**Worship Plan for Sunday, September 18, 2022** **\* 15th Sunday after Pentecost**

**Introduction to the day**

As we are invited today to consider what it means to be managers (rather than owners) of all that we have, it is crucial to recognize that we are bought with a price. “Christ Jesus, himself human, . . . gave himself a ransom for all.” Apart from the generosity of God we have nothing—we are nothing. By God’s gracious favor we have everything we need.

**GOSPEL MESSAGE: The Grace of Confusion**

In today’s gospel, Jesus tells a challenging parable about a dishonest steward that ends with an unsettling moral: “And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes” (Luke 16:9).

Is Jesus being ironic or sincere? Do the characters in the story somehow represent our relationship with God? Are we supposed to emulate the dishonest steward? This text is filled with questions. If you find Jesus’ words today perplexing, even baffling, don’t worry—you are in good company. Both the details of the parable itself and the lesson Jesus is drawing from it have vexed and puzzled generations of the best interpreters, theologians, and preachers.

There are many plausible ways to explain what is happening and what it means for our lives as Christians that might be explored in your assembly today. At the same time, scriptures like this are a reminder that the life of discipleship does not always come with easy answers and neatly packaged meanings. The gospels frequently report moments when Jesus’ disciples simply could not understand what he was saying to them or profoundly misinterpreted his meaning.

The value of the community you join today does not come from the perfect understandings of either the assembly or its leaders. It comes from the one who continues to speak even when we do not understand, who daily affirms God’s love for us through the waters of baptism, who offers his own body and blood at the table each week for those who are still struggling and learning what it means to be his disciples—and that includes all of us. In short, the value of the community you join today comes from a Lord committed to leading us as disciples, even when we are unclear of the way.

**Gathering:** The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

**Greeting:** Welcome to worship today, we are glad to have you with our Faith Lutheran Church community. I'm Pr. John Barton and I will be leading our service today. This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

**ASSISTING MINISTER: Announcements**

Monday, the 19th: Mutual Ministry meets at 10:00 in person; Executive Board meets at 1:00 in person and Zoom

Tuesday, the 20th: 4 Plus 1 Group meets at 10:00 in person

Wednesday, the 21st: WELCA Board meets at 10:00 in person; Finance meets at 10:00 in person

Thursday, the 22nd: WELCA General Meeting is at 10:00 in the Fellowship Hall; Bible Study is at 2:00 in person and Zoom

Friday, the 23rd: Al-Anon meets at 10:30 in the Fellowship Hall.

Other: We are collecting dry pasta and pasta sauce for the Community Cupboard this month.

The envelopes for the Thankoffering Service are now in your mailbox! Please bring them back to church for the Thankoffering service on Sept. 25th.

**Gathering Song:*Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me* (ELW 623)**

**Confession and Forgiveness**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, who forgives all our sin, whose mercy endures forever. **Amen.**

God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Most merciful God,

**we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

**Prayer of the Day**

Let us pray.

God among us, we gather in the name of your Son to learn love for one another. Keep our feet from evil paths. Turn our minds to your wisdom and our hearts to the grace revealed in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

**Word:** God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

**First Reading:** Amos 8:4-7

### 4Hear this, you that trample on the needy, and bring to ruin the poor of the land, 5saying, “When will the new moon be over so that we may sell grain; and the sabbath, so that we may offer wheat for sale? We will make the ephah small and the shekel great, and practice deceit with false balances, 6buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and selling the sweepings of the wheat.”7The Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob: Surely I will never forget any of their deeds.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

**PsalmODY:** Psalm 113

1Hallelujah! Give praise, you servants of the Lord; praise the name of the Lord.

2**Let the name of the Lord be blessed, from this time forth forevermore.**

3From the rising of the sun to its going down let the name of the Lord be praised.

4**The Lord is high above all nations; God’s glory above the heavens.**

5Who is like the Lord our God, who sits enthroned on high,

6**but stoops to behold the heavens and the earth?**

7The Lord takes up the weak out of the dust and lifts up the poor from the ashes,

8**enthroning them with the rulers, with the rulers of the people.**

9The Lord makes the woman of a childless house to be a joyful mother of children. Hallelujah! **Amen.**

**Second Reading:** 1 Timothy 2:1-7

1First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, 2for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. 3This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, 6who gave himself a ransom for all—this was attested at the right time.7For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

**Gospel Acclamation (ELW p. 151)**

**Alleluia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Alleluia.**

**Gospel:** Luke 16:1-13

The holy gospel according to Luke. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

1Then Jesus said to the disciples, “There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. 2So he summoned him and said to him, ‘What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.’ 3Then the manager said to himself, ‘What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. 4I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.’ 5So, summoning his master’s debtors one by one, he asked the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ 6He answered, ‘A hundred jugs of olive oil.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.’ 7Then he asked another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ He replied, ‘A hundred containers of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill and make it eighty.’ 8And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. 9And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes. 10“Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. 11If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? 12And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? 13No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

**Sermon:** Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus the Christ; the Savior of the universe!

"Is Jesus being ironic or sincere? Do the characters in the story somehow represent our relationship with God? Are we supposed to emulate the dishonest steward? This text is filled with questions. If you find Jesus' words today perplexing, even baffling, don't worry-you are in good company. Both the details of the parable itself and the lesson Jesus is drawing from it have vexed and puzzled generations of the best interpreters, theologians, and preachers." This statement - or perhaps confession - by one writer in the bulletin's intro raises a good point, that this is a confusing reading. It raises more questions than it gives answers, for example:

 Who are the characters in the story? Who is the manager? It seems like he is dishonest thief, citing the owner’s profits out of spite for being let go.

It sort of depends on the perspective though doesn't it? Have you considered there's another way to view our dubious main character of Jesus' story? Perhaps instead of the spiteful thief, he is instead a character more akin to a Robin Hood character? As one commentator lays out for our consideration: "If, in fact, the manager is participating in an exploitative system that benefits only the wealthy at the expense of the rest, perhaps ancient hearers of this story would not have viewed the manager’s choice and master’s loss with pity or solidarity."

He calls the manager “shrewd” (other options are wise or prudent). This word is picked up by Jesus, who, contrary to expectation, compliments the children of this age, rather than those who strive to follow him, as having more capacity for shrewdness." Confusing right? It's not what we expect to hear from Jesus and it's hard to make sense of it.

Acknowledging that sense of unease and unsure footing in grasping the text, let's look at a central theme. This gospel passage raises the question of what it means to be a steward or a manager, not an owner.  Whether honest or dishonest, sincere or self-serving we have a highlighted and complimented example of a steward or manager. And in particular, it is the shrewdness that is complemented, The person's ability to not lose their head but instead come face to face with their situation and find the best way out of it. So shrewdness and wisdom are something we can be confident in employing in walking the path of faith. Alright, that's one thing. We can look to our Amos reading as well for another thing that we can be pretty sure of that in the use of shrewdness, we don't oppress or contribute to oppression. The Amos reading says: hear this you that trample on the needy and bring to ruin the poor of the land…The Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob: surely I will never forget any of (these) deeds." So there's another thing that these paired readings reveal to us amidst the confusion, be shrewd but not oppressive. Be smart and not taking advantage of those less fortunate. In fact if you can, use that shrewdness to help those less fortunate, like the debtors in the gospel.

 We don't really have a definite answer from the reading whether the manager was Robin Hood or something less, we know that they were a person and we are people today and we often encounter hard decisions about where life will take us next or how to resolve a particular situation with not great choices either way. This text has not been tamed or whittled down to a simple answer; it leaves complexity. It leaves us some room to do some holy struggling, and opportunity to wrestle with God and what God is trying to tell us. Not all of us are experts in the sport of wrestling, but whether we like it or not, through life we gain plenty of experience in wrestling with God and God's messages.

The good news is that God always gives us a platform and sure ground to grapple from, a theological foundation of discipleship then we can always look back on when we're not sure where to go forward. "Devotion to God, faithfulness in stewarding God’s gifts, is the priority for a follower of Jesus. But it is never easy in a world full of negotiation where wealth demands our loyalty. Recognition of this challenge drives us again to our need for Christ to reconcile us to God and to one another, and the response of mercy and forgiveness at the heart of the Gospel. "

If you're still scratching your head at Jesus's words in the gospel today, or mine, or maybe

You've let your mind rest during this sermon time, just know this; nowhere in the Bible does it say that we're going to understand everything in the Bible. We're not going to always have the answers, we're not always going to be the perfect readers of the Bible or have perfect understanding of it, in fact if anyone tells you they're a perfect disciple or have the perfect understanding of the Bible, go ahead and pray for them. Hey, just like us, need the thing that the Bible does guarantee - God's grace. As we work our way through life stewarding relationships and resources, managing this event or this crisis, we always look back to the owner and creator of all things around us, God, the one who made it all including us, and the one who's steadfast love and grace get us through those times when we're confused or lost. Amen.

**Hymn of the Day:*Take My Life, That I May Be* (ELW 685)**

**ASSISTING MINISTER**

We continue as we confess our faith using the words of the Apostle's Creed.

**Creed**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

**Pastor and Assisting Minister: Prayers of Intercession**

As scattered grains of wheat are gathered together into one bread, so let us gather our prayers for the church, those in need, and all of God’s good creation.

God our Savior, you keep your church in faith and truth. Accompany those preparing for baptism or affirmation of baptism. Enlighten preachers, teachers, seminarians, and all those who share your good news with the world. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Divine teacher, you instruct your children to be responsible stewards of your creation. Show us how best to care for the earth and its resources, and guide those who work to develop sustainable practices. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Ruler of the nations, you direct those in authority. Give leaders wisdom and compassion so that all may live in peace. Inspire public servants to follow the example of courageous leaders and safeguard the dignity of each person. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Helper of the needy, you lift up those who are oppressed. Breathe justice into economic and social systems that perpetuate poverty and hunger. Sustain food ministries, clothing banks, and emergency shelters. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Provide for those in any need, especially JoLynne Buehring; Arnette Calkins; Julie Chevraux; Vicki Crow; Stephanie DeSimone; Carole Erickson; Jill Harper; Kally Homchick; Brian Kniss; Loni Knowles; Sandra Miller;  Carol Morris; Pat Myers; Sheila Neal; Andrew Quinn; the family of Emily Rasmussen; Yolanda Rosales; JoAnne Schriock; Bill and Dee Seel; Amy Sinclair; Dennis and Carol Sutherland; Diana Ward; Nancy Wargolet; Peggy Westby; Mary Yturralde; the homebound; the Emergency responders; and those grieving and anticipating surgery/tests.  We especially pray for those affected by COVID-19 and those who have lost loved ones. At this time we also pray for those we name aloud or silently in our hearts. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Sustainer and giver of life, you bless this congregation with abundance. Instruct us in the proper and faithful use of wealth and resources, that we share generously. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

God of glory, you gather your saints around your throne. Keep us thankful for the witness of those who have gone before us, and bring us with them to the heavenly feast that has no end. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Gathered together in the sweet communion of the Holy Spirit, gracious God, we offer these and all our prayers to you; through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

**Amen.**

**Peace:** The peace of the Lord be with you always. **And also with you.**

**Offering:** At this time, we remember that the giving of our offering is an authentic part of worship. Whether you give of your time, talents, or treasures, a combination of them, or are discerning how you can give to God's beloved community, thank you so much for all the ways you give and help to make the ministries of this church possible!

**ASSISTING MINISTER: Offering Prayer**

Let us pray.

Holy God, gracious and merciful, you bring forth food from the earth and nourish your whole creation. Turn our hearts toward those who hunger in any way, that all may know your care; and prepare us now to feast on the bread of life, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

**Musical Offering:*I Want Jesus to Walk with Me* (ELW 325)**

**Meal:** God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

**Great Thanksgiving**

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God. You reveal your glory as the glory of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: equal in majesty, undivided in splendor, one Lord, one God, ever to be adored in your eternal glory. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, Lord God of pow’r and might: Heav’n and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

**INSTRUCTION FOR COMMUNION**

Now, I invite you to gather bread and drink for communion and share with anyone in your household.

As a note, it helps to take the wafer off first then the juice separately afterward.

Gathering at Christ's table, we trust in God's all-reaching power and grace to provide each one of us the complete and total sacrament in these extraordinary times.

Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord, heaven and earth are full of your glory. In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son, who reached out to heal the sick and suffering, who preached good news to the poor, and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.

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 death, resurrection, and ascension, we await his coming in glory.

Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord, and unite the wills of all who share this heavenly food, the body and blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord; to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, now and forever. **Amen.**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

**Invitation to Communion**

Taste and see that the Lord is good.

**Communion**

The body of Christ, given for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

Amen.

**Prayer after Communion**

Let us pray.

O God, we give you thanks that you have set before us this feast, the body and blood of your Son. By your Spirit strengthen us to serve all in need and to give ourselves away as bread for the hungry, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

**Blessing**

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord’s face shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace. **Amen.**

**Sending Song:*Now Thank We All Our God* (ELW 839)**

**ASSISTING MINISTER: Dismissal**

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Invitation**

The Church Council Members and I would like to invite guests and visitors to come and meet us in the narthex as you exit so that we can meet and welcome you.

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