



Church At Home
St. Timothy's Lutheran Church – Pembroke, Ontario
Pentecost 18 **September 27, 2026**

Prayer of the Day

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.

The Holy Gospel: Matthew 21:23-32

When 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?" Jesus 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. Did 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?' But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet." So 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. "What do you think?"

A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' He answered, 'I will not'; but later he changed his mind and went. The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, 'I go, sir'; but he did not go. Which 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. For 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.

Homily

I greet you in the name of Jesus, our risen Saviour. Amen.

Today's reading is a segment of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. And so, for this last Sunday in September, we return to Palm Sunday in the life of Jesus.

It is Holy Week and the palm branches are still strewn along the roadside. Some have begun to wither. The money changers are no longer in the temple. They have found stalls in the market place to sell and trade their wares in the event Jesus returns. They certainly don't want to go through his disturbance and upheaval again. The withered fig tree becomes another teaching moment for Jesus and the disciples on the topic of living in the Kingdom of God. And let's paint the picture further: there, off to the side, stand the chief priests and elders taking it all in – fuming and frustrated.

Frustrated they were. They have been watching Jesus since the age of twelve when he stayed behind from his family; questioning the rabbis of the day and sharing his ideas. Jesus disturbed them then and he is disturbing them still. The priests and elders try and try without success to trap him in his own words in order to arrest him; to silence him yet he escapes their traps. He slips through their fingers with a single word. He is the ancient Houdini. It is frustrating.

The priest and elders have enjoyed great power. They are respected by those in the streets and in the temple. They enjoyed the power yet their authority is being threatened because Jesus is teaching with authority.

The topic of authority comes at hand. The chief priests and elders challenge Jesus' right to preach and teach in the Temple by asking, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?"

We must keep in mind that authority; well.... *it's given*. This is the difference between *power* – having the strength or will to accomplish something, the sheer ability to do something – and *authority* – being authorized to act by one who holds the actual power, the "author." Authority, in short, is power that has been given, directed, and limited to achieve a particular end. Authority is always and only something given. True authority cannot be taken.

If we were to stop and think for a moment, we live much of our lives having authority rule us. Yes, we live by the rules of the land and that is fine – I get that. Yet, what about the authority that rules us only because we give to others? Do you know what I mean? The child who disappointed us, or the spouse who left us, the friend who insulted us, the parent who deserted us. In these cases, it was someone who's action did something to harm us yet it is the way we consider the action and person over time is something we get to determine. If we are still angry, hurt or disappointed it is because we have decided to give the authority to that person or event to continue to influence our lives. You see, in the end, we can choose whether or not we will live as a victim.

This could help make some sense of the parable Jesus tells his opponents. The common thread between the story of two sons and authority is how the past is viewed. One son says he'll help out and doesn't follow through while the other son is the focus, for he says he will not help, but does. Now, we don't know if he had a previous obligation that fell through or maybe he was nursing a grudge against his father – it doesn't matter because in the end the son recognized that the future is always open.

Jesus invites his opponents into an open future, one not dominated by the quarrels, squabbles or disputes of the past, but open to God's Spirit to heal, restore and reconcile. In the end, the chief priests and elders decline his invitation. They have too much at risk based on the past. They refuse to trade the past for the future. And Jesus says; those who are at the bottom rung of society; those who's identity that has been created by their past, the tax collectors and the prostitutes will enter the kingdom of God before them.

Jesus makes this promise to me and to you. No matter what we have done, no matter what others have done to us, the future is open. The past is the past and we do not have to let it dominate our future. The future is open. It can be really, really hard to let go of the past and

walk into the future. After all, we know the past all too well – even being dysfunctional as it may be.

And here is the thing: God the author of all life regularly invites to be in a new relationship with us. God does not count our past deeds, mistakes, and hurts against us. God refuses to define us by what we do but sees us always as God's beloved children.

My friends in Christ. Today I will invite you to consider to what you have given authority in a way that does not serve life. Think for a moment of what they are: moments of past hurts and disappointments and let go of them; leave them to the past and walk into an open future defined not by regrets, hurts and disappointments but by God's promise to be with us and love us forever. Amen.

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit let us pray as Jesus taught us.....

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.

Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord's face shine upon you and be gracious unto you,
The Lord look upon you with favour and give you (+) peace. Amen.

Dismissal

Go out in Joy. Be led forth in peace.

Thanks be to God.

STTLC Communiqué

In Our Prayers Today.....Casey Wierzbicki, Joanna Spencer, Marie Lenser, Mike Harrington, Lila Martinat, Irlavere Tubbe, Tracy Schori and Christa Reitlingshoefer.

Parents of Post Secondary Students – Applications for the J. Wilmot Harvey Educational Bursary are available in the church office and must be submitted to the Church Secretary by September 30, 2026.

Offering Envelope Box Set Review.... The Finance Committee is issuing a survey letter to those who received a 2026 box set of offering envelopes. You are asked to identify how you would like to make future offerings starting in 2027. Options are described in the letter. Responses are due by October 13 to the Church Office or on-line using a provided QR code. Thank you.

Homemade frozen apple pies can be purchased today in Jubilee Hall following the service. Cost is \$15.00 each or 2 single serving pies for the same price! Proceeds will help off-set the cost of the new tables for Jubilee Hall. Thank you for your support.

Smile! In celebration of the 70th Anniversary of the congregation next year, it is time for a new Pictorial Directory. The dates for the photo sitting will be the week of October 4th. Callers will be contacting you to set up an appointment for your photograph. Keep working on your best smile.

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Denbigh invites you to attend the closing service of their church on Sunday, October 4th at 2:00 pm. Please see the "Our Community" bulletin board.

Ottawa Valley Ministry Area Team invites you to....

Reformation Service on Sunday, October 18 at 3:00 pm at the Rankin Community Center. Guest preacher is Rev. Matthew Brown, Parish of the Valley. Dinner to follow at 5:00 pm. Tickets for the dinner are \$35.00 and available from the church office or Pastor Bruce until October 4th. Please see the "Our Community" bulletin board for more information.