

Worship in the Home: October 4, 2020

Posted on September 29, 2020 by ELCA Worship



Worship in the Home

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Lectionary 27

October 4, 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.

In today's gospel reading, Jesus tells a vineyard parable, which serves as an image of Israel, the prophets' mission, and Christ's death. For Christians, the vineyard also speaks of God's love poured out in the blood of Christ, given to us for the forgiveness of sin. Grafted onto Christ the vine at baptism, we are nourished with wine and bread so that we may share Christ's sufferings and know the power of his resurrection.

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.

Beloved God, from you come all things that are good. Lead us by the inspiration of your Spirit to know those things that are right, and by your merciful guidance, help us to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

First Reading: Isaiah 5:1-7

The prophet sings a sad, parable-like love song about the relationship between God and Israel. In this song Israel is compared to a promising vineyard. Despite God's loving care, the vineyard that is Israel has brought forth "wild grapes" of injustice and distress, when fine grapes of justice and righteousness were expected.

¹Let me sing for my beloved
my love-song concerning my beloved's vineyard:

"My beloved had a vineyard
on a very fertile hill.

²My beloved dug it and cleared it of stones,
and planted it with choice vines;
built a watchtower in the midst of it,

and hewed out a wine vat in it,
and expected it to yield grapes,
but it yielded wild grapes.”

³And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem
and people of Judah,
judge between me
and my vineyard.

⁴What more was there to do for my vineyard
that I have not done in it?
When I expected it to yield grapes,
why did it yield wild grapes?

⁵And now I will tell you
what I will do to my vineyard.
I will remove its hedge,
and it shall be devoured;
I will break down its wall,
and it shall be trampled down.

⁶I will make it a waste;
it shall not be pruned or hoed,
and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns;
I will also command the clouds
that they rain no rain upon it.

⁷For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts
is the house of Israel,
and the people of Judah
are God’s pleasant planting;
for the LORD expected justice,
but saw bloodshed;
righteousness,
but heard a cry!

Word of God, word of life.
Thanks be to God.

Psalm 80:7-15

⁷Restore us, O ^l God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we ^l shall be saved.

⁸You have brought a vine ^l out of Egypt;
you cast out the nations and ^l planted it.

⁹You cleared the ^l ground for it;
it took root and ^l filled the land.

¹⁰The mountains were covered ^l by its shadow
and the towering cedar trees ^l by its boughs.

¹¹You stretched out its tendrils ^l to the sea
and its branches ^l to the river.

¹²Why have you broken ^l down its wall,
so that all who pass by pluck ^l off its grapes?

¹³The wild boar of the forest has ^l ravaged it,
and the beasts of the field have ^l grazed upon it.

¹⁴Turn now, O ^l God of hosts,
look ^l down from heaven;

¹⁵behold and ^l tend this vine;
preserve what your right ^l hand has planted.

Second Reading: Philippians 3:4b-14

Paul reviews some of his supposed credentials, which no longer have any bearing in comparison to the right relationship he has been given through the death of Christ. The power of Christ's resurrection motivates him to press on toward the ultimate goal, eternal life with Christ.

[Paul writes:] ^{4b}If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

⁷Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. ⁸More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. ¹⁰I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, ¹¹if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

¹²Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for [the prize](#) of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel: Matthew 21:33-46

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

[Jesus said:] ³³Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a [fence](#) around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. ³⁴When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. ³⁵But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. ³⁶Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. ³⁷Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' ³⁸But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.' ³⁹So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. ⁴⁰'Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?' ⁴¹They said to Jesus, 'The owner will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.'

⁴²Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the scriptures:

'The stone that the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone;

this was the Lord's doing,

and it is amazing in our eyes?'

⁴³Therefore I tell you, the dominion of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of it. ⁴⁴The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.'

⁴⁵When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. ⁴⁶They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because the people regarded him as a prophet.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Reflection

Having read these readings, think of this:

Here is an old biblical allegory: Israel is a vineyard from which God, as the vineyard owner, expects to see the good wine of justice and righteousness produced. That image is present in two of our readings as well as the Psalm today. We would misuse this allegory, however, if we make it anti-Semitic, as too many Christians have. We ourselves are now the tenants of that vineyard. We are the ones who have contributed to injustice, to the weeping of the misused, even to bloodshed. The son has died because of us. Still, these texts really are a love-song. We are accused because God loves us, wishing to turn us to hear the gospel. For us, Christ is the rejected stone that has become the corner-stone. In mercy, Christ Jesus has made us his own. In the Spirit, he gives us the good wine of himself. Then, in the power of the resurrection and even by sharing his sufferings, we may begin again to do justice for our neighbors in this needy world.

If you have a hymnal, you may now sing or read "There in God's Garden" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 342), "Lord, Christ, When First You Came to Earth" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 727). Links to hymns in the public domain are provided below.

[Lord Christ, When First You Came to Earth](#)

Then pray these intercessions:

Today, October 4, is St. Francis' Day. Francis cared fervently for the church, the earth and its animals, peace, and the poor. Let us now pray for these concerns, responding to each petition with the words "in mercy, receive our prayers."

A brief silence.

God most high, we pray for the church: for our bishop, our pastors and deacons, and our own congregation; for the ministry of Pope Francis; for the work of Franciscan friars and sisters; and for churches that are struggling with few resources. *A brief silence.* That all the baptized may produce good fruit, sowing faith where there is doubt, we pray to you, O God our Redeemer:

in mercy, receive our prayers.

We pray for the earth and its animals: for farmlands; for animals whose habitat is threatened; for livestock; for all the animals that we raise for human use; for service animals; and for our dear pets. *A brief silence.* That the earth may be sustained with your care, and that we will sow joy where there is sadness, we pray to you, O God our Creator:

in mercy, receive our prayers.

We pray for peace: between nations; in our cities; among political rivals; throughout our coming election; between generations; between long-time citizens and new immigrants; in our churches and in our homes. *A brief silence.* That we may become instruments of your peace, sowing union where there is discord, we pray to you, O God, our Peacemaker:

in mercy, receive our prayers.

We pray for those who are poor: for those who are unemployed; for migrants; for those who are marginalized by prejudice; for orphans; for school children with no digital access. *A brief silence.* That we may give assistance where there is poverty and need, we pray to you, O God our Provider:

in mercy, receive our prayers.

We pray for all who are suffering: for those laid low by the coronavirus; for those who like Francis have painful eye disease; for those living with anxiety; for those whose sorrow is known only to you; for those who will die this day; and for those whose names we call out to you here: . . . *A brief silence.* That we may sow hope where there is despair, we pray to you, O God our Comforter:

in mercy, receive our prayers.

We pray, finally for ourselves. Strengthen our faith in Christ, and hear our personal petitions. *A longer period of silence.* That we may sow pardon where there is injury and love where there has been hatred, we pray to you, O God our Healer:

in mercy, receive our prayers.

We praise you, God most high, for all the faithful who have gone before us into the fullness of your life, especially this week the Lutheran pastors Theodor Fliedner and Henry Melchior Muhlenberg. *A*

brief silence. That at our end, where there is darkness, we will join in your light forever, we pray to you, O God, Eternal One:

in your mercy, receive our prayers.

Enfold in your loving arms all for whom we pray, as we trust in your salvation through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

If you have a hymnal, you might now sing or read; "Jesus Loves Me" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 595); "The Church of Christ, in Every Age" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 729). Links to hymns in the public domain are provided below.

[Jesus Loves Me!](#)

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: "[Jesus Loves Me/ We are Baptized](#);" "[This is My Song](#);" "[When I Survey the Wondrous Cross](#)."

Commemorations for Oct. 4:

Francis of Assisi, renewer of the church, died 1226

Born into the family of a wealthy merchant, Francis gave up his inheritance to serve poor people. He formed the Order of Friars Minor (called Franciscans), who took on poverty and the task of preaching "using words if necessary." Francis had a spirit of gratitude for all of God's creation.

Theodor Fliedner, renewer of society, died 1864

Fliedner helped to bring about a revival of the ministry of deaconesses among Lutherans. He was influenced in this by Moravian deaconesses he had met. The motherhouse he founded in Kaiserswerth, Germany, inspired many around the world to take up this ministry.

Readings for the Week:

Monday (Day of Thanksgiving [Canada]) Psalm 34. **Tuesday** Amos 9:5-15. **Wednesday** Song of Solomon 7:10—8:4. **Thursday** (commemoration of Teresa of Avila, teacher, renewer of the church, died 1582) Psalm 96:1-9 [10-13]. **Friday** 1 Peter 5:1-5. **Saturday** (commemoration of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, martyr, died around 115) Isaiah 14:3-11. **Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost** Isaiah 45:1-7; Psalm 96:1-9 [10-13]; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10; Matthew 22:15-22.

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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Pastor Bill Sass – **Sermon for September 27, 2020**

A TALE OF TWO BROTHERS

Matthew 21:28-32

By and large, Americans are amazingly law-abiding folk. We obey the rules. If you don't think so, travel to other countries. Watch people in countries we normally think civilized push in front of one another while waiting in line. Try driving in many of the great cities of the world. Those who travel there have horror stories to report. People drive through stop signs as if they were not there. And traffic lights receive not much more respect. Meanwhile, in the home of the free, and the brave, we passively do what is expected of us.

For example, the old television show CANDID CAMERA had a classic episode in which two telephone booths were placed next to each other. One booth was labeled "Men" and the other "Women." As the camera recorded the scene, no one who used a booth violated the signs. Men only used the booth labeled for men, and women used only the booth labeled for them. Even when there was a line for the men's booth and the women's booth was empty, no man used the women's booth.

I doubt the camera would record exactly the same reaction to these signs today, but isn't that mind-boggling that people would be so acquiescent of accepting the signs?

Then there's this story from the NEW YORK POST. On November 30, 1971, five heavily-armed men shot out the glass doors of a New York bank and entered the bank firing semi-automatic weapons, wounding twelve people. One of the bank tellers ran from the robbers and made it to an upstairs women's restroom. One gunman chased her, but he stopped at the door to the ladies' room, shouting at her to come out. When she refused, he went downstairs to help his colleagues finish robbing the bank. He might be an attempted murderer, and a thief, but he would not enter a women's restroom.

Again, maybe the same thing wouldn't happen today, but it does illustrate an element in our psyche. We obey the rules. We know where we don't belong. So, most of us do not have a problem with outright disobedience to the law. We generally follow it. What we have is a problem of motivation. We're law abiding, but for the most part, we are passive. Our sins are generally ones of omission, what we leave out. We're like a young man Jesus told about who had good intentions. The problem was putting those good intentions into action.

A father had two sons. One day, we came to the first boy and said, "Son, I want you to work in the vineyard today." And the first boy rebelled. That's not unusual in some families. "I don't want to work in the vineyard today," the boy answered. "I've got better things to do with my time." Later, however, that son repented of his petulant outburst and went out and worked in the vineyard. The father also went to his second son. The second son was not nearly as rebellious as his brother. He was like many of us. "Son, I want you to work in the vineyard today," said his father. The boy's reply was prompt. "Sure, Pop, I'll be happy to." But the day passed, and the second son never went into the vineyard.

Jesus told that very human parable and then asked a question. "Which son did the will of his father—the son who said he would not go, but did, or the one who said he would go, but never got around to it. Which did the will of his father?" And the answer is obvious. The first, of course—the one who said he would not go, but did.

This is an important parable for us because we are often those who said, "Yes, Father, there was a time when we received Christian baptism, or confirmation. And we vowed Jesus Christ would be Lord of our lives. "Yes, Father, I will go." There was a time when we stood at the front of a church, and took vows of church membership to uphold the church with our prayers, our attendance, our gifts, and our service. "Yes, Father, I will go." We have said we would go and that is good. The question is, have we gone? So, can you honestly say Jesus is truly the Lord of your life?

Doc Sanders was a country doctor in McNairy County, Tennessee. Doc lived a simple lifestyle. He wore shabby clothes. He was known for his long prayers in church. One day, a young man in Doc's community, Wade Paris, made an unkind remark about Doc. Wade's father overheard him and said, "Son, you don't understand...When Doc was younger, he literally broke his own health by taking care of his patients. He always lived frugally. But he gave generously to others, and to his church. He paid for much of the church's building, although few people know it. And Doc has paid college tuition for many young people who otherwise couldn't go." Reflecting years later on that conversation, Wade Paris says, "I was ashamed. Doc was living like Jesus, and I was making fun of him." Could that be said of your life? "You are living like Jesus."

Have we made Jesus Lord of our life? There is no limit to what we can do in this world if Jesus truly is our Lord.

I love an analogy William Tarbell used years ago. He was explaining about light traveling 186,000 miles per second. He said if that is too hard to imagine, think of it another way. The starlight shining in your window left the star about the time Shakespeare was writing his plays. The light has been traveling all that time to reach you, and provide its light.

Then he adds his profound statement: "the work of the first disciples still influences you. Centuries ago, men and women were commissioned to make disciples of all nations. Although they have been dead for almost two thousand years, the effect of their work has traveled through history and touched us. It is felt in our lives and in our churches today." A handful of people 2,000 years ago turned the world upside down. Why? Because they were brilliant? There is no sign of that. Because they were powerful? Hardly. They were a motley crew of people on the bottom of the social structure of their day. Because they were strategically placed? Most of them were Galileans. They were hillbillies, Bubbas as far as the esteem of their neighbors was concerned. How did they have such an impact on the world? It was because they were totally dedicated to Christ. There is no limit to what we can do in this world if Jesus truly is our Lord. It's strange. We recognize the importance of commitment in other areas of life—business, art, sports. We make heroes out of those who go the extra mile in the direction of excellence.

Some of you are baseball fans. You are familiar with the accomplishments of baseball great Cal Ripken, Jr. Ripken entered sports history when he played a record 2,632 consecutive baseball games. That's a major feat; most players miss a game here, or there, because of injuries or a need to rest their bodies. Ripken didn't get injured less than any other player and didn't need less rest. But Ripken earned national respect because he played on in spite of injuries, or exhaustion. As he says, "I want to be remembered as an iron man, a player who went out there and put it on the line every day. I want people to say, "They couldn't keep him out of the lineup." That would be a good epitaph for any of us. "They couldn't keep you out of the lineup."

There was an article in VANITY FAIR magazine about basketball superstar, Michael Jordan. According to this story, Jordan's unparalleled success in his sport may come from an overwhelming need to win. Jordan's teammates claim he could not stand losing, even little competitions like board games. If he were falling behind in a friendly game of cards or Monopoly, Jordan might overturn the Monopoly board, or throw his cards down in order to disrupt the game. Sometimes be blamed those around him for messing with his concentration. He needed some reason for why his loss is someone else's fault.

Now, Jordan's need to win at sports might not appeal to us, but wouldn't it be grand if you and I were that passionate about winning our community, and our world to Christ—so we would go to any lengths necessary

to find men and women, boys and girls, young people and old who need the love of Christ? There is no limit to what we can do if Jesus truly is our Lord. "Yes, Father, I'll go."

George Barna, a church-growth specialist, asked a group of pastors how they believed Christ would rate their church if He were to return today. Fifty three percent of those Pastors said Christ would rate their church as having little or no positive impact on souls or society. That's disturbing. Are we having an impact on our community? Is this a better area because we are here? A pastor met one of his members on the street who had missed church the day before. "What did you preach about on Sunday?" the man inquired. "I took my text from John and spoke about Simon Peter's brother, Andrew," was his reply. "Andrew!" the parishioner exclaimed in surprise. "Why, I hardly remember him at all among the disciples. He didn't write any of the books of the bible, did he? What made you talk about him?"

The minister smiled. "I don't suppose many people would call Andrew great, but the one significant thing about him is that every time he is mentioned in the bible, he's introducing someone to Jesus! First, we see him bringing his brother Simon to the Lord. Next he's escorting a young lad to the Savior who miraculously used the boy's simple lunch to feed a multitude. And finally, he is directing a group of seeking Greeks to Jesus."

The parishioner walked away thoughtfully, for he had received a new glimpse of the importance of that unpraised apostle. We need more Andrews in the church. We need more disciples directing their friends, and their family, to Jesus. Christ has called us to make an impact on this community.

"Yes, Father, I will go." We are those who have said we would go. The question is, have we gone? Is Christ Lord of our lives? Are we having an impact on those around us?

We have passed the 19-year anniversary of the attack on the World Trade Center. Among the thousands of victims of that attack, was Father Mychal F. Judge, the fire department chaplain who, while ministering to the firemen working at Ground Zero, was killed by falling debris from the Towers. In Father Mychal's pocket was the prayer he always carried with him.

"Lord, take me where You want me to go,/Let me meet who You want me to meet,/Tell me what You want me to say, and /Keep me out of Your way."

Father Mychal was a man of commitment. He understood vows he took before God were not trivial. He is one who said, "I'll go," and he went.

AMEN

Pastor's Mid-week Message: Wednesday, September 29, 2020

This comes from the August 2017 newsletter of Zion-Cloverdale and Markville, where I served as pastor 1979-85. I find it delightful.

"Charlie Bork was honored for his 90th year on July 15th, 2017 at the Cloverdale Center. Well over 100 people were at this wonderful event. Stories were shared; Charlie thanked his many former and present workers who were there; many of them had great stories to tell of their years working with Charlie locally and over the road. I'm including part of Charlie's speech.

"Brains of older people are slow because they know so much. People do not decline mentally with age; it just takes them longer to recall the facts because they have more information in their brains, scientists believe. Much like a computer struggles as the hard drive gets full, so, too, do humans take longer to access info when their brains are full.

Researchers say this slowing down process is not the same as cognitive decline. The human brain works slower in old age, but only because we have stored more information over time. Brains of older people do not get weak. On the contrary, they simply know more.

Older people often go to another room to get something and when they get there, they stand wondering what they came for. It is NOT a memory problem; it is nature's way of making older people do more exercise."

I can identify with these thoughts. Can you, too?

Peace;

Pastor Bill Sass

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.**
- ✓ **There will not be a ham dinner this year due to Covid-19**