

THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
SEPTEMBER 20, 2020

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

SERVICE OF WORD AND PRAYER



PRELUDE *Thy Works, Not Mine, O Christ* on the Tune "Darwall's 148th"
Setting: Barbara Harbach

WELCOME

ENTRANCE HYMN #565 *Thy Works, Not Mine, O Christ* (Tune: Darwall's 148th)

- 1 **Thy works, not mine, O Christ,
Speak gladness to this heart;
They tell me all is done,
They bid my fear depart. *Refrain***

Refrain

To whom save Thee,
Who canst alone
For sin atone,
Lord, shall I flee?

- 2 **Thy wounds, not mine, O Christ,
Can heal my bruised soul;
Thy stripes, not mine, contain
The balm that makes me whole. *Refrain***
- 3 **Thy cross, not mine, O Christ,
Has borne the crushing load
Of sins that none could bear
But the incarnate God. *Refrain***
- 4 **Thy death, not mine, O Christ,
Has paid the ransom due;
Ten thousand deaths like mine
Would have been all too few. *Refrain***
- 5 **Thy righteousness, O Christ,
Alone can cover me;
No righteousness avails
Save that which is of Thee. *Refrain***

INVOCATION

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

Amen.

BAPTISMAL DESCRIPTION

In Holy Baptism our gracious heavenly Father liberates us from sin and death by joining us to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are born children of a fallen humanity; in the waters of Baptism we are reborn children of God and inheritors of eternal life. By water and the Holy Spirit we are made members of the Church which is the body of Christ. As we live with Him and with His people, we grow in faith, love and obedience to the will of God.

THE PRESENTATION (by a sponsor)

I present Hailey Ann (Last Name) to receive the sacrament of Holy Baptism.

QUESTION TO THE PARENTS OF A CHILD

Brian and Christy, in Christian love you have brought Hailey for Holy Baptism. You should, therefore, faithfully bring her to the service of God's house, and teach her the Lord's Prayer, the Creed and the Ten Commandments. As she grows in years, you should place in her hands the Holy Scriptures and provide for her instruction in the Christian faith, that living in the covenant of her Baptism and in communion with the Church, she may lead a godly life until the day of Jesus Christ. Do you promise to fulfill these obligations? I do.

QUESTION TO THE SPONSORS

Mary and Kevin, In Christian love you have presented Hailey for Holy Baptism. You should, therefore, faithfully care for her and help her in every way as God gives you opportunity. By doing this, she may bear witness to the faith we profess, live in the covenant of her Baptism and in communion with the Church, and also lead a godly life until the day of Jesus Christ. Do you promise to fulfill these obligations? I do.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

I ask you now, along with the congregation, to profess your faith in Christ Jesus, reject sin, and confess the faith of the Church, the faith in which we baptize.

Do you renounce all the forces of evil, the devil and all his empty promises?

I do.

Do you believe in God the Father?

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

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

I believe 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.

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

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.

THE BAPTISM

Hailey Ann (Last Name), I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

PRAYER

Let us pray.

God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we give You thanks for freeing Your sons and daughters from the power of sin and for raising them up to a new life through this holy sacrament. Pour out Your Holy Spirit upon Hailey: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in Your presence. Amen.

SIGN OF THE CROSS

Hailey Ann, child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever.

PRESENTATION OF THE CANDLE

And now let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

WELCOME BY THE CONGREGATION

We welcome you into the Lord's family. We receive you as a fellow member of the body of Christ, a child of the same heavenly Father, and a worker with us in the kingdom of God.

KYRIE

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above and for our salvation let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

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

Amen.

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to His people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly king, almighty God and Father:

We worship You, we give You thanks, we praise You for Your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God:

You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.

You are seated at the right hand of the Father; receive our prayer.

For You alone are the Holy One, You alone are the Lord,

You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,

in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray. Lord God, heavenly Father,
since we cannot stand before You relying on anything we have done, help us trust in Your abiding
grace and live according to Your Word; 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 55:6–9*

“Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near;
let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM 27:1-9

The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?
When evildoers assail me
to eat up my flesh,
my adversaries and foes,
it is they who stumble and fall.
Though an army encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
though war arise against me,
yet I will be confident.
One thing have I asked of the LORD,
that will I seek after:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD
and to inquire in his temple.
For he will hide me in his shelter
in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;
he will lift me high upon a rock.

And now my head shall be lifted up
above my enemies all around me,
and I will offer in his tent
sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make melody to the LORD.

Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud;
be gracious to me and answer me!
You have said, "Seek my face."
My heart says to you,
"Your face, LORD, do I seek."
Hide not your face from me.
Turn not your servant away in anger,
O you who have been my help.
Cast me not off; forsake me not,
O God of my salvation!

**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 Philippians 1:12–14, 19–30

I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. . . .

for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. 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 on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

ALLELUIA VERSE

**Alleluia. Lord, to whom shall we go?
You have the words of eternal life.
Alleluia, alleluia.**

GOSPEL Matthew 20:1–16

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 20th chapter.

Glory to You, O Lord.

[Jesus said:] “The kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and to them he said, ‘You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.’ So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’ They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too.’ And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.’ And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, 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 a denarius? Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?’ So the last will be first, and the first last.”

This is the Word of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ

SERMON

Matthew 20:1–16

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

Dear friends in Christ:

Before we dive into an examination of today’s text, I’d like you to ask yourself this question. In life, do you do what you do because you want to receive a reward, or do you do what you do because it’s simply the right thing to do?

For example, do you work your job in order to receive rewards such as higher pay or more recognition? Or do you work it because it’s a good use of your skills and can help people?

And what about your hobbies and interests? If you play a sport, do you play in order to receive a reward – like a trophy or being known as a winner? Or do you play because it’s fun and helps you stay healthy?

Let’s face it. Most of us do things for both reasons. We want rewards such as earnings and recognitions. And we also want to simply use our skills and be productive, because these are good things to do.

But which of these two reasons prevails for you? Which is dominant? Which do you defer to when faced with a choice?

When Jesus told the parable in our text today, he did so in the context of a discussion about such things with his disciples.

The discussion began when a rich man came to Jesus and asked him what he needed to do in order to obtain eternal life. Jesus told him he must keep the law of God – and that this meant not only keeping the commandments but also selling all he had and following him. When the rich man walked away sad – obviously not willing to do what Jesus had said – Jesus then declared to the disciples that it is very hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

This prompted one of the disciples (Peter, not surprisingly), to think about what this meant for him and the rest of the disciples. After all, they had done what Jesus said. They had left everything and followed him.

More specifically, Peter thought about this in terms of whether there might be some form of reward. He said to Jesus: “See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?”

We might think that Jesus, in his response, would rebuke Peter’s question, for we know that Jesus often urged things such as humility and contentment and duty over the prospects of reward. But not here. Jesus said to the disciples, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

These words of Jesus are definitely about reward. And what an amazing reward they describe! The disciples will be “judging the twelve tribes” – a way of describing their future leadership as the church’s apostles. And everyone who has made the sacrifices involved in following Jesus will “receive a hundredfold.”

These words of reward are not to be missed. They speak to God’s great generosity to us, his people. And they echo earlier promises of Jesus given to his followers, including those times where he spoke about the kingdom as a treasure.

The only point of ambiguity is whether Jesus is referring to rewards here in this life or rewards in the life to come. When Mark records these words of Jesus in his Gospel account, he adds that the rewards will be given “in this life,” and that they will come “with persecution.” When we look at all the sayings of Jesus, we should conclude that there will be some blessings given here in this life, but many will need to wait for the life to come.

Yes, there will be rewards. But what kind?

We tend to think of rewards as financial, or forms of bodily health or pleasure. But the scriptures point us to other rewards – such as peace in our hearts, the contentment of our souls, the forgiveness of our sins and the joy of good relationships with others.

Jesus came to change our thinking about rewards, which is one of the reasons he said: “many who are last will be first, and the first last.” With Jesus, the usual ways of thinking are turned upside down. With all this as background, we can now see more clearly what Jesus is intending with his parable of the workers in the vineyard – our text for today.

In this parable, the reward for all the workers is the same. And it is a good reward – a just payment for a day’s worth of work.

Even so, those who ended up doing more work complained. They thought that they should get more than those who were hired later in the day.

We can understand their thinking. We tend to believe that everyone should get paid according to what they have done. But still, the workers had no right to complain – for it's the owner's prerogative how he pays. As he explained: "Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?" The workers were focused only on the reward, not the greater good.

Rewards in themselves can be fine. But an overemphasis on them can lead to trouble. One of the troubles that can come is resentment. The workers in Jesus' parable who worked longer obviously resented both the owner and those who worked less. They were quite offended by the owner's decision and said of their fellow workers: "you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day."

We can become resentful too. And especially those of us in the church.

When someone comes to Jesus at the 11th hour – meaning the last stages of their life – we who have followed Jesus for years might be tempted to resent their equal reward of heaven rather than rejoice in it as we should.

Likewise, and perhaps even more, we who are active and contributing members can become resentful when we see people receiving the same benefits of the Christian life without putting in the same work.

We can become very offended when we see these people receive the same friendly greeting from the pastor, the same rights and privileges in the church, and the same trust from the Christian community without seemingly making the same sacrifices.

Rather than being resentful of such people, however, we should have pity on them. And encourage them. Because they are missing out on the blessings which come from such work.

Many of those who don't work in the church have great burdens that occupy them elsewhere. We must be mindful of this. And many just don't feel like they've been invited – perhaps feeling themselves unworthy.

In the parable, the vineyard owner keeps going out and inviting more workers. At one point he asks a worker: "why do you stand here idle all day?" And the worker replies, "because no has hired us." The worker isn't necessarily lazy. He just hadn't had the opportunity to work.

We tend to think people should show more initiative. But often people are just unsure of what to do. In either case, the people are missing out. And to help these people, the church is to follow the example of the vineyard owner and invite people to work. We are to do this with joy in our hearts, and with generosity of spirit.

We must remember that God will give rewards from his great generosity, and that these rewards will be the ones he knows to be best.

At the end of the parable, Jesus repeats the phrase he had said earlier: "So the last will be first and the first last." And (did you notice?) in the parable itself, he includes the same language – as he tells how the vineyard owner instructs that the last to work should be paid first. Yes, this detail assures that the full-day workers get to see what is happening, but it also serves as an echo of Jesus' phrase.

In this phrase of Jesus, not only do we see that Jesus came to change our thinking, but also that he came to lift up those who are down in life and humble those whose need to be humbled. The phrase echoes the words of his mother, Mary, who praised God before her son's birth by singing: "He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty" (Luke 1:52–53). It also echoes Jesus' own words in one of his sermons, where he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God... But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation" (Luke 6:20,24).

This great reversal of Jesus, as we call it, signals the justice he will give to his people. God sees when injustice takes place and he has promised to act on it.

We tend to get all bent out of shape when we see things such as unequal pay for equal work, but that's because we forget that God sees.

We tend to drive ourselves crazy with worry when we believe that we're falling behind – and especially when we see that others are selling their souls to get ahead, but that's because we forget that God sees.

We tend to despair when we've borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat and see others who sit comfortably with seemingly no cares in the world, but that's because we forget that God sees.

Our God is both generous and just. He generously offers the reward of eternal life to all who put their trust in his plan of salvation, for he has overcome the curse of death through the sacrifice of Jesus his Son. And he justly works in this world to lift up those who are low and knock down those who need correcting.

When we live in God's kingdom, meaning submit ourselves to his Lordship, we will benefit from both God's generosity and his justice. He will provide for us generously as we have need and remind us that the best is yet to come, and he will also work in our lives to shape us into the people he wants us to be.

Serving in the Lord's kingdom is a privilege because it's an opportunity to move from an idleness of spirit to a life of meaning and purpose. And our serving will be done best when we trust God's ways as the right way and let him take care of the rewards – which he will give according to his promises.

May God lead us to remember these things and serve with joy in our hearts. In the name of Jesus our Savior. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY #555 sts. 1–2, 5, 7, 10 Salvation unto Us Has Come

- 1 Salvation unto us has come
By God's free grace and favor;
Good works cannot avert our doom,
They help and save us never.
Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone,
Who did for all the world atone;
He is our one Redeemer.**
- 2 What God did in His Law demand
And none to Him could render
Caused wrath and woe on ev'ry hand
For man, the vile offender.
Our flesh has not those pure desires
The spirit of the Law requires,
And lost is our condition.**
- 5 Yet as the Law must be fulfilled
Or we must die despairing,
Christ came and has God's anger stilled,
Our human nature sharing.
He has for us the Law obeyed
And thus the Father's vengeance stayed
Which over us impended.**

- 7 **Let me not doubt, but truly see
Your Word cannot be broken;
Your call rings out, "Come unto Me!"
No falsehood have You spoken.
Baptized into Your precious name,
My faith cannot be put to shame,
And I shall never perish.**
- 10 **All blessing, honor, thanks, and praise
To Father, Son, and Spirit,
The God who saved us by His grace;
All glory to His merit.
O triune God in heav'n above,
You have revealed Your saving love;
Your blessed name we hallow.**

OFFERING *Salvation unto Us has Come* Setting: Dennis W. Zimmer

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

In peace, let us pray to the Lord and offer to Him the petitions and supplications of a people confident of His promise to hear and answer us with mercy.

Brief silence

That we may seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him in the day of salvation, and be prepared by His mercy for the Day of Judgment, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That we may delight in the light of Christ and His salvation, and that sinners may find refuge in His mercy and comfort in His forgiveness, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That we may hear the voice of God speaking in His Word and be nurtured by faithful pastors who preach and teach this Gospel, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That this Word may be the foundation of the home, that husband and wife may be united in this faith and hope, and that their children may hear and be nurtured in this Word by faithful parents, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That the Church may nurture the lives of our children in Sunday school and catechism classes, and that we may all be grounded in the doctrine of Scripture through the study of God's Word, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That the Lord may bless missionaries far and near, that He may nurture newly planted congregations, and that He may renew those congregations in distress, that those from every nation and culture may be united with us in faith and life, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That we may enjoy the blessing of good government, faithful leaders, peace in our land and peace among the nations, and that we may be good citizens and neighbors, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That the sick may be healed, the troubled know peace, the grieving be comforted and the dying be delivered to everlasting life in Christ, and especially for _____; and that we may all be delivered from fear, anxiety and despair by God's gracious care, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That we may honor the Lord with praise and thanksgiving and bring to the Lord the tithes and offerings of a grateful people, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That we may not forget the witness of the faithful who lived and died in Christ, and that we may at last be joined with them in the marriage supper of the Lamb in His Kingdom without end, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

Hear the prayers of Your people, O Lord, and grant to us all things good and wholesome and keep from us all things harmful. Give us contentment, that trusting in Your mercy we may delight in Your saving will where the last are made first by Your generosity and grace; 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 #838 The Saints in Christ Are One in Every Place

- 1 The saints in Christ are one in ev'ry place
To serve the Gospel of His costly grace;
From those first days to this, our hope the same:
The love of Christ, one Lord, one saving name.**

- 2 In chains for Christ! His pris'ners love to sing,
For slaves and free rejoice to praise our King;
What though the Church on earth still suffers wrong?
The cross of Christ remains our pilgrim song.
- 3 To live is Christ, for us, to die is gain;
Where then shall be our hunger, danger, pain?
Our joy to preach good news to rich and poor,
Then be with Christ, to live forevermore.
- 4 Lord Jesus Christ! Heav'n's praise let earth repeat;
The work that You began, You will complete.
By grace let ev'ry foe become Your friend;
Your day, O Christ, shall dawn and never end.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE The Saints in Christ Are One in Every Place Setting: J. Wayne Kerr

Altar Flowers: "In memory of family members: Art, Iona, Pat, Joe, Jack, May, Jonny, Linda, Velma, Mike"
By Mary Ann W.

Acknowledgments

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