



ST PAUL PINE GROVE MILLS

A congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER
PENTECOST
SEPTEMBER 20, 2026

WELCOME TO SAINT PAUL!

We are happy to have you here!

HOW TO KNOW WHEN TO STAND, SIT, OR SPEAK

Whenever you see an asterisk (*) at a heading, you are invited to stand as you are able. You are not required to stand, so if, for health or emotional reasons you cannot or do not wish to stand, that is okay. You are invited to speak the words printed in **bold type**.

HOW TO SING HYMNS IN HARMONY

To save space in printing the bulletin, we usually limit what is printed to the melody. If you'd like to sing in harmony, the hymn numbers are listed in our bulletin so you can open the red books in the pews (called ELWs).

WE ARE AN OPEN COMMUNION CONGREGATION

This means that any Christian who has received the Sacrament of Holy Baptism is invited to receive Holy Communion.

HOW TO FINANCIALLY SUPPORT US



Offerings can be made online at stpaulpgm.org/give, mailed to St. Paul Lutheran Church, PO Box 200, Pine Grove Mills, PA 16868, placed in the mail slot (outside door to Pastor Paul's office), or in the offering plate located in the lobby/narthex near the entrance of the sanctuary.

A NOTE ON COMMUNION WAFERS



To topple barriers that prevent participation in worship, we want to make it possible for individuals with Celiac Disease or gluten intolerance to be able to eat the Body of our Lord. Our default wafers are made by Parish Crossroads and are known as "Low Gluten Wafers" because they contain trace amounts of gluten. However, the wafers are tested at least once a year for how much gluten is in them. Since 2020, the wafers have routinely tested to contain 15ppm gluten or less (The US FDA defines most food products with 20ppm or less as "gluten free"). Use the QR Code and look for the link that gives the most recent test results. If you still have concerns, we have some truly gluten-free wafers available upon request.

GATHERING

The Gathering for worship began when you started readying yourself for worship

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DAY

Jesus tells a parable that still unsettles us: a landowner pays every worker the same wage, no matter what time they started. Jonah is furious when God changes course and spares Nineveh instead of punishing it. But God is gracious and merciful, abounding in steadfast love—toward people who showed up late, toward people who don't deserve it, toward you. In baptism, that same grace was given to you freely, not earned. As Luther put it, before God's mercy, we are all beggars, and every beggar gets fed.

PRELUDE — *Out of consideration for our musicians, please refrain from talking during the prelude.*

***CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

P: In the name of the Father, and of the ✠Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **A: Amen.**

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

P Compassionate God, **A: we confess that we struggle to embody your goodness in the world and in our own hearts. Creation groans from overuse. Jealousy and bitterness strain our relationships. Indifference keeps us from seeking justice. Divisions disrupt your call to show genuine love to others. Turn our hearts back to you. Restore our world and reconcile us to one another. Renew us to live as your holy people, following the way of Jesus Christ. 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. **A: Amen.**

*GATHERING HYMN "Take My Life, That I May Be" (ELW 685)



1 Take my life, that I may be con - se - crat - ed, Lord, to thee;
2 Take my hands and let them move at the im - pulse of thy love;
3 Take my voice and let me sing al - ways, on - ly, for my King;
4 Take my sil - ver and my gold, not a mite would I with - hold;



take my mo - ments and my days; let them flow in cease - less praise.
take my feet and let them be swift and beau - ti - ful for thee.
take my lips and let them be filled with mes - sag - es from thee.
take my in - tel - lect, and use ev - 'ry pow'r as thou shalt choose.
5 Take my will and make it thine; it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is thine own; it shall be thy royal throne.
6 Take my love; my Lord, I pour
at thy feet its treasure store;
take myself, and I will be
ever, only, all for thee.

Text: Frances R. Havergal, 1836–1879, alt.

Music: PATMOS, William H. Havergal, 1793–1870

*GREETING

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

*PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Let us pray. Almighty and eternal God, you show perpetual lovingkindness to us your servants. Because we cannot rely on our own abilities, grant us your merciful judgment, and train us to embody the generosity of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. A: Amen.

WORD

FIRST READING: JONAH 3:10—4:11

When he received God's call to go to Nineveh and warn them that God would destroy them for their sins, Jonah ran away. It seems that the reason that he did that was that he suspected that the Ninevites would repent, God would have mercy, and he'd look foolish for predicting a punishment that did not come. Indeed, that's exactly what happened, and Jonah retreated outside of town to grumble.

¹⁰When God saw what [the people of Nineveh] did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them, and he did not do it. ^{4:1} But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. ² He prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own

country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning, for I knew that you are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from punishment. ³ And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." ⁴ And the LORD said, "Is it right for you to be angry?" ⁵ Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city. ⁶ The LORD God appointed a bush and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort, so Jonah was very happy about the bush. ⁷ But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. ⁸ When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, "It is better for me to die than to live." ⁹ But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?" And he said, "Yes, angry enough to die." ¹⁰ Then the LORD said, "You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. ¹¹ And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left and also many animals?"

L: The word of the Lord. **A: Thanks be to God.**

PSALM 145:1-8 *sung to Nettleton (ELW 807)*

This psalm provides the reminder (which we need as much as Jonah did) that the greatest of God's "mighty acts" are forbearance and forgiveness.

¹ All my life I will extol You; bless Your name, my God and King.

² Blessing daily bring before You, and Your praise forever sing.

³ Can a mortal search Your greatness? The Lord's great and highly praised!

⁴ Day to day, each generation has Your acts and works upraised!

⁵ Ever glor'ous is Your splendor; on Your works I'll meditate;

⁶ For they'll tell of works most awesome, and I'll tell them You are great.

⁷ Grand the mem'ry of Your goodness—righteousness shown from above.

⁸ How the Lord gives grace and mercy—slow to anger, rich in love.

SECOND READING: PHILIPPIANS 1:21-30

Last week we finished reading through most of Paul's letter to the Romans, and now we turn to his letter to the church at Philippi. The verses preceding this reading include Paul's traditional greeting formula, a description of how he and his companions are proclaiming the Gospel, even while they are imprisoned, and a request that the Philippians pray that he continue to be faithful, even if that leads to his death.

[Paul writes:] ²¹ For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. ²² If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me, yet I cannot say which I will choose. ²³ I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better, ²⁴ but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. ²⁵ Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, ²⁶ so that, by my presence again with you, your boast might abound in Christ Jesus because of me.

²⁷ Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel ²⁸ and in no way frightened by those opposing you. For them, this is evidence of their destruction but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. ²⁹ For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ but of suffering for him as well, ³⁰ since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

L: The word of the Lord. **A: Thanks be to God.**

*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

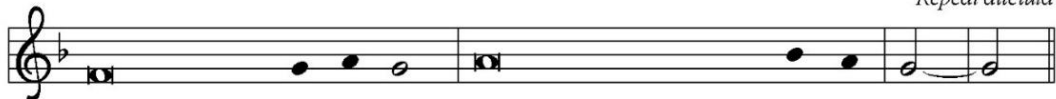


Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia,



al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Repeat alleluia



Open our | hearts, O Lord,*

to give heed to what is said | by your Son.

*GOSPEL READING: MATTHEW 20:1-16

In our near-continuous reading of Matthew, we're skipping chapter 19, since we read that material almost word for word from Luke last year and will read it from Mark next year. It includes teaching on divorce, the blessing of the children, and the rich young ruler who, told to give up his possessions, went away grieving. That story ends with the disciples noting that they have given up everything (including homes and families) to follow Jesus, and Jesus saying that they will receive all they gave up, and more, since "many who are first will be last, and the last will be first." This week's reading explains that saying in more detail, and must have been a favorite story of Gentile converts to Christianity, coming into the people of God two thousand years after the Jews.

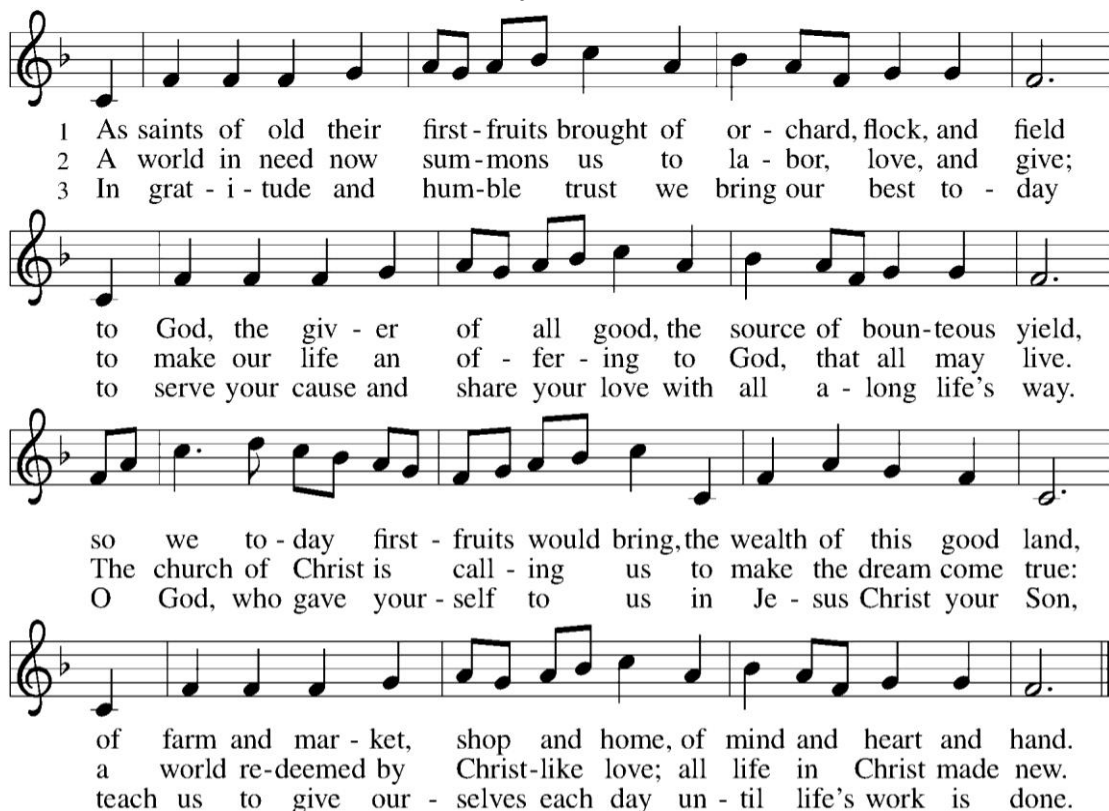
P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 20th chapter. **A: Glory to you, O Lord.**

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹ "The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. ² After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³ When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, ⁴ and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. ⁵ When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. ⁶ And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around, and he said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?' ⁷ They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.' ⁸ When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.' ⁹ When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received a denarius. ¹⁰ Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. ¹¹ And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, ¹² saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' ¹³ But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? ¹⁴ Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. ¹⁵ Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?' ¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

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

SERMON

***HYMN OF THE DAY:** *"As Saints of Old"* (ELW 695)



1 As saints of old their first-fruits brought of orchard, flock, and field
2 A world in need now summons us to labor, love, and give;
3 In gratitude and humble trust we bring our best to-day

to God, the giver of all good, the source of bounteous yield,
to make our life an offering to God, that all may live.
to serve your cause and share your love with all a long life's way.

so we to-day first-fruits would bring, the wealth of this good land,
The church of Christ is calling us to make the dream come true:
O God, who gave yourself to us in Jesus Christ your Son,

of farm and market, shop and home, of mind and heart and hand.
a world re-deemed by Christ-like love; all life in Christ made new.
teach us to give ourselves each day until life's work is done.

Text: Frank von Christerson, 1900–1996, alt.

Music: FOREST GREEN, English folk tune

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***INVITATION TO BAPTISM**

***APOSTLES' 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.**

***PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Reminded of God's gracious and abundant love, we offer our prayers, confident that God hears us, responding to each petition with the words "Your mercy is great."

A brief silence.

Hold your church accountable for our unwillingness to share your good news and our anger at your generosity to others. Nourish us by your grace to be witnesses to your love. Hear us, O God: **A: Your mercy is great.**

Guide scientists and researchers studying responses to the climate crisis so that all your creation may inspire us to give thanks for your great goodness. Hear us, O God: **A: Your mercy is great.**

Show employers the benefits of equal pay standards for all their employees. Reconcile conflicts between employees. Fill places of employment with camaraderie, and bring an end to employment disparity. Hear us, O God: **A: Your mercy is great.**

Encourage any who cannot work or who cannot work a full day with the truth that their value comes from your everlasting love for them. Provide for those who are injured, ill, and for all in any need (*especially*). Hear us, O God: **A: Your mercy is great.**

Strengthen all those in this congregation whose labor serves the needs of others in the community (*especially*). Inspire all in this congregation to support community endeavors with our time and talents. Hear us, O God: **A: Your mercy is great.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Comfort us with the promise of the resurrection as we remember Janet Conrad and all our loved ones whose desire to be with Jesus is fulfilled. Hear us, O God: **A: Your mercy is great.**

Grant the prayers we have offered, what we have forgotten to ask, and whatever else you see that we need. We ask this in Jesus' name. **A: Amen.**

***PEACE**

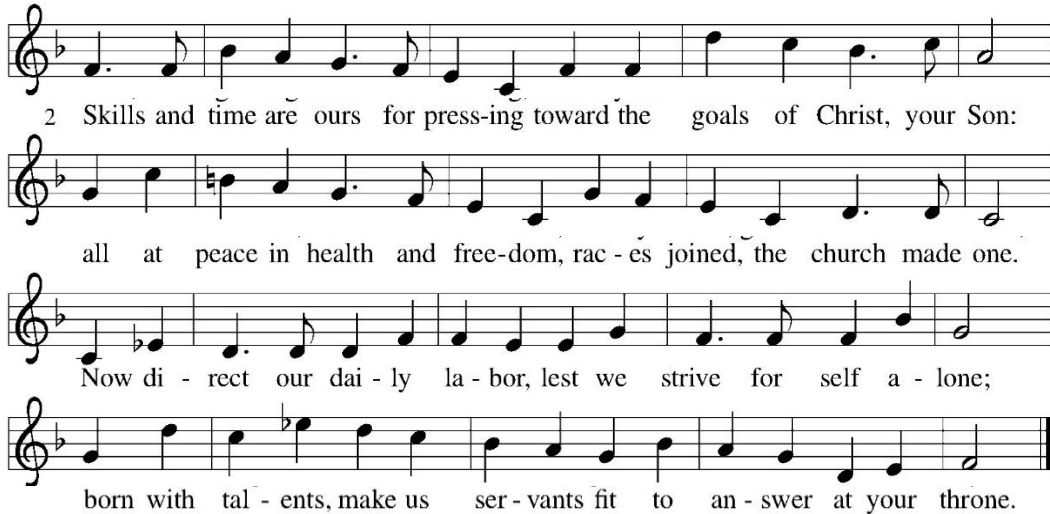
P: The peace of Christ be with you always. **A: And also with you.**

MEAL

OFFERING

MUSICAL OFFERING

*OFFERTORY *"God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending"* (ELW 678) vs. 2



2 Skills and time are ours for press-ing toward the goals of Christ, your Son:
all at peace in health and free-dom, rac-es joined, the church made one.
Now di-rect our dai-ly la-bor, lest we strive for self a-lone;
born with tal-ents, make us ser-vants fit to an-swer at your throne.

Text: Robert L. Edwards, 1915–2006

Music: RUSTINGTON, C. Hubert H. Parry, 1848–1918

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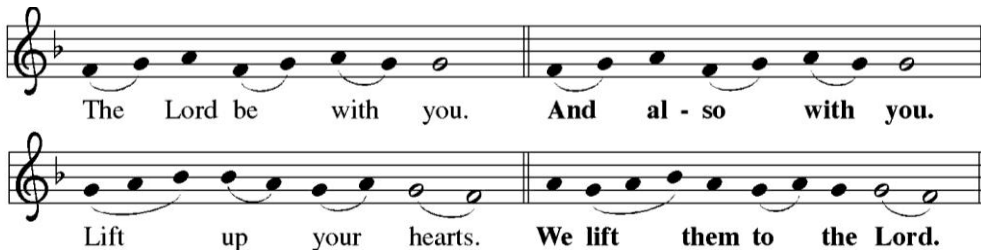
*OFFERING PRAYER

L: Let us pray: God of creation, you send rain and the earth springs forth abundantly. All blessings are from you; make us generous with what we have. Use our gifts, our abilities, and our hearts in service to you and in love to our neighbors, today and always.

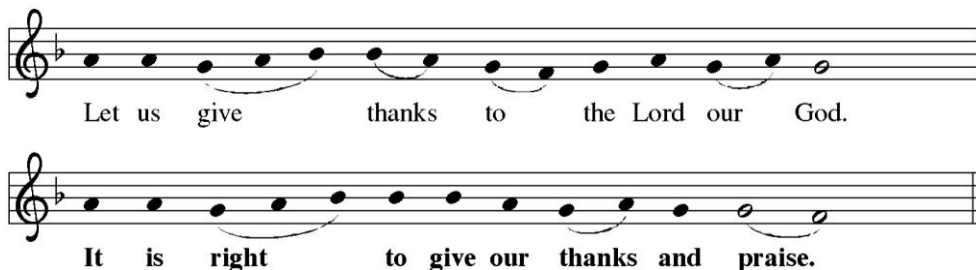
A: Amen.

*THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

* DIALOGUE



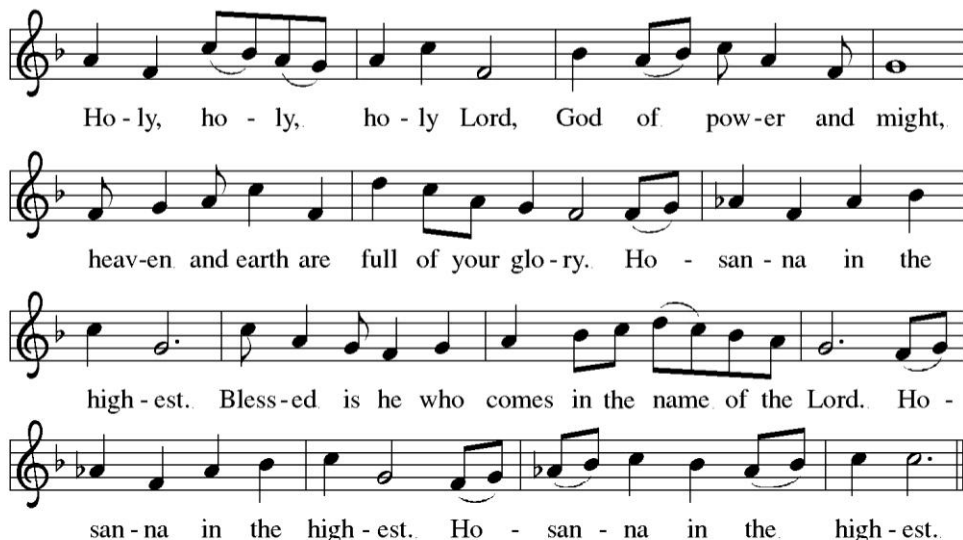
The Lord be with you. And al-so with you.
Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.



*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:

*SANCTUS



*THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

P: 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 handed over,
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.

We proclaim the mystery of our faith:

A: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

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.

A: Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

By your 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 your Son.

A: Amen. Come, Holy Spirit.

Through him all glory and honor is yours,
Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit,
in your holy Church, both now and forever. **A: Amen.**

*LORD'S PRAYER

P: 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.**

**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.
Lead us not into time of trial,
but deliver us from evil.**

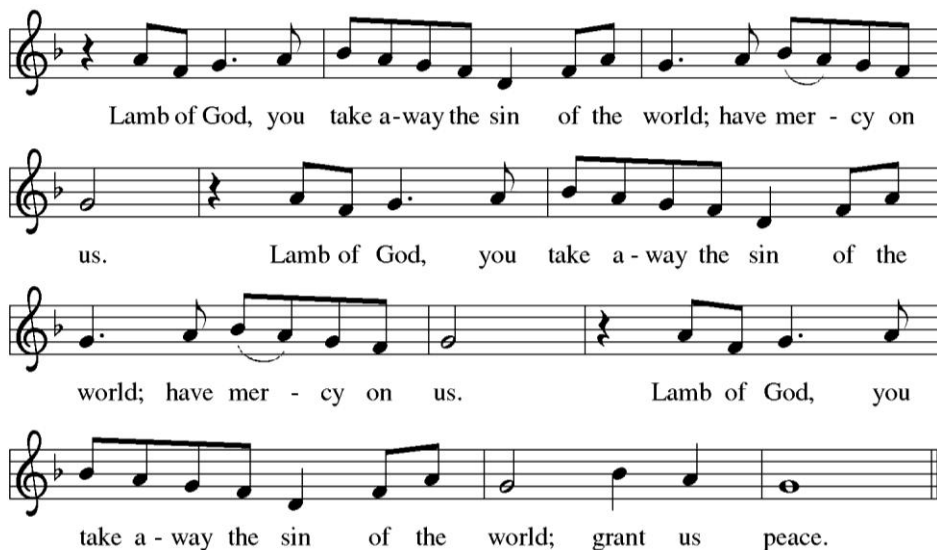
**For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
forever and ever. Amen.**

***INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

P: Christ invites you to this table. All who are thirsty, all who are hungry, come!

***LAMB OF GOD**



Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer - cy on
us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the
world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you
take a - way the sin of the world; grant us peace.

COMMUNION

P: The body of Christ, given for you. L: The blood of Christ, shed for you. **A: Amen.**

COMMUNION HYMN: "Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise" (ELW 834)



1 Im - mor - tal, in - vis - i - ble, God on - ly wise,
 2 Un - rest - ing, un - hast - ing, and si - lent as light,
 3 To all, life thou giv - est, to both great and small;
 4 Thou reign - est in glo - ry; thou dwell - est in light;

in light in - ac - ces - si - ble hid from our eyes,
 nor want - ing, nor wast - ing, thou rul - est in might;
 in all life thou liv - est, the true life of all;
 thine an - gels a - dore thee, all veil - ing their sight;

most bless - ed, most glo - rious, the An - cient of Days,
 thy jus - tice like moun - tains high soar - ing a - bove
 we blos - som and flour - ish like leaves on the tree,
 all laud we would ren - der; oh, help us to see

al - might - y, vic - to - rious, thy great name we praise!
 thy clouds which are foun - tains of good - ness and love.
 and with - er and per - ish, but naught chang - eth thee.
 'tis on - ly the splen - dor of light hid - eth thee!

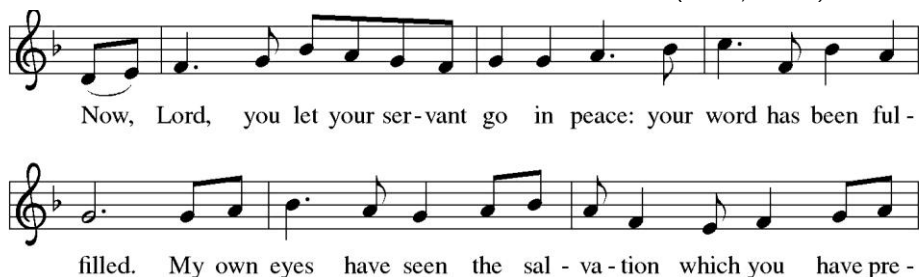
Text: Walter Chalmers Smith, 1824–1908, alt.

Music: ST. DENIO, Welsh traditional

*POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

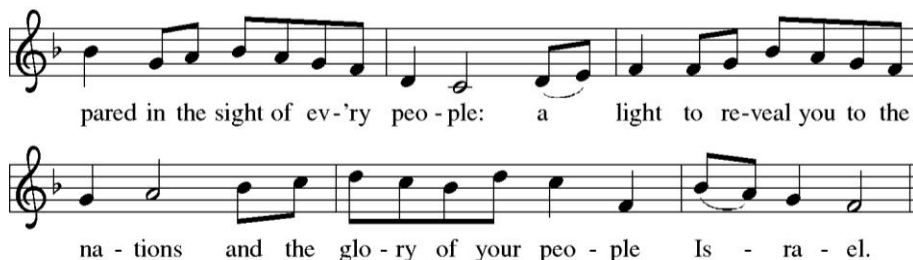
P: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you, body, mind, and soul, now, and unto eternal life. **A: Amen.**

*POST-COMMUNION CANTICLE – *Nunc Dimittis* (Now, Lord)



Now, Lord, you let your ser-vant go in peace: your word has been ful -

filled. My own eyes have seen the sal - va - tion which you have pre -



*POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

L: Let us pray. Sustaining God, with this bread and cup, you nourish us with mercy and abundant life. By your Spirit, send us from this table to serve a needy world. Make us living signs of your liberation, healing, and love, following the way of Jesus, in whose name we pray. **A: Amen.**

SENDING

*SENDING OF COMMUNION

P: Gracious God, loving all your family with a mother's tender care: As you sent the angel to feed Elijah with heavenly bread, assist those who set forth to share your word and sacrament with those who are *sick, homebound, and imprisoned*. In your love and care, nourish and strengthen those who will receive this sacrament, and give us all the comfort of your abiding presence through the body and blood of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. **A: Amen.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

You may be seated.

*CHARGE TO THE PEOPLE

*BLESSING

P: 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. In the name of the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit. **A: Amen.**

***SENDING HYMN: "Lord of All Hopefulness" (ELW 765)**



1 Lord of all hope - ful - ness, Lord of all joy,
 2 Lord of all ea - ger - ness, Lord of all faith,
 3 Lord of all kind - li - ness, Lord of all grace,
 4 Lord of all gen - tle - ness, Lord of all calm,



whose trust, ev - er child - like, no cares could de - stroy:
 whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe:
 your hands swift to wel - come, your arms to em - brace:
 whose voice is con - tent - ment, whose pres - ence is balm:



be there at our wak - ing, and give us, we pray,
 be there at our la - bors, and give us, we pray,
 be there at our hom - ing, and give us, we pray,
 be there at our sleep - ing, and give us, we pray,



your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.
 your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.
 your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.
 your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

Text: Jan Struther, 1901–1953

Music: SLANE, Irish traditional

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***DISMISSAL**

L: Go out in joy. Be led forth in peace.

A: Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

REFLECTIONS FOR AFTER WORSHIP

Discomfort: Sign of Grace?

Poor Jonah. The guy never could get comfortable. He was uncomfortable with his God-given call to preach to Nineveh; he was uncomfortable in the arms of the sailors as they hoisted him over the boat's edge and tossed him into the sea; he was uncomfortable as the ocean's raging waves flung him about like flotsam; he was—undoubtedly—uncomfortable in the fish's belly; and he was uncomfortable and downright angry with God's mercy on the people of Nineveh. Jonah had a hard time getting comfortable with himself, and, even more so, Jonah was uneasy embracing the wideness of God's grace.

The same can be said about the laborers in Jesus' parable here in Matthew 20. The laborers who came in the early morning hours grumbled against the landowner because they were paid the same as others who started later and worked fewer hours. These laborers are ill-at-ease with the landowner's choice "to give to this last the same as I give to you" (Matt. 20:14). Like Jonah, they are uncomfortable with the unchecked mercy offered by the landowner/God. God doesn't play by our rules, and that can be very discomfiting for us all.

Our discomfort with grace manifests itself in all sorts of ways. It can be discomfiting for us to engage the poor and the outcast of our society. It can be discomfiting for us to welcome immigrants into our communities. It can be discomfiting to address the pervasive racism that still surrounds us. And it can be very discomfiting for us to open our lives to the transforming power of the cross of Christ, whereby "the last will be first, and the first will be last" (Matt. 20:16).

Could it be that the more uncomfortable we become with the reckless love of God, the closer we are to understanding the meaning of grace?

COMMENTS FROM THE CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Let all the pious and all lovers of God rejoice in the splendor of this feast; let the wise servants blissfully enter into the joy of their Lord. Let those who have toiled since the first hour now receive their due reward. Let any who came after the third hour be grateful to join the feast. Those who may have come after the sixth, let them not be

afraid of being too late, for the Lord is gracious, and he receives the last even as the first. He has pity on the last, and he serves the first; he rewards the one, and is generous to the other; he repays the deed, and praises the effort. Come you all: enter into the joy of your Lord. The calf is a fatted one: let no one go away hungry.

—An Easter homily by John Chrysostom

[John Chrysostom, in *A Triduum Sourcebook*, ed. Gabe Huck and Mary Ann Simcoe (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1983), 11-12.]

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

SEPTEMBER 20: JANET CONRAD, † 2008; NELSON WESLEY TROUT, BISHOP, † 1996

A native of Ohio, Trout served parishes in several parts of the United States before being elected bishop of the South Pacific District of the American Lutheran Church, the first African American Lutheran to serve in such a capacity.

SEPTEMBER 21: MATTHEW, APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST

Matthew (or Levi) was a tax collector in Capernaum for the Roman government. Tax collectors were frequently despised for dishonesty and for assisting the occupiers. Jesus nevertheless showed love for them, and chose Matthew to be a disciple.

SCANDALOUS GRACE

Jesus loved to tell strange, unsettling stories to illustrate God's grace. Theologians and biblical scholars have wrestled with the parables of Jesus for centuries, trying to make them make sense. But perhaps the beauty of these strange illustrations is that they refuse to succumb to our need for logic or neat conclusions. They are wild, confusing, and often scandalous—much like God's love for God's people.

This parable is one such story that has the power to offend us with its backward-seeming logic. A landowner who keeps inviting new laborers to join the workforce, paying them the same amount for different amounts of work? To be sure, this is not a commentary on how to run a business or abide by fair labor practices. Instead, it is a

reminder of the outrageousness of God's kingdom or reign and the scandal of God's grace.

The kingdom of God functions by its own rules: It is a table where there is always room for more people, and an endless supply of bread and wine. It is a font where all are welcome, where all are invited to splash in the waters of baptism and be named children of God. It is a realm where our rules of space and time no longer apply, as we enter into ancient story and liturgy alongside the saints who have come before us. It is a sanctuary where we find the courage to confess our sins and receive God's extravagant, scandalous forgiveness. It is a community where love and justice supersede force and greed. It is a safe place where the most vulnerable are the most cared for, and generosity abounds so that all have enough. And it is a kingdom where all are invited to participate. Much like how the landowner hired new laborers until the end of the day, it's never too late to be welcomed by God's mercy!

FROM: FAITHFUL PROPERTY STEWARDSHIP -

A Bible Study from the ELCA Church Property Resource Hub – (Session 3)

We serve a God who chose to take on human form — to embody grace, love and justice. Jesus' ministry on earth was defined by physical, material, embodied changes in the lives of those he touched. The hungry were fed. The sick were healed. Outcasts found a warm embrace. God invites us to participate in an incarnational faith, always considering how we can make real, physical change in the lives of our neighbors. The land and buildings that our congregation stewards present real, physical opportunities for ministry. At this moment in our lives, in the life of this congregation and in the life of the wider church, we are asked to think about how our property can become an embodiment of the gospel.



SERVING TODAY

Worship Leader.....	Pastor Paul Tomkiel
Assisting Minister.....	Lauren Tingle
Musicians.....	Jacob Heller
Sacristan.....	Delorse Homan
Reader.....	Jeff Muthler

ABOUT ST. PAUL

PURPOSE

We are a beacon, boldly sharing the light of Jesus' grace and love.

MISSION

Guided by Jesus, we strengthen faith, deepen compassion, extend generosity, and serve community.

CORE VALUES

Faith ♡ Compassion ♡ Generosity ♡ Community

OUR BIBLE VERSES

As Paul was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. [Jesus said,] 'Paul is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before the nations.' – Acts 9:3,15

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

St. Paul is located on the original and ancestral homelands of the Conestoga-Susquehannock people, where we gather. We also acknowledge the Seneca, Cayuga, Lenape, as well as all of our Indigenous siblings who have and continue to care for this place – this land – and call it their home.

Find out more about the Conestoga-Susquehannock at www.conestogasusquehannocktribe.com

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