



**Sunday, September 17, 2023**  
**Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost**

*In today's second reading Paul questions why we judge one another, since we all stand before the judgment of God. Yet we do sin against one another, and Jesus' challenge that we forgive seventy-seven times reveals God's boundless mercy. When we hear the words of forgiveness in worship and sign ourselves with the cross, we are renewed in baptism to be signs of reconciliation in the world.*

**GATHERING**

**WELCOME**

This is the day the Lord has made.  
**We will rejoice and be glad in it.**

*(Please stand as you are able)*

**CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

*All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism.*

Blessed be God, the one who forms us, + Jesus who bears the cross, the Spirit who makes our joy complete.  
**Amen.**

Let us bow before God in humility, confessing our sin.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Steadfast and faithful God,

**you have revealed the ways of justice, yet we fail to follow you. We are overwhelmed by the world's violence and suffering. We are afraid to risk what we have for the sake of others. For the harm we have caused, known and unknown, forgive us. For the unjust demands we place on others and your creation, forgive us. For the ways we turn away from you and our neighbor, forgive us. Lead us back to you and set us on the right path; in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.**

Beloved in Christ, God's justice stretches beyond all understanding. God's compassion is beyond compare. In Jesus, God is always making a new way for us. In + Christ, you are already and always forgiven.

**Amen.**

## **OPENING SONG ELW #556 vs. 1,3 *Morning Has Broken***

1 Morning has broken like the first morning;  
blackbird has spoken like the first bird.  
Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning!  
Praise for them, springing fresh from the Word!

3 Mine is the sunlight! Mine is the morning,  
born of the one light Eden saw play!  
Praise with elation, praise ev'ry morning,  
God's recreation of the new day!

Text: Eleanor Farjeon, 1881-1965

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## **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.**

## **CANTICLE OF PRAISE W&P 132 *Step by Step***

O God, you are my God,  
and I will ever praise you. (repeat 1X)  
I will seek you in the morning,  
and I will learn to walk in your ways,  
and step by step you'll lead me,  
and I will follow you all of my days.

Text: Beaker ©1991 BMG Songs, Inc. and Kid Brother of St. Frank Publishing

## **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

O Lord God, merciful judge, you are the inexhaustible fountain of forgiveness.

**Replace our hearts of stone with hearts that love and adore you, that we may delight in doing your will, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

*(Please be seated)*

## **WORD**

### **SPECIAL MUSIC**

#### **Reading: Genesis 50:15-21**

*After Jacob's death the brothers of Joseph begged for forgiveness for the crime they had done against him. You intended to do me harm, Joseph said, but God used this as an opportunity to do good and save many lives.*

<sup>15</sup>Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said, "What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?" <sup>16</sup>So they approached Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this instruction before he died, <sup>17</sup>'Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.' Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. <sup>18</sup>Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said, "We are here as your slaves." <sup>19</sup>But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? <sup>20</sup>Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. <sup>21</sup>So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones." In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

Word of God. Word of Life.

**Thanks be to God.**

*(Please stand as you are able)*

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *Alleluia*

**Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia,  
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.**

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### **Gospel: Matthew 18:21-35**

*When Peter asks about the limits of forgiveness, Jesus responds with a parable that suggests human forgiveness should mirror the unlimited mercy of God.*

<sup>21</sup>Peter came and said to [Jesus], “Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” <sup>22</sup>Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

<sup>23</sup>“For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. <sup>24</sup>When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; <sup>25</sup>and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. <sup>26</sup>So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ <sup>27</sup>And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. <sup>28</sup>But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’ <sup>29</sup>Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ <sup>30</sup>But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. <sup>31</sup>When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. <sup>32</sup>Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. <sup>33</sup>Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’ <sup>34</sup>And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. <sup>35</sup>So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

*(Please be seated)*

**Music: *Jesus Loves Me* – ELW #595**

### **CHILDREN’S SERMON**

**Music: *Lord, Listen to your Children Praying* – ELW #752**

### **SERMON**

#### **SONG OF THE DAY ELW #331 vs.1,4 *As the Deer Runs to the River***

1 As the deer runs to the river,  
parched and weary from the chase,  
we have come from hurt and hurry,  
thirsting for your healing grace.

*Refrain*

Jesus, source of living water,  
may we drink of you and live!

4 Christ, we come from desert places,  
deepest thirst unsatisfied.  
Lead us to the waters flowing  
from the cross on which you died. *Refrain*

Text: Herman G. Stuempfle Jr., b. 1923

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*(Please stand as you are able)*

Let us confess our faith in the words of the

## **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 power of 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**

Remembering the caring and generous works of God, we pray for the church, creation, and the needs of our neighbors.

*A brief silence.*

We pray for the church. Bless the missions and ministries of diverse congregations, that they uplift the good news of salvation in ways that can be understood. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

We pray for creation. Send rain to lands experiencing drought and healing to rivers clogged with pollution. Enrich the soil for trees and plants. Protect the crops needed to feed those who hunger. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

We pray for all who govern. Encourage those in positions of power to lead with empathy, practice forgiveness, and care for those who struggle. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

We pray for our neighbors who face illness of any kind. For those strained financially; for all living with chronic pain, mental illness, the disease of addiction, or otherwise afraid or in harm's way. Protect all who cry out for mercy. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

We pray for this congregation. Open our hearts to practice intentional invitation. Help us to forgive each other, practice patience, and choose welcome over judgment. Move us to care for those in our community seeking refuge and safety. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

Accept our thanksgiving for the people you surround us with, especially for those who celebrate their lives and birth this week:

June Holiday  
Kristi Morton  
Lois Lawson

enrich them with a sense of joy and grace for yet another year. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

Save us from ourselves, from racism in all its hidden forms, from hollow words without actions, forgive us,  
renew us, call us to action Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

For those fighting cancer and other serious illnesses, grant strength and grace. We pray for doctors, nurses,  
technicians, researchers and all who work toward treatments and cures. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

For police officers and firefighters, for peacekeepers and military personnel, and for the leaders of governments,  
that they provide protection to all people, especially the most vulnerable. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer**

For your people in the midst of war, civil unrest, or conflict, grant protection, strength and hope for a better  
tomorrow. Bring peace and an end to the conflict. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

We give thanks for the saints who died in faith. Show us how to live faithfully, creatively, and lovingly in your  
church and world. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

Remember us according to your steadfast love as we offer these and the prayers of our heart, trusting in your  
compassion made known through Jesus Christ.  
**Amen.**

## **PEACE**

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**And also with you.**

Share the peace ...

*(Please be seated)*

## **MEAL**

### **OFFERING**

*The Worship/Communion Registration Card may be placed in the offering plate as it is passed.  
Thank you for your support of our ministry.*

*(Please stand as you are able)*

### **OFFERTORY ELW #186 *Create In Me a Clean Heart***

Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and renew a right spirit within me.  
Cast me not away from your presence,  
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and uphold me with your free Spirit.

Text: Lutheran Book of Worship

### **THE LORD'S SUPPER: Words of Institution**

#### **Grace at the table: The Lord's Prayer**

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

*(Please stand as you are able)*

### **COMMUNION SONG** *Lamb of God*

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.  
Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.  
Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.  
Text: Evangelical Lutheran Worship

### **COMMUNION BLESSING**

### **POST COMMUNION CANTICLE ELW #207** *Thankful Hearts and Voices*

Thankful hearts and voices raise;  
tell ev'ryone what God has done.  
Let ev'ryone who seeks the Lord rejoice  
and bear the name of Christ.  
Send us with your promises  
and lead your people forth in joy  
with shouts of thanksgiving. Alleluia, alleluia.

Text: John W. Arthur, 1922-1980 Text © 1978, 1995 Augsburg Fortress.

## **SENDING**

*(Please be seated)*

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **BLESSING**

May the Lord bless you and keep you,  
may the Lord smile upon you and be gracious to you,  
may the Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace. + Amen.

### **SENDING SONG ELW 547** vs.2 *Sent Forth by God's Blessing*

2 With praise and thanksgiving  
to God ever-living,  
the tasks of our ev'ryday life we will face—  
our faith ever sharing,  
in love ever caring,  
embracing God's children, the whole human race.  
With your feast you feed us,  
with your light now lead us;  
unite us as one in this life that we share.  
Then may all the living  
with praise and thanksgiving  
give honor to Christ and his name that we bear.

Text: Omer Westendorf, 1916-1997, alt.

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## DISMISSAL

Go in peace. God is at work in you.

**Thanks be to God.**

### ADDITIONAL READINGS FOR THE DAY

Psalm 103:[1-7] 8-13

Matthew 18:21-35

### NEXT WEEK'S READINGS FOR

September 24, 2023

#### **Seventeenth Sunday After Pentecost**

**Jonah 3:10--4:11**

*God's concern for the city of Nineveh*

**Psalm 145:1-8**

The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. (*Ps. 145:8*)

**Philippians 1:21-30**

*Standing firm in the gospel*

**Matthew 20:1-16**

*The parable of the vineyard workers*

## GOSPEL MESSAGE

**September 17, 2023**

### **God's Immeasurable Mercy**

Forgive seventy-seven times? Jesus' instruction seems, at best, all but impossible and, at worst, dangerous. Sometimes the Bible has been used to excuse abuse in the name of mercy, but Jesus doesn't mean to condone suffering for its own sake or to commit us to endlessly enduring hurt and harm. Instead, Jesus wants to orient Peter and us to the all-encompassing nature of forgiveness. Seven days make the week complete and whole. Grace also extends to us the promise of wholeness, and yet forgiveness that comes from the heart is immeasurable.

Forgive seventy-seven times. The number suggests that forgiveness isn't to be doled out or strictly accounted for, but rather is endless. Forgiveness is not a singular event as much as it is a process. We are amazed and rightly inspired when some Christians are able to so quickly forgive others even the most horrendous crimes, like the Amish community after the West Nickel Mines School shooting in 2006, or some families of the Emanuel Nine in 2015. But today's gospel does not preclude the rest of us. Probably for most of us, forgiveness is much more the destination we are journeying toward than the place at which we've already arrived. Jesus' encouragement to Peter can encourage us as well.

Every day God calls us back to the everlasting promises made in baptism. Our participation in the church's worship life assures us that forgiveness is not something we endeavor to do alone, but rather is a lifelong journey in which we can turn to one another for support. Every Sunday at Jesus' table, we are freely given the bread of mercy and cup of forgiveness. God's grace sets all of us free to extend that same mercy to others. God's forgiveness erases every debt.

## **Upcoming Commemorations**

**Hildegard, Abbess of Bingen, died 1179**

**Sunday, September 17, 2023**

A mystic who was widely influential within the church, Hildegard advised and reproved kings and popes, wrote poems and hymns, and produced treatises in medicine, theology, and natural history. She was also a musician and artist.

**Dag Hammarskjöld, renewer of society, died 1961**

**Monday, September 18, 2023**

A Swedish diplomat, Hammarskjöld served as the second Secretary General of the United Nations until his death in a plane crash while trying to negotiate peace in present-day Zambia. His journal, published as *Markings*, revealed the depth of his Christian faith.

**Nelson Wesley Trout, bishop, died 1996 (TFF)**

**Wednesday, September 20, 2023**

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.

**Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist**

**Thursday, September 21, 2023**

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.

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