

GATHERING

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, who creates, redeems, and sustains us and all of creation. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another. (Silence is kept for reflection.)

Faithful God, **have mercy on us. We confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We turn from your loving embrace and go our own ways. We pass judgment on one another before examining ourselves. We place our own needs before those of our neighbors. We keep your gift of salvation to ourselves. Make us humble, cast away our transgressions, and turn us again to life in you through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

God hears the cries of all who call out in need, and through his death and resurrection, Christ has made us his own. Hear the truth that God proclaims: Your sins are forgiven in the name of † Jesus Christ. Led by the Holy Spirit, live in freedom and newness to do God's work in the world. **Amen.**

Gathering Song "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy" ELW 588

1. There's a wideness in God's mercy, like the wideness of the sea; there's a kindness in God's justice which is more than liberty. There is no place where earth's sorrows are more felt than up in heav'n. There is no place where earth's failing have such kindly judgment giv'n.

2. There is welcome for the sinner, and a promised grace made good; there is mercy with the Savior; there is healing in his blood. There is grace enough for thousands of new worlds as great as this; there is room for fresh creations in that upper home of bliss.

3. For the love of God is broader than the measures of our mind; and the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind. But we make this love too narrow by false limits of our own; and we magnify its strictness with a zeal God will not own.

4. 'Tis not all we owe to Jesus; it is something more than all: greater good because of evil, larger mercy through the fall. Make our love, O God, more faithful; let us take you at your word, and our lives will be thanksgiving for the goodness of the Lord.

Text: Frederick W. Faber, 1814-1863, alt. Public Domain

Greeting

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.**

Prayer of the Day

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. Amen.**

WORD First Reading: Jonah 3:10-4:11

¹⁰When God saw what [the people of Ninevah] 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.



First Reading: Jonah 3:10-4:11 (CONTINUED)

⁴But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. ²He 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 God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. ³And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." ⁴And the LORD said, "Is it right for you to be angry?" ⁵Then 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.

⁶The 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. ⁷But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. ⁸When 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."

⁹But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?" And he said, "Yes, angry enough to die." ¹⁰Then 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. ¹¹And 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?"

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

Psalm: Psalm 145:1-8 (Read Responsively)

¹I will exalt you, my God and king, and bless your name forever and ever.

²**Every day will I bless you and praise your name forever and ever.**

³Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised! There is no end to your greatness.

⁴**One generation shall praise your works to another and shall declare your power.**

⁵I will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty and all your marvelous works.

⁶**They shall tell of the might of your wondrous acts, and I will recount your greatness.**

⁷They shall publish the remembrance of your great goodness; they shall sing joyfully of your righteousness.

⁸**The LORD is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**

Second Reading: Philippians 1:21-30

²¹For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. ²²If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. ²³I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; ²⁴but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. ²⁵Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, ²⁶so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

²⁷Only, 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, ²⁸and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. ²⁹For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well—³⁰since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

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

Gospel: Matthew 20:1-16

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

¹[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. ²After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. ³When he went out about nine o’clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; ⁴and he said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went. ⁵When he went out again about noon and about three o’clock, he did the same. ⁶And 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?’ ⁷They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard.’ ⁸When 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.’ ⁹When those hired about five o’clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. ¹⁰Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. ¹¹And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, ¹²saying, ‘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.’ ¹³But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? ¹⁴Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. ¹⁵Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ ¹⁶So the last will be first, and the first will be last.” The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sermon Sermon summary for September 20, 2020 ~ Pastor Steve Weston

God’s ways are not like our ways. The parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16) gives us a picture of just how different God’s ways are from ours.

In the parable, laborers are hired at various times of the day, but they are all paid the same at the end of the day. The ones hired first, who complain that the ones hired last get the same amount even though they worked less, represent the human point of view. We like things to be fair. The landowner represents God’s point of view. Strictly speaking, God is not fair; God is better than fair. God is, as the Bible says in many places, gracious, merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

Traditionally, this parable is understood to illustrate how the result of faith in Christ (that is, eternal life) is the same whether one has been a believer and lived as a faithful Christian for many decades, or one has a deathbed conversion. This traditional interpretation is correct. But there’s more to it than that.

If Jesus’ parables are about how God’s ways are different from our ways, they’re also about how our ways should be more like God’s ways. When Jesus introduces a parable with “The kingdom of heaven is like . . .”, we can often take it to mean, This is the way the world should be but is not.

In this parable, when the landowner goes out midmorning to hire more workers, he tells them he’ll pay them “what ever is right,” which could also be translated “whatever is just.” How is it right or just for those hired last to be paid the same as those hired first? Well, consider the situation from the perspective of the day laborers working for subsistence wages. They all show up early in the morning. Some get hired and some don’t. The ones that don’t are facing the prospect of not eating that night.

The workers not hired first are not lazy; they’re unfortunate. They’re willing to work, but for some reason, the employers don’t choose them. Maybe one has some gray in his hair,



Sermon (Continued)

another is short, another is missing a finger or two or has an ugly scar, another looks like he might be a foreigner. Maybe some of them haven't been hired for a few days and look weak from hunger.

This landowner looks at these people not as mere human resources to be used for the benefit of his enterprise but as human beings to be treated with dignity and respect. This landowner, representing God's ways, does not think it is right or just that those who are unlucky should fall into destitution.

In this world, today as it has always been, the unlucky and unfortunate often fall through the cracks. A health crisis leads to a loss of income and high medical bills (even with insurance), which leads to rent or a mortgage not being paid, which leads to homelessness. In this country, a conviction for a minor offense in one's youth can be a lifelong blot on one's record and a permanent handicap in the hiring process. A person born into a poor family doesn't benefit from going to the best schools or having a network of family connections when seeking employment.

The laborers hired first grumble because the outcome doesn't seem fair. In the first reading for today, Jonah 3:10–4:11, Jonah is angry because God doesn't destroy Nineveh. Nineveh is the capital city of the evil empire that's been oppressing Jonah's people, and Jonah thinks the Ninevites should suffer for all the suffering they've caused. That's what would be fair, in Jonah's mind. But God is not interested in retribution or revenge. God wants healing and wholeness. So when the Ninevites in the story repent, God has mercy. Maybe that's not fair by human standards, but it's good, and it's what God wants for us. If we find ourselves resenting God's goodness toward others, that's our problem, not God's.

Human justice says you should work for what you get. God's justice says you shouldn't be penalized for things that are out of your control. God calls us to strive to make human justice more like God's. What does justice require in today's world if there aren't enough living wage jobs to go around? If God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, human society should be too. But it's not. We look for the day when God will intervene, when Christ will return and make everything right in the end. In the mean time, God calls his people to work to bring about God's justice as much as is possible in this sinful world. In Christ, God has blessed us far more than we could ever desire or deserve, and he has "hired" us to be a blessing to others as well. What a privilege that is!

Hymn of the Day "Say, Why Are You Standing Here Idle All Day?"

1 "Say, why are you standing here idle all day?
Come into my vineyard; I'll give you your pay.
It's never too late to join up with my crew,
for you are dear to me, and I care for you."

2 Return to the Father, O prodigal child;
don't think you're too guilty, too wicked, too wild.
His love is far greater than all of your sin,
so come, for he truly will welcome you in.

3 Consider the ravens and worry no more.
Consider the lilies and stop keeping score.
More precious are you than the birds or the flowers,
and God will look after you each day and hour.

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

L: Drawn together in the compassion of God, we pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

L: Generous God, you make the last first, and the first last. Where this gospel challenges the church, equip it for its works of service. Strengthen those who suffer for Christ. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

#1. Sun and wind, bushes and worms, cattle and great cities—nothing in creation is outside your concern, mighty God. In your mercy, tend to it all. Give us a spirit of generosity toward all you have made. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

#2. Where we find envy and create enemies, you provide enough for all. Bring peace to places of conflict and violence. Inspire leaders with creativity and wisdom. Bless the work of negotiators, peacekeepers, and development workers. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

#3. Reveal yourself to all in need as you are gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, ready to relent from punishing. Accompany judges and lawyers, victims of crime and those serving sentences. Give fruitful labor and a livelihood to those seeking work. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

#4. We give thanks for each person connected with Northwoods StaR Ministries— so many gifts, so many ideas, everyone nurtured by your love. Help each of us to give thanks for our diversity. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

L: Even beyond our expectations, you choose to give generously. Grant life, health, and courage to all who are in need. We especially pray for all those on the prayer list — Jennifer, Leo, Mary, Scott, Florence, Betty, Arland, Phil & Janice, Dorothy, Ben M., Evelina, Renee, Kay, _____ and all those we name before you now, out loud or in our hearts. *(pause)* Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

(Other prayers added here)

L: All these things and whatever else you see that we need, we entrust to your mercy; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

MEAL

Offering (The offering plates will be placed near the sanctuary entrances. Please place your offerings there as you exit the worship service today. Thank you for your faithful support.)

Offering prayer

Let us pray...**Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. You have set before us these gifts of your good creation. Prepare us for your heavenly banquet, nourish us with this rich food and drink, and send us forth to set tables in the midst of a suffering world, through the bread of life, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

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.

Blessed are you, Lord of life, creator of heaven and earth. Through his death on the cross, your Son Jesus Christ has broken the power of evil, and by his resurrection has opened for us the gate to eternal life. Through him you seek the lost, restoring those whose lives have been shattered and torn apart. In the fullness of time, he will gather all things to himself, enfolding us and all who have died in his undying love.

The Words of Institution

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.

The Lord's Prayer

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.

Invitation to Communion

Come to the banquet table where Christ gives himself as food and drink.

COMMUNION

Post-Communion Blessing

Prayer after Communion

Let us pray... We give you thanks, gracious God, that you have once again fed us with food beyond compare, the body and blood of Christ. Lead us from this place, nourished and forgiven, into your beloved vineyard to wipe away the tears of all who hunger and thirst, guided by the example of the same Jesus Christ and led by the Holy Spirit, now and forever. **Amen.**

SENDING

Announcements

Blessing

Mothering God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit,
bless you and lead you into the way of truth and life. **Amen.**

Sending Hymn “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” ELW 733

1. Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father; there is no shadow of turning with thee; thou changest not, thy compassions they fail not; as thou hast been, thou forever wilt be.

Refrain: Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see; all I have needed thy hand hath provided; great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

2. Summer and winter and springtime and harvest, sun, moon, and stars in their courses above join with all nature in manifold witness to thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love.

Refrain

3. Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth, thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide; strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow, blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside! *Refrain*

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Mission Statements

Northwoods STaR Ministries

“United in Christ, Sharing God’s Love”

Zion Brantwood

“We are disciples of Christ: Growing in faith, sharing our faith stories, serving others.”

First Prentice

“We are Jesus’ disciples: Welcoming every sinner, sharing Jesus’ love and teachings, encouraging all to live Christ-centered lives.”

First Ogema

“We are called and gathered to share Christ as we minister to all, bringing an unchanging God to a changing world.”

First Westboro

“Feeding bodies, minds and spirits through Christ.”

Dismissal

Go in peace. Remember the poor. **Thanks be to God.**