

Worship in the Home: September 20, 2020

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Worship in the Home

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Lectionary 25

September 20, 2020

In this time of world-wide crisis, congregations throughout this church are not able to gather for worship as the body of Christ. While you cannot be together in person, we can hear the word of God and hold each other in prayer. We offer this brief resource as an aid for prayer in the home. As with our prayers in the gathered assembly for worship, you are encouraged to prepare or adapt them locally for your context.

Matthew narrates one of Jesus' controversial parables in which Jesus says that the reign of God is like that of a landowner who pays his workers the same wage no matter what time of day they began to work. When God changes God's mind about punishing Nineveh for their evil ways, Jonah is angry. Yet God is gracious and merciful, abounding in steadfast love. In baptism we receive the grace of God that is freely given to all. As Martin Luther wrote, in the presence of God's mercy we are all beggars.

Find a peaceful place to pray, perhaps a table. You may wish to light a candle near where you pray. One person may lead in this acclamation and then pray the Prayer of the Day.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Amen.

Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

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.

First Reading: Jonah 3:10 — 4:11

After Jonah's short sermon in 3:4, the Ninevites all repented and God decided to spare the city. Jonah objected to this and became even more angry when God ordered a worm to destroy a plant that was providing shade. The book ends with a question that challenges any who are not ready to forgive: You, Jonah, are all worked up about a bush, but shouldn't I be concerned about a hundred and twenty thousand Ninevites?

^{3:10}When God saw what the people of Nineveh did, how they turned from their evil ways, God had second thoughts about the calamity that God said would be done to them; and God did not do it.

^{4:1}But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. ²He prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. ³And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." ⁴And the LORD said, "Is it right for you to be angry?" ⁵ Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city.

⁶The LORD God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to [save](#) him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush. ⁷But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. ⁸When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

⁹But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?" And he said, "Yes, angry enough to die." ¹⁰Then the LORD said, "You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. ¹¹And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?"

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 145:1-8

¹I will exalt you, my ^l God and king,
and bless your name forever and ever.

²Every day ^l will I bless you
and praise your name forever and ever.

³Great is the LORD and greatly ^l to be praised!
There is no end ^l to your greatness.

⁴One generation shall praise your works ^l to another
and shall declare your power.

⁵I will speak of the glorious splendor ^l of your majesty
and all your ^l marvelous works.

⁶They shall tell of the might of your ^l wondrous acts,
and I will re- ^l count your greatness.

⁷They shall publish the remembrance of ^l your great goodness;
they shall sing joyfully ^l of your righteousness.

⁸The LORD is gracious and full ^l of compassion,
slow to anger and abounding in ^l steadfast love.

Second Reading: Philippians 1:21-30

Paul writes to the Philippians from prison. Though he is uncertain about the outcome of his imprisonment, he is committed to the ministry of the gospel and calls on the Philippians to live lives that reflect and enhance the gospel mission.

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

²⁷Only, 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, ²⁸and 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. ²⁹For God has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for Christ as well—³⁰since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel: Matthew 20:1-16

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus tells a parable about God's generosity, challenging the common assumption that God rewards people according to what they have earned or deserve.

[Jesus said:] ¹"The dominion of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. ²After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. ³When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; ⁴and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. ⁵"When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. ⁶And 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?' ⁷They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.' ⁸"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.' ⁹When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. ¹⁰Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. ¹¹And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, ¹²saying, '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.' ¹³But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? ¹⁴Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. ¹⁵Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?' ¹⁶So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Reflection

Having read these readings, think of this:

The old story goes that Jonah does not want Israel's ancient enemies forgiven for he does not think they deserve it. Then, in Matthew's parable, the first workers, expecting that they themselves should get more, do not think the latecomers deserve full pay. Do we draw lines about who is deserving and who not? The gospel is always teaching us that if we draw a line to exclude someone, Jesus Christ is always on the other side of the line: in the cross he is with the unsalaried, the suffering poor, the sinners, the enemies, even the threatened animals. And he is risen to give away mercy to all, to give enough to live this day. The justice and "fairness" of God is mercy. And none of us is deserving. We, too, are latecomers — beggars for life — and God's gift is for us all, without distinction. Such mercy gives us an utterly new way to see the world.

If you have a hymnal, you may now sing or read "There's A Wideness in God's Mercy" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 587 / 588); "Great God, Your Love Has Called Us" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 358). Links to hymns in the public domain are provided below.

[There's a Wideness in God's Mercy](#)

Then pray these intercessions:

Drawn together in the compassion of God, we pray for the church, the world, and all those in need, responding to each petition with the words "graciously hear our prayer."

O God, you make the last first, and the first last. Give resources and courage to the churches around the globe that have few resources. When ministry in this time is so difficult, inspire bishops, pastors, deacons, and congregational leaders in their service.

A brief silence.

O God, you are full of compassion:

graciously hear our prayer.

Continue your care for your whole creation: sun and wind, bushes and worms, cities and farms, and all your many animals. Make us into extensions of your care. Preserve the food sources of the world's endangered wildlife.

A brief silence.

O God, you are full of compassion:

graciously hear our prayer.

To places of conflict and violence, bring peace, especially to the cities of our nation. Bless the work of negotiators, peacekeepers, and development workers. Preserve protesters, and guide police. Enlighten our nation, the nations we call friends, and the nations that are deemed our enemies. Keep our election season from dishonesty.

A brief silence.

O God, you are full of compassion:

graciously hear our prayer.

Give your blessing to the Jewish people at this time of their new year. Bring an end to anti-Semitism around the globe and strengthen peace efforts in the Middle East.

A brief silence.

O God, you are full of compassion:

graciously hear our prayer.

To all who are suffering, show your mercy. We pray for firefighters, for communities devastated by fire, for all who suffer racial injustice, for migrants who seek safety, for all who are imprisoned, for victims of crime, for the unemployed, for students and faculty during the pandemic, for medical workers, for all who are hungry: O God, the list of the needy is so long. . .

A brief silence.

O God, you are full of compassion:

graciously hear our prayer.

Give health and wholeness to all who are sick, to all who are suffering from the coronavirus, and to those we name before you here:

A brief silence.

O God, you are full of compassion:

graciously hear our prayer.

You show mercy beyond our expectations, far beyond our deserving. Hear now our personal prayers.

A longer period of silence.

O God, you are full of compassion:

graciously hear our prayer.

We praise you for all the saints, especially this week for the apostle Matthew and for the gift of his gospel that speaks to us of your goodness. Give us grace to live for Christ, until we join with all the faithful in your eternal life.

A brief silence.

O God, you are full of compassion:

graciously hear our prayer.

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

Amen.

If you have a hymnal, you might now sing or read "Take My Life, That I May Be" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 583 / 685); "Lord of All Hopefulness" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 765). Links to hymns in the public domain are provided below.

[Take My Life, That I May Be](#)

Then conclude with these prayers:

Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

Gracious and merciful God, slow to anger, rich in love, we bless your name and give you thanks. In our need, you make haste to help us. You plant us beside streams of your wisdom, teach us in pastures greening with truth, and guide us on the path of your promise. By your Spirit awaken our faith, that, feasting on your Word, we may love you more fully and serve our neighbor more faithfully; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Offering

Please remember to mail in your offerings so that Grace can continue to serve you.

Offering Prayer

Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. You have set before us these gifts of your good creation. Prepare us for your heavenly banquet, nourish us with this rich food and drink, and send us forth to set tables in the midst of a suffering world, through the bread of life, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

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.

Then speak the Blessing:

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

Amen.

Devotional Music Links: For your individual or group devotion, you may choose to listen to the following choral recordings made available through Augsburg Fortress: "[God Created Life for Living](#);" "[Bread of the World](#);" "[Unless You Lead Me, Love](#)."

Readings for the Week:

Monday (Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist) Matthew 9:9-13. **Tuesday** Romans 16:17-

20. **Wednesday** Matthew 18:1-5. **Thursday** Psalm 25:1-9. **Friday** Ezekiel 18:5-

18. **Saturday** Ezekiel 18:19-24. **Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost** Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32; Psalm 25:1-9; Philippians 2:1-13; Matthew 21:23-32.

Daily Prayer Resources are available, including simple forms of Morning, Evening, and Night Prayer; Responsive Prayer; and prayers for mealtimes and other occasions.

Due to copyright restrictions, we are only able to provide downloadable hymns that are in the public domain. Other suggestions provided above may be found in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. To purchase a copy of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* for the home, visit the [Augsburg Fortress website](#) or call 1-800-328-4648.

Reflection text: Gordon Lathrop. Intercessory Prayer: Gail Ramshaw
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permission by Gordon Lathrop and Gail Ramshaw.

Please keep in your prayers this week: Kevin Johnson, Barbara Metzger, Rob Johnson and
Steve Lindberg (Streeter Family Friend's & Kin), Noah Klenken (Fred Fixsen's Nephew), Cal
Curtis & Patty Thompson (Carole Holten's Son-in-Law & Sister), Bill Warner, David Warner, Emily
(Ben & Casey's Daughter), Terry Newgard, Judy Wingses.

- ✓ **Flu Shots will be given here at Grace on October 22, 9:00 – 11:00. They are requesting a sign-up sheet, just to enable us to spread time to enable to keep the 6' distance. Also asking for participants to wear mask.**
- ✓ **Thank you to those who clean the Church following Worship.**

Pastor's Message for September 16: From the August 26 Brainerd paper. I culled this
challenging column by Pastor Jon Hauser of Fargo. Here 'tis:

"Be a thermostat, not a thermometer"

"I love to observe leaders. It is fascinating. I learn so much as I watch and listen. Influential,
inspiring leaders are thermostats, not thermometers. Thermostats set the temperature. They are
proactive. They are not victims. They are victors. Other "leaders" are thermometers. They
simply take on the temperature of the room. They let other people and circumstances determine
their attitude. What a tragedy to let others make a choice that only we should make. The last of
the human freedoms is to daily choose my attitude.

During these difficult days of pandemic and disruption, we need influential, inspiring leaders who
lead others toward better days. We need leaders who make each day count, and fight against
complacency, negativity, and a victim mindset. We need leaders who privately fill their bucket,
and choose to daily empty what God has poured into them, and into the lives of others. We need
leaders who dig deep, lean into their faith, and seek strength in the Lord.

The greater the difficulties, the more critical Godly effective leadership is. And during difficulties,
the habits, attitudes and quality of a leader is brightly revealed. When times are good, leaders
can hide. Personal growth can be ignored. Bad habits can be overlooked. But during dark,
difficult days, the mettle of a leader, or lack thereof, is exposed for the world to see. Do not be
deceived, difficult days reveal the quality and character of a leader.

I have three things I routinely pray for leaders. I pray for wisdom. Without God sharing His
wisdom and insight, unlocking the truth He has placed within us, we are in deep trouble. Wisdom
comes through Godly friends who are investing in themselves, through Biblical truth, and
through prayer, seeking God's presence and perspective.

Number two, I pray for courage. Wisdom always requires taking action. Wisdom is more than
philosophical ideologies. Because wisdom should always result in activity, courage is needed. I
heard a great quote from Pastor Jud Wilhite: "We tend to think the opposite of courage is fear.
But I want to challenge you that the opposite of courage is actually hesitation." When I read that
quote, it hit me uncomfortably hard. I love that quote and I don't. I don't like it because it is
painfully true. Tell me where you are hesitating, and you will discover where fear is present.
God, give us courage.

And, number three, I pray for strength. Galatians 6, verse 9, reads, "Let us not become weary in
doing good, for at the proper time, we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." Doing the right

thing, when others are not, or when it is not the easy thing, can be tiring. God, renew us, strengthen us. We don't want to stop short.

During this pandemic I have seen leaders who have been highly effective; they have led well; they have stayed focused on their mission; their organizations have not just survived, they have moved forward in significant ways. I am thankful for and admire their leadership. Their communities are blessed to have them.

Let us lead well. These are strange days. God bless you!"

Peace,

Pastor Bill Sass