

ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD
LITTLETON, COLORADO

September 20, 2026

4:00 pm Saturday and 8:00 a.m. Sunday



SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

DO NOT BEGRUDGE GOD'S GENEROSITY

AS WE GATHER

On the surface, the parable of the laborers in the vineyard seems wrong. Shouldn't the worker receive the wages he or she deserves for his or her time and labor? It offends our sense of fair play that one who worked less should receive the same as one who worked more. If you only focus on the perspective of the laborer, that might seem true, but if you focus on the generosity of the vineyard owner, you get a very different perspective. God's mercy is not the reward for our labor but a pure gift of grace given to those who deserve none of His kindness. When you begin to look at this parable from that perspective, God's abundant generosity becomes clear. The Lord does what none of us would do—forgives all our sins, no matter how great, and bestows upon us the mercy and salvation we did nothing to earn and could never deserve. How can anyone begrudge Him such generosity?

✠ PREPARATION ✠

Gathering Song

HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD!

Tomlin / Reeves / Cash

The splendor of the King, clothed in majesty;
Let all the earth rejoice, all the earth rejoice.
He wraps Himself in light, and darkness tries to hide,
And trembles at His voice, and trembles at His voice.

**CHORUS: How great is our God! Sing with me: How great is our God!
And all will see how great, how great is our God!**

And age to age He stands, and time is in His hands;
Beginning and the End, Beginning and the End.
The Godhead, three in one, Father, Spirit, Son,
The Lion and the Lamb, the Lion and the Lamb. **CHORUS**

CCLI Song # 4348399 Chris Tomlin | Ed Cash | Jesse Reeves © 2004 Rising Springs Music; Vamos Publishing; worshiptogether.com songs; Wondrously Made Songs For use solely with the SongSelect® [Terms of Use](#). All rights reserved. www.ccli.com CCLI License # 1903595

Pastoral Greeting

Opening Song

MY LIGHTHOUSE

Rend Collective

In my wrestling and in my doubts; In my failures You won't walk out
Your great love will lead me through; You are the peace in my troubled sea (whoa-oh),
You are the peace in my troubled sea.

In the silence, You won't let go; In the questions, Your truth will hold
Your great love will lead us through; You are the peace in my troubled sea (whoa-oh),
You are the peace in my troubled sea.

CHORUS

**My lighthouse, my lighthouse; Shining in the darkness. I will follow You, oh,
My lighthouse, my lighthouse; I will trust the promise
You will carry us safe to shore (oh-oh-oh-oh-oh); Safe to shore (oh-oh-oh-oh-oh);
Safe to shore (oh-oh-oh-oh-oh); Safe to shore.**

I won't fear what tomorrow brings; With each morning I'll rise and sing
My God's love will lead me through; You are the peace in my troubled sea (whoa-oh),
You are the peace in my troubled sea. **CHORUS 2x**

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Invocation

Pastor: In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.
People: Amen.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

Pastor: Almighty God,
People: Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of all things, and judge of all people, we confess to You that we have sinned. We have turned away

from one another in our thinking, speaking, and doing. We have done the evil You forbid and have not done the good You desire. We do repent and are truly sorry for these our sins. Because of the obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us, forgiving us all that is past and granting us the Holy Spirit to guide us into the future.

Pastor: God has promised forgiveness of sins to those who repent. The Lord keep you in His grace and favor and bring you to everlasting life. Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

Pastor: He who began this good work within you will bring it to completion on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

People: Amen.

✠ **WORD** ✠

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 55:6-9

("Seek the LORD while He may be found.")

**"Seek the Lord while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near;
let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the Lord,
that he may have compassion on him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.**

**For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts."**

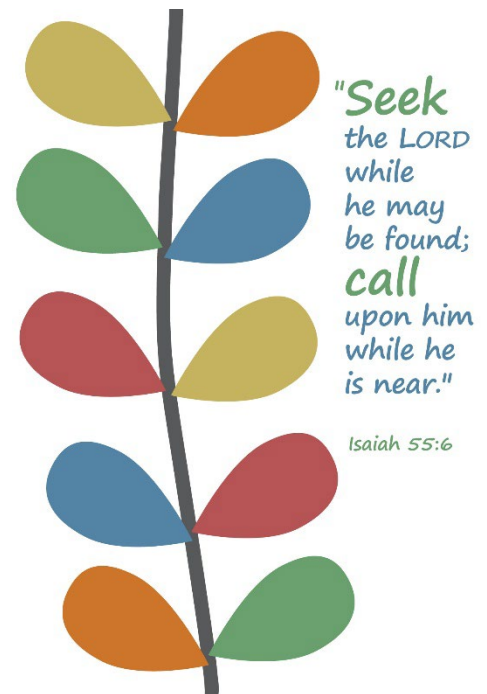
Lector: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Epistle: Phil. 1:12-14, 19-30

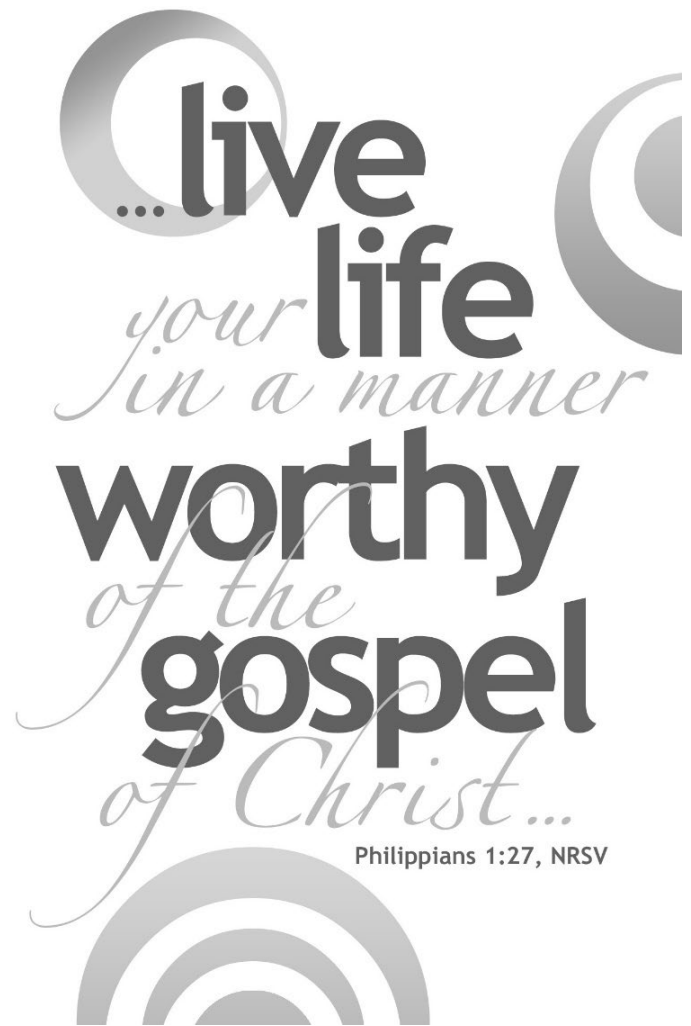
("Let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ.")

I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.



For I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.



Philippians 1:27, NRSV

Lector: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Please rise for the Verse and the Holy Gospel.

VERSE *John 6:68*



Pastor: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the twentieth chapter.

People: **Glory to You, O Lord.**

Holy Gospel: Matthew 20:1-16

(Do you begrudge the Lord's generosity?)

For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and to them he said, 'You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.' And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.' And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, 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.' But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?' So the last will be first, and the first last."

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to You, O Christ.

Children's Message

Jenna Lawrenz

Song of the Day AMAZING GRACE (MY CHAINS ARE GONE)

Tomlin

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now I'm found,
Was blind but now I see.

Through many dangers, toils, and snares
I have already come;
His grace has brought me safe thus far,
His grace will lead me home.

CHORUS **My chains are gone. I've been set free,
My God, my Savior has ransomed me.
And like a flood His mercy rains,
Unending love, amazing grace.**

The Lord has promised good to me,
His word my hope secures.

He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures. **CHORUS X2**

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine.
But God, who called me here below,
Will be forever mine, Will be forever mine.
You are forever mine.

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Sermon "Life or Death? Which is Better?" Pastor John Larson
Text: Philippians 1:12-14, 19-30

Nicene Creed *(found in the back of the hymnal)*

Prayer of the Church

Pastor: Lord, in your mercy...

People: **Hear our prayer.**

Sharing of the Peace

Pastor: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

People: **And also with you.**

You may now greet one another in the name of the Lord using...Peace be with you!

Offering *(collected in back)*

✠ HOLY COMMUNION AT ASCENSION ✠

The Lord, our Host, invites to his Supper those who are baptized into the Christian faith, confess him as Savior, have been instructed and have examined themselves, truly repent of sins, believe the Risen Lord is present in the sacrament with his true body and blood, and resolve to live faithfully and obediently. For those with an intolerance to alcohol, the center ring of the tray contains grape juice. Gluten free wafers are available to those with wheat allergies. Children who have not been instructed, yet desire a blessing, are invited to come forward with arms crossed. When receiving the bread and wine, the communicant may respond with "Amen!", a word of affirmation and belief.

✠ SACRAMENT ✠

Preface **(Divine Service, Setting One)**

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

People: **We lift them to the Lord.**

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: **It is right to give Him thanks and praise.**

Words of Institution

Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:9-13

People: 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.

DISTRIBUTION MUSIC

Song

GRAVES INTO GARDENS

Lake / Brown / Furtick / Hammer

I searched the world but it couldn't fill me
Man's empty praise and treasures that fade
Are never enough
Then You came along and put me back together
And every desire is now satisfied here in Your love

CHORUS

Oh there's nothing better than You
There's nothing better than You
Lord there's nothing
Nothing is better than You

I'm not afraid to show You my weakness
My failures and flaws
Lord You've seen them all
And You still call me friend
'Cause the God of the mountain
Is the God of the valley
There's not a place
Your mercy and grace won't find me
again...**CHORUS 2x**

You turn mourning to dancing
You give beauty for ashes
You turn shame into glory
You're the only one who can

You turn graves into gardens
You turn bones into armies
You turn seas into highways
You're the only one who can...**CHORUS**



Song

GOODNESS OF GOD

Johnson / Cash et al.

I love You Lord
Oh Your mercy never fails me All my days
I've been held in Your hands
From the moment that I wake up Until I lay my head
I will sing of the goodness of God

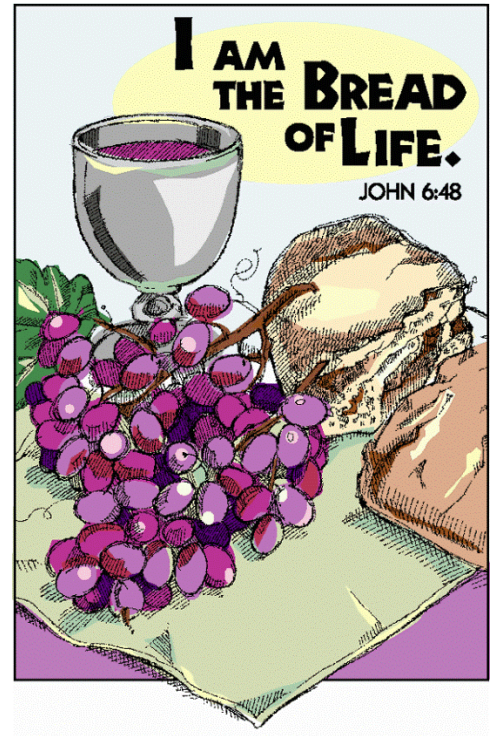
CHORUS

All my life You have been faithful
All my life You have been so so good
With every breath that I am able
I will sing of the goodness of God

I love Your voice You have led me through the fire
In darkest night You are close like no other
I've known You as a father I've known You as a friend
I have lived in the goodness of God **CHORUS**

Your goodness is running after It's running after me
Your goodness is running after It's running after me
With my life laid down I'm surrendered now
I give You everything Your goodness is running after
It's running after me (Repeat)

CHORUS



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General Communion Blessing

Benediction (Divine Service, Setting One)

Pastor: The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look upon you with favor and ✕ give you peace.

People: **Amen**

Closing Song ALL THE PEOPLE SAID AMEN!

Maher

You are not alone if you are lonely.
When you feel afraid, you're not the only.
We are all the same, in need of mercy,
To be forgiven and be free.
It's all you got to lean on, But thank God, it's all you need.

CHORUS: And all the people said, "amen." Whoa.
And all the people said, "amen."
Give thanks to the Lord, for His love never ends.
And all the people said, "amen."

If you're rich or poor, well, it don't matter.
Weak or strong, you know love is what we're after.
We're all broken, but we're all in this together.
God knows we stumble and fall,
And He so loved the world, He sent His son to save us all. **CHORUS**

Blessed are the poor in spirit who are torn apart.
Blessed are the persecuted and the pure in heart.
Blessed are the people hungry for another start,
For theirs is the kingdom, the kingdom of God. **CHORUS**

Congregational Concerns

Dismissal

Pastor: Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

Postlude

"Almighty Father, Bless the Word"

Fred Bock



SERVING IN WORSHIP

PREACHER / CELEBRANT

Pastor John Larson

MINISTER OF MUSIC AND WORSHIP

Rev. Michael Zehnder

ORGANIST / PIANIST

Diana Gaide

CHOIR DIRECTOR – ASCENSION CHORALE

Stephanie Roettjer

CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP LEADER

Stephanie Roettjer

ELDERS

4:00 Jim Wert; 8:00 Bob Olsen; 10:30 Michael Lawrenz

ACOLYTES

8:00 Ellise Friend; 10:30 Abby Williams

LECTORS

4:00 Curt Engle; 8:00 Joyce Lord; 10:30 Jude Donovan

COMMUNION SERVER

4:00 Curt Engle; 10:30 Jude Donovan

ALTAR GUILD

Shelia Beu, Cathy Utecht, Charmaine Rohde

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Ascension Lutheran Church

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(303) 794-4636 office@alutheran.org

Extended Day Preschool

303-730-2514 director@alcpreschool.com



“He told them,
‘You also
go and
work
in my
vineyard,
and I will pay you
whatever is right.’”

MATTHEW 20:4, NIV