

September 20th Worship  
16<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost

### Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,  
who creates, redeems, and sustains us and all of  
creation.

**Amen.**

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

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Faithful God,

**have mercy on us.**

**We confess that we are captive to sin  
and cannot free ourselves.**

**We turn from your loving embrace  
and go our own ways.**

**We pass judgment on one another  
before examining ourselves.**

**We place our own needs before those of our  
neighbors.**

**We keep your gift of salvation to ourselves.**

**Make us humble, cast away our transgressions,  
and turn us again to life in you  
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.**

**Amen.**

God hears the cries of all who call out in need,  
and through his death and resurrection,  
Christ has made us his own.

Hear the truth that God proclaims:

Your sins are forgiven in the name of † Jesus  
Christ.

Led by the Holy Spirit, live in freedom and newness  
to do God's work in the world.

**Amen.**

### Prayer of the Day

Almighty and eternal God, you show perpetual lovingkindness to us your servants. Because we cannot rely on our own abilities, grant us your merciful judgment, and train us to embody the generosity of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

### Lesson – Philippians 1:21-30

<sup>21</sup>For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. <sup>22</sup>If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. <sup>23</sup>I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; <sup>24</sup>but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. <sup>25</sup>Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, <sup>26</sup>so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

<sup>27</sup>Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, <sup>28</sup>and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. <sup>29</sup>For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well—<sup>30</sup>since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

### Gospel – Matthew 20:1-16

[Jesus said to the disciples:] <sup>1</sup>“The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. <sup>2</sup>After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. <sup>3</sup>When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; <sup>4</sup>and he said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went. <sup>5</sup>When he went out

again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. <sup>6</sup>And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?' <sup>7</sup>They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.'

<sup>8</sup>When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.' <sup>9</sup>When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. <sup>10</sup>Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. <sup>11</sup>And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, <sup>12</sup>saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' <sup>13</sup>But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage?' <sup>14</sup>Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. <sup>15</sup>Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?' <sup>16</sup>So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

### **Message**

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

When a gospel text starts out the way that this one does, where we hear "Jesus said to the disciples," and he immediately launches into a parable, we have to ask ourselves what cause him to say what he says to them? Why does this come up? We need to look for a little bit of context.

We only have to go seven verses back into chapter 19, a skipped chapter of Matthew in the lectionary, and Jesus tells his disciples that it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. "It would be easier for a camel to enter the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven." And this troubles his disciples. This troubles those who've been with him since the beginning.

So Peter asks him, four verses before chapter 20, "look, we've left everything and followed you. What then will we have? We've done all of this. We've been with you since the beginning. What will be there for us?"

So Jesus tells them the parable. He says to his disciples, "The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner." And he goes on to tell them the parable of the vineyard, the parable of the landowner. We need to remember with Parables that we have to ask ourselves, who are we in these stories that Jesus tells to illustrate his point, who is what and what things are imagery of things that we know of. And we have all of these questions in our minds. It is crucial that we ask ourselves those questions to gain an understanding of why Jesus tells us these stories.

In this parable, this landowner five different times throughout the day hires workers to do what is needed to be done in the vineyard. Once at the very beginning of the day, again at nine o'clock, then noon, then three, then five. Each time workers are hired and those who'd been hired at the beginning of the day are told that they will receive what they are due in the end.

When it comes to the end of the day those who arrived at the very end get paid first and receive a full day's wage. Those who were there from the beginning start to think that they may very well be in for a bonus. Perhaps they'll get double. If those who arrived at the sundown get a full day's wage, then those who arrive at sunrise, may very well be in for double!

But, they receive the same, and they are angry.

"How come how come those who just arrived get paid for the full day while those of us who've been here all day, get the same amount?"

And we find ourselves sympathizing with the ones who've been there all day. We find ourselves as we read this, as we look at this, thinking, "you know what, they're right. They got jobbed a little bit. It *ISN'T* fair. if I were that worker I'd want more than those who arrived at the end."

And, we might be able to summon some memories from our past and find ourselves easily relating to those feelings that they have. That was me. I was in those shoes. So we find ourselves sympathizing with those who were there from the beginning.

Our culture, society, has trained us to think that we live in a merit based world. We live in a world where so much is derived from "what have you done for me lately?" And we are quick to look at what has been done for us lately, and without hesitation abandon ship when we don't like it. We feel that we've put our time in and this is the payment we receive. And we're ready to find ourselves a new vineyard.

We've been trained to think that way. So much of what drives our world is what we can provide. And we think that way in the church too. We think that way as people of faith, that, because we've been here since the beginning, we are entitled to more than those who've maybe just arrived.

This gospel text, Jesus telling us this story, challenges those ideas. The notes in the columns of my Lutheran Study Bible, conclude with, "God's mercy breaks human ideas of what is right." We think that it would be right that those who'd been there all day would receive more, and that those who arrived in in the end shouldn't quite receive the level of mercy that others receive. But God in Christ Jesus breaks those human ideas, challenges our understanding of what is right.

It's a challenge to us.

The truth, people of God, for you and I, for those of us who might be feeling the sympathy for those who'd been working all day, the truth is that when God in Christ Jesus showed love to God's people through Christ on the cross, it didn't come with the caveat that those who put in their time would be the ones who receive this grace.

It didn't come with a caveat that you had to have perfect Sunday School attendance from when you were in three year old Sunday School up through Senior High youth group.

It didn't come with the caveat that 50 years later you'd be able to pull out your confirmation books that are tattered and used. It didn't come with the caveat that you would be able to look back and check the boxes that we perceive need to be checked. It didn't come with the caveat that you would be able to say you'd been there since the beginning and therefore deserve this mercy more than others.

The truth is the vineyard, the church, needs workers. The truth is the vineyard, the church, needs people.

Our lessons from weeks past point to the importance of community. They point to the importance of relationship and the role that forgiveness and compassion and being together play in that community. And they point to the importance of continually returning to that well of God's grace when we feel like we've been wronged as someone who's put our time in in the church - When we feel like questioning why it is that someone that we perceive to not have been here long enough gets what they get. We need that reminder that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is counter-cultural - it challenges this idea of being a merit based people and the idea of merit based systems.

And, boy oh boy is it a challenge, right?

Jesus tells us this parable to challenge us, to force us into putting ourselves into the shoes of a character in the story. Because the truth is there are hearers of this good word today who may feel as though they are the ones arriving at the end of the workday.

There may be people hearing this good news today who may just be arriving, needing that good news of God's salvation for God's people. And if the message they receive from those who've been here is that those who've been here don't think they deserve it, then what have we done for the body of Christ?

In our Baptism liturgy, "We welcome you into God's family and the mission we share." Those are the words we speak as a congregation affirming the promises that are made for the baptized.

"We welcome you into God's family and the mission we share, even if you are just arriving or have been here since the beginning."

It is a mission that we share, a challenging mission, but it's a mission we need to tend to.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

## **Apostle's Creed**

### **Prayers**

Drawn together in the compassion of God, we pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

*A brief silence.*

Generous God, you make the last first, and the first last. Where this gospel challenges the church, equip it for its works of service. Strengthen those who suffer for Christ. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Sun and wind, bushes and worms, cattle and great cities—nothing in creation is outside your concern, mighty God. In your mercy, tend to it all. Give us a spirit of generosity toward all you have made. As fires rage in the west, and tropical storms and hurricanes batter the Southeast, be with all who provide aide. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Where we find envy and create enemies, you provide enough for all. Bring peace to places of conflict and violence. Inspire leaders with creativity and wisdom. Bless the work of negotiators, peacekeepers, and development workers. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Reveal yourself to all in need as you are gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, ready to relent from punishing. Accompany judges and lawyers, victims of crime and those serving sentences. Give fruitful labor and a livelihood to those seeking work. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Even beyond our expectations, you choose to give generously. Grant life, health, and courage to all who are in need whom we name now both silently and aloud. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

We praise you for the generations that have declared your power to us. Give us faithfulness to follow them, living for Christ, until you call us to join them in the joyful song around his throne. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

All these things and whatever else you see that we need, we entrust to your mercy; through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## **Lord's Prayer**

## **Blessing**

Mothering God,  
Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit,  
bless you and lead you into the way of truth and life.  
**Amen.**

## **Dismissal**

Go in peace. Remember the poor.

**Thanks be to God**

## **At Home Communion Liturgy**

+WORDS OF INSTITUTION+

(Holding the bread) In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

(Holding the cup) Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this in remembrance of me." When we eat this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

(Tear the bread, share with each person – invite them to dip into the cup of wine/grace juice) +

LORD'S PRAYER +

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION +

In the mystery of Christ's resurrection, you shine light into darkness, provide water that brings new life, and give bread that nourishes your people and frees from our fear. Help us be witnesses of the resurrection and empower us to show your glory to all the world, through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord. AMEN +

BLESSING EACH OTHER +

(Using your pointer finger, dip it in the bowl of water, and make the sign of the cross on another's forehead or the back of their hand)

"Child of God, marked as God's own, Jesus loves you, and will love you forever. AMEN"

Take turns until each person has been blessed.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS!**

### **Opportunities to Connect!**

It has been six months since we were last physically in worship together. The first time we voiced that this past week in the office, it hit us like a ton of bricks. Now that we are into the “program year” of the church season, we are going to be offering YOU opportunities to RE-connect with your church family. Each day throughout the week there will be an opportunity for you to enjoy fellowship and/or prayer here at church.

**Mondays:** Bring your own coffee for a time of fellowship in the Upper Fellowship Hall at 9 am

**Tuesdays:** Bring your own lunch and enjoy a time of fellowship in Hegge Hall

**Wednesdays:** Youth and Family Ministries throughout the Day

**Thursdays:** Sanctuary open for “Prayer Around the Cross

\*Communion is available each day by appointment

\*All opportunities require a mask and spacing precautions will be in place

### **MASKS! MASKS! MASKS!**

Stop into the church office TODAY to get your very own Good Shepherd Face Mask. These masks are FOR YOU! If you would like to make a free-will donation for your mask we will graciously accept.

### **Church Pews available for purchase**

We have officially surpassed the 65 donor goal for our “65 for 65 Anniversary Appeal” and have now shifted our focus to a targeted ask for the purchase of chairs and disposition of the pews.

If you would like your very own piece of Good Shepherd history in the form of a pew please contact the church office. Some of you may have been a part of the initial purchase of those pews and we would be happy to accommodate getting you a pew of your own.

If you’d like to purchase a pew we can have that arranged.

If you’d like to purchase a chair, chairs for your family, a row of chairs, or a section of chairs we will be happy to have those conversations. Each chair costs \$70. We’ve already had 30 chairs purchased.

**Any funds raised over the cost of the chairs will be put towards the remaining balance on the Boiler Loan from the Good Shepherd Endowment Fund.**