

Eighteenth Sunday After Pentecost – September 22nd, 2024

Introduction to the Day

Today we hear James warn against selfish ambition, while the disciples quarrel over which one of them is the greatest. Jesus tells them the way to be great is to serve. Then, to make it concrete, he puts in front of them a flesh-and-blood child. We are called to welcome the children God puts in front of us, to make room for them in daily interaction, and to give them a place of honor in the assembly.

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.

Welcome

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God,
who forgives all our sin,
whose mercy endures forever.

Amen.

Let us confess our sin and come to God for healing.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Gracious God,

have mercy on us.

We confess that we have honored you with our lips,

but have harmed our neighbors with our tongues.

The cravings at war within us cause conflicts and disputes.

In our desire to be first

we make distinctions among ourselves.

We place the needs of the poor and the suffering last.

Gathering Hymn

“All Are Welcome” #641 vss 1-3

Prayer of the Day

Gracious God, we thank you for the community that is Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd. We are grateful for the lives impacted, relationships built, and the mission we share in the neighborhood and larger community.

We turn our hearts and minds to the future, knowing that your work is not done here. Enlighten and enliven us to come together in confidence, courage, and hope. Fill us with your life-giving love. Give us generous hearts to commit fully to the work of the **“Building Together for Generations to Come”** Capital Campaign.

Stir in us a desire to contribute to a creative and faithful legacy. As we go forward, bless this campaign to be a blessing to others. May all that we do lead others into a relationship with you and bring honor and glory to your name. AMEN

Capital Campaign Verse - Colossians 2:6-7

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to walk in him, rooted and built up in him, established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Gospel – Mark 9:30-37

30[Jesus and the disciples went on] and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it;31for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, “The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.” 32But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

33Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the way?” 34But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. 35He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.” 36Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, 37“Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.”

The Gospel of Our Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sermon

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

Growing up in the Toufar household, we always joked that our brother Jacob was mom and dad’s favorite. If Jacob wanted a new pair of sneakers he would tell our mother how wonderful an opportunity it would be for them to bond, if they were to go shoe shopping. And, believe it or not, it worked.

Jacob once wrote a letter to our mother, with an interruption of “I love you” every 4th or 5th word, with the purpose of asking if he could get a new baseball glove...and it worked.

We always joked about this, or at least we thought we were joking about this, until grandkids came into the picture, and school pictures made their way into Nana and Papa’s house. As the grandkids would bring their school pictures to Nana and Papa, and continue to bring them each year, they take their place on the side of the refrigerator, for everyone who goes to the kitchen sink to see them.

Guess who is a teacher? Jacob. Guess who else gets school photos taken each year? Jacob. Guess who else has their school photo on mom and dad’s refrigerator? You guessed it. Jacob. Their favorite. But, it gets better. Is Jacob’s school picture next to the grandkids on the side of the fridge for anyone at the kitchen sink to see? NOOOOOO!!!! He is right front and center on display for anyone on the main floor to see. Why? Because he is most obviously the favorite!

As he should be. He is my favorite, too.

I tell this story because, as one of five siblings, and as a parent, I found the beginning of this gospel text to be very relatable. Jesus is walking through a crowd, he’s got his disciples behind him, and on their way they are arguing (seemingly to themselves) about something. And, when they reach their destination Jesus calls them on it. I’m sure we’ve all been there at some point in our life. When we think what we are doing isn’t seen by those we don’t want to see it, and then we are called on it. Or, we hear those that we are responsible for fighting about something that they think we don’t hear...and then we call them on it.

And, we’ve probably experienced what Jesus does, too. The disciples didn’t fess up. But Jesus knew. They had been arguing amongst themselves about whose school photo belongs on the front of the refrigerator!

We laugh about this. We find humor in it. Jacob's school photo is a family joke of ours, and if you know our family at all, family jokes don't die.

But, for Jesus, he finds himself needing to reteach them the lesson that we just heard him teach them one week ago in our worship life, and roughly a week or two has passed in their timeline. He tells them again that the Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.

This is the same foretelling of his death that had Peter rebuke him and Jesus call Peter Satan in response. This is the same news that he gave them that led to the lesson that any who want to be his followers must take up their cross and follow him. That, to follow Jesus fully means they will need to set aside the earthly human things in their lives to truly experience the divine in their presence. It was a difficult realization for them as they hoped to ride his kingly coattails to fame, not experience his gruesome death.

One to two weeks removed from that very lesson, we find them arguing about who among them is the greatest. And, it is in response to that that we get one of Jesus most clear and concise statements of what it means to be a Jesus follower.

Having reached their destination they are again in a house when they are having this conversation. It is here that Jesus tells them, "whoever wants to be first (greatest) must be last (least) of all AND servant of all."

The AND in that statement is doing a lot of heavy lifting. In the grand scheme of this, being last instead of first isn't all that difficult. Sure, it will take some life and attitude adjustment, but being last isn't so bad. After all, when there is a long line to whatever we want to get to what do we do? We wait in the comfy seat instead of standing in line. We voluntarily go last. Last isn't so difficult. But, the AND calls us to more. Jesus calls us to be "AND servant of all." Essentially Jesus is telling us, waiting for everyone else to go first is great, but serving everyone in line while you wait is what makes you the greatest. Be SERVANT of all.

And, he doesn't stop there. There is a child in the house. Jesus picks up this child and places them on his lap. In the world of object lessons, this was a powerful one on Jesus' part. You see, in that time, children would have had little-to-no significance. Unless they were a first-born son, their was little value to a child. They were essentially worthless, until they were old enough not to be.

So, Jesus took this image of insignificance right in front of them and tells them, "whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

So...

To welcome a child is to welcome Jesus and to welcome Jesus is to welcome God. Full stop.

My how we have messed this up in our world.

People of God, in this Gospel text today Jesus gives us a challenge. Jesus gives us a challenge to look at those in our world that we have deemed insignificant, and see God in their faces. Whether that face is the face of children in our community, the unhoused, the immigrant, or any other demographic that we have deemed insignificant, and ask ourselves, "does God feel welcomed here?"

AMEN

Apostle's Creed

Prayers

Drawn together in the power of the Holy Spirit, we pray with confidence for the church, God's good creation, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

Loving God, you welcome all at your table of grace. Instill in your church a spirit of humility and curiosity, that we embrace all who seek you. We pray especially for ministries of hospitality and faith formation (*specific ministries may be named*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Creating God, you shape the world so there is more than enough for all. Curb our habits of overuse, and guide us toward more sustainable sources of energy, food, and water. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Gracious God, your peace brings justice and solidarity. Encourage peace among peoples, tribes, and nations; heal divisions in our country and local communities, that together we might cooperate for the good of all. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Faithful God, you draw near to you all who are in need. Bring healing and wholeness to all who suffer (*especially*). Transform economic, political, and social systems that oppress vulnerable people, especially systems of structural racism and generational poverty. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Transforming God, you accompany all through changes and transitions. Help us to see where you are calling this community to new ways of living the gospel promise; assure us that even as change brings loss, it also brings hope and life. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Merciful God, you embrace us on our final pilgrimage from this life. Accompany all who have died, console those who mourn, and at the last, show us the way to eternal life in you. Hear us, O God.

We entrust these and all our prayers to you, holy God, in the name of your beloved child, Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen.

Peace

Offering

Offertory Prayer

Blessed are you, O God,
source of every gift of your creation.
By these gifts and with our lives,
help us to serve one another and all in need,
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Sacrament of Holy Communion

Lord's Prayer

Jesus welcomes you to this table.
Come, here is your God.

Post Communion Prayer

Holy God,
you have welcomed us to this meal
and fed us with dignity at your table.
Send us now to welcome others
and to be at peace with one another,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Blessing

God all mighty,
God most merciful
‡ bless you, keep you,
and give you peace.
Amen.

Sending Hymn **“All Are Welcome” #641 vss 4-5**

Sending

Go in peace. Follow Jesus!
Okay! We will! Thanks be to God.
And all of Good Shepherd said,
“AMEN”

Your Generosity in Action:



BUILDING TOGETHER
for Generations to Come

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- September 22 - Campaign Kickoff
- September 29 - Front Porch Visits
- October 18 - Congregation Event at the Children's Theater - 5:30 pm
- October 23 - Appetizers Potluck and Hymn Sing at Church
- October 27 - COMMITMENT SUNDAY

THANK YOU!!

Monthly Financials to date:	Total Revenue	Total Expenses	Difference
	\$13,387	\$13,324	\$63
	2023: \$20,393	2023: \$21,677	



BUILDING TOGETHER
for Generations to Come

Capital Campaign Events for YOU!

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