

A Christian is...

Spiritually Rich

July 26 & 27, 2026



Welcome to Bethlehem!

We welcome our guests who are worshipping with us today. Thanks for joining us! We are a community of ordinary people who gather to hear the message of God's grace in Jesus. We believe that he is our savior—and yours, too!

We'd love to have you join us again soon. Please take a moment to fill out a connection card (located in the back of the pew in front of you). The blue side is for members to fill out and the yellow side is for visitors.

A lounge for parents needing to quiet small children is located at the rear of church. The room has a clear window for viewing and is equipped with a speaker system.

A hearing loop is available in the worship area and fellowship hall. Set your hearing aid to “t-coil” or ask for headphones at the A/V desk in the back of church.



Today's Worship

This weekend we continue our worship series called “A Christian is...” In this series, we'll see what God's Word says about the difference faith in Christ makes in the life of a believer. Today, we see that true spiritual wealth can only be found in God and his eternal blessings for us in Christ.

To Prepare Our Hearts for Worship

See the “Prayers for Worship” on the inside cover of the blue hymnal.

God's People Gather

Hymn: For the Beauty of the Earth

Blue Hymnal, p.505 sts. 1, 3-5 · 8am

VBS Kids: Hip Hip Hooray, The Duck Song, A Place in the Choir

10am

Pastor: At the front of our worship area stands a font. Here, children of sinners are made children of God as the Holy Spirit works through water and the Word in baptism.

Congregation: In moments of doubt or despair or guilt, we point to our baptism and say,
"Yes, I am a sinner, but I am God's forgiven child in Christ."

P: In moments of temptation, we point to our baptism and say, "I am a holy child of God, and by God's grace I will live like it today."

The invocation in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with the sign of the cross echoes the sign of the cross made over our head and heart and the name placed on us when we were baptized.

C: The Confession and Absolution take us back to baptism, too. We come to God with our sins of thought, word, and action—the signs of who we once were. God washes us clean and fills us again with faith and love.

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

C: Amen.

Confession

P: Reminded of who we are in Christ, we freely admit our sins, confident of our Father's mercy.

C: Heavenly Father,

I am surrounded daily by signs of your goodness and signs of my sin. I know that you are holy. Everything you think, say, and do shows this to be true. I know that I am not. So do you. I know that someone like me should have no right to expect anything good from someone like you. But I do. You have freely chosen to bind yourself to all kinds of promises to me. In this building, you have surrounded me with symbols of your greatest promise: free forgiveness and eternal life in Christ. Confident of your absolute honesty, I give my guilt to you.

Silence for meditation and reflection

Absolution

P: God is good. His promises are true. You owed an enormous debt to God. Not anymore. Christ has paid it all with his holy, precious blood. Christ has lived the life of perfect

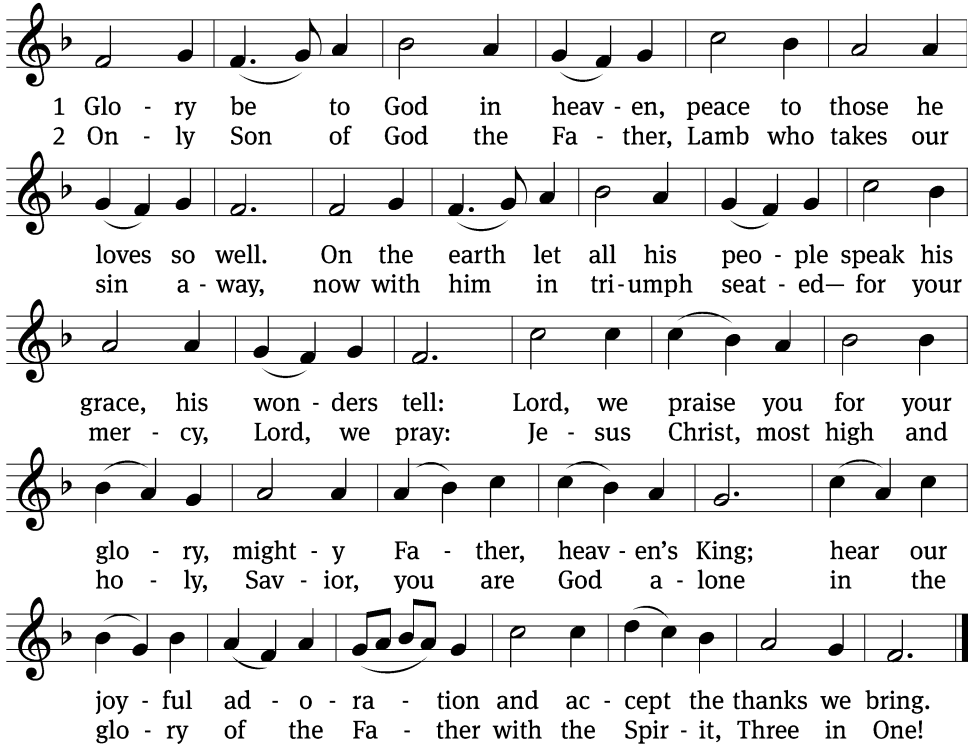
obedience you could not as your substitute. Your debt is forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son +, and of the Holy Spirit. May the Holy Spirit fill your heart with this Good News, so that you the fruits of faith show in your life this week.

C: Amen.

Glory to God in the Highest

Service Builder 1023

Tune: HYFRYDOL



1 Glo - ry be to God in heav - en, peace to those he
2 On - ly Son of God the Fa - ther, Lamb who takes our
loves so well. On the earth let all his peo - ple speak his
sin a - way, now with him in tri - umph seat - ed - for your
grace, his won - ders tell: Lord, we praise you for your
mer - cy, Lord, we pray: Je - sus Christ, most high and
glo - ry, might - y Fa - ther, heav - en's King; hear our
ho - ly, Sav - ior, you are God a - lone in the
joy - ful ad - o - ra - tion and ac - cept the thanks we bring.
glo - ry of the Fa - ther with the Spir - it, Three in One!

God's People Listen

- P: In the front of our worship area stands an ambo. The font symbolizes Holy Baptism. The ambo symbolizes God's Holy Word. Each week, our worship centers around readings from the Old Testament, the New Testament epistles (or letters), and the Gospels.
- C: In the Old Testament, prophets pointed ahead to the Savior who would come. In the New Testament epistles, apostles pointed back to the Savior who had come. In the Gospels, we see that Savior teaching, preaching, healing, and dying for the sins of the whole world.**
- P: At the ambo, we hear God speak his message of Law and Gospel, sin and grace.

First Reading

1 Kings 3:5–12

⁵At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, “Ask for whatever you want me to give you.”

⁶Solomon answered, “You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day.

⁷“Now, LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. ⁸Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. ⁹So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?”

¹⁰The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. ¹¹So God said to him, “Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, ¹²I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be.

Today's Psalm: Psalm 63

P: A psalm of David. When he was in the Desert of Judah.

You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water.

C: I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you.

P: I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you.

C: On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night. Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. I cling to you; your right hand upholds me.

P: Those who want to kill me will be destroyed; they will go down to the depths of the earth. They will be given over to the sword and become food for jackals.

C: But the king will rejoice in God; all who swear by God will glory in him, while the mouths of liars will be silenced.

Second Reading

1 Timothy 6:17–21

¹⁷Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with

everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. ¹⁹In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

²⁰Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, ²¹which some have professed and in so doing have departed from the faith.

Grace be with you all.

Children's Message

Gospel

Matthew 13:44–52

⁴⁴“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

⁴⁵“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. ⁴⁶When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

⁴⁷“Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. ⁴⁸When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. ⁴⁹This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous ⁵⁰and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁵¹“Have you understood all these things?” Jesus asked.

“Yes,” they replied.

⁵²He said to them, “Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.”

Hymn: Your Kingdom, O God, Is My Glorious Treasure

Blue Hymnal, p.859

Sermon

Today's Message from God's Word

“The Eternal Catch”

Matthew 13:47-50

We Confess our Faith

P: On the front of the altar are three symbols that represent the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The symbol of God the Father is a hand holding a scroll with 7 seals. Written on the scroll is the future. This symbol is from Revelation 5. It reminds us that the

God who created the world continues to preserve the world. Past, present, and future are in his hands. This is what we confess when we say:

C: I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

P: The symbol of God the Son is a lion holding a scepter. In Revelation 5, the Lion is the only one worthy to open the scroll and reveal the future to God's people. Christ is worthy because he gave his life to make sinful people into God's "royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9). The scepter symbolizes Christ's rule over all things for the good of those who believe in him. This is what we confess when we say:

C: I believe in Jesus Christ, his 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 into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

P: The symbol of God the Holy Spirit is a dove. This is how the Spirit appeared at Jesus' baptism. The Spirit's work is to sanctify sinners, or saint-ify them. He makes them holy by creating faith in their hearts through Word and Sacraments. He strengthens our faith with the same means of grace. This is what we confess when we say:

C: I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Offering

The Church's Prayer

P: Lord Jesus, you sit at the right hand of your Father in heaven and rule all things for the good of your Church. We rejoice that in your infinite wisdom, you have seen fit to bless the work of our home mission congregation in Olathe, Kansas, to spread your good news of forgiveness in their community.

C: We humbly ask that you cause the gospel to thrive not just in Olathe, but in every new start, every mission, and every established congregation, so that more people can know of your forgiveness and your salvation.

P: Give strength and zeal to us frail jars of clay to take the treasure you have given to us and to share it with all the lost.

C: Triune God, we praise you for the work you are doing through the Lutheran Evangelical Christian Church of Japan, including sustaining six congregations as they faithfully serve your people.

P: We thank you for the 100 adults and 10 children you have gathered into these flocks. We rejoice with the angels in heaven over the soul brought to the waters of Holy Baptism this past year, and we thank you for the three pastors you have provided to shepherd

these congregations with the pure gospel.

C: Lord, we also marvel at how you open doors for your kingdom.

P: Thank you for the Chinese immigrants in Tokyo and beyond who have been drawn to the LECC, including those who have been confirmed in the faith this year.

C: We ask that you continue to use these cross-cultural connections to spread the life-giving message of Christ.

Special Prayers

Lord's Prayer

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 temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Hymn: God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It

Blue Hymnal, p.679 sts. 1-3

Closing Prayer

P: In the front of our worship area stands an altar. The altar symbolizes Holy Communion. The bread and wine, Christ's body and blood, are placed on the altar. We gather around it to receive them.

C: The Lord's Supper is a spiritual meal. By eating Christ's body and drinking Christ's blood, we feed our faith. As we gather around the altar, Christ's table, we celebrate fellowship with Christ and with our fellow believers. As Christians we are never alone.

P: Heavenly Father, give us the wisdom to stay close to the means of grace symbolized in font, ambo, and altar. These are the tools through which you have chosen to send your Spirit to create and strengthen faith in you.

C: Amen.

Blessing

P: The grace of our Lord ✠ Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: Amen.

Hymn: May the Peace of God

Blue Hymnal, p.929