

AUGUSTANA  
where Lutherans and Anglicans worship together

Pentecost 16 September 27, 2020  
ELW Service of Word & Prayer

**Welcome** to worship.

**Thanks** to worship assistant Ruth Zuk, musicians Deb Buck, Ted Warren, and choir members, tech people Bryan and Greg.

**Season of creation:** From now until the commemoration of Francis of Assisi on October 4 we are in the Season of Creation. This season of creation is a time we share with Christians of many differing backgrounds and worship traditions from around the world. In this season we acknowledge the wonder of God's gift of creation.

GATHERING SONG "When Morning Gilds the Skies" # 853 v. 1 & 5

When morning gilds the skies, my heart awaking cries:  
May Jesus Christ be praised!  
When evening shadows fall, this rings my curfew call;  
May Jesus Christ be praised!

Sing, sun and stars of space, sing, all who see his face,  
Sing, "Jesus Christ be praised!"  
God's whole creation o'er, today and evermore  
Shall Jesus Christ be praised!

GREETING

As we begin our time of worship we ask that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

KYRIE

Lord, have mercy, Christ, have mercy.  
Lord, have mercy, have mercy, O Lord. (sing twice)

GLORY TO GOD

**Refrain: Glory to God, glory to God, glory to God in the highest; glory to God, glory to God, and peace to God's people on earth.**

1. Lord God, heavenly king, almighty God and Father. We worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. .../refrain
2. Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us; you are seated on the right hand of the Father; receive our prayer. .../refrain
3. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen. .../refrain

### CHILDREN'S TIME

- Favorite books ... favorite stories .. things that are important to us
- Important ones we like to read over and over again
- People of God tell their important stories
- Bible stories and study
- Psalm retells the story of how God cared for God's people as they wandered in the wilderness.

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray: God of our salvation, we falter before the demands of your word and turn away from your call to life. As you showed mercy to your people of old, pour out your mercy on us, so that we may turn from our sinfulness and walk the path of self-emptying love made known in Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

### SCRIPTURE READINGS

A reading from Psalm 78 (1-4, 12-16)

Give ear, O my people, to my teaching;  
 incline your ears to the words of my mouth.  
 I will open my mouth in a parable;  
 I will utter dark sayings from of old,  
 things that we have heard and known,  
 that our ancestors have told us.  
 We will not hide them from their children;  
 we will tell to the coming generation  
 the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might,  
 and the wonders that he has done.

In the sight of their ancestors he worked marvels  
 in the land of Egypt, in the fields of Zoan.  
 He divided the sea and let them pass through it,  
 and made the waters stand like a heap.  
 In the daytime he led them with a cloud,  
 and all night long with a fiery light.  
 He split rocks open in the wilderness,

and gave them drink abundantly as from the deep.  
 He made streams come out of the rock,  
 and caused waters to flow down like rivers.

Word of God, Word of life **thanks be to God**

ALLELUIA

Alleluia, Lord, to whom shall we go? Alleluia. You have the words of eternal life.  
 Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL:

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew chapter 21:23-32

**Glory to you, O Lord**

When he 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.

The Gospel of our Lord, **Praise to you, O Christ**

## MEDITATION

The stories we tell and re-tell one another are more than just a collection of words. They have layers of meaning. Our Bible story from the Gospel of Matthew is no exception. On the surface it seems to speak about hypocrisy ... to say one thing and then do another. Or to preach a moral standard that one expects others to live up to while having no intention of doing so oneself.

And on the surface of this Bible story Jesus is pointing out the hypocrisy of both the brothers and the religious leaders. None of them seemed to have any intention of living up to their words. The brothers said one thing and did another. The religious leaders did not live up to the law that they taught.

But actually, this Bible reading is not about hypocrisy. There are plenty of Bible stories about hypocrisy, but this is not one of them. This is a Bible story about POTENTIAL .... to change one's actions ... about deciding to do something different. Not just acting different. But digging deeper and reflecting. It is about regret ... feeling remorse and a change of heart which leads to changed behavior.

This story is about elder siblings ... about the ones who are number one.. The gospel of Matthew was written for Jewish Christians and one of the things it addresses is the problems that come when people think of themselves as number one ... when there is a sense of entitlement that goes along with being "numero uno." We are the people of God ... not those others ... they are on the outside.

But the ones on the outside were the ones who heard both John the Baptist and Jesus. They no longer needed a change of heart ... but this Bible story isn't really about them either.

This Bible story is a message for the elder sibling – the one who thinks of themselves as numero uno \*\*\*

The elder sibling in Jesus' parable has a change of heart. They regret their initial negative response and, upon reflection, they have changed their thinking and actions. But the elder siblings that are the religious leaders of the time have not got to that point yet. They do not have any remorse or regret. They have not changed their thinking or behavior ..... YET.

This is a story about potential: The elder sibling can change ... upon reflection they can have a change of heart. The elder siblings who are the religious leaders of the time had not had a change of heart YET ... but Jesus' parable offers the tantalizing possibility that change is still possible. The door was still open for the Jews to become followers of Jesus even if they had rejected Jesus at first.

This Bible story also reminds us that a change of heart is possible.

I think this is an important Bible story for our time. We live in a time when the outsiders are clamouring for change, for justice: the "MeToo" movement, the ongoing struggle of LGBTQIA people and Black Lives and Indigenous Lives matter.

I have heard some push back lately. Especially to Black and Indigenous lives matter: "All lives matter" people say. And this is a no brainer. Of course, all lives matter. But some lives need extra help. I have four children and I love them all. But when one of those children was ill or injured that was the child that mattered the most at that time. They needed extra care. In giving them that care it did not mean that my other children became less loved.

Black lives and indigenous lives and the MeToo movement recognize that there are historical reasons for a call to justice so that all lives really do matter. As a white cis gender person I have to work really hard to try to understand how racism and sexism have wounded many.

And in our world white straight folks are the elder sibling who says no. Sometimes a loud "NO!" and sometimes a quiet and subtle "no." What does it take for us to feel remorse, to regret saying no and then to change our actions?

I'll tell you two stories that have helped me begin to understand how I have been the nay saying elder sibling.

1. A number of years ago I lived in an apartment building. One night as I was walking from my car to the entrance and as I went around the corner in the dark I bumped into a black man. We both screamed and jumped back in horror. I was not surprised by my own fright, I had been startled. But I was surprised by the look of fear and horror on the man's face. His intensity of fear was greater than mine. I did not realize until later that he was afraid because

he had bumped into a white woman in the dark at night ... the consequences of that could have been deadly for him.

2. Last week on my favorite radio program “Quirks and Quarks” I heard the story about a black bird watcher. A person who is black and is also a bird watcher and researcher. They explained how, when they were on the trail, they always made sure that people saw them as a bird watcher and not as a black person ... lifting their binoculars up to their eyes even when there wasn’t actually a bird to look at. But as a way to say “I’m not a threat to you, I’m just watching birds.”
3. The person who accidently received a package for their neighbour a few doors down. Just pop down the street and give it to them. No way! Why not? I’m black and they might shoot me or call the cops ... return to sender.

Can you imagine living in a way where you always have to double ... triple ... think everything you do?

Those and many other stories help me to recognize myself as the elder sibling. They also help me to reconsider ... to feel some remorse ... and change my no to a yes. Yes, I will try to love my neighbour.

The Christian church is the elder sibling who needs to recognize that they have said “no” to Jesus’ call. We have seen ourselves as number one. We self-righteously respond to black lives matter and indigenous lives matter by saying “All lives matter” thinking that this is how we love our neighbour. The Christian church is called to reconsider that reaction ... to feel some remorse ... and then to change: find out why there are things like MeToo and Black Lives matter, and Wet’suwet’en resistance.

I believe that the story Jesus tells the religious people of his day speaks to us today. And it speaks of potential. The potential to change. We could be the elder sibling who, upon reflection, reconsidered .... And changed their “no” to a “yes”. The **tantalizing possibility of change** is there for us as well.

Prayer: God of love, giver of life, you know our frailties and failings. Give us your grace to overcome them. This we ask in Jesus’ name. Amen

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Notes: Two words to consider: authority and change/repent/reconsider

From ἐξοντ- (*exont-*, participle) + -ῖα (*-fā*, verbal adjective suffix), from ἐξεστί (*éxestí*, “it is possible, it is allowed”). (Wiktionary/Bauer) ... the right or permission

Metameletheis/metemelethete – change/reconsider – more than just change of heart, it includes an element of remorse regret that leads to a change of heart Bromley (1985) p. 589-590. Change is still possible. I believe the Greek supports this possibility. It is something that hangs in the air ... tantalizing ... you could be the elder son who did change his mind.

#### SONG “O God, My Faithful God” # 806 v. 1 & 4

O God, my faithful God, true fountain ever flowing  
Without whom nothing is, all perfect gifts bestowing;  
Give me a healthy frame,  
and may I have within a conscience free from blame,  
a soul unstained by sin.

When dangers gather round,  
oh, keep me calm and fearless;  
Help me to bear the cross when life seems dark and cheerless;  
help me, as you have taught, to love both great and small,  
and, by your Spirit’s might, to live at peace with all.

#### PRAYER OF CONFESSION

- *In our prayer of confession I will pause so that we have time to reflect on how we have not loved our neighbour: whether our neighbours are people or creation. If you wish to have a longer time to reflect you can pause the video and take as much time as you need.*

Most merciful God, we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. [pause]

For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

*And since God treats us as Jesus did tax collectors and outsiders we hear these words of assurance and forgiveness:* God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace we have been saved. In the name of Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthen us with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in our hearts through faith. Amen.

#### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Let us join hearts and voices together in prayer. Each short prayer will end with the words “Lord in your mercy” and you can make the prayer your own by responding **“hear our prayer.”**

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

*A brief silence.*

In all the world, give your church unity. Inspire all the baptized with the mind of Christ. Where the church is powerful and where it struggles, shape us with humility and obedience so that your love may be at work in us. We pray especially for the bishop, people, and clergy of The Territory of the People and the dean, council, and congregations of the North Region of the British Columbia Synod. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Your son took on all of bodily life in our world, even to death. Preserve and keep your creation, O God. Mend and redeem places that are polluted and damaged, so that all of creation confesses you as Lord. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Turn the nations towards life. Where our ways are unfair, give us new hearts and new spirits. Where sin permeates our cultures and institutions and we struggle to understand both racism and white privilege, open our minds and teach us your way. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Our lives are yours, O God. Defend the lives and welfare of children who are abused or neglected, hungry or exploited, bullied or lonely. Relieve the suffering of those who are ill in body, mind, or spirit especially: Bruce, Gloria, Logan, William, Marcus, Brodie, Karin, Anthony, Robert, Curtis, Linda, Marci, Gayle, Evelyn, Lisa, Danielle, Inger, Anne Jane, Deanna, Ron, Marlene, those who feel alone, and for all those we name aloud or in the silence of our hearts

*(a pause to offer time to name others)*

..... Hold them all in your care. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Turn this congregation away from our own interests toward the interests of others. Fill us with your compassion and sympathy. Bless ministries of care in our community; make us into signs of your mercy and justice for our neighbors. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Protect all who live in uncertainty and precarious situations: especially the Iqbal and Alhamad/Wahid families . Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Guide those who are preparing for our first in-person worship service since March. Let all who gather for worship do so in safety. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**



Thank you for those who have gone into the kingdom ahead of us – tax collectors and prostitutes, likely and unlikely, obedient and slow to learn. By their witness, teach us to confess Jesus Christ as Lord in life and in death. 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.**

Pastor Marilyn: Knowing how God loves us as a Mother and Father we pray in the words Jesus taught us:

#### LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
     your kingdom come, your will be done,  
     on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

#### BLESSING

May the blessing of God who is Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be with you now and always. AMEN.

#### SENDING SONG      "Praise to the Lord the Almighty" # 859 v. 1 & 2

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty the God of creation!  
 My heart is longing to offer up sweet adoration,  
 Melody make; dulcimer, harp, now awake.  
 Sound forth your praise, ev'ry nation.

Praise the Almighty, o'er all life so wondrously reigning,  
 And as on wings of an eagle, uplifting, sustaining.  
 Have you not seen? All that is needful has been  
 Sent by God's gracious ordaining.

#### DISMISSAL

Go now and revel in God's world  
 Go now to be creative and work for justice  
 Go now to love your neighbour  
 Go now to love and serve the Lord  
 THANKS BE TO GOD. AMEN.

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