



St. Peter's Lutheran Church
Highspire
Pentecost 8
July 19, 2026

Introduction

It is an age-old question: why is there evil in the world? In the parable of the wheat and the weeds Jesus suggests that both grow together until the harvest. With Paul, we long for the day that all creation will be set free from bondage and suffering. Having both weeds and wheat within us, we humbly place our hope in the promises of God, and from the Lord's table we go forth to bear the fruit of justice and mercy.

Overview

Judgment and Mercy

Matthew's gospel knows little compromise: sheep or goats, wheat or weeds, good or evil. Finding the good news of God's love for all people, for all creation, can be a challenge in this book. Today's gospel is no exception. Jesus interprets a parable for the disciples; he announces that all evildoers will be thrown into the furnace of fire, while the righteous will shine like the sun. The "Son of Man" will judge the world. Matthew's phrase "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to . . ." occurs here for the first time in this gospel (Matt. 13:24). Jesus' parable is a genuine metaphor—it is best viewed as a whole with no point-by-point comparison. The kingdom of believers has the same potential as those of the world to do good and to do evil. Jesus' allegorical interpretation encourages believers to strive for righteousness and emphasizes God as judge. However, in his letter to the church at Rome, Paul focuses on God as merciful judge. He proclaims that all creation will be freed from decay and receive redemption. Paul reminds us that our hope lies with God, our parent through a spirit of adoption. This dichotomous picture of God as judge and giver of mercy began with last Sunday's texts and evidences itself in readings from Romans and Matthew across the next four Sundays. In some cases the God of mercy is highlighted in Paul's letter, at other times in the gospel. This good news, however, is always present! The exercise of judgment and mercy reflects God's emphasis on justice over fairness. A fair God condemns those who do evil. A just God moves beyond fairness to justice, peace, and reconciliation. As evil-doers, sinners, one and all, we are grateful for God's justice towards us and all people.

WORDS OF WELCOME

PRELUDE

Grady Daub

The Gathering

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

*CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

ELW p. 94

P In the name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

P 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.

C Amen.

P Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.
Most merciful God,

C 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.

P 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.

C Amen.

*GATHERING HYMN

"Praise and Thanksgiving" **

ELW #689

*GREETING

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

C And also with you.

*PRAYER OF THE DAY

P Faithful God, most merciful judge, you care for your children with firmness and compassion. By your Spirit nurture us who live in your kingdom, that we may be rooted in the way of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C Amen.

The Word

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

First Reading: Isaiah 44:6-8

There are no other gods besides God: the word of the Lord does not fail to come to pass. We can trust in God, through whom Israel—and we—are redeemed.

6 Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: I am the first, and I am the last; besides me there is no god.

7 Who is like me? Let them proclaim it; let them declare and set it forth before me. Who has announced from of old the things to come?

Let them tell us what is yet to be.

8 Do not fear or be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? You are my witnesses! Is there any god besides me?

There is no other rock; I know not one.

L The word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Psalm: Psalm 86:11-17 (read responsively)

Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth. (Ps. 86:11)

11 Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth;
give me an undivided heart to revere your name.

**12 I will thank you, O Lord my God, with all my heart,
and glorify your name forevermore.**

13 For great is your love toward me;
you have delivered me from the pit of death.

**14 The arrogant rise up against me, O God, and a band of violent
people seeks my life;
they have not set you before their eyes.**

15 But you, O Lord, are gracious and full of compassion,
slow to anger, and full of kindness and truth.

**16 Turn to me and have mercy on me;
give your strength to your servant, and save the child of your
handmaid.**

17 Show me a sign of your favor, so that those who hate me may see
it and be put to shame;
because you, Lord, have helped me and comforted me.

Second Reading: Romans 8:12-25

For Paul, true spirituality means that we experience the reality of the Spirit, which enables us to pray as God's children, keeps us in solidarity with creation, and gives us unseen hope that God will liberate us and creation from bondage to death and decay.

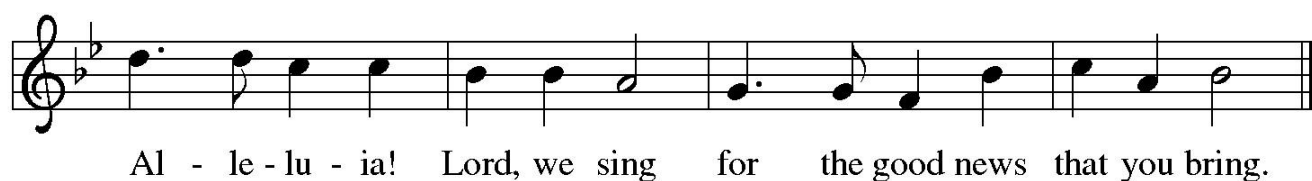
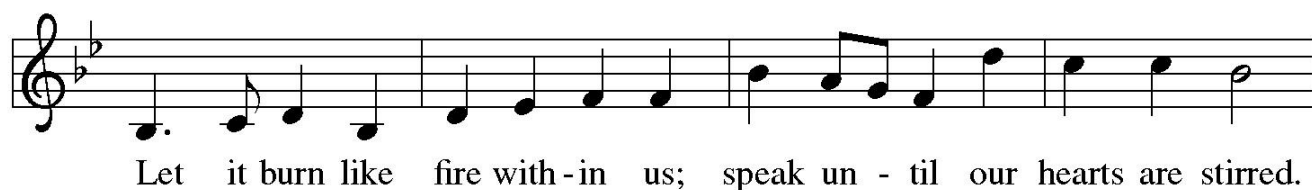
12 So then, brothers and sisters, we are obligated, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—13 for if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. 15 For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” 16 it is

that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs: heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if we in fact suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

18 I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God, 20 for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its enslavement to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning together as it suffers together the pains of labor, 23 and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what one already sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

L The word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

***GOSPEL Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43**

Jesus tells a parable about the coexistence of good and evil in this world. God's judgment will remove all evildoers and causes of sin, but not until the end of human history.

P The holy gospel according to Matthew

C **Glory to you, O Lord.**

24 [Jesus] put before [the crowds] another parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field, 25 but while everybody was asleep an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and then went away. 26 So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. 27 And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?' 28 He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' The slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' 29 But he replied, 'No, for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them.

30 Let both of them grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.' "

36 Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." 37 He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; 38 the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, 39 and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. 40 Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, 42 and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!"

P The gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to you, O Christ.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Pastor Alex

SERMON

Pastor Alex

*HYMN OF THE DAY "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come" ELW #693

*APOSTLES CREED

ELW p.105

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.

*PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

A Trusting in God's steadfast love for all God has made, let us pray
for the church, the world, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

God our source, protect your church from those who sow weeds among
the wheat. Where we trade grace for judgment, restore us, and where
we get lost among the complexities of life, guide us.
God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

God our creator, sustain creation in places not easily seen; the depths of oceans, microscopic plants and animals, galaxies beyond our own. May we share earth's dedication to hope for what we do not yet see. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

God our soil, we yearn to live on your lands and waters with justice and in righteousness. Renew the hearts of all in authority, that our leaders guide wisely toward the flourishing of all. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

God our rock, be a source of constancy for those whose lives have been uprooted by war, eviction, global climate change, unemployment, harassment, false witness to their character, or illness or injury. We pray especially for *Don Alsedek, Connie Barner, Rachel Benkovic, Rose Hoover, Samson Kennedy, Bernie Kunz, and Rob Lipsitt.* God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

God our teacher, guide and provide for all summer camp staff and campers, daycare professionals, librarians, summer school educators and coaches, teachers preparing for the coming academic year, and youth becoming first-time babysitters. God of grace, **hear our prayer.** *Here other intercessions may be offered.*

God our hope, the message of your salvation is planted among us in all times and places. We give you thanks for the witness of all the saints who shine like the sun in your presence. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

P Grateful for your abundant provision and trusting in your goodness, we cast all our cares upon you, through the abundant grace of Christ Jesus.

C **Amen.**

*PEACE

P The peace of Christ be with you always.

C **And also with you.**

SPECIAL MUSIC

Liz Jefferies, soloist

The Meal

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

*OFFERTORY HYMN

Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful

ELW #182

Let the vine - yards be fruit - ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of

bless - ing. Gath - er a har - vest from the seeds that were sown, that we may be

fed with the bread of life. Gath - er the hopes and the dreams of all; u -

nite them with the prayers we of - fer now. Grace our ta - ble with your

pres - ence, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

The musical score is written on five staves in treble clef. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The melody is simple and hymn-like, with lyrics written below the notes. The final note of the fifth staff is a whole note, followed by a double bar line.

*OFFERTORY PRAYER

A Loving God, we offer at your table the gifts of our hearts. Help us take heart in you and share freely of your love, so that all creation can taste your abundance. We ask this in the name of Jesus, through the Spirit abiding with us now and forever.

C Amen.

*THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

ELW p.206

P The Lord be with you.

C And also with you.

P Lift up your hearts.

C We lift them to the Lord.

P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C It is right to give our thanks and praise.

*PREFACE

P 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,
through our Savior Jesus Christ;
who on this day overcame death and the grave,
and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life.
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

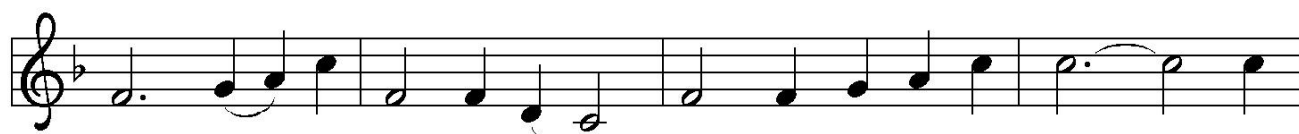
ELW p.207



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and might,



heav'n and earth are full of your glo-ry. Ho-san - na in the high - est.



Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho -



san - na in the high - est, ho - san - na in the high - est.

*EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

P 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.

C Amen.

*THE LORD'S PRAYER

ELW p.208

P Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

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.

***SHARING THE MEAL**

P Heaven has come near. Come, share in the feast.

COMMUNION HYMNS:

"Lamb of God"

ELW p.208

"When Peace Like a River"***

ELW #785

"As The Grains of Wheat"

ELW #465

***PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

A Compassionate God, through the gifts of bread and wine our hearts are filled with the abundance of your love. Strengthen us that we, through this holy meal, may share your love freely, as you have shared with us. We ask this in the name of Jesus, through the Spirit nourishing us now and forever.

C Amen.

The Sending

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

***BLESSING**

P Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, ☩ one God,
bless, heal, and hold you today and always.

C Amen.

***SENDING HYMN**

"Sing To The Lord of Harvest"

ELW #694

***DISMISSAL**

A Heaven has come near. Go, share the good news!

C Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

Grady Daub

We appreciate Grady Daub and Liz Jefferies for sharing their musical talent with us this morning. Thank-you.

Permission to podcast/ stream the music in this service obtained from ONE LICENSE, License #736549-A and CCLI License #CSPL 19029 except where notated, All Rights Reserved. From sundayandseasons.com. Copyright @2026 Augsburg Fortress. All Rights Reserved. License #SB179760.

Prelude - Grady Daub

Gathering Hymn - "Praise and Thanksgiving" ELW #689 words - Albert F. Bayly music - Gaelic tune BUNESSAN @ arr. 2006 Augsburg Fortress**

Gospel Acclamation - "Alleluia! Lord and Savior" p. 205, setting 10

Hymn of the Day - "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come" ELW #693 words -

Henry Alford music - George Elvey ST. GEORGE'S WINDSOR PUBLIC DOMAIN

Special Music - Liz Jefferies, solo

Offertory Hymn - "Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful " ELW #182

"Holy, Holy, Holy" p.206, setting 10 ELW

Distribution of Communion - Lamb of God, p. 208 ELW

"When Peace Like a River" ELW #785 words - Horatio G. Spafford music -

Philip P. Bliss IT IS WELL PUBLIC DOMAIN**

"As the Grains of Wheat" ELW #465 words & music - Marty Haugen @1990 GIA Publications, Inc.

Sending hymn - "Sing to the Lord of Harvest" ELW #694 words - John

Monsell Music - Johann Steurlein PUBLIC DOMAIN

Postlude - Grady Daub

** - congregational favorites

St. Peter's Lutheran Church Highspire Contact Information:

Saint Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church

240 Broad St., P.O. Box 97

Highspire, Pennsylvania 17034-0097

Office Phone: 717-939-3492

E-mail: stpetershighspire240@gmail.com

If you are in need of Pastoral care, please reach out to our church office at 717-939-3492 or by email at stpetershighspire240@gmail.com .

You can also reach out to Pastor Alex, at 717-434-5037.

Special Music for July

7/19 - Pentecost 8 - Liz Jefferies, soloist
7/26 - Pentecost 9 - Spike Spilker, soloist

Worship Participants for July 19, 2026

Presiding Minister	Pastor Alex Sheppard-Witt
Music Director	Stephen Strauss
Worship Assistant	Karl Hawkins
Musician	Grady Daub
Lector	Matt Hunt

Worship Participants for July 26, 2026

Presiding Minister	Pastor Alex Sheppard-Witt
Music Director	Stephen Strauss
Worship Assistant	Matt Hunt
Musician	Grady Daub
Lector	Clydene Strauss

Altar Flower Sponsor needed

The following date is available for sponsoring the altar vases or centerpiece. If you may be interested, please call Helene Hoch at 717-343-8397.

- **Sunday, August 30th**

CENTERPIECE: Presented to the Glory of God by Bob and Maria Miller in honor of their son Bobby's birthday on July 17th.

All are Welcome Bible Study

The All are Welcome Bible Study meets on Tuesday nights at 6:30pm. We are currently reading Isaiah.

We send out a weekly email with the Zoom link, as well as a brief summary of what we covered the previous week. To get the link for attending the Zoom session, or just to get on the weekly email list, please contact Matt and Mary Hunt at allarewelcomebiblestudy@gmail.com.

A Friendly reminder from Sally:

Please remember to take 1 or more Samaritan Bags to hand out to those who may be in need of this outreach. They are located in a basket in the back of the sanctuary to grab and keep available in your travels.

Come to church and stay for Fellowship every Sunday in the Parlor. Enjoy coffee and snacks and friendly conversation! If you would be interested in "Hosting a Sunday" please check the sign-up sheet posted on the bulletin board located in the hallway outside the Music Room/Church Office.