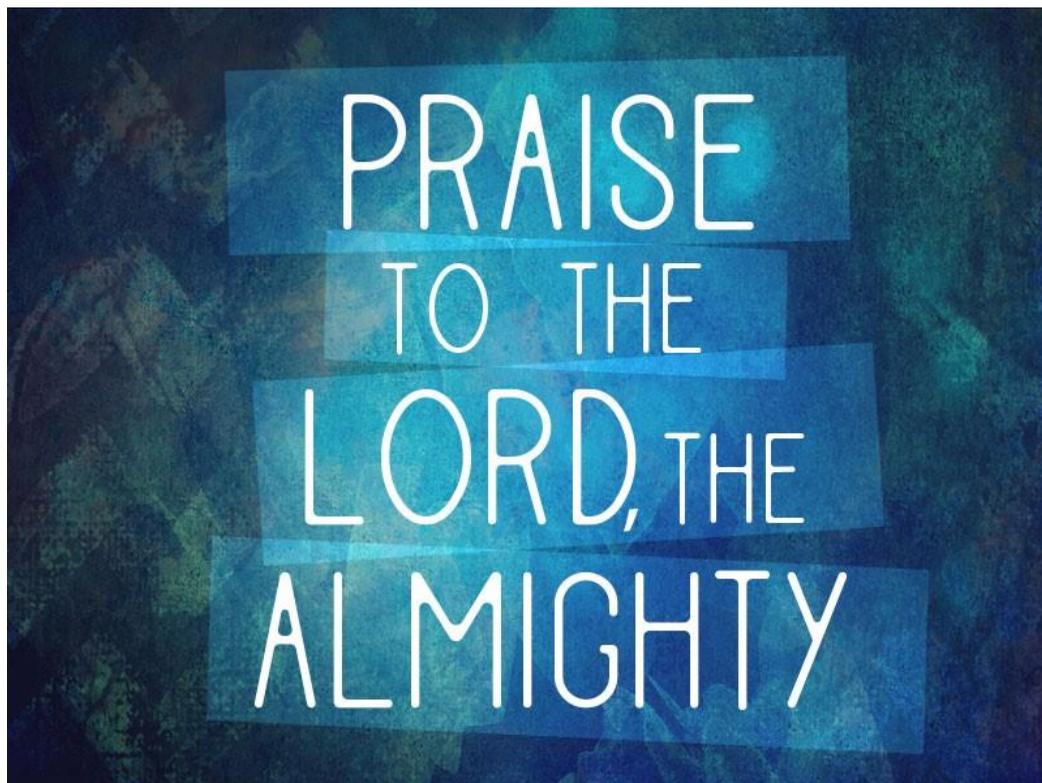


The Lutheran Church of the Covenant
“Reaching Out, Reflecting Christ, Renewing Lives”



Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Favorite Hymn Sing
September 26, 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

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EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Someone who isn't part of Jesus' own circle is casting out demons in Jesus' name, and the disciples want him stopped. They appeal to Jesus, as Joshua did to Moses about the elders who prophesied without official authorization. Like Moses, Jesus refuses to see this as a threat. Jesus welcomes good being done in his name, even when it is not under his control. The circle we form around Jesus' word must be able to value good being done in ways we wouldn't do it, by people we can't keep tabs on.

Prelude *Brightest and Best* (BALCOMBE)

Welcome & Announcements

Hymn *Soon and Very Soon*

#439 verses 1, 3



1 Soon and ver - y soon
2 No more cry - in' there, we are goin' to see the King,
3 No more dy - in' there,
4 Soon and ver - y soon



soon and ver - y soon
no more cry - in' there, we are goin' to see the King,
no more dy - in' there,
soon and ver - y soon



soon and ver - y soon
no more cry - in' there, we are goin' to see the King.
no more dy - in' there,
soon and ver - y soon



Hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, we're goin' to see the King!

Coda after stanza 4



Hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu -



jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah.

Text: Andraé Crouch, b. 1945
Music: VERY SOON, Andraé Crouch
Text and music © 1976 Bud John Songs, Inc./Crouch Music, admin. EMI Christian Music Publishing

***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,

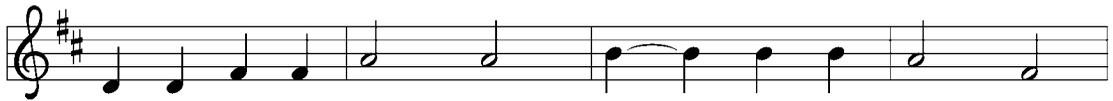
God makes you righteous.

Receive with glad hearts the forgiveness of all your sins.

Amen!

***Gathering Hymn** *Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty*

#413 verses 1, 4



1 Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly, Lord God Al - might - y!
2 Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly! All the saints a - dore thee,
3 Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly! Though the dark - ness hide thee,
4 Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly! Lord God Al - might - y!



Ear - ly in the morn - ing our song shall rise to thee.
cast - ing down their gold - en crowns a - round the glass - y sea;
though the eye of sin - ful - ness thy glo - ry may not see,
All thy works shall praise thy name in earth and sky and sea.



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly, mer - ci - ful and might - y!
cher - u - bim and ser - a - phim fall - ing down be - fore thee,
on - ly thou art ho - ly; there is none be - side thee,
Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly, mer - ci - ful and might - y!



God in three per - sons, bless - ed Trin - i - ty!
which wert and art, and ev - er - more shalt be.
per - fect in pow'r, in love and pu - ri - ty.
God in three per - sons, bless - ed Trin - i - ty!

Text: Reginald Heber, 1783–1826, alt.
Music: NICAEA, John B. Dykes, 1823–1876

*Prayer of the Day

Generous God, your Son gave his life that we might come to peace with you. Holy Spirit, continue to bless us with hope and new life, that in all we do, we bear the name of Jesus Christ, our Risen Savior and Lord. **Amen!**



- 1 What a friend we have in Je - sus, all our sins and griefs to bear!
- 2 Have we tri - als and temp - ta - tions? Is there trou - ble an - y - where?
- 3 Are we weak and heav - y - lad - en, cum - bered with a load of care?



What a priv - i - lege to car - ry ev - 'ry - thing to God in prayer!
 We should nev - er be dis - cour - aged—take it to the Lord in prayer.
 Pre - cious Sav - ior, still our ref - uge—take it to the Lord in prayer.



Oh, what peace we of - ten for - feit; oh, what need - less pain we bear—
 Can we find a friend so faith - ful who will all our sor - row share?
 Do your friends de - spise, for - sake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer.



all be - cause we do not car - ry ev - 'ry - thing to God in prayer!
 Je - sus knows our ev - 'ry weak - ness—take it to the Lord in prayer.
 In his arms he'll take and shield you; you will find a so - lace there.

What constitutes legitimate need and legitimate leadership is the focus of this reading. God provides manna in the wilderness, yet the people crave meat. What is truly needful? God bestows the spirit on seventy elders, yet two men not designated as leaders prophesy in the power of God's spirit. What constitutes real leadership?

⁴The rabble among them had a strong craving; and the Israelites also wept again, and said, "If only we had meat to eat! ⁵We remember the fish we used to eat in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; ⁶but now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at."

¹⁰Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, all at the entrances of their tents. Then the LORD became very angry, and Moses was displeased. ¹¹So Moses said to the LORD, "Why have you treated your servant so badly? Why have I not found favor in your sight, that you lay the burden of all this people on me? ¹²Did I conceive all this people? Did I give birth to them, that you should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom, as a nurse carries a sucking child, to the land that you promised on oath to their ancestors'? ¹³Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? For they come weeping to me and say, 'Give us meat to eat!' ¹⁴I am not able to carry all this people alone, for they are too heavy for me. ¹⁵If this is the way you are going to treat me, put me to death at once—if I have found favor in your sight—and do not let me see my misery."

¹⁶So the LORD said to Moses, "Gather for me seventy of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tent of meeting, and have them take their place there with you."

²⁴So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD; and he gathered seventy elders of the people, and placed them all around the tent. ²⁵Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders; and when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did not do so again.

²⁶Two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the spirit rested on them; they were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. ²⁷And a young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." ²⁸And Joshua son of Nun, the assistant of Moses, one of his chosen men, said, "My lord Moses, stop them!" ²⁹But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit on them!"

Hymn *The King of Love My Shepherd is*

#502 verses 1, 4



1 The King of love my shep - herd is, whose good - ness
 2 Where streams of liv - ing wa - ter flow, my ran - somed
 3 Per - verse and fool - ish oft I strayed, but yet in
 4 In death's dark vale I fear no ill, with thee, dear



fail - eth nev - er; I noth - ing lack if
 soul he lead - eth and, where the ver - dant
 love he sought me, and on his shoul - der
 Lord, be - side me, thy rod and staff my



I am his and he is mine for - ev - er.
 pas - tures grow, with food ce - les - tial feed - eth.
 gent - ly laid, and home, re - joic - ing, brought me.
 com - fort still; thy cross be - fore to guide me.

Second Lesson

James 5:13-20

Marks of the Christian community include praying for those who are sick and in need, celebrating with those in good health, restoring those who have strayed, confessing sins to one another, and offering forgiveness to each other.

¹³Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. ¹⁴Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord.

¹⁵The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. ¹⁶Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. ¹⁷Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. ¹⁸Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth yielded its harvest.

¹⁹My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and is brought back by another, ²⁰you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

Word of God, word of life!

Thanks be to God!

Hymn *You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore*

#817 verses 1, 3



1 *Tú* has ve - ni - do a la o - ri - lla, no has bus -
 1 You have come down to the lake - shore seek - ing
 2 You know full well what I have, Lord: nei - ther
 3 You need my hands, my ex - haus - tion, work - ing
 4 You who have fished oth - er wa - ters; you, the



ca - do ni a sa - bios ni a ri - cos; tan só - lo
 nei - ther the wise nor the wealth - y, but on - ly
 trea - sure nor wea - pons for con - quest, just these my
 love for the rest of the wea - ry— a love that's
 long - ing of souls that are yearn - ing: O lov - ing



quie - res que yo te si - ga.
 ask - ing for me to fol - low.
 fish - nets and will for work - ing.
 will - ing to go on lov - ing.
 Friend, you have come to call me.

Refrain / Estribillo



Se - ñor, me has mi - ra - do a los o - jos; son - ri - en - do,
 Sweet Lord, you have looked in - to my eyes; kind - ly smil - ing,



has di - cho mi nom - bre. En la a - re - na he de - ja - do mi
 you've called out my name. . . . On the sand I have a - ban - doned my



bar - ca; jun - to a ti bus - ca - ré o - tro mar.
 small boat; now with you, I will seek oth - er seas.

Text: Cesáreo Gabaráin, 1936–1991; tr. Madeleine Forell Marshall, b. 1946
 Music: PESCADOR DE HOMBRES, Cesáreo Gabaráin

Spanish text and music © 1979 Cesáreo Gabaráin, OCP Publications. All rights reserved.
 Tr. © Editorial Avance Luterano

*Gospel

Mark 9:38-50

On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus teaches his disciples about ministry that involves service and sacrifice. His disciples are slow to realize that these words apply to them as well as to others.

The Gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord!

³⁸John said to [Jesus,] “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.” ³⁹But Jesus said, “Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. ⁴⁰Whoever is not against us is for us. ⁴¹For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward.

⁴²“If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea. ⁴³If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. ⁴⁵And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell. ⁴⁷And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched.

⁴⁹“For everyone will be salted with fire. ⁵⁰Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

This is the holy Gospel of our Lord!

Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon

*Hymn of the Day *Praise to the Lord, the Almighty*

#858



1 Praise to the Lord, the Al - might - y, the King of cre - a - tion!
2 Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things is won-drous-ly reign - ing
3 Praise to the Lord, who will pros - per your work and de - fend you;
4 Praise to the Lord! Oh, let all that is in me a - dore him!



O my soul, praise him, for he is your health and sal - va - tion!
and, as on wings of an ea - gle, up - lift - ing, sus - tain - ing.
sure - ly his good - ness and mer - cy shall dai - ly at - tend you.
All that has life and breath, come now with prais - es be - fore him!



Let all who hear now to his tem - ple draw near,
Have you not seen all that is need - ful has been
Pon - der a - new what the Al - might - y can do
Let the a - men sound from his peo - ple a - gain.



join - ing in glad ad - o - ra - tion!
sent by his gra - cious or - dain - ing?
if with his love he be - friend you.
Glad - ly for - ev - er a - dore him!

Text: Joachim Neander, 1650–1680; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–1878, alt.
Music: LOBE DEN HERREN, *Erneuertes Gesangbuch*, Part II, Stralsund, 1665

*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.

Universal God, watch over your whole church and its ministry. Bless the newly baptized and encourage them in their journey of faith. Sustain all members of the body of Christ in lives of prayer, service, and worship. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Bountiful God, we remain in amazement over the natural wonders of your creation. Restore damaged forests, waterways and natural habitats and lead us to be good stewards of what you have provided. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of justice, guide those in authority. Give them wise minds and compassionate hearts. Strengthen in them a desire to protect the vulnerable and care for those underserved. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Healing God, we lift up those who are struggling with cancer, dementia, or any other disease. Provide them with peace and resilience for the days ahead. Sustain caregivers with energy and patience. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Eternal God, we give thanks for all your saints, those we have loved and known and those from every time and place. Continue to guide us by their example and reassure us of your promised salvation. 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

Hymn *You are Holy*

Sing Twice

#525

Du är he - lig, du är hel. Du är all - tid myck-et mer
You are ho - ly, you are whole. You are al - ways ev - er more

än vi nån - sin kan för - stå, du är nä - ra än - då.
than we ev - er un - der - stand. You are al - ways at hand.

Väl - sig - nad va - re du som kom - mer hit just nu,
Bless - ed are you com - ing near. Bless - ed are you com - ing here

väl - sig - na - de vår jord, blir till bröd på vår jord.
to your church in wine and bread, raised from soil, raised from dead.

²
Du är he - lig, du är hel - het,
You are ho - ly, you are whole - ness,

du är när - het he - la kos - mos lo - var dig!
you are pres - ent. Let the cos - mos praise you, Lord!

Ho - si - an - na, ho - si - an - na,
Sing ho - san - na in the high - est!

ho - si - an - na, ho - si - an - na vår Gud.
Sing ho - san - na! Sing ho - san - na to our God!

* May be sung in canon.

Text: Per Harling, b. 1945
Music: DU ÄR HELIG, Per Harling
Text and music © 1990 Ton Vis Produktion AB, admin. Augsburg Fortress in North America,
South America, and Central America, including the Caribbean.

*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 *Shine, Jesus, Shine*

#671

Refrain



Shine, Je - sus, shine, fill this land with the Fa-ther's glo - ry;



blaze, Spir - it, blaze, set our hearts on fire.



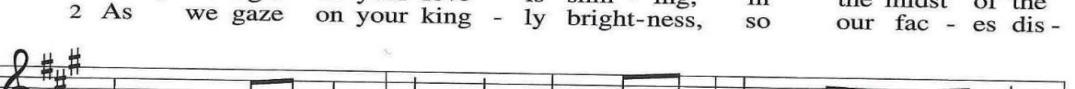
Flow, riv - er, flow, flood the na - tions with grace and mer - cy;



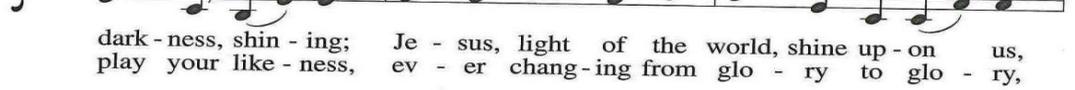
send forth your Word, Lord, and let there be light!



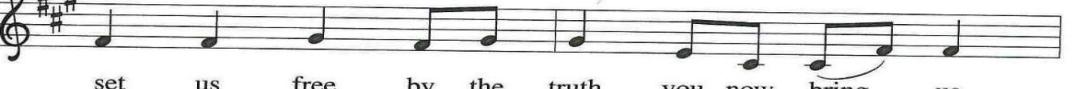
1 Lord, the light of your love is shin - ing, in the midst of the



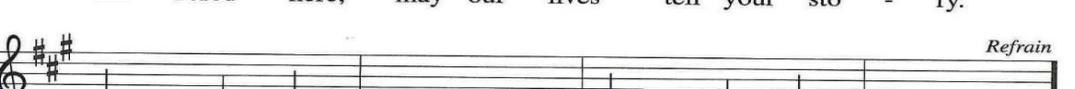
2 As we gaze on your king - ly bright-ness, so our fac - es dis -



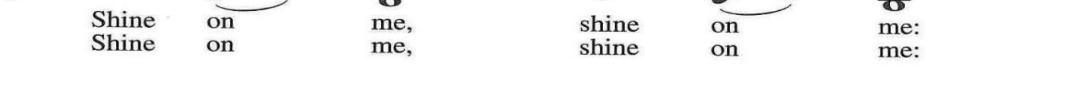
dark-ness, shin - ing; Je - sus, light of the world, shine up - on us,



play your like - ness, ev - er chang - ing from glo - ry to glo - ry,

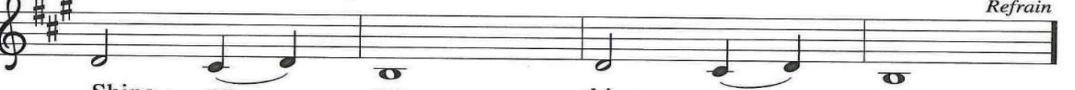


set us free by the truth you now bring us.

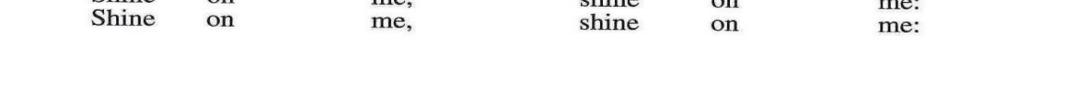


mir - rored here, may our lives tell your sto - ry.

Refrain



Shine on me, shine on me:



Shine on me, shine on me:

Text: Graham Kendrick, b. 1950
 Music: Graham Kendrick
 Text and music © 1987 Make Way Music, admin. Music Services in the Western Hemisphere

SHINE, JESUS, SHINE
 99 10 10 33 and refrain

*Dismissal

Go in peace. The living Word dwells in you!

Thanks be to God!

Postlude *Fantasia on "Old Hundred"* (WILSON)

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, Steve Sendek, 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 9/19/2021: \$848



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 News on your news

Good

feed!

Lectionary Blog: Allow Some Room for the Spirit

A Baptist preacher friend of mine got his first seminary degree in church music and spent at least a decade as a full-time director of music in several congregations before he went back to seminary for another degree and became a pastor. I was in the room once while he was trying to teach an old Southern gospel hymn to a group of ministers who were very well-educated musically but weren't Southerners and weren't familiar with the hymn. After a couple of false starts, he said to them, "Y'all are singing it exactly as it's written. The problem is—the way it's written isn't always the way it's sung. In this kind of singing, you have to allow some room for the Spirit."

Our reading from Numbers tells the story of a time when Moses had to teach Joshua how to "allow some room for the Spirit." In the middle of an episode of community dysfunction, the Israelites turned on their leader, Moses, who then proceeded to blame everything on God. God responded with a plan that moved the community from an authoritarian, charismatic leader model to a "spirit dispersed on the people" style of decision making. God took some of the Spirit from Moses and bestowed it upon 70 elders who had been selected by the people. Eldad and Medad were among the 70 chosen to be elders, but they did not go to the tent of meeting for the swearing in ceremony. God apparently does not care about such niceties, God put the Spirit on them anyway. Joshua got pretty upset about this and said, "*'My Lord Moses, stop them!' But Moses said to him, 'Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit on them!'*" (Numbers 11:28-29)

The first part of our reading from Mark echoes the story about Eldad and Medad: "*'Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.'* But Jesus said, *'Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. Whoever is not against us is for us'*" (Mark 9:38-50). John wanted everybody singing from the same page, but Jesus reminded him, and us, "You have to allow some room for the Spirit."

So far, so good. Up until this point, our Scripture lessons, and this homily, have covered ground most of us are comfortable with. We're all for the removal of authoritarian power structures, taking the decision-making away from one man, Moses, and creating a more spread-out, representative, pseudo-democratic form of religious governance. And, in this ecumenical age, we applaud the way Jesus' words appear to affirm our belief that "all truth is God's truth," etc. If we stopped here, we could all feel pretty good about the lesson and about ourselves.

But it doesn't stop here. It begins to get weird and scary with talk about drowning one's self and cutting off various body parts and tearing one's eyes out of their sockets. While we know it's all hyperbole, exaggeration for the sake of emphasis, designed to bring us up short and get us to pay attention to the fact that cross-bearing, following Jesus, is very serious business, that doesn't make it any less weird or any less scary. And it does not answer the question as to what any of this has to do with the leading of the Spirit.

Jesus is reminding John and the rest of the disciples that simply having received the Spirit is not enough, we must be willing to actively remove from our lives those things that prevent the Spirit from filling and leading our lives. Anything that gets in the way of following Jesus on the way of the cross, that "*causes you to stumble*" (Mark 9:43, 45, 47) must be cut off, torn out, removed. We must ask ourselves—"What do we need to cut out of our lives? What are we doing that is keeping us from being the complete and whole people God made us to be and means for us to be?"

My late mother-in-law was always on a diet. And she was always cheating on it, eating things she knew she shouldn't. When her husband would find a wrapper from a drive-thru breakfast hidden in her purse, she would sigh and say, in her soft, sweet, eastern North Carolina accent, "Ah, ham biscuits, them's my downfall." When one of her grandchildren discovered an empty takeout plate from Wilber's Barbecue under the car seat, she would say, "Ah, ribs and potato salad, them's my downfall!" Cookie wrapper in the couch cushions? "Ah, Oreos, them's my downfall!"

Sisters and brothers in Christ, what's your downfall? We all have good intentions of living a life close to God. We all want to be better people than we are. We all want our churches to be communities that are full of love and compassion, capable of healing and transforming one another and the world. What's stopping us? What is our downfall? What will it take to heal us, to make us whole, to turn us into the people God made us to be, wants us to be, calls us to be?"

The first step is allowing a little room for the Spirit, cutting out things that get in the way.
The rest is trusting the Spirit to blow us where God wills. Amen and amen.
- The Rev. Delmer Chilton (originally published September 24, 2018 on LivingLutheran.org)