**Emmanuel Lutheran Church**

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**At Home Worship September 27, 2020**

**WE GATHER**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, + one God, who creates, redeems, and sustains us and all of creation.

**Amen.**

**Confession and Forgiveness**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another. *(silence for reflection)*

Faithful God,

**Have mercy on us. We confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We turn from your loving embrace and go our won ways. We pass judgement on one another before examining ourselves. We place our own needs before those of our neighbors. We keep your gift of salvation to ourselves. Make us humble, cast away our transgressions, and turn us again to life in you through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

God hears the cries of all who call out in need, and through his death and resurrection, Christ has made us his own. Hear the truth that God proclaims: Your sins are forgiven in the name of +Jesus Christ. Let by the Holy Spirit, live in freedom and newness to do God’s work in the world. **Amen**.

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

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

Let us pray. **God of love, giver of life, you know our frailties and failings. Give us your grace to overcome them, keep us from those things that harm us, and guide us in the way of salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

**WE HEAR THE WORD**

**First Reading:** Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

1The word of the LORD came to me: 2What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, “The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge”? 3As I live, says the LORD God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. 4Know that all lives are mine; the life of the parent as well as the life of the child is mine: it is only the person who sins that shall die.

25Yet you say, “The way of the LORD is unfair.” Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair? 26When the righteous turn away from their righteousness and commit iniquity, they shall die for it; for the iniquity that they have committed they shall die. 27Again, when the wicked turn away from the wickedness they have committed and do what is lawful and right, they shall save their life. 28Because they considered and turned away from all the transgressions that they had committed, they shall surely live; they shall not die. 29Yet the house of Israel says, “The way of the LORD is unfair.” O house of Israel, are my ways unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair?

30Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, all of you according to your ways, says the LORD God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity will be your ruin. 31Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? 32For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the LORD God. Turn, then, and live.

**Psalm 25:1-9**

1To | you, O LORD, I lift | up my soul.  
2My God, I put my trust in you; let me not be | put to shame,  
nor let my enemies triumph | over me.  
3Let none who look to you be | put to shame;  
rather let those be put to shame | who are treacherous.  
4Show me your | ways, O LORD, and teach | me your paths.  
5Lead me in your | truth and teach me,  
for you are the God of my salvation; in you have I trusted all | the day long.  
6Remember, O LORD, your compas- | sion and love, for they are from | everlasting.  
7Remember not the sins of my youth and | my transgressions;  
remember me according to your steadfast love and for the sake of your good- | ness, O LORD.  
8You are gracious and up- | right, O LORD; therefore you teach sinners | in your way.  
9You lead the low- | ly in justice and teach the low- | ly your way.

**Second Reading:** Philippians 2:1-13

1If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, 2make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. 4Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. 5Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus

6who, although being in the form of God,

did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,  
7but relinquished it all, taking the form of a slave,  
being born in human likeness. And being found in human form,  
8he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross.

9Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name,  
10so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
11and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God, the Father.

12Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for God’s good pleasure.

**Gospel**: Matthew 21:23-32

23When Jesus entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?” 24Jesus said to them, “I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. 25Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?” And they argued with one another, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ 26But if we say, ‘Of human origin,’ we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet.” 27So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And he said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

28“What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ 29He answered, ‘I will not’; but later he changed his mind and went. 30The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, ‘I go, sir’; but he did not go. 31Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the dominion of God ahead of you. 32For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.”

**SERMON:** *(see last page)*

**WE RESPOND**

**HYMN: Lord Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word**

<https://blogs.elca.org/worship/files/2020/09/Lord-Keep-Us-Steadfast-in-Your-Word.pdf>

<https://youtu.be/x2vGK3Nw55w>

**APOSTLE’S CREED:**

We confess our shared faith with the words of the Apostle’s Creed:

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s 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 to the dead.**

**On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father,**

**and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church,**

**the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,**

**the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

Drawn together in the compassion of God, we pray for the church, the world, and all those in need, responding to each petition with the words “Hear our laments, and receive our prayers.”

Throughout the globe is the church: many assemblies are postponed by the virus, our songs quieted, our leaders searching for new ways forward.That you will continue to inspire all the baptized with the mind of Christ, we pray to you, faithful God.  
**Hear our laments, and receive our prayers.**

Around us nature is strained: polar ice is melting, excessive rains ravage the land, fires consume forests, fields, and homes, and animals are deprived of habitat*.* That you will preserve and protect the earth, we pray to you, mighty God:  
**Hear our laments, and receive our prayers.**

Around us is a needy world: governments allow injustice, violence threatens stability, people experience prejudice, reforms are thwarted, workers are unemployed, medical facilities are strained, children are abused. That you will save the people in all the nations of the world, we pray to you, compassionate God:  
**Hear our laments, and receive our prayers.**

In our nation’s courts, we see justice delayed and justice denied. Yet we thank you for the life of Ruth Bader Ginsburg and for her passion for equality under the law. That you will uphold honest judges and insightful juries throughout our criminal justice system, and that you will assist our nation in its task of filling the Supreme Court, we pray to you, righteous God:  
**Hear our laments, and receive our prayers.**

Around us are the sick: there is starvation, the virus continues, many persons receive no medical attention, our neighbors and dear ones are ill. That you will bless all ministries of care and will relieve the suffering of those who are ill in body, mind, or spirit, we pray to you, merciful God.  
**Hear our laments, and receive our prayers.**

Nearby are needs of which we are unaware. That you will send your holy angels to uphold all who face personal troubles, we pray to you, benevolent God:  
**Hear our laments, and receive our prayers.**

Inside many hearts there is both joy and sorrow. We pray now for ourselves: (*silence for relfection*)  
That you will give us new hearts and a new spirit, we pray to you, loving God.  
**Hear our laments, and receive our prayers.**

Before us lived countless of the faithful — the famous and the forgotten, our relatives and strangers. We lament their deaths, and we praise their witness.  That we may confess Jesus Christ as Lord through our life and at our death, we pray to you, eternal God.  
**Hear our laments, and receive our prayers.**

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

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, 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.**

**OFFERING:** *Part of our worship of God is giving of our talents, our passions, our gifts, our possessions, our time. Please take a moment to commit to healthy ways give back to God through service or financial gifts.*

Let us pray; **Blessed are you, O God, make of all things, You have set before us these gifts of your good creation. Bless our offerings that they may be a sign of your love in the world. Amen.**

**HYMN: O God, My Faithful God**

[**https://blogs.elca.org/worship/files/2020/09/O-God-My-Faithful-God.pdf**](https://blogs.elca.org/worship/files/2020/09/O-God-My-Faithful-God.pdf)

[**https://youtu.be/fgvef0GdPsU**](https://youtu.be/fgvef0GdPsU)

**WE ARE SENT**

**Benediction**

The God of compassion, hope and joy,

Our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer,

Bless your feet to carry you into places of need.

Bless your lips to proclaim love and mercy.

Bless your heart to love and listen to those you encounter.

Bless your hands to care for the needs of your neighbors.

Bless you to be a blessing to others.

Now and always.

**Amen.**

Parts of our Worship Service are curated from the following sources:

Reflection material: Gordon Lathrop. Intercessory Prayer: Gail Ramshaw

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Sermon:

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and redeemer. Amen.

We’re starting today a series where I hope to explore the conversations in the Gospel texts. Whether that’s with disciples, Jesus, priests and elders, God and his people, lots of conversations are happening in our sacred text. And knowing humanity as we do it shouldn’t surprise you that often people don’t see things the same way. In this time of elections, protests, and politicization of everything from wearing face masks, to vaccines, to fashion, we’re confronted limitlessly with different opinions. And our gospel readings are no different.

We each when we read scripture bring our own personalities, preferences, family backgrounds and experience to the text as lenses to read the narratives. So not only are the folks in the Bible having conversations but we each have conversations with the text. And hopefully then have conversations with each other! The best way to read scripture is with other perspectives to help inform our own.

To that end, please share with us your perspectives. Join us on the phone or through your computer at 11:30 on Sunday mornings. The information is in our bulletins.

The conversational aspects of our Gospel for today are pretty clear. The chief priests and elders of the people, the CP&E, are wanting to questions Jesus, to trap him into saying something they can use against him. But Jesus turns the tables and asks them a question instead. Ever wary of the power of the crowd and always aware of the rules of their religion, they are stuck between a rock and a hard place. They can’t answer where John the Baptist’s power and authority came from. In that moment there was not good answer for them.

So then Jesus uses another conversation tactic, he tells a parable. Two sons were asked to go work in the vineyard, one said yes the other no, one didn’t go to the field and one did. The CP&E admitted that the one who said no but still went and worked was the one who did the father’s will. Jesus then interprets the parable to show how the undesirable characters who turned their lives around because of the John the Baptist’s preaching had done as God had willed. They may have turned away and said not to God’s will, God’s desire to see them have abundant life, but they repented, turned and moved into God’s grace.

The stakes in this conversation were pretty high on both sides. The priests and elders risked looking foolish in front of the crowd at the temple. Jesus knew his life was in danger from these folks who wanted him out of the way of their ambitions. He knew that his message was important and wanted to share it widely.

Jesus and the CP&E also were coming at this conversation with very different value sets. The scripture, the law and prophets, dictated the smallest actions for these priests and elders. They felt by following the rules to the most minute degree that they would be made right with God, the would be righteous. But Jesus comes from the same Jewish tradition and instead values human flourishing above all. If people are suffering because of the Law and the Prophets these scriptures are not working as they were meant! They are instructions on how to live well with God and with each other with the planet and with one’s self. If they do not give life, abundant life, then they are not reflecting God’s will.

And so Christ Jesus who, although being in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but relinquished it all, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God, the Father.

God’s values humanity over the exploitation of godly power. He gave it up to be a human, the form of a slave. And even that he gave up in the most humiliating, violent way. Gave up being God like, gave up life itself, to bring all people to himself.

Very different than the values of the elders and priests who wouldn’t answer a question about John the Baptist because they feared giving up any power or authority.

The question comes down to what are we to adhere to – are we to follow the letter of the law, or are we to create means for human flourishing? God gave us laws and rules and prophets to threaten us back into right behavior. But until God gave it all up in the form of Jesus Christ, until we were united with him in our baptisms, until we daily remember that we have died to sin and been raised to new life, until we have the same mind as Christ Jesus who although being in the form of God gave that up, and gave up human life, so that we might have life, that we might have abundant life. Until that good news the law only forces us to acknowledge our need for a savior.

Our Gospel reading teaches us that following the letter of the law will get you more laws, more tied up in legalities. It will teach you to judge others harshly without compassion or empathy. Jesus instead reminds us that God’s will is to have all turn to him. To give freedom, eternal life, and forgiveness to all.

I’d invite you to reflect on this reading and ask how am I, how are we all judging others based on society’s laws instead of God’s values? How are we following rules without tending to human flourishing?

I’d invite you through words and action and influence break down the rules that hold back our neighbor’s abundant life. How can we encourage the flourishing of all those that God loves? The ICE officers the Black Lives Matter protestors, the homeless folks begging at corners in downtown, the heads of corporations making billions while giving workers minimum wage, the drug addicts and sex workers. The members and friends of Emmanuel Lutheran, Cheney.

Please join me in prayer:

*Grant us, Lord God, a vision of your world as your love would have it:   
a world where the weak are protected, and none go hungry or poor;   
a world where the riches of creation are shared, and everyone can enjoy them;   
a world where different races and cultures live in harmony and mutual respect;   
a world where peace is built with justice, and justice is guided by love.  
Give us the inspiration and courage to build it, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*