

St. Paul Lutheran Church
of Stillwater, Minnesota
September 14, 2025
Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost



Your presence at worship is important to God and to us! Whether you are a first-time visitor, frequent participant, neighbor, member, or friend, please take a moment as you prepare for worship to share some information on the "Welcome to Worship" card included with your bulletin. Place it in the offering plate at the time the offering is received.

Jesus welcomes sinners and eats with them: that is the wonderful promise of our gospel (a word that means "good news") today. That God seeks and saves the lost is our only hope. As 1 Timothy 1:15 reminds us, "The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Thanks be to God!

Many of our worship materials are taken from the red Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW). Page numbers are located in the front half of the book and hymn numbers are located in the back half of the book.

The assembly **speaks** or **sings** the bold responses.



GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

Prelude "Great Is Thy Faithfulness"

Confession and Forgiveness

In the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

(Continued on the next page.) 1

God of all mercy and consolation . . .
. . . and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ,
our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Gracious God,

have mercy on us.

**We confess that we have turned from you
and given ourselves into the power of sin.**

We are truly sorry and humbly repent.

**In your compassion forgive us our sins,
known and unknown,
things we have done and things we have failed to do.**

Turn us again to you,

and uphold us by your Spirit,

**so that we may live and serve you in newness of life
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.**

Amen.

God, who is rich in mercy . . .

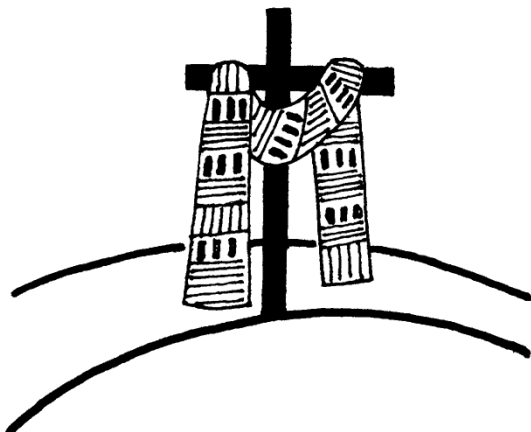
. . . that Christ may live in your hearts through faith.

Amen.

Gathering Song

ELW Hymn 834

"Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise"



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

O God, overflowing with mercy and compassion, you lead
back to yourself all those who go astray. Preserve your
people in your loving care, that we may reject whatever is
contrary to you and may follow all things that sustain our
life in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.



Prayer for Illumination

*As we begin our "Forward in Faith" initiative, we enter into a time
of deep listening to God and one another. This morning we name
things we are thankful for, followed by things for which we ask
God's help.*

Could it be for such a time as this?

Could it be that we are called for such a time as this?

Could it be for such a time as this?

Could it be that we are called for such a time as this?

The musical score is written for four staves in G major (one sharp). The melody is simple and repetitive, with lyrics written below each staff. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The second staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The third staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The fourth staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The lyrics are: "Could it be for such a time as this?" on the first staff, "Could it be that we are called for such a time as this?" on the second staff, "Could it be for such a time as this?" on the third staff, and "Could it be that we are called for such a time as this?" on the fourth staff. There are musical notations such as rests, eighth notes, and a triplet of eighth notes on the second staff.

Mighty God of mercy, we thank you for bringing us from sorrow to joy, from pain to gladness. Especially, we thank you for:
the mission and ministry of our congregation . . .
every good work we do that proclaims your love . . .
the people and relationships here that sustain us . . .
our calling to follow you in everything . . .
signs of new life and hope . . .

Other thanksgivings may be spoken from the assembly.

Merciful God of might, open our hearts to your presence and our spirits to your leading. Especially, we pray for:
a deeper awareness of our church's place in this community . . .
for wise use of the resources given to us . . .
for those to whom we are called to invite and welcome . . .
for neighbors near and far in special need . . .
all who serve your mission in this community . . .

Other prayers may be spoken from the assembly.

God of mercy, you know us better than we know ourselves, and still you love us. Open our hearts, renew our spirits, and strengthen us by your Holy Spirit, for you where you lead and we can confidently go with Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Could it be for such a time as this?

Could it be that we are called for such a time as this?

Could it be for such a time as this?

Could it be that we are called for such a time as this?

The musical score is written for four staves in G major (one sharp). The melody is simple and hymn-like. The lyrics are: 'Could it be for such a time as this?' on the first staff, 'Could it be that we are called for such a time as this?' on the second staff, 'Could it be for such a time as this?' on the third staff, and 'Could it be that we are called for such a time as this?' on the fourth staff. There are triplets indicated by a '3' over a group of three notes on the second and fourth staves.



Exodus 32:7-14

While Moses is on Mount Sinai, the people grow restless and make a golden calf to worship. Today's reading shows Moses as the mediator between an angry God and a sinful people. Moses reminds God that the Israelites are God's own people, and boldly asks for mercy for them.

At the conclusion:

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 51:11-12

Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God,

and re - new a right spir - it with - in me.

Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God,

and re - new a right spir - it with - in me.

Cast me not a - way from your pres - ence, O

Lord, and take not your Ho - ly Spir - it from me.

Re - store un - to me the joy of your sal - va - tion,

and re - new a right spir - it with - in me.

Gospel Acclamation

"Alleluia"



Gospel Reading

Pew Bible: New Testament Page 78

Luke 15:1-10

Jesus tells two stories that suggest a curious connection between the lost being found and sinners repenting. God takes the initiative to find sinners, each of whom is so precious to God that their recovery brings joy in heaven.

The gospel is introduced:

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

At the conclusion:

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.



Silence for reflection follows the sermon.

Hymn of the Day

"What Is the World Like"

1 What is the world like when God's will is
2 What is the world like when God's will is
3 What is the world like when God's will is
4 What is the world like when God's will is
5 These are the sto - ries that Je - sus im -

done? Mus - tard seeds grow more than
done? Wit - ness the wan - der - ing
done? No more is neigh - bor just
done? Read - y for feast - ing, we
parts, filled with the Spir - it who

we can con - ceive: roots thread the
child com - ing home; watch as the
al - ly or friend; peace thrives in
watch through the night, tend - ing our
joins us as one. Born through our

soil; branch - es reach for the sun.
par - ent breaks in - to a run.
plac - es where once there was none.
lamps till the new day's be - gun.
voic - es, our hands, and our hearts,

This is how God moves us each to be - lieve.
This is how God longs for us when we roam.
This is how God works when ri - val - ries end.
This is how God read - ies us for the light.
this is a new world where God's will is done.

Prayers of Intercession

After each prayer:

God of grace,

receive our prayer.

At the conclusion:

We entrust these prayers to you, O God, in the name of Jesus Christ, our redeemer and friend.

Amen.

Peace

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

All are invited to greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace.

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

Offering

"Amazing Grace"

(My Chains Are Gone)

Our offering is a collection of money for the church's mission, including the care of those in need, as a sign of the giving of our whole selves in grateful response for all God's gifts. Your offering and "Welcome to Worship" card may be placed in the offering plate. The QR code on the right may be used if you wish to give electronically.



Offering Prayer

Lord of the harvest, we return to you a portion of what you have given to us. Turn us to set our hope not on the uncertainty of riches, but on you, who richly provides for us. Multiply what we have gathered to bless all who are suffering and in need, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.



Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts,

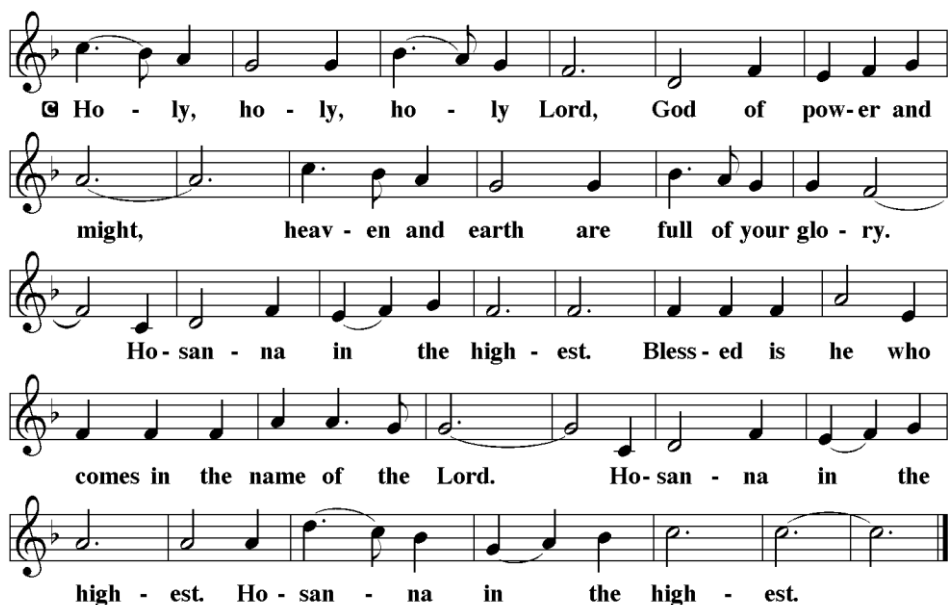
We lift them to the Lord

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy . . .

. . . we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



The musical score is written on five staves in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The melody is simple and hymn-like, with lyrics written below the notes. The lyrics are: Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and might, heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and
might, heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry.
Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who
comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the
high - est. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord, heaven and earth are full of your glory. In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son, who reached out to heal the sick and suffering, who preached good news to the poor, and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.

In the night in which he was betrayed . . .

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks . . .

(Continued on the next page.) 9

Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection, and ascension, we await his coming in glory.

Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord, and unite the wills of all who share this heavenly food, the body and blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord; to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, now and forever.

Amen.

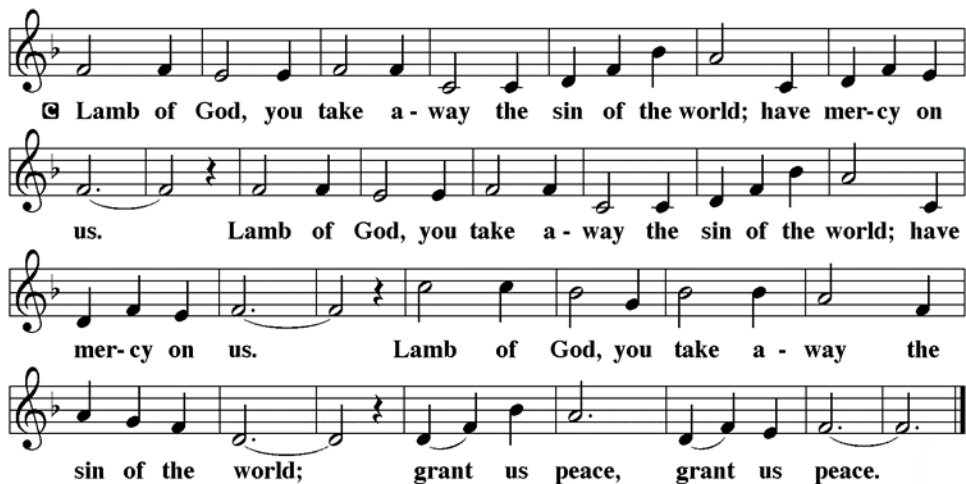
Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit,
let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**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.**





Communion



We celebrate at an open communion table. All who hear our Lord's invitation are welcome to participate. Receive the bread first with an open hand and eat immediately, followed by the juice (white) or wine (red). Gluten-free bread is available at the front end of the center aisle. Please indicate to an usher if you need to receive communion from your pew. Children who have received age-appropriate instruction are welcome to commune. If you prefer instead to receive a blessing, please indicate by crossing your arms over your shoulders.

When giving the bread and cup, the communion ministers say:
 The body of Christ, given for you.
 The blood of Christ, shed for you.
 and each person may respond:

Amen.

Prayer After Communion

O God, through this meal you have strengthened us and appointed us to be your servants. Send us to do good and to share our possessions with all in need. We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

Announcements

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace.

Amen.

Sending Song

ELW Hymn 543

"Go, My Children, With My Blessing"

Dismissal

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

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DAILY PRAYER
A Prayer to Begin the Work Day



May the graciousness of the Lord our God be upon us;
prosper the work of our hands. (Ps. 90:17)

Generous God, you call us to lives of service.
In my words and actions this day, move me
to serve in Christ's name.

When I lack energy, inspire me.
When I lack courage, strengthen me.
When I lack compassion, be merciful to me.

You may make the sign of the cross.

In all things, O God, you are our way, our truth, and our life.
Reveal through me your life-giving work, that I love my neighbors
as myself. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

CONNECTIONS WITH THE LITURGY



Each Sunday's worship is patterned on the parable of the lost sheep from Luke: we gather and begin by acknowledging that we are lost, we hear God calling our name through the Word, then we are carried home where God feeds us, and we conclude with the entire community rejoicing over God's forgiveness.

CATECHISM CONNECTION



We cannot save ourselves; only God can save us. In the parable of the lost sheep and lost coin, it is God's pre-emptive love that makes all the difference. God is a shepherd who seeks us out, a woman of the house who drops everything to find us. In his teaching on the third article of the Apostles' Creed in his Small Catechism, Martin Luther describes God's pre-emptive love as the work of the Holy Spirit: "I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith."

GOSPEL MESSAGE

God Gathers Us



The sense of heartache that sets in when a treasured keepsake goes missing can be profound. How many times have we panicked when searching for a special item that is not where we think we left it? We may spend hours, days, months searching for what was lost, even when the trail goes cold.

We ourselves tend to get lost from time to time. We forget where we belong. We lose track of our belovedness. We grumble and complain, and the joy that once sustained us slips away. This sort of separation is hard on our hearts. It is hard on our spirits. And it is hard on our relationships. But these are exactly the places where Jesus meets us and regathers us into God's love. No matter where we find ourselves wandering, Jesus is there already, turning over every last piece of furniture in the cosmic house to find us when we've gotten lost, to free us when we've gotten lodged in difficult places. And when we are found, the heavens celebrate with us, breaking bread and pouring wine and giving thanks for the chance to be together again. What a remarkable thing!

Indeed, God has drawn near to us already. In bread and wine, in water and word, we know the faithfulness of a God who won't rest until we all are cared for and all of life's relationships are made right. We are, each and all, recipients of the generous love of the Christ who eats with us, who seeks us out when we are lost, and who gathers us back again and again to celebrate abundant life, togetherness, and the joy of restorative community.

Thanks be to God, who goes with us along the way and never ceases to gather us back into such divine folds of love.