

# *17th Sunday of Pentecost*

*September 19, 2021*



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Welcome! 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.

# SERVICE OF THE WORD

## CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, whose teaching is life, whose presence is sure, and whose love is endless.

**Amen.**

Let us confess our sins to the one who welcomes us with an open heart.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

God our comforter:

**like lost sheep, we have gone astray. We gaze upon abundance and see scarcity. We turn our faces away from injustice and oppression. We exploit the earth with our apathy and greed. Free us from our sin, gracious God. Listen when we call out to you for help. Lead us by your love to love our neighbors as ourselves. Amen.**

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. By the gift of grace in † Christ Jesus, God makes you righteous. Receive with glad hearts the forgiveness of all your sins.

**Amen.**

## GATHERING HYMN

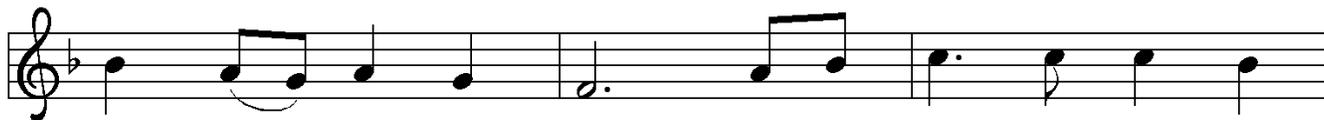
*All Are Welcome vs. 1 & 2*



1 Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safe - ly  
2 Let us build a house where proph-ets speak, and words are strong and



live, a place where saints and chil - dren tell how  
true, where all God's chil - dren dare to seek to



hearts learn to for - give. Built of hopes and dreams and  
dream God's reign a - new. Here the cross shall stand as

vi - sions, rock of faith and vault of grace; here the love of  
 wit - ness and as sym - bol of God's grace; here as one we

*Refrain*

Christ shall end di - vi - sions:  
 claim the faith of Je - sus: All are wel - come,

all are wel - come, all are wel - come in this place.

Text: Marty Haugen, b. 1950  
 Music: TWO OAKS, Marty Haugen  
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## APOSTOLIC GREETING & THE PRAYER OF THE DAY

Worship Leader: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**Congregation: And also with you.**

Worship Leader: Let us pray. O God, our teacher and guide, you draw us to yourself and welcome us as beloved children. Help us to lay aside all envy and selfish ambition, that we may walk in your ways of wisdom and understanding as servants of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Congregation: Amen.**

## FIRST READING

### Jeremiah 11:18-20

Introduction to the Lesson: *Today's reading tells of the suffering of the prophet Jeremiah, who announced God's word to Judah but was met with intense opposition and persecution. Jeremiah continues to trust in God in the midst of his suffering.*

Reader: <sup>18</sup>It was the LORD who made it known to me, and I knew;  
 then you showed me their evil deeds.

<sup>19</sup>But I was like a gentle lamb  
 led to the slaughter.

And I did not know it was against me  
 that they devised schemes, saying,  
 "Let us destroy the tree with its fruit,

let us cut him off from the land of the living,  
so that his name will no longer be remembered!”  
<sup>20</sup>But you, O LORD of hosts, who judge righteously,  
who try the heart and the mind,  
let me see your retribution upon them,  
for to you I have committed my cause.

*After the reading...*

Reader: The word of the Lord.

**Congregation: Thanks be to God.**

**SECOND READING**                      **James 3:13--4:3, 7-8a**

Introduction to the Lesson: *The wisdom God gives unites our hearts and minds. Instead of living to satisfy our own wants and desires, we manifest this wisdom in peace, gentleness, mercy, and impartiality toward others.*

Reader: <sup>13</sup>Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. <sup>14</sup>But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. <sup>15</sup>Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. <sup>16</sup>For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. <sup>17</sup>But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. <sup>18</sup>And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.<sup>4:</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? <sup>2</sup>You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup>You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures. <sup>7</sup>Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. <sup>8a</sup>Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

Reader: The word of the Lord.

**Congregation: Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL LESSON**                                      **Mark 9:30-37**

Introduction to the Gospel: *Jesus' teaching and action in this text are directed to the church whenever it is seduced by the world's definition of greatness: prestige, power, influence, and money. The antidote to such a concern for greatness is servanthood.*

Worship Leader: The Holy Gospel according to Mark in the 9th chapter.

**Congregation: Glory to you, O Lord.**

Worship Leader: <sup>30</sup>[Jesus and the disciples went on] and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it;<sup>31</sup>for 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.”<sup>32</sup>But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

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

*After the reading...*

Worship Leader: The gospel of the Lord.

**Congregation: Praise to you, O Christ.**

## **GOSPEL MESSAGE—From Sundays and Seasons**

### **The Greatest**

In today’s gospel from Mark, the disciples have just witnessed Jesus’ transfiguration atop the high mountain. Riding high on this experience, they are now traveling with him through the countryside, processing what they have seen, contrasting it with the story of crucifixion and death Jesus keeps hinting at. They begin to argue about which of them is the greatest—who will be given the highest honors for hanging out with Jesus? But Jesus stops them in their tracks. It isn’t about the highest honors, or about who shines most brightly: “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all” (Mark 9:35).

Jesus’ words to the disciples and to us are a reminder that God flips upside-down the way the world judges greatness. As Christians, most of us know this almost instinctively. We talk about avoiding “works righteousness” and rejecting the need to earn our salvation or prove our faith. And yet, even within the “servant of all” framework, we too often compete with one another to be the greatest servant. We hold ourselves up as examples of charity and justice, patting ourselves on the back for our works of service, hoping that the world—and God—will be impressed. Even when we know that this isn’t how God works, we still get sucked into the ways of the world.

But Jesus’ statement to the disciples is not just about them: it is also about himself. It is a reminder that Jesus’ greatness is precisely because on the cross, he has become “last of all and servant of all.” Our own efforts at service and humility will always pale in comparison to the Son of God. To be sure, we are called to love and serve our neighbors; but we are called to trust Jesus, “last of all and servant of all,” for our salvation. This is good news, for now our competitions and attempts to impress are no more. We simply receive from the Lord and pass it along.

## **SERMON**

## HYMN OF THE DAY

### *Children of the Heavenly Father*



Tryg - ga - re kan ing - en va - ra än Guds lil - la bar - na - ska - ra,  
1 Chil - dren of the heav'n-ly Fa - ther safe - ly in his bo - som gath - er;  
2 God his own doth tend and nour-ish, in his ho - ly courts they flour - ish.  
3 Nei - ther life nor death shall ev - er from the Lord his chil - dren sev - er;  
4 Though he giv - eth or he tak - eth, God his chil - dren ne'er for - sak - eth;



stjär - nan ej på him - la - fäs - tet, få - geln ej i kän - da näs - tet.  
nest - ling bird nor star in heav - en such a ref - uge e'er was giv - en.  
From all e - vil things he spares them, in his might - y arms he bears them.  
un - to them his grace he show - eth, and their sor - rows all he know - eth.  
his the lov - ing pur - pose sole - ly to pre - serve them pure and ho - ly.

Text: Carolina Sandell Berg, 1832–1903; tr. Ernst W. Olson, 1870–1958

Music: TRYGGARE KAN INGEN VARA, Swedish folk tune

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## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Worship Leader: Made children and heirs of God's promise, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

*A brief silence.*

Prayer Leader: God of community, we pray for the church around the world. Unite us in our love for you. Help us overcome our divisions, that we are encouraged to work together for your sake. Lord, in your mercy,

**Congregation: hear our prayer.**

Prayer Leader: God of creation, we pray for this hurting earth. Awaken in us a new desire to care for this world and empower us to support agencies, organizations, and individual efforts to heal our environment. Lord, in your mercy,

**Congregation: hear our prayer.**

God of cooperation, we pray for nations of the world embroiled in conflict. Inspire leaders to listen to each other and work towards peaceful solutions to disagreements. Protect the vulnerable, especially children, who cannot find safety in their home or country. Lord, in your mercy,

**Congregation: hear our prayer.**

Prayer Leader: God of comfort, we pray for all who live with mental or physical illness *especially* those on the prayer list of Grace Lutheran Church, those suffering from violence, terror, and natural disasters, and those we name now with our lips or in our hearts .....

Help them find appropriate care. Bring healing and wholeness when the path forward seems bleak. Lord, in your mercy,

**Congregation: hear our prayer.**

Prayer Leader: God of compassion, we pray for the young people of this congregation. Renew in us your call to welcome the children in our midst. As they grow, strengthen their faith and our commitment to them. Lord, in your mercy,

**Congregation: hear our prayer.**

Prayer Leader: God of consolation, we give you thanks for our loved ones who have died, especially those within our Memorial Garden, and pray for all who grieve today. Shine your grace on all your saints. Lord, in your mercy,

**Congregation: hear our prayer.**

Worship Leader: Receive these prayers, O God, and those in our hearts known only to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Congregation: Amen.**

### **OFFERING PRAYER**

Prayer Leader: God of abundance, you cause streams to break forth in the desert and manna to rain from the heavens. Accept the gifts you have first given us. Unite them with the offering of our lives to nourish the world you love so dearly; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Congregation: Amen.**

### **THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD**

Worship Leader: O God of justice and love, we give thanks to you that you illumine our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, awaken us to the needs of others, and at the end bring all the world to your feast; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever.

**Congregation: Amen.**

### **LORD'S PRAYER**

Worship Leader: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray in the language closest to our hearts.

**Congregation: 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.

## BLESSING

Worship Leader: People of God, you are Christ's body, bringing new life to a suffering world. The holy Trinity, † one God, bless you now and forever.

**Congregation: Amen.**

## SENDING HYMN

*Christ Is Alive! Let Christians Sing vs. 1, 4 & 5*



1 Christ is a - live! Let Chris - tians sing. The cross stands  
2 Christ is a - live! No long - er bound to dis - tant  
3 In ev - 'ry in - sult, rift, and war, where col - or,  
4 Wom - en and men, in age and youth, can feel the  
5 Christ is a - live, and comes to bring good news to



emp - ty to the sky. Let streets and homes with  
years in Pal - es - tine, but sav - ing, heal - ing,  
scorn, or wealth di - vide, Christ suf - fers still, yet  
Spir - it, hear the call, and find the way, the  
this and ev - 'ry age, till earth and sky and



prais - es ring. Love, drowned in death, shall nev - er die.  
here and now, and touch - ing ev - 'ry place and time.  
loves the more, and lives, where e - ven hope has died.  
life, the truth, re - vealed in Je - sus, freed for all.  
o - cean ring with joy, with jus - tice, love, and praise.

## DISMISSAL

Worship Leader: Together we have heard God's Word and joined in prayer, we have given and have been forgiven. Now as this service of worship is ending, this week's service to the world is beginning! Go in peace. The living Word dwells in you.

**Congregation: Thanks be to God.**

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