

THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 2, 2020

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, FALLS CHURCH, VA

SERVICE OF WORD AND PRAYER



*PRELUDE* Lord, Tis Not That I Did Choose Thee Setting: J. Wayne Kerr

*WELCOME*

*ENTRANCE HYMN #573* Lord, Tis Not That I Did Choose Thee

- 1 Lord, 'tis not that I did choose Thee;  
That, I know, could never be;  
For this heart would still refuse Thee  
Had Thy grace not chosen me.  
Thou hast from the sin that stained me  
Washed and cleansed and set me free  
And unto this end ordained me,  
That I ever live to Thee.
  
- 2 It was grace in Christ that called me,  
Taught my darkened heart and mind;  
Else the world had yet enthralled me,  
To Thy heav'nly glories blind.  
Now I worship none above Thee;  
For Thy grace alone I thirst,  
Knowing well that, if I love Thee,  
Thou, O Lord, didst love me first.
  
- 3 Praise the God of all creation;  
Praise the Father's boundless love.  
Praise the Lamb, our expiation,  
Priest and King enthroned above.  
Praise the Spirit of salvation,  
Him by whom our spirits live.  
Undivided adoration  
To the great Jehovah give.

*CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION*

In the name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

God of all mercy and consolation, come to the aid of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that, attentive to your Word, we may confess our sins, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

*(Silence for reflection and self-examination)*

Gracious God,

**have mercy on us. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things done and left undone. Uphold us by your Spirit so that we may live and serve you in newness of life, to the honor and glory of your holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life. Amen.

*KYRIE*

In peace let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.**

For the gift of divine peace and of pardon, with all our heart and with all our mind, let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.**

For the holy Christian church, here and scattered throughout the world, and for the proclamation of the Gospel and the calling of all to faith, let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.**

Help, save, comfort and defend us, gracious Lord.

**Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.**

*HYMN OF PRAISE*

**To you on high be glory and peace to all the earth;  
Goodwill from God in heaven proclaimed at Jesus' birth!  
We praise and bless You, Father; Your holy name, we sing –  
Our thanks for Your great glory, Lord God our heavenly King.**

**To you, O sole begotten, the Father's Son, we pray;  
O Lamb of God, our Savior, You take our sins away.  
Have mercy on us, Jesus; receive our heartfelt cry,  
Where You in power are seated at God's right hand on high.**

**For You alone are holy; You only are the Lord.  
Forever and forever, be worshiped and adored;  
You with the Holy Spirit alone are Lord Most High,  
In God the Father's glory. "Amen!" our glad reply.**

*THE PRAYER OF THE DAY*

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Let us pray. Heavenly Father,

**though we do not deserve Your goodness, still You provide for all our needs of body and soul.**

**Grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may acknowledge Your gifts, give thanks for all Your benefits, and**

**serve You in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**



*FIRST LESSON* Isaiah 55:1–5

“Come, everyone who thirsts,  
come to the waters;  
and he who has no money,  
come, buy and eat!  
Come, buy wine and milk  
without money and without price.  
Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,  
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?  
Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good,  
and delight yourselves in rich food.  
Incline your ear, and come to me;  
hear, that your soul may live;  
and I will make with you an everlasting covenant,  
my steadfast, sure love for David.  
Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples,  
a leader and commander for the peoples.  
Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know,  
and a nation that did not know you shall run to you,  
because of the LORD your God, and of the Holy One of Israel,  
for he has glorified you.”

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 136:1–3, 23–26

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,  
for his steadfast love endures forever.  
Give thanks to the God of gods,  
for his steadfast love endures forever.  
Give thanks to the Lord of lords,  
for his steadfast love endures forever;  
It is he who remembered us in our low estate,  
for his steadfast love endures forever;  
and rescued us from our foes,  
for his steadfast love endures forever;  
he who gives food to all flesh,  
for his steadfast love endures forever.  
Give thanks to the God of heaven,  
for his steadfast love endures forever.

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son**

**and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning,  
is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

*SECOND LESSON* Matthew 14:13–21

Now when Jesus heard [about the death of John], he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick. Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves.” But Jesus said, “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.” They said to him, “We have only five loaves here and two fish.” And he said, “Bring them here to me.” Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*CHILDREN’S SERMON*

*ALLELUIA VERSE*

**Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.**

**These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.**

**Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.**

*SERMON TEXT* Romans 9:1–12

I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit— that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. For this is what the promise said: “About this time next year I will return and Sarah shall have a son.” And not only so, but also when Rebecca had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of his call— she was told, “The older will serve the younger.”

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Praise to You, O Christ**

*SERMON*

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ:

In our journey through the Book of Romans during these past weeks we've covered a lot of ground. We've examined Paul's great teaching on the doctrine of justification. We've heard him speak on Baptism, God's righteousness, our struggles with suffering and sin, and the help given by the Holy Spirit. And in our reading last week, we heard Paul speak with particular power and enthusiasm – bringing a glorious crescendo of promise and praise to a triumphant conclusion by declaring: "Nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Those concluding words of chapter eight would make a fitting end to this or any letter. But Paul has more things to say. A few weeks ago, we noted that the Book of Romans addresses subjects that mostly pertain to the individual – things like our personal salvation and our struggles. But Paul also has things to say about our life together as Christians. He knows how important it is that God's people live well together under the promise of the Gospel.

As he begins this new section of the letter, Paul addresses a topic that is obviously very difficult for him, for he says: "I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart." The topic, which he doesn't even need to specifically state because everyone knows it, is the separation which has taken place between Jew and Christian. Some Jews have heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ and become Christians. Others have not.

Paul has already touched on this subject earlier in the book, and he will address it now for the better part of three chapters. He knows the subject is an emotionally charged one. As he mentions his feelings, he even feels the need to defend them – saying that he is not lying. Paul knows that his readers have heard about the beatings and slander and rejection he endured from some Jews during his travels. He wants the people to know that despite these, he harbors no ill will. He is truly sad about the separation. Paul, after all, was a Jew himself. And he still thinks of Jews as his brothers. He just believes that the Messiah has come, and that God has done a new thing in this world through his arrival.

Paul has so much emotion that he wishes he could be accursed and cut off from Christ if that could save the Jewish people. And here we have an example of how God's greater story – his vision for his people – was shaping Paul's life in sacrificial love. Paul says these things because his heart is filled with the love of Jesus – the one who was himself cut off from God and cursed by hanging on a tree for the life of others.

Behind Paul's words here too is the fact that many Jews who had to leave Rome during the recent persecution by Emperor Claudius, were now coming back to their homes and looking to re-engage with people they knew. The church in Rome had begun as a movement of faith among the Jews, but it was now predominantly Gentile. Paul is therefore encouraging unity, acceptance and compassion among people, even as he also stands for what he believes.

As Paul speaks to the issue at hand, he introduces for the first time in his letter the word "Israel." Those who have not accepted Jesus as the Christ are still Israelites, he says. And to them belong many things, which he then lists.

Notice that first on his list is the word "adoption." Paul has used this word twice earlier to describe how believers in Christ are brought into God's family. Israel was always God's chosen family. They were the first to be adopted.

As Paul builds his list – naming the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, and others – he concludes it by stating that the Christ, who would come from the Jewish line, is "God over all, blessed forever." The Jews did not all agree that the Messiah would be God, but Paul is clear on this. And although Paul doesn't specifically say "Jesus Christ" at this time, he did so just a few verses earlier. Paul

may be acknowledging the spiritual heritage of the Jews in these verses, but he is also adamant about the divinity of Jesus. Jesus was, of course, accused of blasphemy by the Jews as he faced trial. He was clear in his claim to be God and the people understood it. After his resurrection, many would also believe it.

But not all. So, Paul then addresses the question of why so many Jews did not believe. He is quick to point out that it was not a failure of God's word. Our first reading today was from Isaiah chapter 55 – chosen to correspond with the Gospel reading for its references to God's word as nourishment for us. If we were to read further in the chapter, we would hear the great promise that God's word does not return void to him but accomplishes its purposes. The word does not fail.

If it wasn't that the word failed, then what was the cause of the unbelief? As Paul addresses this, he introduces a distinction between people, referring to them as either children of the flesh or children of the promise. A child of the flesh is a biological child only. A child of the promise is also a child of God, for they are ones who believe.

Paul starts the presentation of this distinction by saying: "For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel." He had just mentioned all the benefits of being an Israelite. Now he uses that term of identity to make his new point: one's identity as a child of God does not come simply by birth.

We recall that John the Baptist had made that same point when addressing the Pharisees (Luke 3:8). He told them: "Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham."

Like John, Paul mentions Abraham as well. He reminds us of the distinction between Abraham's two sons. Ishmael was born first, and therefore should have been the one through whom the promised line would continue. But Ishmael was not born according to the word of God, for God had specifically said that Abraham was to have a son through Sara, his wife. Eventually Abraham did have a son by Sara, and that child's name was Isaac. Paul even adds that word of God from Genesis (21:12), quoting: "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named."

Ishmael and Isaac may both have been children of the flesh, but only Isaac was the child of promise. God did not reject Ishmael. He cared for him as well. But God would carry out his great acts of salvation through the line of Isaac – including the giving of his holy word and the giving of his son.

Paul then gives one more example. Isaac and his wife had two sons—Jacob and Esau. Esau was born first, but God, contrary to the usual way, made Jacob the son of promise. This was decided by God when

the children were still in the womb. As God told Rebekah: "the older will serve the younger." And though this chosen status was not apparent for many years, eventually it proved to be true. Along the way there were signs – as when Jacob treasured the birthright more than Esau and when Jacob built an altar to the Lord to acknowledge his care.

Paul wants us to know that God's decisions are ultimately based not on people's works, but on God's calling. Here Paul states that God's choices were made "in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls."

In chapter eight, Paul had introduced the word "election" by saying: "who shall bring any charge against God's elect?" God's elect are those foreknown, predestined, called, glorified and justified.

God had called ancient Israel to be his holy people, his treasured possession. Now that he had sent the Messiah, he was calling the believers in that Messiah to be his chosen people – the new Israel.

We stopped reading at v. 12. But if we were to continue, we would hear Paul anticipate one more question about all this: why does God choose some and not others? And here Paul simply says we

should submit to God's wisdom and mercy. He says: "What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So then, it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." (ESV)

God had chosen Israel to bring forth the law and the prophets and the Christ. God has now chosen the followers of Jesus to bring the good news of his salvation to all the nations.

Having now made our way through this text, let us reflect on it a little further with an eye toward its main concern. In these words, we see Paul's great sadness over the fact that so many of his Jewish brothers are not joining him in the new work of the kingdom. It pains him greatly. And this reminds us that religious disagreements are not to be taken lightly. They are tragic.

We all know this pain. We have people in our family and friend-groups and community who do not believe the message of Jesus either, or who don't make much attempt to live it. This is a pain we will need to work through.

As with all pains, we do best to simply submit ourselves to God's will, and to God's mercy. Some will remain children of the flesh. Some will be children of promise.

As Paul did, we can take comfort in remembering the ways God has worked in the lives of those who may not now believe. Many have received the promise of Baptism. And God always works through his word. Most importantly, the Son of God has died for all.

We are to love all children. And to pray for them, encourage them and to look for signs. We can't always tell what is truly in another's heart. Sometimes people will change.

The world has many children of the flesh. Paul reminds us here that it is the children of promise who are truly precious, for they are the ones whom God will use to accomplish his good purposes.

As such, we are also called here to appreciate our siblings in the kingdom. And to give thanks for them. They are a gift to us. They are a gift to the world.

We do not walk the path of faith alone. We are a part of a great family. It is not a perfect family, but it is a good one – graced by our Lord Jesus, empowered by the Spirit.

May God then awaken in us both a love for all and a love for our true family. And may he lead us in our calling as his children, so that together we may carry out his work and live faithfully according to his promises. Amen.

*HYMN OF THE DAY #642 O Living Bread from Heaven*

- O living Bread from heaven,  
How well You feed your guest!  
The gifts that You have given  
Have filled my heart with rest.  
Oh, wondrous food of blessing,  
Oh, cup that heals our woes!  
My heart, this gift possessing,  
With praises overflows.**

- 2 My Lord, You here have led me  
To this most holy place  
And with Yourself have fed me  
The treasures of Your grace;  
For You have freely given  
What earth could never buy,  
The bread of life from heaven,  
That now I shall not die.
- 3 You gave me all I wanted;  
This food can death destroy.  
And You have freely granted  
The cup of endless joy.  
My Lord, I do not merit  
The favor You have shown,  
And all my soul and spirit  
Bow down before Your throne.
- 4 Lord, grant me then, thus strengthened  
With heav'nly food, while here  
My course on earth is lengthened,  
To serve with holy fear.  
And when You call my spirit  
To leave this world below,  
I enter, through Your merit,  
Where joys unmingled flow.

#### *APOSTLES' CREED*

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

*OFFERING*    *O Living Bread from Heaven*    Setting: Paul Bouman

#### *PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH*

Lord, You have bidden us to come without money to receive grace beyond price. Hear us as we heed Your call and turn to You in prayer, confident of Your promise to hear and answer us.

*Brief silence*

Father, we have sought meaning, comfort and sustenance from all the wrong places. Grant us Your Holy Spirit, that our hearts may be turned to Your Word, that we may hunger for Your Son's body and blood, and that we may discern truth from error. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Father, we give You thanks that You have blessed us beyond what we deserve and given to us Your Church. Guard her life by Your Spirit and strengthen her witness before the nations. Bless all pastors and church workers in their service to us in Your name, and bless those now considering and preparing for church-work vocations. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Father, we sorrow to see the suffering which comes in this broken world, and we struggle to share the great resources you shower upon us. Bless all relief agencies and services of Your Church on behalf of the hungry, the homeless, the hurting and those who have lost hope. Bless those visited by disaster and tragedy and open our hearts to help them recover from their loss. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Father, we are daily blessed to know much abundance and freedom. Bless those who defend us from our enemies, who serve us in government and who protect us in our communities. Be with our president, the Congress, our governor, and our judges and magistrates, that they may discern the right path and lead us with honor and integrity. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Father, in this life we suffer with all manner of ills and afflictions. Hear us and grant to us healing according to Your will, strength in time of trial and peace at the last. We pray especially for \_\_\_\_\_ and those named in our hearts. Deliver us and teach us to depend upon Your grace in all things. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Father, we know that Your steadfast love and mercy are forever, but our faith is daily tested and tempted. Give us strength and endurance, that we may not despair but have confidence in Your sufficient grace. Guide us to seek our consolation in Your Word and Sacraments, and keep us in faith according to the promises you give us in these gifts. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Father, we remember the saints who lived by Your mercy and died in Christ. We long for that day when all divisions will end and the Church in heaven and earth shall be one in Your presence, singing Your praise in Your kingdom without end. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Father, we ask You to grant us all things needful and to keep from us all things harmful to us and to our salvation, for we trust Your wisdom and Your love. Teach us to pray without fear "Your will be done," through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

#### *THE LORD'S PRAYER*

**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 us and keep us.  
The Lord make His face shine on us  
and be gracious to us.  
The Lord look upon us with favor and ✠ give us peace.

*SENDING HYMN #652 Father, We Thank Thee*

- 1 Father, we thank Thee who hast planted  
Thy holy name within our hearts.  
Knowledge and faith and life immortal  
Jesus, Thy Son, to us imparts.  
Thou, Lord, didst make all for Thy pleasure,  
Didst give us food for all our days,  
Giving in Christ the Bread eternal;  
Thine is the pow'r, be Thine the praise.**
  
- 2 Watch o'er Thy Church, O Lord, in mercy,  
Save it from evil, guard it still,  
Perfect it in Thy love, unite it,  
Cleansed and conformed unto Thy will.  
As grain, once scattered on the hillsides,  
Was in this broken bread made one,  
So from all lands Thy Church be gathered  
Into Thy kingdom by Thy Son.**

*ANNOUNCEMENTS*

*DISMISSAL*

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

*POSTLUDE Father, We Thank Thee Setting: Jeffrey Blersch*

Acknowledgments

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.  
Created by Lutheran Service Builder © 2018 Concordia Publishing House.  
Lord, 'Tis Not That I Did Choose Thee: Text: Public domain  
O Living Bread from Heaven: Text: Public domain  
Father, We Thank Thee: Text: © The Church Pension Fund. Used by permission: LSB Hymn License no. 110005326