SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST SEPTEMBER 17, 2023

IN THE NAME OF JESUS, WELCOME TO ST. PAUL'S!

8:00 & 10:30 a.m. ★ ★ ★

THE ENTRANCE RITE

PRELUDE

Come Down, O Love Divine Setting: Brian L. Hanson

ENTRANCE HYMN

Come Down, O Love Divine

LSB 501

1 Come down, O Love divine; Seek Thou this soul of mine, And visit it with Thine own ardor glowing; O Comforter, draw near; Within my heart appear, And kindle it, Thy holy flame bestowing. O let it freely burn, 2 **Till worldly passions turn** To dust and ashes in its heat consuming; And let Thy glorious light Shine ever on my sight, And clothe me round, the while my path illuming. Let holy charity 3 Mine outward vesture be

And lowliness become mine inner clothing-

- True lowliness of heart,
- Which takes the humbler part,
- And o'er its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.
- And so the yearning strong,
 With which the soul will long,
 Shall far outpass the pow'r of human telling;
 No soul can guess His grace
 Till it become the place
 Wherein the Holy Spirit makes His dwelling.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

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

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Silence for reflection on God's Word and for self-examination.

Let us then confess our sins to God our Father.

Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the H Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

KYRIE

LSB 168

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.

This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia.

Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose blood set us free to be people of God.

Power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and blessing and glory are His.

This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia.

Sing with all the people of God, and join in the hymn of all creation:

Blessing and honor and glory and might be to God and the Lamb forever. Amen. This is the feast of victory for our God, for the Lamb who was slain has begun His reign.

Alleluia, alleluia.

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Let us pray. Living God,

Your almighty power is made known chiefly in showing mercy and pity. Grant us the fullness of Your grace to lay hold of Your promises and live forever in Your presence; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

 \mathbf{H} \mathbf{H} \mathbf{H}

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST LESSON (Be seated)

When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him." So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died, 'Say to Joseph, Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.' And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant

Genesis 50:15-21

it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

(8:00) ANTHEM

Jubilation Choir

1. What a fellowship, what a joy divine, leaning on the everlasting arms; what a blessedness, what a peace is mine, leaning on the everlasting arms.

Refrain:

Leaning, leaning, safe and secure from all alarms; leaning, leaning, leaning on the everlasting arms.

(10:30) PSALM 103:1-12 (Sung responsively)

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!
Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
The LORD works righteousness

and justice for all who are oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel. The LORD is merciful and gracious, *Leaning on the Everlasting Arms* Text: E. Hoffman Music: A. Showalter

2. O how sweet to walk in this pilgrim way, leaning on the everlasting arms;O how bright the path grows from day to day,

leaning on the everlasting arms. (Refrain)

3. What have I to dread, what have I to fear, leaning on the everlasting arms?I have blessed peace with my Lord so near, leaning on the everlasting arms. (Refrain)

slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever.
He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

SECOND LESSON

Romans 14:1-12

As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written,

"As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."

So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

(10:30) CHILDREN'S SERMON

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

GOSPEL

Matthew 18:21-35

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 18th chapter. **Glory to You, O Lord.**

Peter came up and said to [Jesus], "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.

"Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

This is the Gospel of the Lord. Praise to You, O Christ.

SERMON (Be seated)

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus. Amen. Dear friends in Christ:

Last Sunday we read the verses right before today's Gospel text. And in those verses, we heard Jesus instruct his followers on how to approach a brother Christian who has sinned against them. His instruction included a clear goal: that of winning the brother back into the family – something that would happen when sins were confessed, and forgiveness was granted. And the instruction also outlined a specific method: that of following a four-step approach.

With this teaching of Jesus brought to mind, and quickly summarized, one can see how natural it was for Peter to then ask his question in today's reading. Peter wanted to know: "How many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me?"

Most things in life have limits. In baseball, a batter is out after three strikes. With the library, you only get to check out a book for so many days. Peter, having just heard Jesus share a four-step process with a clear conclusion, perhaps thought that forgiveness had limits too.

But Peter had also seen Jesus show mercy, on several occasions. So he postulates that the number of times to forgive was probably a high one. He guesses seven, which no doubt seemed good because it's also a holy number.

Jesus responds to Peter by telling him that there is in fact no number when it comes to forgiveness. The "seventy-seven" time answer he gives – as well as the "seventy times seven" variant found in some manuscripts – is simply a way of saying that the number is endless. Jesus' words here are clear: occasions for forgiveness are never to be counted. His followers are not to keep score.

Jesus then tells a parable to explain why he commands this practice. As the parable unfolds, the reason becomes quite clear.

In the parable, a servant of the king owes the king a great amount of money – 10,000 talents – equivalent to millions of dollars today. The servant can't pay it, so he begs the king for mercy. The king, who has every right to sell the man and his family into slavery, as was the custom, forgives the servant's debt instead – setting him free, with no strings attached – simply out of pity.

This first part of the parable relates God's great mercy towards us. For you and I, like the king's servant, have accrued a great debt to God through our sin. Each of our sins has contributed to life's struggle, in some way, whether they have resulted in a direct and

painful wound in the life of another, or whether they've simply served to distance us from God.

Sometimes the Bible refers to these sins as trespasses – because in committing them we are going places we should not go. But other times the Bible calls them debts – meaning they are a loss for which we are responsible, and for which we owe payment.

Forgiving debt is not easy. And neither is forgiving sin. The loss incurred by the sin of another is significant, and in some cases quite overwhelming. The king in the parable – even though he was the king – surely would have suffered consequences because of his action of forgiving such a large debt. The same happens with us.

That is why we are instructed to turn to God for help. In times of loss, God will overwhelm us with his mercy. His mercy is freeing and renewing. The more we consider how God has been merciful to us, the more we will be able to show mercy to others and forgive them.

God expects us to forgive one another because that's the way he operates. And this is the main point of Jesus' parable. We who have been forgiven such great debts are now empowered to forgive others for their debts, because we have been overwhelmed by God's grace. That grace has given us freedom, hope, and the promise of a great future. This should be all the help and perspective we need.

Remember, God does not put a limit on our forgiveness. This teaching of Jesus is also found in verses such as Psalm 130 v.3 – words that you will recognize from one of our liturgical responses. "If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared."

And yet, despite being shown such grace, we don't always respond with grace of our own. The parable, as it continues, clearly points this out.

Soon after receiving that great mercy from the king, the servant encountered a fellow servant who owed him money – a hundred denarii – not an insignificant amount but still nowhere close to the 10,000 talents the servant had just been forgiven. When that fellow servant asked for mercy for his debt, the first servant refused to grant it. Instead, he had the debtor thrown into prison – the same penalty he had just escaped.

Here we see the forgiven servant acting with great hypocrisy. He was happy to receive forgiveness, but he would not give it in return. And this angers and saddens us.

Lest we focus our anger and sadness on that one character in the story, however, we must remember that the story is meant to mirror our own failings. We, too, often fail to extend forgiveness to those who owe us a debt. And we do this in great hypocrisy, since our much larger debt, owed to God by virtue of our sin, has been forgiven.

Receiving God's forgiveness without extending it to others is just plain wrong. Still, God can forgive us for this sin too. There is no number of times at which he'll stop, right?

Yes and no. Jesus goes on in the parable to explain that there is actually one condition to God's forgiveness.

In the parable, word of his servant's great hypocrisy gets back to the king. And the king is not happy, because his example of mercy has been completely ignored. Therefore, the king makes the servant play by the servant's own rules. He takes back his forgiveness, and the servant will now have to pay back his debt. Considering the amount, he'll never be able to do it.

Like the other parts of the parable, this part is also easily discerned. But in case we miss it, Jesus explains it to us very directly, saying: "So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

Here we have a word of judgment. God our king will not be mocked. Those who can't extend grace to others are not worthy of his grace. It's as simple as that.

Then again, even simple things can have complexities. And this is definitely one of those cases.

God, being God, is good at showing grace. But we mortals, on the other hand, struggle mightily with this. And that's because we get our feelings hurt, and we have many fears, and our memories can be vivid. Forgiveness is not so easy for us.

Jesus tells us that our forgiveness is to be done from the heart. And while this reference to the heart certainly points to its sincerity, it also points to what forgiveness is and is not.

Forgiveness doesn't mean that one immediately extends trust. Logic dictates that some boundaries may need to be in place. The one who hurts may hurt again, and people have every right to be careful.

But by appealing to our heart, Jesus is telling us to let love play a part too. The heart naturally longs for good relationships between people. We want to live in harmony with others. When our hearts are involved, we will wish another person well.

Our love may need to be tough love. But it should be love regardless. Forgiving means to hope and pray that a person would turn to God, turn from sinful ways, and be restored to a good relationship with us. It also means taking steps, as much as can be done, to help make the turning and restoration of the other person possible.

Forgiveness does not minimize sin. Far from it. Forgiveness takes sin seriously, and then does something about it.

Yes, some people will abuse God's forgiveness. Some will abuse it by refusing to forgive others. Others will abuse it by thinking they can go on sinning with no consequence.

And as to this second abuse, some think the church is implicit in its spread, by pronouncing forgiveness too quickly. Perhaps that's the case in certain circumstances.

Then again, anyone who thinks Christ's message minimizes sin by its proclamation of forgiveness has not spent enough time considering his message. Sin and forgiveness are both serious matters. Jesus' words today make this very clear.

Satan wants us to believe that we have a right to refuse to forgive someone who harms us, and especially if the harm is given without contrition. He will focus us upon the small bit of satisfaction we can derive from holding a grudge or exacting some payback. But such an unforgiving spirit is a poison that greatly harms us instead. When we refuse to forgive others, we endanger both our present health and our eternal salvation.

Today Jesus is asking you who it is that you need to forgive. Is it someone from the past? Is it someone you live with? Someone in your office? Someone at school? Someone at church? A neighbor? A friend?

Think about these people who have hurt you – and whom you may have hurt as well – and consider, today, how you can forgive them from your heart.

And if your heart can see nothing but anger and hate, then consider what you need to do to change this. Jesus taught us to pray: "and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Prayers to God are the greatest path to needed change.

By expecting us to forgiving others, God seeks to elevate our standards to his. And this is important, because if we set different standards for ourselves than what we expect from God, then we can't expect others to abide by them either. And in a world where no one forgives, all we're left with is resentment and escalating anger.

God knows that forgiving is difficult. And he will help us with this task. The greatest help he gives is the sure and certain mercy he shows in forgiving us – which is vividly and powerfully demonstrated through his son's death on the cross.

May God then help us to be merciful like he is. And may we learn the benefits of forgiving our brothers and sisters from our heart. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY (Stand) O Bless the Lord, My Soul

LSB 814

- O bless the Lord, my soul! Let all within me join And aid my tongue to bless His name Whose favors are divine.
- 2 O bless the Lord, my soul, Nor let His mercies lie Forgotten in unthankfulness And without praises die!
- 3 'Tis He forgives thy sins;
 'Tis He relieves thy pain;
 'Tis He that heals thy sicknesses And makes thee young again.

- 4 He crowns thy life with love When ransomed from the grave;
 He that redeemed my soul from hell Hath sov'reign pow'r to save.
- 5 He fills the poor with good; He gives the suff'rers rest.
 The Lord hath judgments for the proud And justice for th'oppressed.
- 6 His wondrous works and ways He made by Moses known,
 But sent the world His truth and grace By His belovèd Son.

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

Offerings support the church's mission work – both here and through our many partners. Offerings may be placed in the box at the sanctuary entrance or sent to the church through our website or the mail. **Fellowship Cards** help us welcome new people and track participation. Please fill one out and place it in the offering box following the service.

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

Heavenly Father, in Your mercy You have forgiven our insurmountable debt of sin, ransoming us with the death of Your Son. Free us from our grudges and unforgiving nature, lest through our lack of mercy we exclude ourselves from Your forgiveness. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, as You kept Joseph from evil and brought good from his suffering in Egypt, deliver us by Your grace so that we may learn patience in trials. Teach us to be slow to judge, quick to forgive, and steadfast in love for You and one another. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We praise You, O Lord, for retaining among us Your Holy Word and Sacraments. Continue to raise up faithful stewards of Your mysteries, that repentance and the forgiveness of sins in Christ's name would be proclaimed in our midst and throughout the world. And prepare Your baptized children to be faithful confessors of the hope that is in them. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Caring Father, visit the homes of Your people. Keep them from all harm and danger, and grant that we would dwell together in peace under the protection of Your holy angels. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of power and might, sustain the nations of the earth and lead them in the way of justice and truth. Defend life and liberty, and give us honest and faithful rulers, that nations may strive toward what is honorable, true and just. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, according to Your will grant healing to those who are struggling with concerns of health, especially, Geraine, Ann, Sophia, Dolly, Norma, Brooks, Trudy, Mary Ann, June, Peter, Wendy, Ron, James, Russell, Rich, Tawni, Dale, and those whom we name in our hearts... Bless, too, all who are celebrating, including Jerry and Jean on their 64th anniversary and Dolly on her 99th birthday. Grant these your children for whom we pray joys in their living, patience in suffering, and crown all their days with Your mercy. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Merciful God, though we come to Your table as servants who owe a debt we cannot pay, Your Son has forgiven it in its entirety. As we receive His very body and blood for our forgiveness, let us be grateful and go out to serve others with the same spirit of forgiveness. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Hear us, heavenly Father, for the sake of Christ Jesus, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

 Let the vineyards be fruitful, Lord, And fill to the brim our cup of blessing. Gather a harvest from the seeds that were sown, That we may be fed with the bread of life. Gather the hopes and the dreams of all; Unite them with the prayers we offer now. Grace our table with Your presence, and give us A foretaste of the feast to come.

OFFERTORY

\mathbf{H} \mathbf{H} \mathbf{H}

SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT

PREFACE	The Lord be with you. And also with you.	LSB 177
	Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.	
	Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to give Him thanks and praise.	
lt is tru	uly good right and salutaryevermore praising You and saying:	
SANCTUS		LSB 178
	Holy, holy, holy Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might: Heav'n and earth are full of Your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.	
PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING		LSB 178
THE WORDS OF OUR LORD		LSB 179
PROCLAMATION OF CHRIST		

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.

PAX DOMINI

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **Amen.**

AGNUS DEI

LSB 180

LSB 180

Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us. Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us. Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world; grant us peace.

THE COMMUNION (Be seated)

The Communion Assistant will come forward to receive first, then those from the pulpit side – by order of pew, front to back. Communicants will come up the center aisle and return via the side aisle. When all from the pulpit side have communed, the baptismal font side will commune in the same manner. We ask that the wine be consumed away from the tray table. Empty cups should be dropped into the receptacles.

- Let all mortal flesh keep silence And with fear and trembling stand; Ponder nothing earthly-minded, For with blessing in His hand Christ our God to earth descending Comes our homage to demand.
- 2 King of kings yet born of Mary, As of old on earth He stood, Lord of lords in human vesture, In the body and the blood, He will give to all the faithful His own self for heav'nly food.
- Rank on rank the host of heaven Spreads its vanguard on the way As the Light of Light, descending From the realms of endless day, Comes the pow'rs of hell to vanquish As the darkness clears away.
- At His feet the six-winged seraph, Cherubim with sleepless eye,
 Veil their faces to the presence As with ceaseless voice they cry:
 "Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia, Lord Most High!"

NUNC DIMITTIS

Lord, now You let Your servant go in peace; Your word has been fulfilled. My own eyes have seen the salvation which You have prepared in the sight of ev'ry people: A light to reveal You to the nations and the glory of Your people Israel. 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. PRAYER (Stand)

BENEDICTION

SENDING HYMN

- All praise to Thee, for Thou, O King divine, Didst yield the glory that of right was Thine, That in our darkened hearts Thy grace might shine. Alleluia!
- 2 Thou cam'st to us in lowliness of thought; By Thee the outcast and the poor were sought; And by Thy death was God's salvation wrought. Alleluia!
- 3 Let this mind be in us which was in Thee, Who wast a servant that we might be free, Humbling Thyself to death on Calvary. Alleluia!
- Wherefore, by God's eternal purpose, Thou
 Art high exalted o'er all creatures now,
 And giv'n the name to which all knees shall bow.
 Alleluia!
- Let ev'ry tongue confess with one accord,
 In heav'n and earth, that Jesus Christ is Lord,
 And God the Father be by all adored.
 Alleluia!

ANNOUNCEMENTS (Be seated)

DISMISSAL

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

All Praise to Thee, for Thou, O King Divine Setting: Sandra Eithun

FLOWERS: In celebration of our 64th wedding anniversary. By Jerry and Jeannie Meyer

Those serving:

Sunday, September 17, 8:00 a.m.:

Greeter: Jim Easterly Comm. Assist.: Judy Koucky Reader: Rich Kauzlarich

10:30 a.m.:

Greeter: Charles Fisher Comm. assist: Jill Hecht Reader: Charles Fisher AV Assistants: Hannes Buuck Andreas Buuck

Acknowledgments

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