

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 "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing" ELW 807

1. Come, thou Fount of ev'ry blessing, tune my heart to sing thy grace; streams of mercy, never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise. While the hope of endless glory fills my heart with joy and love, teach me ever to adore thee; may I still thy goodness prove.

2. Here I raise my Ebenezer: "Hither by thy help I've come"; and I hope, by thy good pleasure, safely to arrive at home. Jesus sought me when a stranger, wand'ring from the fold of God; he, to rescue me from danger, interposed his precious blood.

3. Oh, to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be; let that grace now like a fetter bind my wand'ring heart to thee. Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it; prone to leave the God I love. Here's my heart, oh, take and seal it; seal it for thy courts above.

Text: Robert Robinson, 1735-1790, 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...**God of love, giver of life, you know our frailties and failings. Give us your grace to overcome them, keep us from those things that harm us, and guide us in the way of salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

WORD First Reading: Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

¹The word of the LORD came to me: ²What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, "The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge"? ³As I live, says the Lord GOD, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. ⁴Know that all lives are mine; the life of the parent as well as the life of the child is mine: it is only the person who sins that shall die.

²⁵Yet you say, "The way of the Lord is unfair." Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair? ²⁶When the righteous turn away from their righteousness and commit iniquity, they shall die for it; for the iniquity that they have committed they shall die.



First Reading: Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32 (CONTINUED)

²⁷Again, when the wicked turn away from the wickedness they have committed and do what is lawful and right, they shall save their life. ²⁸Because they considered and turned away from all the transgressions that they had committed, they shall surely live; they shall not die. ²⁹Yet the house of Israel says, "The way of the Lord is unfair." O house of Israel, are my ways unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair?

³⁰Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, all of you according to your ways, says the Lord GOD. Repent and turn from all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity will be your ruin. ³¹Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? ³²For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord GOD. Turn, then, and live.

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

Psalm: Psalm 25:1-9 (Read Responsively)

¹To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

²**My God, I put my trust in you; let me not be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me.**

³Let none who look to you be put to shame; rather let those be put to shame who are treacherous.

⁴**Show me your ways, O LORD, and teach me your paths.**

⁵Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; in you have I trusted all the day long.

⁶**Remember, O LORD, your compassion and love, for they are from everlasting.**

⁷Remember not the sins of my youth and my transgressions; remember me according to your steadfast love and for the sake of your goodness, O LORD.

⁸**You are gracious and upright, O LORD; therefore you teach sinners in your way.**

⁹You lead the lowly in justice and teach the lowly your way.

Second Reading: Philippians 2:1-13

¹If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, ²make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,

⁷but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form,

⁸he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.

⁹Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.



Second Reading: Philippians 2:1-13 (CONTINUED)

¹²Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure. The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel: Matthew 21:23-32

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

²³When [Jesus] entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" ²⁴Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?" And they argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' ²⁶But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet." ²⁷So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

²⁸"What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' ²⁹He answered, 'I will not'; but later he changed his mind and went. ³⁰The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, 'I go, sir'; but he did not go. ³¹Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. ³²For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him."

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

Sermon

Sermon summary for September 27, 2020 ~ Pastor Steve Weston

In today's Gospel reading (Matthew 21:23-32), the chief priests and elders are miffed at Jesus for causing chaos in their precious temple the day before, overturning the tables of the money changers and disrupting their lucrative business of selling animals for people to offer in sacrifice. They demand to know what "authority" Jesus has for doing these things. It's a loaded question. These are people who consider themselves to be in authority over what goes on at the temple, and any answer Jesus might give would enable them to mock and ridicule him. The only reasonable thing to do when one is asked a loaded question is to find a way not to answer it. So, Jesus asks them a loaded question in return: what do they make of John's baptism? They don't answer his loaded question, and so he doesn't answer theirs.

In today's second reading (Philippians 2:1-13), Paul answers the chief priests' question: Jesus is the authority. Paul urges the Christians at Philippi to follow Christ's example as they live their lives. That example is one of total servanthood. And why should we follow his example? Because Jesus Christ is Lord. But what does that mean?

A lord is a person who has some kind of authority over others. Many humans who fit that description are not good examples to follow. Many of them are tyrants. We often call God "the Good Lord," to make clear that God is not like that. But that word, Lord, has another meaning in this context.

In the Hebrew Bible (what Christians call the Old Testament) there is a name for God. Jewish tradition, going back long before Jesus, regards that name as too holy to be pronounced. So, when Jews read the Bible in Hebrew, the custom is to replace that name



Sermon (CONTINUED)

with something like “the Lord,” or “my Lord” or “the Name.” Christians have mostly kept that custom as well, though not as strictly as our Jewish friends. So when Paul speaks of “the name that is above every name,” that’s what he’s referring to. And when he says, “Jesus Christ is Lord,” he’s saying Jesus is none other than the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But we are to follow Jesus’ example, not because he’s God and therefore has authority to demand obedience. As Paul says, he did not consider his status as something to be “exploited.” Rather, we follow his example because it is excellent and worthy of being followed.

Returning to Jesus’ dialog with the chief priests in the Gospel reading, he continues by asking them a question. A father tells his two sons to work in the vineyard. One says no but then does, while the other says yes and then doesn’t. Which, he asks, did what the Father wanted? The chief priests say it’s “the first,” which gives Jesus the occasion to rebuke them. Their role as priests was to serve people on God’s behalf, and instead they’ve been lording it over the people. They’re the ones who said yes but then didn’t do what was expected of them.

Jesus’ question, which of the two sons did the will of the father, stands as a challenge to us. The truth is, both sons fell short. The father in the parable no doubt wanted his sons to both say yes and then follow through. As we live out our faith, there are two equal and opposite mistakes we can make. One is to glorify the Lord with all our heart without putting faith into action. We call that being so heavenly minded you’re no earthly good. The other is to do what we think God wants, but only out of a sense of duty, without a sense of joy in the privilege of being God’s hands and feet and voices in the world.

Paul urged the Christians at Philippi to “make my joy complete” by having the mind of Christ, by loving one another as Christ loved us. But he was actually urging them to make their own joy complete. Repeatedly, Paul tells us that we are saved, forgiven, redeemed, “by grace,” or as a gift. But like a gift that is merely admired while it gathers dust on a shelf, we don’t get the full enjoyment of the gift if we don’t put it to use. So when Paul says, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,” he’s saying that we’re saved for a purpose, and if we let God work through us, it will fill us with awe.

May you be first filled with the joy of knowing that God loves you all the time no matter what, that you’re salvation is a gift, and second filled with the joy of being part of God’s work in the world .

Hymn of the Day “Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service” ELW 712

1. Lord, whose love in humble service bore the weight of human need, who upon the cross, forsaken, worked your mercy's perfect deed: we, your servants, bring the worship not of voice alone, but heart; consecrating to your purpose ev'ry gift which you impart.

2. Still your children wander homeless; still the hungry cry for bread; still the captives long for freedom; still in grief we mourn our dead. As you, Lord, in deep compassion healed the sick and freed the soul, by your Spirit send your power to our world to make it whole.

3. As we worship, grant us vision, till your love's revealing light in its height and depth and greatness dawns upon our quickened sight, making known the needs and burdens your compassion bids us bear, stirring us to ardent service, your abundant life to share.

4. Called by worship to your service, forth in your dear name we go, to the child, the youth, the aged, love in living deeds to show; hope and health, good will and comfort, counsel, aid and peace we give, that your servants, Lord, in freedom may your mercy know and live.

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: In all the world, give your church unity. Inspire all the baptized with the mind of Christ. Where the church is powerful and where it struggles, shape us with humility and obedience so that your love may be at work in us. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

#1. Your Son took on all of bodily life in our world, even to death. Preserve and keep your creation, O God. Mend and redeem places that are polluted and damaged, so that all of creation confesses you as Lord. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

#2. Turn the nations toward life. Where our ways are unfair, give us new hearts and new spirits. Where sin permeates our cultures and institutions, change our minds and teach us to trust your authority. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

#3. Our lives are yours, O God. Relieve the suffering of those who are ill in body, mind, or spirit. Defend the lives and welfare of children who are abused or neglected, hungry or exploited, bullied or lonely. 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: Turn us away from our own interests toward the interests of others. Fill us with your compassion and sympathy. Bless ministries of care in our community and make us into signs of your mercy and justice for our neighbors. We especially pray for all those on the prayer list — Sandy, Beryl, Shelly & Jay, Erika, Steven, Don, Diane, Jennifer, Leo, Mary, Scott, Florence, Betty, Arland, Phil & Janice, Dorothy, Ben M., Renee, Kay, _____ and all those we name before you now, out loud or in our hearts. (pause) Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

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

THANKSGIVING

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. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts: our selves, our time, and our possessions. Use us, and what we have gathered, in feeding the world with your love, through the one who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

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.

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 "Have No Fear, Little Flock" ELW 764

1. Have no fear, little flock; have no fear, little flock,
for the Father has chosen to give you the kingdom;
have no fear, little flock!
2. Have good cheer, little flock; have good cheer, little flock,
for the Father will keep you in his love forever;
have good cheer, little flock!
3. Praise the Lord high above; praise the Lord high above,
for he stoops down to heal you, uplift and restore you;
praise the Lord high above!
4. Thankful hearts raise to God; thankful hearts raise to God,
for he stays close beside you, in all things works with you;
thankful hearts raise to God!

Text: Luke 12:32, st. 1; Marjorie Jilson, b. 1931, sts. 2-4 Text and music © 1973 Concordia Publishing House.
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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.**