

St. Stephen Lutheran Church
July 26, 2020
Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

As Solomon prays for wisdom, we seek to more deeply know the treasures of faith. In today's gospel Jesus offers everyday images that reveal to us the reign of God: a tree that becomes a sheltering home, yeast that penetrates and expands, a treasured pearl, a net that gains a great catch. Even as we seek the riches of God's reign, the great surprise is that God's grace finds us first!

Prelude

"Was Gott Tut, Das ist Wohlgetan"

by Johann Pachelbel

Gathering

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, whose steadfast love is everlasting, whose faithfulness endures from generation to generation.

Amen.

Trusting in the mercy of God, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Reconciling God,

**we confess that we do not trust your abundance,
and we deny your presence in our lives.**

**We place our hope in ourselves
and rely on our own efforts.**

**We fail to believe that you provide enough for all.
We abuse your good creation for our own benefit.**

**We fear difference and do not welcome others
as you have welcomed us.**

We sin in thought, word, and deed.

**By your grace, forgive us;
through your love, renew us;
and in your Spirit, lead us;
so that we may live and serve you in newness of life. Amen.**

Beloved of God,

by the radical abundance of divine mercy we have peace with God through ☩ Christ Jesus, through whom we have obtained grace upon grace. Our sins are forgiven. Let us live now in hope. For hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Gathering Hymn

“God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens”

Hymn#771

- 1 God, who stretched the spangled heavens
infinite in time and place,
flung the suns in burning radiance
through the silent fields of space:
we, your children in your likeness,
share inventive pow'rs with you;
great Creator, still creating,
show us what we yet may do.

- 2 We have ventured worlds undreamed of
since the childhood of our race;
known the ecstasy of winging
through untraveled realms of space;
probed the secrets of the atom,
yielding unimagined pow'r,
facing us with life's destruction
or our most triumphant hour.

- 3 As each far horizon beckons,
may it challenge us anew:
children of creative purpose,
serving others, hon'ring you.
May our dreams prove rich with promise;
each endeavor well begun;
great Creator, give us guidance
till our goals and yours are one.

Text: Catherine Cameron, b. 1927

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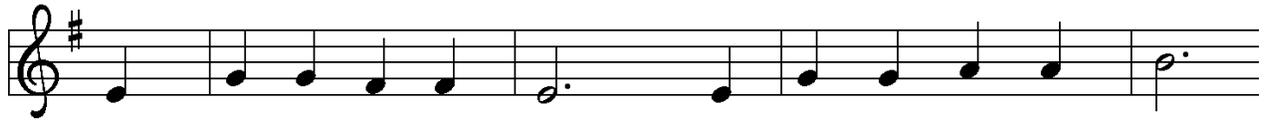
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***Apostolic Greeting**

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

And also with you.

*Kyrie



- 1 Have mer - cy on us, Lord, and hear our sol - emn prayer.
- 2 Have mer - cy on us, Christ, and wash a - way our sin.
- 3 Have mer - cy on us, Lord; make sin and shame de - part.



We come to hear your liv - ing word; it saves us from de - spair.
Pour out your grace and make us whole that new life may be - gin.
Re - new us with your sav - ing pow'r; cre - ate in us new hearts!

Canticle of Praise



- 1 Glo-ry be to God in heav-en; peace, good-will to all the earth.
- 2 Glo-ry be to Christ for - ev - er, Lamb of God and Lord of love.
- 3 Ho - ly One we now ac-claim you; Lord a - lone, to you we call;



Might-y God of all cre - a - tion, Fa - ther of sur - pass - ing worth:
Son of God and gra - cious Sav - ior, you have come from heav'n a - bove;
Ho - ly One in faith we name you, God most high, yet near to all:



we ex - alt you, we a - dore you, we lift high our thanks and praise.
on the cross you died to save us; now you reign at God's right hand.
Je - sus Christ, with God the Spir - it, in the Fa - ther's splen - dor bright.



Saints and an - gels bow be - fore you; here on earth our songs we raise.
Hear our prayer; re - store, for - give us; in your prom - ise firm we stand.
For the peace that we in - her - it, glo - ry be to God on high!

*Prayer of the Day

Let us pray.

Beloved and sovereign God, through the death and resurrection of your Son you bring us into your kingdom of justice and mercy. By your Spirit, give us your wisdom, that we may treasure the life that comes from Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Word

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

The First Lesson

1 Kings 3:5-12

Because Solomon did not ask for long life, riches, or the defeat of his enemies, God gave him what he asked for: wisdom to govern the people well.

⁵At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask what I should give you." ⁶And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. ⁷And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. ⁸And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. ⁹Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?"

¹⁰It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. ¹¹God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, ¹²I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you."

Word of God. Word of Life. **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm

Psalm 119:129-136

¹²⁹Your de- | crees are wonderful;

therefore I obey them with | all my heart.

¹³⁰**When your word is opened | it gives light;**

it gives understanding | to the simple.

¹³¹I open my | mouth and pant

because I long for | your commandments.

¹³²**Turn to me and be gra- | cious to me,**

as you always do to those who | love your name.

¹³³Order my footsteps | in your word;

let no iniquity have dominion | over me.

¹³⁴**Rescue me from those | who oppress me,**

and I will keep | your commandments.

¹³⁵Let your face shine up- | on your servant

and teach | me your statutes.

¹³⁶**My eyes shed | streams of tears,
because people do not | keep your teaching.**

The Second Lesson

Romans 8:26-39

These words celebrate the depth of God's actions for us. Through Christ's death for us and the activity of the Spirit praying for us, we are fused to God's love poured out in Jesus Christ. Nothing, not even death itself, is able to separate us from such incredible divine love.

²⁶The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. ²⁷And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

²⁸We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. ³⁰And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

³¹What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³²He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? ³³Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. ³⁵Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all day long;
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Word of God. Word of Life. **Thanks be to God**

***Gospel Acclamation**



Al - le-lu - ia! Lord and Sav - ior: o - pen now your sav - ing word.



Let it burn like fire with - in us; speak un - til our hearts are stirred.



Al - le - lu - ia! Lord, we sing for the good news that you bring.

***Gospel Reading**

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Throughout Matthew’s gospel, Jesus and his disciples proclaim the good news that “the kingdom of heaven is near!” Here, Jesus offers several brief parables that explore the implications of this announcement for people’s lives.

A reading from the Gospel according to St. Matthew, the thirteenth chapter.

Glory to You o Lord.

³¹[Jesus] put before [the crowds] another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field;³² it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

³³He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.”

⁴⁴“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

⁴⁵“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; ⁴⁶on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

⁴⁷“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; ⁴⁸when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. ⁴⁹So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁵¹“Have you understood all this?” They answered, “Yes.” ⁵²And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to You, O Christ.**

Sermon

Pastor Matthew Best

***Hymn of the Day**

“God, When Human Bonds are Broken”

Hymn #603 vs. 1-3

- 1 God, when human bonds are broken
and we lack the love or skill
to restore the hope of healing,
give us grace and make us still.
- 2 Through that stillness, with your Spirit
come into our world of stress,
for the sake of Christ forgiving
all the failures we confess.
- 3 You in us are bruised and broken:
hear us as we seek release
from the pain of earlier living;
set us free and grant us peace.

Text: Fred Kaan, b. 1929

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***Apostles Creed**

AM: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us profess our faith, using the words of the Apostles 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 Church**

Congregational response after each petition:

Lord in Your mercy, **C: Hear our prayer.**

With the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, let us pray for the church, those in need, and all of God's creation.

Omnipotent Father, Your promises are broader than we can begin to grasp while our visions are limited. Expand our vision of what Your universal fellowship of believers could be and do, and help us, in communion with our sisters and brothers, to lovingly work for that future. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Merciful Father, help us to see that we are not the masters of Your creation. Instead, help us better grasp our responsibilities as caretakers for Your creation of which we are a part. Give us wisdom and guide us to work for the sustainment of all life and the careful conservation of earth's resources. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

All powerful God, as, according to Your Word, You blessed Solomon with wisdom never known before his time, please bless our local, state, and national leaders along with others in authority around the world with the wisdom needed to equitably lead all, not only through this COVID-19 pandemic but also through the other current calamities and strife that harms and separates humanity. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Loving Father, so many of your children feel lost, deserted, and alone at this time. Remind all of us that nothing in or beyond our world can separate us from Your love. Living in that love, help us to continue reaching out to those bereaved and lonely in need of comfort. Help us to continue to support and lift up those who are oppressed. Help us to assist those who are poor, and work, where possible, to help them become economically self-sustaining. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Loving God, guide us away from complacency in our own health and wellbeing. Help us to go beyond being thankful. Help us to live thanks-filled lives to assist and heal those whom you have blessed us to serve. Be with healers everywhere whose curative skills surpass ours. Guide them to minister to all in need of healing in body, mind, or spirit regardless of their faith, sex, nationality, skin color, creed, or social status. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of grace, open the eyes of this and all congregations in your fellowship of believers that we might see Your truths, Your wisdom, and Your direction in the challenges and opportunities that are placed before us, even those which we are confronted on a daily, seemingly mundane basis. Help us see beyond what we view as limited options and truly embrace the idea that through You all things are possible. Especially help us in fashioning new ways to worship in these unprecedented times. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Benevolent Father, thank You for all with which you continue to bless us: the opportunity to join each other in worship, the joys of human contact before and after our virtual service, the knowledge that You walk beside us on each and every road on which we might find ourselves. For these and for whatever else your gifts provide, we thank you. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

***Peace**

P: The Peace of Christ be with you always.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us show a sign of that peace!

Offering

The offering, whether in person or through digital means, is an act of worship. Worship, at its core, is a reverent love and devotion accorded to God. We give because God loves us first, and we are called to love God and neighbor as a result. The offering is one way we show our love of God.

To assist you in this act of worship, there are several ways to make your offering:

Go to www.ststephenlc.org and scroll to the bottom of the page, and click donate.

- Text your offering dollar amount to 717-259-2393.
- Use the GivePlus app from your smart phone or device.
- Set up regular electronic offerings by contacting Kevin, our office manager, at 717-766-2168, Monday through Thursday from 9am – 2pm, or by email at office@ststephenlc.org to get set up.
- Mail in your check, made payable to St. Stephen Lutheran Church. Our address is 30 W. Main St., PO Box 266, New Kingstown, PA 17072.

The offerings are used to carry out the ministry of the church, to share the Good News, to provide pastoral care, to worship as a community, and to create an environment where Jesus encounters people and their lives are transformed. All of these things continue to take place. Thank you for your generosity.

*Offertory Prayer

Let us pray. God of goodness and growth,
all creation is yours, and your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens. Water and word, wine and bread: these are signs of your abundant grace. Nourish us through these gifts, that we might proclaim your steadfast love in our communities and in the world, through Jesus Christ, our strength and our song.

Amen

Thanksgiving for the Word

**Salvation belongs to our God
and to Christ the Lamb forever and ever.
Great and wonderful are your deeds,
O God of the universe;
just and true are your ways,
O Ruler of all the nations.
Who can fail to honor you, Lord,
and sing the glory of your name?
Salvation belongs to our God
and to Christ the Lamb forever and ever.
For you alone are the Holy One,
and blessed is the one
whose name is the Word of God.
All praise and thanks to you, holy God!
Salvation belongs to our God
and to Christ the Lamb forever and ever.**

Let us pray.

Praise and thanks to you, holy God, for by your Word you made all things: you spoke light into darkness, called forth beauty from chaos, and brought life into being. For your Word of life, O God,

we give you thanks and praise.

By your Word you called your people Israel to tell of your wonderful gifts: freedom from captivity, water on the desert journey, a pathway home from exile, wisdom for life with you. For your Word of life, O God,

we give you thanks and praise.

Through Jesus, your Word made flesh, you speak to us and call us to witness: forgiveness through the cross, life to those entombed by death, the way of your self-giving love. For your Word of life, O God,

we give you thanks and praise.

Send your Spirit of truth, O God; rekindle your gifts within us: renew our faith, increase our hope, and deepen our love, for the sake of a world in need. Faithful to your Word, O God, draw near to all who call on you; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever.

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.**

Sending

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

***Blessing**

Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. God, the creator, † Jesus, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the comforter, bless you and keep you in eternal love.

Amen.

***Sending Hymn**

"Sent Forth by God's Blessing"

Hymn #547

- 1 Sent forth by God's blessing,
our true faith confessing,
the people of God from this dwelling take leave.
The supper is ended.
Oh, now be extended
the fruits of this service in all who believe.
The seed of Christ's teaching,
receptive souls reaching,
shall blossom in action for God and for all.
Your grace shall incite us,
your love shall unite us
to work for your kingdom and answer your call.
- 2 With praise and thanksgiving
to God ever-living,
the tasks of our ev'ryday life we will face—
our faith ever sharing,
in love ever caring,
embracing God's children, the whole human race.
With your feast you feed us,
with your light now lead us;
unite us as one in this life that we share.
Then may all the living
with praise and thanksgiving
give honor to Christ and his name that we bear.

Text: Omer Westendorf, 1916-1997, alt.

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***Dismissal**

Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness; be of good courage; hold fast to that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honor all people; love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Postlude

"Toccata Jubiloso"

by Lani Smith

St. Stephen Evangelical Lutheran Church is a community of faith inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit to proclaim boldly the Good News of God's loving and saving presence in the world.

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