

St. Paul Lutheran Church
of Stillwater, Minnesota
September 21, 2025
Fifteenth 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.

As we are invited today to consider what it means to be managers (rather than owners) of all that we have, it is crucial to recognize that we are bought with a price. "Christ Jesus, himself human, . . . gave himself a ransom for all." Apart from the generosity of God we have nothing—we are nothing. By God's gracious favor we have everything we need.

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

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
who looks upon us in compassion,
forgives our sin,
and heals our lives.

Amen.

(Continued on the next page.) 1

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Have mercy, O God,

**against you, you alone,
we have sinned.**

**In your compassion,
cleanse us from our sin
and take away our guilt.**

**Create in us a new heart
and give us a steadfast spirit.**

**Do not cast us away,
but fill us with your Holy Spirit
and restore your joy within us.**

Amen.

As tender as parent to child . . .

. . . Blessed be God who crowns us with mercy and love.

Blessed be God forever.

Gathering Song

ELW Hymn 583

"Take My Life, That I May Be"

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

God among us, we gather in the name of your Son to learn
love for one another. Keep our feet from evil paths. Turn
our minds to your wisdom and our hearts to the grace
revealed 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.

All sing together "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?

Could it be for such a time as this?

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

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.



All sing together "For Such a Time as This"

Could it be for such a time as this?

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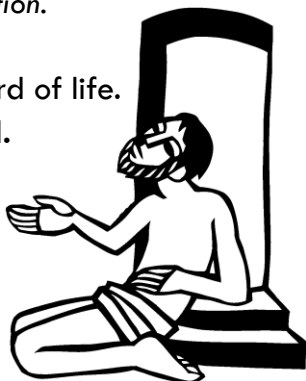
Amos 8:4-7

Amos was called by God to prophesy in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Peace and prosperity in Israel led to corrupt business practices and oppression of the poor. The prophet declares that God will not tolerate such a situation.

At the conclusion:

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.



Psalm 113 *"Bless the Lord, O Saints and Servants*

Sung to the tune "Nettleton":

**Bless the Lord, O saints and servants,
praise the might of God's great name:
ageless, matchless, filled with wonder,
yesterday, today the same.**

**When the dawn receives the sunrise
till the night returns its rays,
shall the glory of God's goodness
be the theme of all our praise.**

**Who in heav'n can be God's equal,
who on earth with God compare?**

**Who can raise the poor from ashes,
lift the needy from despair?**

**God alone invites the helpless
with the strong to share reward;
fields once barren yield a harvest,
tongues once silent praise their Lord.**

1 Timothy 2:1-7

The pastoral epistles offer insight into how early Christians understood many practical matters, such as church administration and worship. The church's focused prayer for others is an expression of the single-minded passion God has toward us in Jesus.

At the conclusion:

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.



Children's and Outreach Message

Jenny Brelje

Gospel Acclamation

“Alleluia”



Luke 16:1-13

Jesus tells the curious story of a dishonest manager who cheats his employer and then is commended by him for having acted so shrewdly. Jesus wonders why his own followers are less creative and diligent in their stewardship given that they are managers of a far more valuable household.

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.

Sermon

Pastor Nathan Baker-Trinity

Silence for reflection follows the sermon.

Hymn of the Day

ELW Hymn 679

"For the Fruit of All Creation"

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

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,

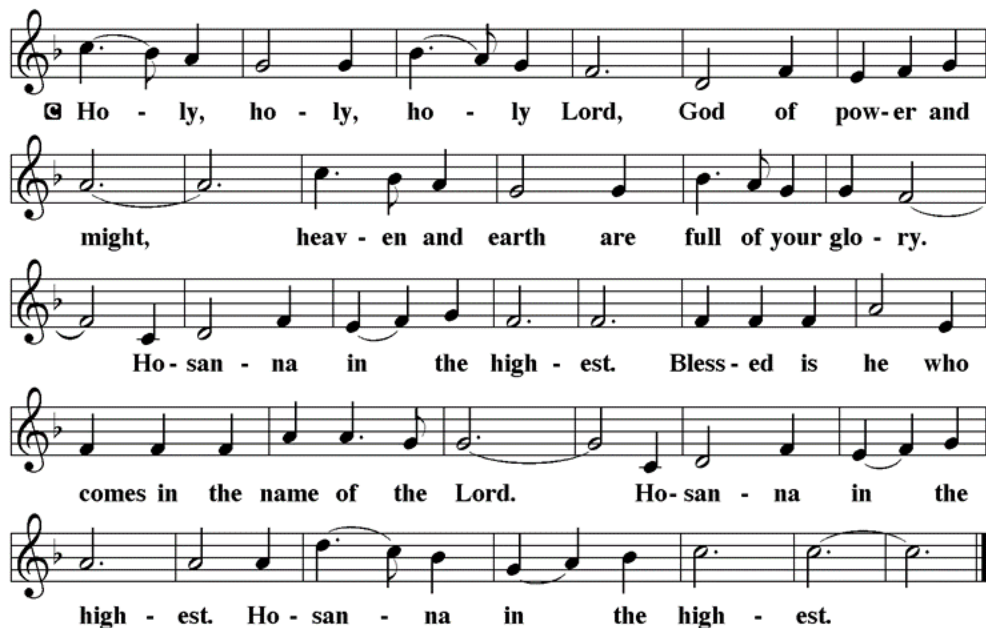
We lift them to the Lord

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:



Blessed are you, O God, creator of heaven and earth . . .

In the night in which he was betrayed . . .

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

As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup,
we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit in this meal . . .

Glory and praise to you, O God,
Author of life, Word made flesh, Power of the Most High,
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.**

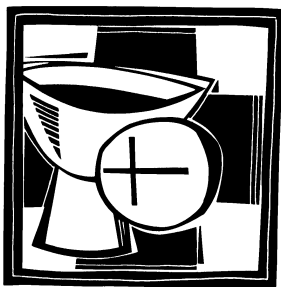
**Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**




Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on
us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace. 10

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 793

"Be Thou My Vision"

Dismissal

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

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DAILY PRAYER

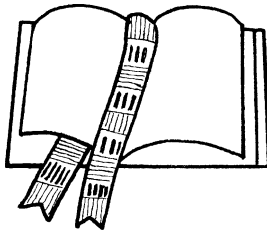
For friends



God among us, thank you for the gift of friends, those who have forgiven and loved me when I have not made it easy for them. Thank you for friends who stand by me and sacrifice for me, who show me support and give me encouragement. Help me in the same way to be a trustworthy friend to others, caring for their welfare and being worthy of their trust. Keep me from exploiting my friends. Keep me from failing to show gratitude for them. I ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

CONNECTIONS WITH THE LITURGY

Old Testament



Most Christians throughout time have honored the Hebrew Scriptures and especially the Psalms as God's word. Having heard the stern words of Amos, we join together in Psalm 113, which praises God for continuing to care for the poor. The ways of God—that the poor sit with the rulers, that the childless woman becomes a mother—imply a reversal of the world we live in. It is a common theme in both the Old and New Testaments.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

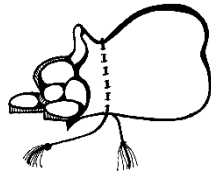
The Lord's Prayer: Fourth Petition



When the manger in our gospel today is afraid of losing his job, he suddenly appreciates the basic necessities of life through the generosity of others. When Martin Luther teaches us to pray for "daily bread" in the Small Catechism, he recounts of long list of basic necessities: "food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, farm, fields, livestock, money, property, an upright spouse, upright children, upright members of the household, upright and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, decency, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors and the like." The generosity of God teaches us that all human beings are worthy to have these basic needs met.

GOSPEL MESSAGE

True Riches



Being stuck in unjust systems is exhausting. Perhaps they are designed to frustrate and impede any efforts to undo their power. The manager in Jesus' parable does what he can to make the most of his precarious position, but his resolution still leaves a lot to be desired. Does the rich man remain in his wealthy and powerful position? What about all the others who still owe the estate? Why does the manager, and not the rich landowner who holds all the cards, become the object lesson?

It seems Jesus is getting serious here about our relationships with money, riches, and power: "You cannot serve God and wealth" (Luke 16:13). That much is clear. But perhaps Jesus is drawing our attention to the larger implications of God's economy and what it means to lean on one another for the sake of justice in our world. Luke's gospel began with Mary's song, after all, extolling the ways the poor will be lifted up in the kin-dom Jesus brings. In this new reign, all resources are brought into the service of those who need them most. Faithful living here and now might look different from what we're accustomed to when we consider what God has in mind, especially when we are used to unhelpful contemporary mantras like "Might makes right" and "Winner takes all."

True to Mary's song, Jesus indeed turns our world upside down, which distresses those of us who appreciate good order. But in the end, this turning does what is needed to make the world right. In our world today, we may struggle with the forgiveness of debts and the redistribution of wealth, but Jesus doesn't. God brings the true riches of justice and love for all and will not fail to do what is needed to make sure every last beloved person on earth has what they need to truly live.