

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



Blessed
are those whose help is
the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the LORD
their God.

Psalm 146:5
THEWORDFORTHEDAY

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost
September 5, 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. Maria Bernardo

Robin Crawford

Jennifer Lasher-Dobush

Vince Besednjak

The Lutheran Church of the Covenant

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Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

James tells us to stop showing favoritism in the assembly, treating the rich visitor with more honor than the poor one. Jesus himself seems to show partiality in his first response to the Syrophenician woman in today's gospel. Was he testing her faith in saying Gentiles don't deserve the goods meant for God's children? Or was he speaking out of his human worldview, but transcended those limits when she took him by surprise with her reply? Either way, the story tells us that God shows no partiality. Everyone who brings a need to Jesus is received with equal honor as a child and heir.

Prelude *Grateful* (HAYES)

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 *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, *Erneuertem Gesangbuch*, Part II, Stralsund, 1665

Prayer of the Day

Gracious God, throughout the ages you transform death into life. Open us to the power of your presence, and make us a people ready to proclaim your promises to the whole world, through Jesus Christ, our healer and Lord. **Amen!**

First Lesson

Isaiah 35:4-7a

These verses are a word of hope to the exiles in Babylon. Isaiah 34 portrays God's vengeance on Edom, Israel's age-old enemy, which makes the path from Babylon to Zion safe for the exiles' return. The desert itself will flow with water to give drink to the returning exiles.

⁴Say to those who are of a fearful heart,

“Be strong, do not fear!

Here is your God.

He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense.

He will come and save you.”

⁵Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

⁶then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;

^{7a}the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water.

Word of God, word of life!

Thanks be to God!

Psalm

Psalm 146

¹Hallelujah!

Praise the Lord, O my soul!

²**I will praise the Lord as long as I live;**

I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

³Put not your trust in rulers,
in mortals in whom there is no help.

**⁴When they breathe their last, they return to earth,
and in that day their thoughts perish.**

⁵Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their help,
whose hope is in the Lord their God;

**⁶who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that is in them;
who keeps promises forever;**

⁷who gives justice to those who are oppressed, and food to those who hunger.
The Lord sets the captive free.

**⁸The Lord opens the eyes of the blind; the Lord lifts up those who are bowed
down;
the Lord loves the righteous.**

⁹The Lord cares for the stranger;
the Lord sustains the orphan and widow, but frustrates the way of the wicked.

**¹⁰The Lord shall reign forever,
your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. Hallelujah!**

Second Lesson

James 2:1-10, 14-17

Faithful Christians do not show partiality to the rich and powerful of the world, especially at the expense of the poor and weak. Likewise, faith does not pay mere lip service to God's will. Instead, a living Christian faith expresses itself in acts of compassion and mercy for those in need.

¹My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? ²For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, ³and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Have a seat here, please," while to the one who is poor you say, "Stand there," or, "Sit at my feet," ⁴have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? ⁵Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? ⁶But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? ⁷Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you?

⁸You do well if you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ⁹But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.

¹⁴What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? ¹⁷So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

Word of God, word of life!

Thanks be to God!

Gospel

Mark 7:24-37

In Mark's gospel, encounters with women usually signify turning points in Jesus' ministry. Here, a conversation with a Syrophenician woman marks the beginning of his mission to the Gentiles.

The Gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord!

²⁴[Jesus] set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, ²⁵but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. ²⁶Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. ²⁷He said to her, “Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.” ²⁸But she answered him, “Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.” ²⁹Then he said to her, “For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.” ³⁰So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

³¹Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. ³²They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. ³³He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. ³⁴Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.”

³⁵And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. ³⁶Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. ³⁷They were astounded beyond measure, saying, “He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

This is the holy Gospel of our Lord!

Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon

Hymn of the Day *Light Dawns on a Weary World*

#726



1 Light dawns on a wea - ry world when eyes be - gin to
2 Love grows in a wea - ry world when hun - gry hearts find
3 Hope blooms in a wea - ry world when crea - tures, once for -



see all peo - ple's dig - ni - ty. Light dawns on a
bread and chil - dren's dreams are fed. Love grows in a
lorn, find wil - der - ness re - born. Hope blooms in a



wea - ry world: the prom - ised day of jus - tice comes.
wea - ry world: the prom - ised feast of plen - ty comes.
wea - ry world: the prom - ised green of E - den comes.



Refrain

The trees shall clap their hands; the dry lands, gush with springs;



the hills and moun - tains shall break forth with sing - ing!



We shall go out in joy, and be led forth in peace,



as all the world in won - der ech - oes sha - lom.

Text: Mary Louise Bringle, b. 1953

Music: TEMPLE OF PEACE, William P. Rowan, b. 1951

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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.

Holy One, you bring your people together in worship. Enliven your whole church. Guide all evangelists, preachers, prophets, and missionaries, who seek to share your love through word and deed. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You provide water for thirsty ground and sunshine to feed hungry plants. Bless all who advocate for healthy forests, unpolluted air, and clean waterways. Inspire all people to show care for the world you have made. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You show no partiality. Increase justice in all nations. Encourage leaders and governments to work with one another for the good of our common world. Especially as we celebrate Labor Day, unite us in seeking the health, safety, and dignity of all. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You accompany those who are most in need. Shelter all fleeing violence or persecution, protect any who are in danger, and sustain them through uncertain and unstable times. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You embrace all who have died in the faith and brought them into your glorious presence. We thank you for their example and rejoice in their lives. 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 *Come, Ye Disconsolate* (RODRIGUEZ)

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 *Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life*

#719



1 Where cross the crowd - ed ways of life, where sound the
2 In haunts of wretch - ed - ness and need, on shad - owed
3 From ten - der child - hood's help - less - ness, from hu - man
4 The cup of wa - ter giv'n for you still holds the



cries of race and clan, a - bove the noise of
thresh - olds dark with fears, from paths where hide the
grief and bur - dened toil, from fam - ished souls, from
fresh - ness of your grace; yet long these mul - ti -



self - ish strife, we hear your voice, O Son of Man.
lures of greed, we catch the vi - sion of your tears.
sor - row's stress, your heart has nev - er known re - coil.
tudes to view the strong com - pas - sion in your face.

- 5 O Master, from the mountainside
make haste to heal these hearts of pain;
among these restless throngs abide;
oh, tread the city's streets again;
- 6 Till all the world shall learn your love,
and follow where your feet have trod;
till glorious from your heav'n above
shall come the city of our God.

Text: Frank M. North, 1850–1935, alt.
Music: WALTON, W. Gardiner, *Sacred Melodies*, 1815

Dismissal

Go in peace. You are the body of Christ!
Thanks be to God!

Postlude *A Mighty Fortress is Our God* (HANSEN)

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 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 8/29/2021: \$1781



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!



A BIG
thank
you
♥

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

Lectionary Blog: When Hope is Lost



“Say to those of fearful heart, ‘Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God ... (who) will come and save you!’” (Isaiah 35:4).

“Happy are they who have their hope in the God of Jacob for their help, whose hope is in the Lord their God” (Psalm 146:5).

Have you ever lost hope? I don’t mean just a little bit, I mean a lot—so much so that you thought you were going lose everything, that you were going to, quite literally, die? I did, once, a long time ago. I was maybe 6 or 7. We were at my grandma’s little house in the mountains of southwest Virginia. She and Grandpa had 10 children, and we were having a family reunion. The seven children who had lived to adulthood, their spouses and some stray in-laws, plus most of Grandma’s 21 grandchildren, as well as a few great-grands, neighbors, preachers and other, more distant, cousins, etc.

After a “covered-dish” dinner on tables set up under the walnut tree in the front yard, some of my teen-age cousins decided to go hiking. They were intent on climbing Joe’s Knob, a mountain that rose up directly behind Grandma’s house. A trip to the top and back was a rite of passage in my family. It was not an easy climb and there was no real trail. I wanted to go. Daddy said no. Mama said no. Grandma emphatically said no, gently swatted my behind and gave me a cookie. I stood on the kitchen steps, eating my cookie and watching the big kids head off on their great adventure. And as soon as I could, I lit out after them—without water, without food and with no plan but catching up with my cousins and following them from a discreet distance.

By the time I realized that my plan wasn’t going to work, I was in big trouble. I was completely lost. And the more I walked, the more lost I became. As the darkness began to deepen, I sat down on a log, crying, praying, begging and yelling. Eventually, I settled into a fitful and exhausted sleep, having given up all hope of living.

In Isaiah, we encounter a community on the verge of losing hope. They are a “little people,” who often aspire to join the ranks of the “big people.” Great empires like Egypt, Assyria and Persia march and swirl around them, ignoring the little lap dog states trotting along behind hoping to be noticed. And when they do get noticed, they often live to regret it, finding themselves trampled under foot in the battle for supremacy and power in the known world. Israel looks up from where they have fallen and cries and prays and yells and wonders, “Has God forgotten us? Is God punishing us? Will we ever get ‘home’?”

In the midst of their descent into despair, Isaiah speaks a word of hope, “*Say to those of fearful heart, ‘Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God ... (who) will come and save you!’*” (Isaiah 35:4). This promise is two-fold: 1) the return to wholeness of the people—the eyes of the blind shall see, the lame leap, the deaf hear, the speechless sing, and 2) the return from barrenness to productivity for the land—water in the wilderness, streams in the desert, burning sands becoming pools of water, dry ground erupting with springs.

In Mark’s Gospel we encounter a gentile woman who is told (by Jesus yet!) that she should not expect Jesus to heal her daughter. “It’s not your turn. I came for the children, not the dogs.” Ouch! But, even when Jesus rejects her, appears to have turned his back on her, she holds on to hope. She takes Jesus’ meal image and runs with it. “Ah yes,” she says, “but even the dogs get to lick up the crumbs from under the children’s table.” She finds hope in a hopeless situation, and her daughter is healed.

As Jesus moves on from Tyre to the Decapolis, he encounters a group of folks who ask him to heal a man with two connected problems; he is deaf, and he cannot speak plainly. For most of human history, that would be a hopeless situation with no conceivable opportunity to be healed. But the people who come to Jesus believe that he can do something. They have hope, and their hope is fulfilled; the man is healed.

Almost no one gets through life without experiencing a loss of hope. Not just the little things like “I hope she will go to the prom with me,” or “I hope I get into that college,” or “I hope we can swing the loan for that house.” Most of us learn soon enough to cope with those sorts of normal ups and downs in life—some of us better than others. But the larger loss of hope in the future can hit us like a ton of bricks, and it can hit any of us. A failure to find meaning in life, a loss of belief and trust in the church or the government or your fellow human beings. Sometimes we think society is moving progressively in one direction—then it veers and turns and goes another way. And to us it looks like the world is going to hell in a handbasket, downhill at 90 miles an hour. What can we do; where can we look for hope?

The Scriptures remind us to look to God, our loving parent, our creator. Psalm 146 says, “*Happy are they who have their hope in the God of Jacob for their help, whose hope is in the Lord their God.*” Mark’s Gospel, from beginning to end, is written to let us know that Jesus is God incarnate, here with us in our earthly existence to give us hope, to lead us in giving others hope, to remind us that God loves us and everyone, now and forever.

On that lonely Virginia mountainside, I awoke with a start from behind a log. There was a light shining in my eyes and a gentle hand on my shoulder. It was my father. He had walked many miles that night looking for me. He picked me up in his arms, gave me a long drink from a jar of water he had brought, carried me to a spring he had found nearby and washed me clean, put me on his shoulders and carried me home. And I have never, ever completely lost hope again.

Amen and amen.

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- *The Rev. Delmer Chilton*