

# ST. PETER EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

[Stpeterlutheranchurch.net](http://Stpeterlutheranchurch.net)

13221 W. Todd School Rd.

Glasford, Illinois 61533

309-389-5342

Pastor Raymond Barclay



Sunday, August 17, 2025  
Tenth Sunday after Pentecost  
Holy Communion

**PRELUDE: ORGAN / CLAVINOVA**

**[\*] REQUESTS YOUR RISING IF COMFORTABLE**

**CALL TO WORSHIP BY OUR CHURCH BELL**

**GREETINGS**

**THE ANNOUNCEMENTS OF THE DAY**



### **Introduction to the Worship Service**

The word of God is a refining fire. Jesus is the great divide in human history. He invites our undivided attention and devotion. Today in worship we are surrounded by a great “cloud of witnesses.” In the word and in holy communion we are invited yet again to look to Jesus, “the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.”

**\*ENTRANCE HYMN *How Firm a Foundation* (LBW 507)**

## How Firm a Foundation



1 How firm a foun - da - tion, O saints of the Lord,  
2 "Fear not, I am with you, oh, be not dis - mayed,  
3 "When through fi - ery tri - als your path - way shall lie,  
4 "Through - out all their life - time my peo - ple shall prove



is laid for your faith in his ex - cel - lent word!  
for I am your God and will still give you aid;  
my grace, all - suf - fi - cient, shall be your sup - ply.  
my sov - 'reign, e - ter - nal, un - change - a - ble love;



What more can he say than to you he has said  
I'll strength - en you, help you, and cause you to stand,  
The flames shall not hurt you; I on - ly de - sign  
and then, when gray hairs shall their tem - ples a - dorn,



who un - to the Sav - ior for ref - uge have fled?  
up - held by my righ - teous, om - nip - o - tent hand."  
your dross to con - sume and your gold to re - fine."  
like lambs they shall still in my bo - som be borne."

Text: J. Rippon, *A Selection of Hymns*, 1787, alt.  
Music: FOUNDATION, early American

## **\*BRIEF ORDER FOR CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

P In the name of the Father, and of the ✝ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

P Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C **Amen**

P 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.

Most merciful God,

C **we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. 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. 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**

P In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ✝ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen**

## **\*INVOCATION**

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

C **And also with you.**

# \*HYMN OF PRAISE



☐ Glo-ry to God, glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God in the high - est;



glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God, and peace to God's peo- ple on earth.



☐ Lord God, heav-en - ly king, al- might- y God and Fa- ther, we



wor-ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glo - ry.



☐ Glo-ry to God, glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God in the high - est;



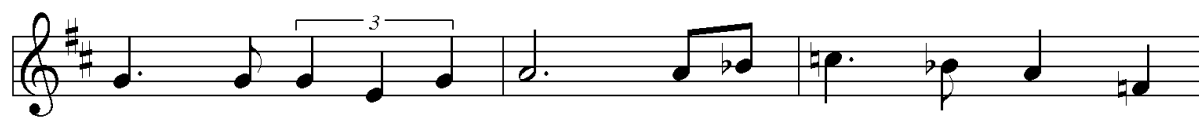
glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God, and peace to God's peo- ple on earth.



☐ Lord Je - sus Christ, on - ly Son of the Fa - ther,



Lord God, Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the



world: have mer - cy on us; you are seat - ed at the



right hand of the Fa - ther: re- ceive our prayer.

**C** Glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God in the high - est;  
glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God, and peace to God's peo - ple on earth.

**I** For you a - lone are the Ho - ly One, you a - lone are the Lord,  
**II** you a - lone are the Most High, Je - sus Christ, with the Ho - ly  
Spir - it, in the glo - ry of God the Fa - ther, A - men.

**C** Glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God in the high - est;  
glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God, and peace to God's peo - ple on earth,  
and peace to God's peo - ple on earth.

### \*PRAYER OF THE DAY

**P** The Lord be with you.

**C** And also with you.

**P** Let us pray.

**P** Almighty and ever-living God, you have given great and precious promises to those who believe. Grant us the perfect faith which overcomes all doubts, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**C** Amen

## FIRST READING: Jeremiah 23:23-29

A reading from Jeremiah.

*Because Jeremiah preaches the unpopular message of God's judgment, he suffers rejection. Today's reading distinguishes between the true prophet, like Jeremiah, who speaks God's word, and the false prophet who misleads the people through dreams. One is like wheat; the other like worthless straw.*

<sup>23</sup> Am I a God near by, says the LORD, and not a God far off? <sup>24</sup> Who can hide in secret places so that I cannot see them? says the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? says the LORD. <sup>25</sup> I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, "I have dreamed! I have dreamed!" <sup>26</sup> How long? Will the hearts of the prophets ever turn back—those who prophesy lies and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart? <sup>27</sup> They plan to make my people forget my name by their dreams that they tell one another, just as their ancestors forgot my name for Baal. <sup>28</sup> Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let the one who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? says the LORD. <sup>29</sup> Is not my word like fire, says the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?

READER The word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

## PSALM: Psalm 82

Arise, O God, and rule the earth. (Ps. 82:8)

<sup>1</sup> God takes his stand in the coun-<sup>1</sup> cil of heaven;  
he gives judgment in the midst<sup>1</sup> of the gods:

<sup>2</sup> **"How long will you<sup>1</sup> judge unjustly,  
and show favor<sup>1</sup> to the wicked?**

<sup>3</sup> Save the weak<sup>1</sup> and the orphan;  
defend the hum-<sup>1</sup> ble and needy;

<sup>4</sup> **rescue the weak<sup>1</sup> and the poor;  
deliver them from the power<sup>1</sup> of the wicked.**

<sup>5</sup> They do not know, neither do they understand; they go<sup>1</sup> about in darkness;  
all the foundations of the<sup>1</sup> earth are shaken.

<sup>6</sup> **Now I say to you,<sup>1</sup> 'You are gods,  
and all of you children of<sup>1</sup> the Most High;**

<sup>7</sup> nevertheless, you shall<sup>1</sup> die like mortals,  
and fall like<sup>1</sup> any prince.' "

<sup>8</sup> **Arise, O God, and<sup>1</sup> rule the earth,  
for you shall take all nations<sup>1</sup> for your own.**



## SECOND READING: Hebrews 11:29—12:2

A reading from Hebrews.

*The author of Hebrews presents us with rich stories of faith. In a long list of biblical heroes, we find examples of trust in God that enabled them to face the trials of life faithfully. In addition to this “cloud of witnesses,” we have Jesus, the perfect model of faithful endurance.*

<sup>29</sup> By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as if it were dry land, but when the Egyptians attempted to do so they were drowned. <sup>30</sup> By faith the walls of Jericho fell after they had been encircled for seven days. <sup>31</sup> By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had received the spies in peace.

<sup>32</sup> And what more should I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, <sup>33</sup> who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, <sup>34</sup> quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. <sup>35</sup> Women received their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to obtain a better resurrection. <sup>36</sup> Others suffered mocking and flogging and even chains and imprisonment. <sup>37</sup> They were stoned to death; they were sawn in two; they were killed by the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented <sup>38</sup> of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains and in caves and holes in the ground.

<sup>39</sup> Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, <sup>40</sup> since God had provided something better so that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect.

<sup>12:1</sup> Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup> looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

READER The word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.



## \*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



## \*GOSPEL: Luke 12:49-56

P The Holy Gospel according to Luke, the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter.

C **Glory to you, O Lord.**

*Jesus delivers harsh words about the purifying and potentially divisive effects of obedience to God's call. The way of the cross often leads followers to encounter hostility and rejection, even from those they love.*

[Jesus said:] <sup>49</sup> "I have come to cast fire upon the earth, and how I wish it were already ablaze! <sup>50</sup> I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what constraint I am under until it is completed! <sup>51</sup> Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! <sup>52</sup> From now on five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three; <sup>53</sup> they will be divided:

father against son  
and son against father,  
mother against daughter  
and daughter against mother,  
mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law  
and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

<sup>54</sup> He also said to the crowds, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, you immediately say, 'It is going to rain,' and so it happens. <sup>55</sup> And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, 'There will be scorching heat,' and it happens. <sup>56</sup> You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?"

P The Gospel of the Lord.

C **Praise to you, O Christ.**

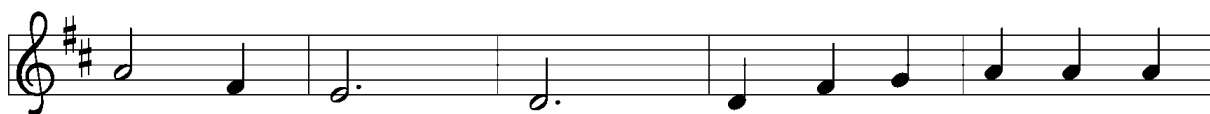
**THE WORD: 'WHY DO YOU THINK I CAME?'**

# HYMN OF THE DAY *I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light* (WOV 649)

## I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light



1 I want to walk as a child of the light. I want to  
2 I want to see . . . the bright-ness of God. I want to  
3 I'm look - ing for . . . the com - ing of Christ. I want to



fol - low Je - sus. God set the stars to give  
look at Je - sus. Clear Sun of right - teous-ness,  
be with Je - sus. When we have run . . . with



light to the world. The star of my life is Je - sus.  
shine on my path, and show me the way to the Fa - ther.  
pa - tience the race, we shall know the joy of Je - sus.

### *Refrain*



In him there is no dark-ness at all. The night and the



day are both a - like. The Lamb is the light of the



cit - y of God. Shine in my heart, Lord Je - sus.

Text: Kathleen Thomerson, b. 1934

Music: HOUSTON, Kathleen Thomerson

Text and music © 1970, 1975 Celebration

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**\*CREED**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.  
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.  
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit  
and born of the virgin Mary.  
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried.  
He descended into hell.  
On the third day he rose again.  
He ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again 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**

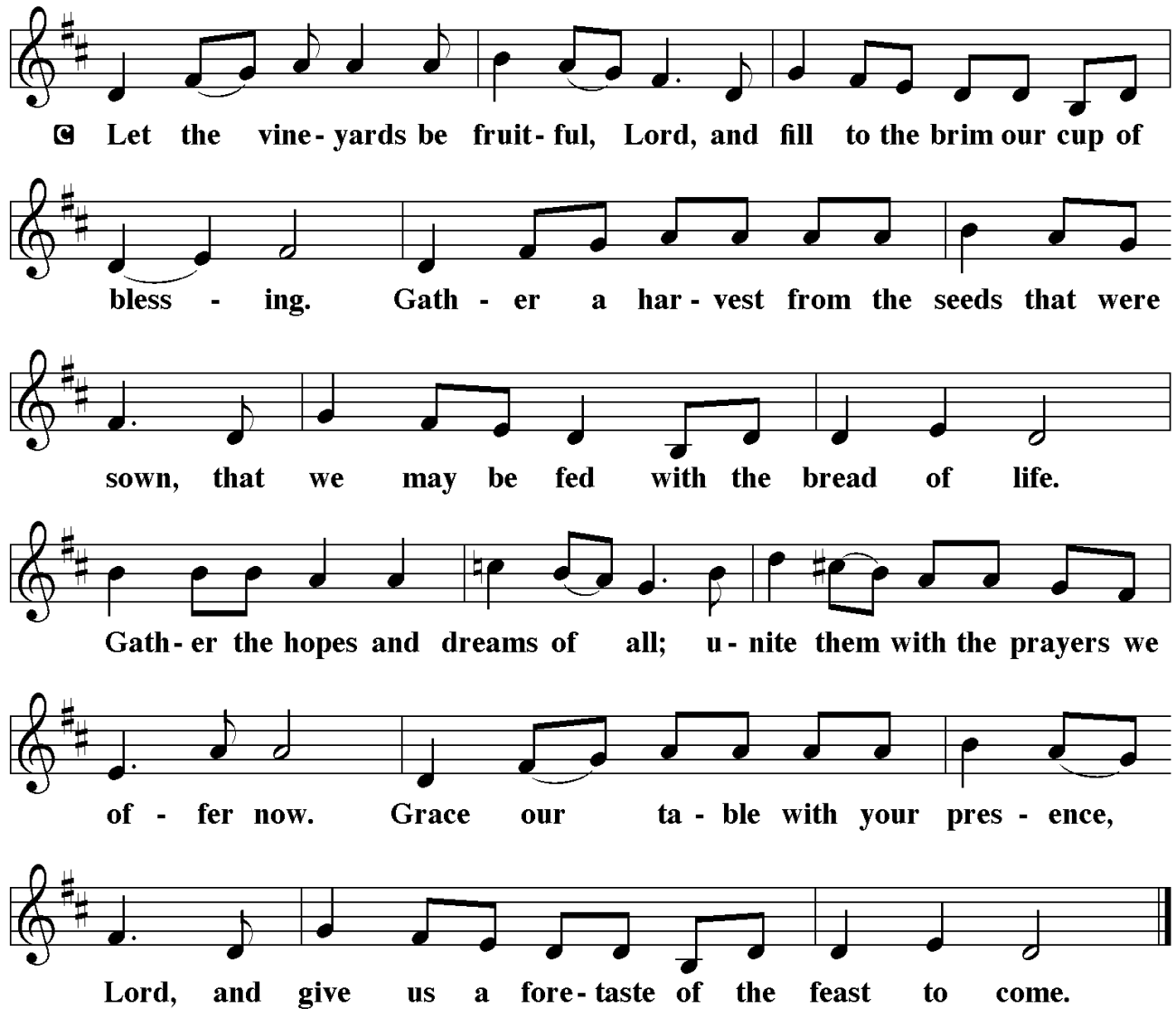
## **\*THE PRAYERS**

- P Let us pray for the church, the creation, and the whole people of God, for God is near.
- P Raise up faithful leaders for your church around the world. Inspire global missionaries (*missionaries sponsored by this congregation may be named*) with a spirit of accompaniment, as they walk alongside our partners in the gospel in solidarity, interdependence, and mutuality. Hear us, O God.
- C **Your mercy is great.**
- P Safeguard rivers and lakes (*local water sources may be named*) from pollution. Sustain the work of conservationists, policy makers, and advocacy groups seeking to protect fresh water sources. Hear us, O God.
- C **Your mercy is great.**
- P Bridge divisions across partisan lines. Strengthen cooperative efforts among lawmakers (*local elected officials may be named*) who enact policies that protect our neighbors who are most vulnerable. Hear us, O God.
- C **Your mercy is great.**
- P Embrace all who suffer in isolation: for those who are incarcerated or detained, those who are fleeing from unsafe environments, and those who are sick or homebound (*especially*). Reassure them of your care in all times and places. Hear us, O God.
- C **Your mercy is great.**
- P Guide the leaders of this congregation. In these late summer weeks, inspire their planning for a new program year ahead. Kindle in us a spirit of collaboration and support for their work. Hear us, O God.
- C **Your mercy is great.**
- P With thanksgiving, we remember the cloud of witnesses who surround us. By the example of their faith, enable us to run with perseverance the race set before us, until that day when we join their unending praise. Hear us, O God.
- C **Your mercy is great.**
- P Confident in God's presence and promise, we entrust our prayers to the one who always receives them; through Jesus Christ, our wisdom and companion.
- C **Amen.**

## **\*PEACE**

- P The peace of the Lord be with you always.
- C **And also with you.**
- P Let us share God's peace with one another.

## \*PRESENTATION OF THE GIFTS



Let the vine-yards be fruit-ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of  
bless - ing. Gath - er a har - vest from the seeds that were  
sown, that we may be fed with the bread of life.  
Gath-er the hopes and dreams of all; u - nite them with the prayers we  
of - fer now. Grace our ta - ble with your pres - ence,  
Lord, and give us a fore-taste of the feast to come.

## \*OFFERTORY PRAYER

P Let us pray.

Blessed are you,

C O Lord our God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts. With them we offer ourselves to your service and dedicate our lives to the care and redemption of all that you have made, for the sake of him who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

## \*DIALOGUE

P The Lord be with you.

C **And also with you.**

P Lift up your hearts.

C **We lift them to the Lord.**

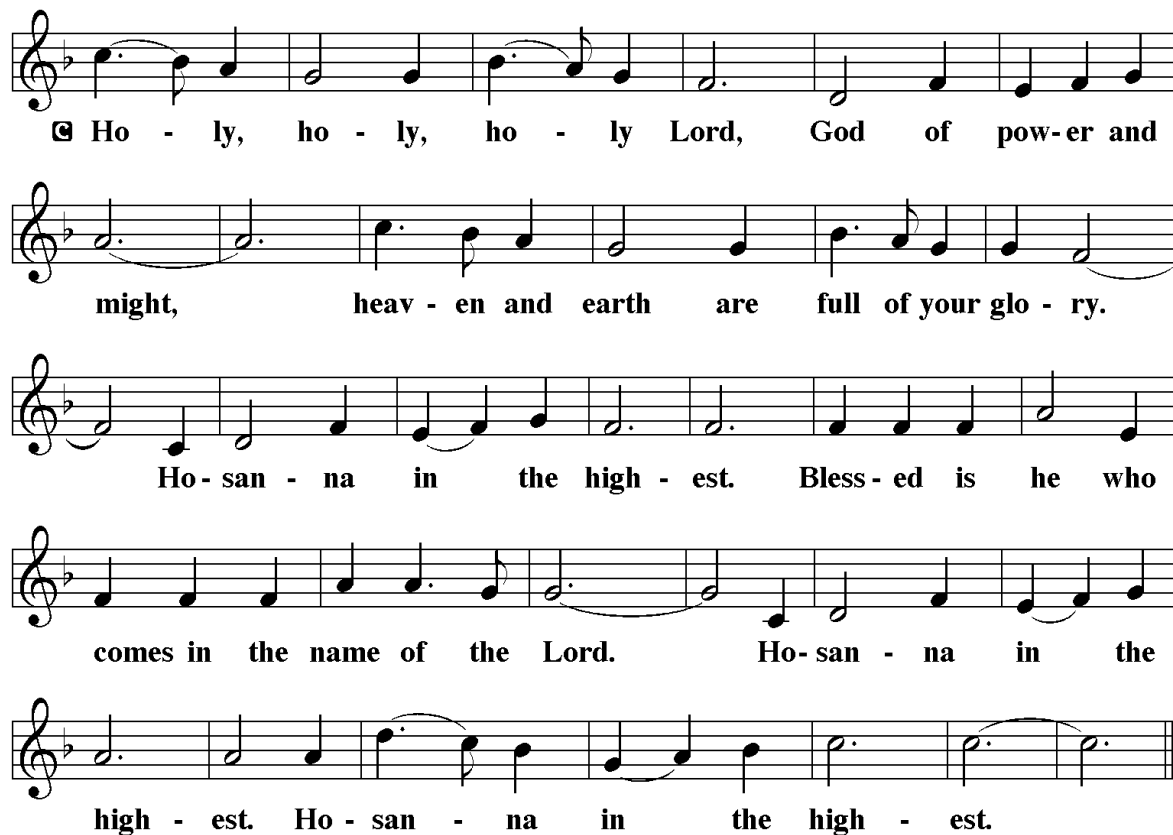
P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

## \*PREFACE

It is indeed right and salutary that we should at all times and in all places offer thanks and praise to you, O Lord, holy Father, through Christ our Lord; who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. And so, with the Church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

## \*SANCTUS



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and  
might, heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry.  
Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who  
comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the  
high - est. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

## **\*GREAT THANKSGIVING**

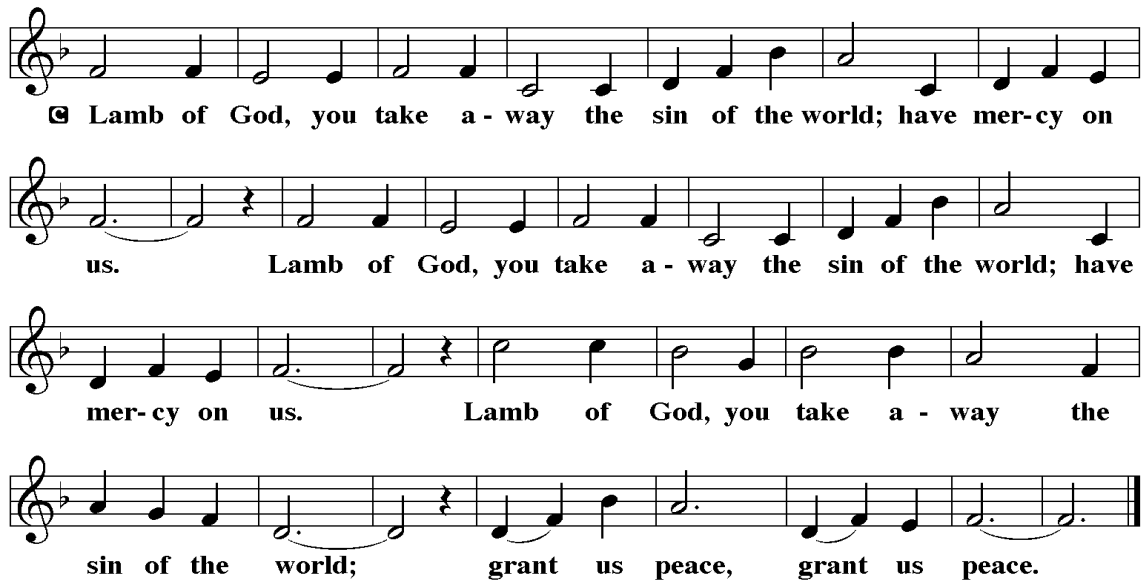
Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son,  
who reached out to heal the sick and suffering,  
who preached good news to the poor,  
and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.  
In the night in which he was betrayed,  
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;  
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:  
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.  
Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,  
and gave it for all to drink, saying:  
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,  
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.  
Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection, and ascension,  
we await his coming in glory.  
Pour out your Holy Spirit,  
that by this Holy Communion we may know  
the unity we share with all your people  
in the body of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, now and forever.  
**Amen**

## \*LORD'S PRAYER

P Lord, remember us in your kingdom, and teach us to pray:

**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.**

## COMMUNION HYMN



☞ Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on  
us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have  
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the  
sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

## COMMUNION

P The body of Christ, given for you. The blood of Christ, shed for you.

C Amen



# COMMUNION HYMN *Earth and All Stars!* (LBW 558)

## Earth and All Stars!



1 Earth and all stars! Loud rush - ing plan - ets!  
 2 Hail, wind, and rain! Loud blow - ing snow - storm!  
 3 Trum - pet and pipes! Loud clash - ing cym - bals!  
 4 En - gines and steel! Loud pound - ing ham - mers!



Sing to the Lord a new song!  
 Sing to the Lord a new song!  
 Sing to the Lord a new song!  
 Sing to the Lord a new song!



Oh, vic - to - ry! Loud shout - ing ar - my!  
 Flow - ers and trees! Loud rus - tling dry leaves!  
 Harp, lute, and lyre! Loud hum - ming cel - los!  
 Lime-stone and beams! Loud build - ing work - ers!



Sing to the Lord a new song!  
 Sing to the Lord a new song!  
 Sing to the Lord a new song!  
 Sing to the Lord a new song!



*Refrain*  
 He has done mar - vel - ous things.



I too will praise him with a new song!

5 Classrooms and labs!  
 Loud boiling test tubes!  
 Sing to the Lord a new song!  
 Athlete and band!  
 Loud cheering people!  
 Sing to the Lord a new song! *Refrain*

6 Knowledge and truth!  
 Loud sounding wisdom!  
 Sing to the Lord a new song!  
 Daughter and son!  
 Loud praying members!  
 Sing to the Lord a new song! *Refrain*

Text: Herbert F. Brokering, b. 1926

Music: EARTH AND ALL STARS, David N. Johnson, 1922–1987

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COMMUNION HYMN *One Bread, One Body* (WOV 710)

One Bread, One Body

*Refrain*



One bread, one bod-y, one Lord of all; one cup of



bles-ing which we bless, and we, though man-y



through-out the earth, we are one bod - y in this one Lord.



1 Gen - tile or Jew, ser - vant or free,  
2 Man - y the gifts, man - y the works,  
3 Grain for the fields, scat-tered and grown,



*Refrain*

wom-an or man, no more.  
one in the Lord of all.  
gath-ered to one for all.

Text: John Foley, SJ, b. 1939

Music: ONE BREAD, ONE BODY, John Foley, SJ

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## \*POST-COMMUNION CANTICLE

P The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

C Amen

Thank - ful hearts and voic - es raise; tell ev - 'ry -  
one what God has done. Let all who seek the  
Lord re - joice and bear Christ's ho - ly name.  
Send us with your prom - is - es, O God, and  
lead us forth in joy with shouts of thanks -  
giv - ing. Al - le - lu - ia.

## \*POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

P Let us pray.

P Almighty God, you provide the true bread from heaven, your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Grant that we who have received the Sacrament of his body and blood may abide in him and he in us, that we may be filled with the power of his endless life, now and forever.

C Amen

### **\*BENEDICTION**

**P** Almighty God, Father, ✠ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.  
**C** **Amen**

### **\*DOXOLOGY**

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise him, all creatures here below;  
Praise him above ye heav'nly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.  
**Amen**

### **REFLECTION**

1. How would you translate Luke 12:56 in your own language?
2. "...already kindled". Has the 'fire' begun?
3. Part of life is dealing with 'hard truths'. What's the 'hardest truth' you have had to face?

**P** Go in Peace. Serve the Lord.  
**C** **Thanks be to God.**

**\*THIS WEEK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS\***

Welcome in the name of Jesus Christ. Thank you for coming!

**~ Strength & Healing Concerns~**

**\*PLEASE KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS\***

Pam Rabe	Judy Livingston	Pat Janssen	Bill Juraco	Phyllis Fischer
Lyle & Mary Lou Nannen	Judy Wyss	Virginia Mahan		Richard Sathoff
Ray Hammerich	Cyndi Benson	Carl Satterlee		Dave Kroepel
Linda Meyer	Grant Blaza	Doug Rabe		Alice Lopez
Derek Cruitt	Heather Hayden	Marsha Shafer		Greg Strickfaden
Marie Haage	Linda Hollenback	Kendall Manwaring		Bobby Creamer

**And All Soldiers Serving Our Country**

**~ THANK YOU ~**

<b>Music:</b>	<b>Linda Garmon</b>
<b>Reader:</b>	<b>Mike Rabe</b>
<b>Greeter:</b>	<b>Gents'</b>
<b>Com. Assts:</b>	<b>Ed Shafer</b>
	<b>Colleen Juraco</b>
	<b>Gary Rosenbohm</b>

**~ ST. PETER HAPPENINGS ~**

Aug. 17<sup>th</sup> – Communion Sunday – 9am Worship Service  
Aug. 19<sup>th</sup> – Ladie's Night Out @ Gil's Supper Club – 5:30pm  
Aug. 23<sup>rd</sup> – Northern Conference Summer Gathering  
9am – 1pm @ First English Lutheran Church  
Aug. 24<sup>th</sup> – Non-Communion Service – 9am Worship Service  
Aug. 31<sup>st</sup> – Communion Service – 9am Worship Service  
Hammerich – Rjekena Reunion Church Basement

### **First Year Confirmation Classes Announcement:**

I hope to be able to offer first year Confirmation Classes beginning in September. So, if you are interested or know someone who is, please contact either myself or your Council President, Alice Diver.

I'm open to combining younger age students this year in order to keep students being the only student in their class. Please help to spread this announcement to people who you believe would be interested.

Classes will begin in September, but class materials need to be ordered well in advance.

Have any questions? Talk to Alice D. or call me anytime.

**Pastor Ray (309) 229-4963**

I'd like you to know the definition given by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America of what Confirmation is all about.

In the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), confirmation is a rite of passage marking a public affirmation of faith and a commitment to living as a Christian. It's a process of instruction and preparation for young people to identify more deeply with the Christian community and its mission. This involves learning about the Christian faith, including the Bible, Creeds, and Lutheran teachings, and actively participating in the life of the church.

These are the guidelines that I apply to each of my students who participate in my classes.

**---Pastor Ray---**

The WELCA "Project Promise" continues its next phase for the summer months by collecting donations for the School Kits in June, July, and August. Containers will be available in the Narthex to collect the following items:

- ❖ Notebooks – 70 sheets only
- ❖ Pencils (unsharpened) and ball point pens (no gel ink)
- ❖ Pencil Sharpeners
- ❖ Erasers (2 inches)
- ❖ Rulers (inches on one side and centimeters on the other)
- ❖ Scissors (blunt safety)
- ❖ Boxes of crayons (16 or 24 count only)

**\*If you would like for Sharon to do the shopping, just give her the money and she will get it done!!**

## GOSPEL MESSAGE

**August 17, 2025**

**LECTIONARY 20**

**It's So Confusing**

Entering someone else's conversation halfway through can be disorienting. You don't know the context, and you're confused about the background, so you can't really make heads or tails of what's being discussed. Today's gospel reading is kind of like that experience. It's so confusing to hear Jesus talk like this!

But if we're honest with ourselves, we know our world is already full of the divisions Jesus describes. Political divisions have only deepened. Religious divisions cause people to talk over one another. We encounter racial divisions that we're afraid to talk about or even acknowledge, and economic divisions that isolate people according to status and means. Yes, our world is already full of divisions. And what about the tone of this gospel reading? Jesus' sayings are so provocative! With the kind of rhetoric being thrown around in our world today, do we need more alarming words?

When we look closely at the reading and pay attention to the context, we can get a better idea of what exactly Jesus is proposing in these inflammatory sayings. Notice the divisions he mentions here: divisions within families. In the context of the ancient world, the family was the central unit of connection and the source of your identity. The family told you who you were and how you could (or could not) operate.

It is into that kind of ordering, the foundation of identity, that Jesus brings disruption. His point is that in the kingdom of God, whether you were born into wealth or poverty, a family of prestige or one of pandemonium, you are God's beloved child. The message of God in Christ breaks up the social boxes and social games of this world, erasing the dividing lines we already set up for ourselves.

In the death and resurrection of Christ, we're all united in God's family, enjoying a new ordering of identity that breaks down what divides us.

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