

# Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 20, 2020

## PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

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.



## WELCOME TO WORSHIP

### THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

*A bowl of water may be placed on a table as you read the Thanksgiving. You may make the sign of the cross, a sign marked at baptism, on your forehead, on your lips and on your heart.*

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism, we are clothed with God's mercy and forgiveness. Let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

*Water is poured into the font.*

We give you thanks, O God, for in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters and by your Word you created the world, calling forth life in which you took delight.

Through the waters of the flood you delivered Noah and his family.

Through the sea you led your people Israel from slavery into freedom.

At the river your Son was baptized by John and anointed with the Holy Spirit.

By water and your Word you claim us as daughters and sons, making us heirs of your promise and servants of all.

We praise you for the gift of water that sustains life, and above all we praise you for the gift of new life in Jesus Christ. Shower us with your Spirit, and renew our lives with your forgiveness, grace, and love.

To you be given honor and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever. **Amen.**

## HYMN

### “Great is Thy Faithfulness”

*Please either sing the hymn or pray the verse speaking out loud.*

**Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father; there is no shadow of turning with thee;  
thou changest not, thy compassions they fail not; as thou hast been, thou forever wilt be.**

#### *Refrain*

**Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!  
Morning by morning new mercies I see; all I have needed thy hand hath provided;  
great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!**

**Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,  
sun, moon, and stars in their courses above  
join with all nature in manifold witness to thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love. *Refrain***

**Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth, thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;  
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,  
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside! *Refrain***

Text: Thomas O. Chisholm, 1866-1960

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## **GREETING & PRAYER OF THE DAY**

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

**And also with you.**

Let us pray ... 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?*

When God saw what [the people of Ninevah] did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. He 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. And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.” And the LORD said, “Is it right for you to be angry?” 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.

The 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. But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. When 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.”

But God said to Jonah, “Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?” And he said, “Yes, angry enough to die.” Then 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. And 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.**

**(silence)**

### **PSALM 145:1-8**

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

**Every day | will I bless you and praise your name forever and ever.**

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

**One generation shall praise your works to another and shall declare your power.**

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

**They shall tell of the might of your wondrous acts, and I will recount your greatness.**

They shall publish the remembrance of your great goodness;

they shall sing joyfully of your righteousness.

**The LORD is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and abounding in 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.*

For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. 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 for you. Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

Only, 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, and 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. For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well — since 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 ACCLAMATION**

**“Halle, Hallelujah”**

*Please either sing the hymn or pray the verse speaking out loud.*

**Halle, halle, hallelujah! Halle, halle, hallelujah! Halle, halle, hallelujah!  
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!**

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## **GOSPEL: Matthew 20:1-16**

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

The Gospel of Matthew, the twentieth chapter.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

Jesus said to the disciples: “The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And 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?’ They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard.’ 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.’ When those hired about five o’clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, 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 the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

The Gospel of the Lord.  
**Praise to you, O Christ.**

## HOMILY

## HYMN

### **“Great God, Your Love Has Called Us Here”**

*Please either sing the hymn or pray the verse speaking out loud.*

**Great God, your love has called us here as we, by love, for love were made.  
Your living likeness still we bear, though marred, dishonored, disobeyed.  
We come, with all our heart and mind your call to hear, your love to find.**

**We come with self-inflicted pains of broken trust and chosen wrong,  
half-free, half-bound by inner chains, by social forces swept along,  
by powers and systems close confined yet seeking hope for humankind.**

**Great God, in Christ you call our name and then receive us as your own  
not through some merit, right, or claim, but by your gracious love alone.  
We strain to glimpse your mercy seat and find you kneeling at our feet.**

**Great God, in Christ you set us free your life to live, your joy to share.  
Give us your Spirit's liberty to turn from guilt and dull despair,  
and offer all that faith can do while love is making all things new.**

Text: Brian A. Wren, b. 1936

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## **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Drawn together in the compassion of God, we pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

*A brief silence.*

Generous God, you make the last first, and the first last. Where this gospel challenges the church, equip it for its works of service. Strengthen those who suffer for Christ. Lord, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

Sun and wind, bushes and worms, cattle and great cities—nothing in creation is outside your concern, mighty God. In your mercy, tend to it all. Give us a spirit of generosity toward all you have made. Bless those who are fighting fires with your strength, and keep them safe. Let this time be one of renewal in the awareness of how to care for the earth. Lord, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

Where we find envy and create enemies, you provide enough for all. Bring peace to places of conflict and violence, especially our cities across the nation. Inspire leaders with creativity and wisdom, and help them work for tolerance and unity among people. Bless the work of negotiators, peacekeepers, and development workers. Lord, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

Reveal yourself to all in need as you are gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, ready to relent from punishing. Accompany judges and lawyers, victims of crime and those serving sentences. Give fruitful labor and a livelihood to those seeking work. Lord, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

Even beyond our expectations, you choose to give generously. Grant life, health, and courage to all who are in need, especially Sue Anna and Sarah Linda and their family, Karen, Bert & Maureen, Bill & Joan, and LaVerne. Lord, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

We praise you for the generations that have declared your power to us. Give us faithfulness to follow them, living for Christ, until you call us to join them in the joyful song around his throne. We remember Erika and rejoice in the new and eternal life you have lavished upon her, ending her struggles and freeing her in your promise. Lord, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

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

## **LORD'S PRAYER**

Gathered as one in Christ, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

**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.**

## **BENEDICTION**

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord's face shine upon you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.

**Amen.**

## **HYMN**

### **"The Lord Now Sends Us Forth"**

Please either sing the hymn or pray the verse speaking out loud.

**The Lord now sends us forth with hands to serve and give,  
to make of all the earth a better place to live. *Repeat***

**The angels are not sent into our world of pain  
to do what we were meant to do in Jesus' name;  
that falls to you and me and all who are made free.  
Help us, O Lord, we pray, to do your will today. *Repeat***

Text: Anonymous, Central America; tr. Gerhard M. Cartford, b. 1923  
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## **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

