

# *19th Sunday of Pentecost*

## *October 3, 2021*



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Welcome! Today's gospel combines a saying that makes many of us uncomfortable with a story we find comforting. Jesus' saying on divorce is another of his rejections of human legislation in favor of the original intent of God's law. Jesus' rebuke of the disciples who are fending off the children should challenge us as well. What does it mean to receive the kingdom of God as a child does?

# 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:

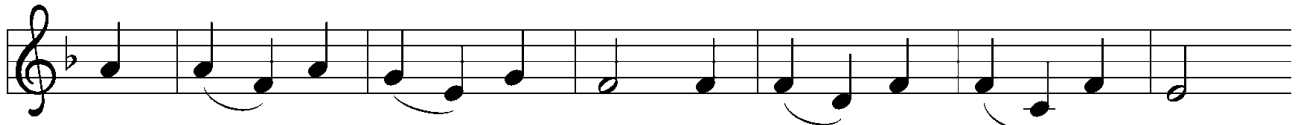
**like lost sheep, we have gone astray. We gaze upon abundance and see scarcity. We turn our faces away from injustice and oppression. We exploit the earth with our apathy and greed. Free us from our sin, gracious God. Listen when we call out to you for help. Lead us by your love to love our neighbors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

*Blest Be the Tie That Binds vs. 1-3*



1 Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Chris-tian love;  
2 Be - fore our Fa - ther's throne we pour our ar - dent prayers;  
3 We share our mu - tual woes, our mu - tual bur - dens bear,  
4 From sor - row, toil, and pain, and sin we shall be free;



the u - ni - ty of heart and mind is like to that a - bove.  
our fears, our hopes, our aims are one, our com - forts and our cares.  
and of - ten for each oth - er flows the sym - pa - thiz - ing tear.  
and per - fect love and friend - ship reign through all e - ter - ni - ty.

## **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. Sovereign God, you have created us to live in loving community with one another. Form us for life that is faithful and steadfast, and teach us to trust like little children, that we may reflect the image of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Congregation: Amen.**

## **FIRST READING**

### **Genesis 2:18-24**

Introduction to the Lesson: *Genesis 2 stresses that people are not meant to live in isolation but in relationship. Out of love for humanity, God creates them male and female, to provide companionship for each other and to become with each other “one flesh.” The Hebrew words used here are ish (man) and ishshah (woman).*

Reader: <sup>18</sup>The LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.” <sup>19</sup>So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup>The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. <sup>21</sup>So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. <sup>22</sup>And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup>Then the man said,

“This at last is bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
this one shall be called Woman,  
for out of Man this one was taken.”

<sup>24</sup>Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.

*After the reading...*

Reader: The word of the Lord.

**Congregation: Thanks be to God.**

## **SECOND READING**

### **Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12**

Introduction to the Lesson: *Quoting from the psalms, this passage from Hebrews emphasizes that Jesus, the one through whom God created everything and who sits at God’s right hand, is also the one who experienced human suffering and death in order to blaze the path of salvation for us.*

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Reader: <sup>1</sup>Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. <sup>3</sup>He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>4</sup>having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

<sup>2:5</sup>Now God did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels.

<sup>6</sup>But someone has testified somewhere,

“What are human beings that you are mindful of them,  
or mortals, that you care for them?

<sup>7</sup>You have made them for a little while lower than the angels;  
you have crowned them with glory and honor,

<sup>8</sup>subjecting all things under their feet.”

Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them,<sup>9</sup>but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

<sup>10</sup>It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. <sup>11</sup>For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, <sup>12</sup>saying,

“I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters,  
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.”

Reader: The word of the Lord.

**Congregation: Thanks be to God.**

## **GOSPEL LESSON**

## **Mark 10:2-16**

Introduction to the Gospel: *Jesus announced and enacted in history the new reality of God's surprising activity. These two stories demonstrate this new reality: Women and children are accepted and valued, not dismissed as inferior to adult men.*

Worship Leader: The Holy Gospel according to Mark in the 10th chapter.

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

Worship Leader: <sup>2</sup>Some Pharisees came, and to test [Jesus] they asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” <sup>3</sup>He answered them, “What did Moses command you?” <sup>4</sup>They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.” <sup>5</sup>But Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. <sup>6</sup>But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ <sup>7</sup>‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, <sup>8</sup>and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. <sup>9</sup>Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

<sup>10</sup>Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. <sup>11</sup>He said to them,

“Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; <sup>12</sup>and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

<sup>13</sup>People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. <sup>14</sup>But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. <sup>15</sup>Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” <sup>16</sup>And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

*After the reading...*

Worship Leader: The gospel of the Lord.

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

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

### **Softening Hearts**

At first, the two episodes in today’s gospel may seem disjointed: a challenging, even unsettling passage about divorce is followed by a much-loved image of Jesus telling his disciples to let little children come to him. Yet in both passages, Jesus puts rules and conventions aside to challenge his followers’ hearts to greater openness and vulnerability.

When legal experts attempt to reduce the challenges of divorce to legal minutiae, Jesus reframes their questions in the context of our created need for human relationship. In a broken world, opening our hearts to others can bring some of our deepest pain, but if we don’t take that risk, we can lose out on the human love and companionship for which God created us. These verses should never be used to judge those who have gone through the heartache of divorce, but rather as a caution for all of us against letting the pain of relationships harden our hearts to the care we were created to both give and receive.

Similarly, in the second passage, Jesus praises the openness of children’s hearts to God’s kingdom when the disciples attempt to shoo them away. As adults, we have accumulated a lot of knowledge about how the world works. Yet this confidence in what we know can also harden our hearts against perceiving a God who moves in mysterious ways and challenges our fixed ideas of how things are. Once again, Jesus calls us to risk our hearts with humility and openness to being taught the ways of God’s kingdom by those we thought needed us to teach them.

Through the rhythms of worship and the cadence of liturgy, in the vibrations of music and the gifts of bread and wine, we invite one another to relax our hearts, drop our defenses, and leave behind what we thought we knew. Here, the Spirit of God comes to open our hearts, to heal our pain, and to draw us ever more deeply into relationship with God and one another.

## **SERMON**

## HYMN OF THE DAY

### *Jesus Loves Me!*

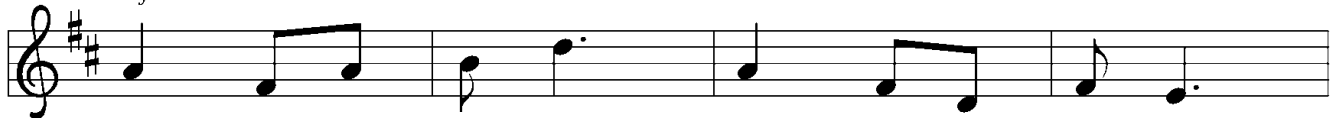


1 Je - sus loves me! this I know, for the Bi - ble tells me so;  
2 Je - sus loves me! he who died heav - en's gates to o - pen wide;  
3 Je - sus loves me! he will stay close be - side me all the way;



lit - tle ones to him be - long, they are weak, but he is strong.  
he will wash a - way my sin, let his lit - tle child come in.  
when at last I come to die, he will take me home on high.

#### *Refrain*



Yes, Je - sus loves me, yes, Je - sus loves me,



yes, Je - sus loves me, the Bi - ble tells me so.

Text: Anna B. Warner, 1820–1915, alt.

Music: JESUS LOVES ME, William B. Bradbury, 1816–1868

## 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: Holy One, you have raised up faithful leaders throughout history. Empower those discerning a call to ministry and all seminarians (*especially Jennifer Grumbling of St. Mark Lutheran Church in Dunedin and Teresa Stewart of St. Paul's and St. Matthias Lutheran Churches in Clearwater*), that they continue to be formed for the sake of the gospel. Lord, in your mercy,

**Congregation: hear our prayer.**

Prayer Leader: You have established a diverse and beautiful creation. Revive declining species and preserve endangered lands. Cultivate in us a sense of wonder for the world you created. Lord, in your mercy,  
**Congregation: hear our prayer.**

Prayer Leader: You desire for us not to be alone and to live in community with one another. Strengthen relationships between nations and peoples, that we celebrate and support one human family. Lord, in your mercy,  
**Congregation: hear our prayer.**

Prayer Leader: You share in our experiences and struggles. Bless all who live with any mental or physical disability. Inspire creative communities, spaces, and environments that are accessible and hospitable. Bless all who are ill or in any other kind of need, *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. Provide them with peace and resilience for the days ahead.. Lord, in your mercy,  
**Congregation: hear our prayer.**

Prayer Leader: You have established and nurtured relationships that extend beyond those gathered here today. Bless members who can no longer travel to worship with us, especially during this time of pandemic, and remind us of their continued role in this community of faith. Lord, in your mercy,  
**Congregation: hear our prayer.**

Prayer Leader: You promise eternal life to all your children. Thank you for the people of faith who have gone before us, especially those within our Memorial Garden. Strengthen our trust we have in you. 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.**

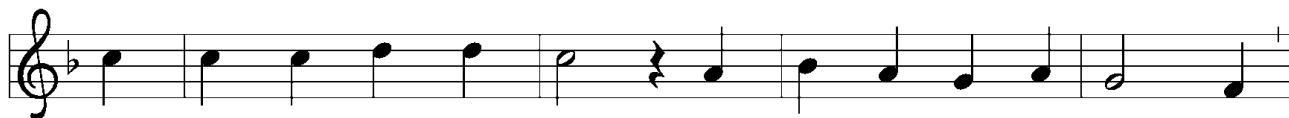
### BLESSING

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

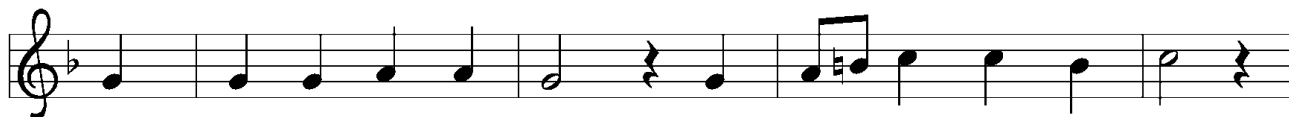
*Now Thank We All Our God vs. 1 & 2*



1 Now thank we all our God with hearts and hands and voices,  
2 Oh, may this bounteous God through all our life be near us,  
3 All praise and thanks to God the Father now be given,



who wondrous things has done, in whom this world rejoices;  
with ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us,  
the Son, and Spirit blest, who reign in highest heaven,



who, from our mothers' arms, has blest us on our way  
and keep us all in grace, and guide us when perplexed,  
the one eternal God, whom earth and heav'n adore;





with count-less gifts of love, and still is ours to - day.  
and free us from all harm in this world and the next.  
for thus it was, is now, and shall be ev - er - more.

Text: Martin Rinkhart, 1586–1649; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–1878  
Music: NUN DANKET ALLE GOTT, Johann Crüger, 1598–1662

## **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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