



St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church
Wilton, WI
October 4, 2020
18th Sunday after Pentecost
**Inviting People to Journey with Christ's
Family in Spreading God's Love and Mercy**

In today's gospel reading, Jesus tells a vineyard parable, which serves as an image of Israel, the prophets' mission, and Christ's death. For Christians, the vineyard also speaks of God's love poured out in the blood of Christ, given to us for the forgiveness of sin. Grafted onto Christ the vine at baptism, we are nourished with wine and bread so that we may share Christ's sufferings and know the power of his resurrection.

Gathering

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

Hymn

You Are Holy
Du är helig

1*

Du är he - lig, du är hel. Du är all - tid myck-et mer
You are ho - ly, you are whole. You are al - ways ev - er more

än vi nån - sin kan för - stå, du är nä - ra än - då.
than we ev - er un - der - stand. You are al - ways at hand.

Väl - sig - nad va - re du som kom - mer hit just nu,
Bless - ed are you com - ing near. Bless - ed are you com - ing here

väl - sig - na - de vår jord, blir till bröd på vår jord.
to your church in wine and bread, raised from soil, raised from dead.

2

Du är he - lig, du är hel - het,
You are ho - ly, you are whole - ness,

du är när - het he - la kos - mos lo - var dig!
you are pres - ent. Let the cos - mos praise you, Lord!

Ho - si - an - na, ho - si - an - na,
Sing ho - san - na in the high - est!

ho - si - an - na, ho - si - an - na vår Gud.
Sing ho - san - na! Sing ho - san - na to our God!

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Beloved God, from you come all things that are good. Lead us by the inspiration of your Spirit to know those things that are right, and by your merciful guidance, help us to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.

Word

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

FIRST READING

The prophet sings a sad, parable-like love song about the relationship between God and Israel. In this song Israel is compared to a promising vineyard. Despite God's loving care, the vineyard that is Israel has brought forth "wild grapes" of injustice and distress, when fine grapes of justice and righteousness were expected..

Isaiah 5:1-7

- ¹Let me sing for my beloved
my love-song concerning his vineyard:
My beloved had a vineyard
on a very fertile hill.
- ²He dug it and cleared it of stones,
and planted it with choice vines;
he built a watchtower in the midst of it,
and hewed out a wine vat in it;
he expected it to yield grapes,
but it yielded wild grapes.
- ³And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem
and people of Judah,
judge between me
and my vineyard.
- ⁴What more was there to do for my vineyard
that I have not done in it?
When I expected it to yield grapes,
why did it yield wild grapes?
- ⁵And now I will tell you
what I will do to my vineyard.
I will remove its hedge,
and it shall be devoured;
I will break down its wall,
and it shall be trampled down.
- ⁶I will make it a waste;
it shall not be pruned or hoed,
and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns;
I will also command the clouds
that they rain no rain upon it.

⁷For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts
is the house of Israel,
and the people of Judah
are his pleasant planting;
he expected justice,
but saw bloodshed;
righteousness,
but heard a cry!

P: The word of the Lord. C: **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 80:7-15

⁷Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.
⁸**You have brought a vine out of Egypt;
you cast out the nations and planted it.**
⁹You cleared the ground for it;
it took root and filled the land.
¹⁰**The mountains were covered by its shadow
and the towering cedar trees by its boughs.**
¹¹You stretched out its tendrils to the sea
and its branches to the river.
¹²**Why have you broken down its wall,
so that all who pass by pluck off its grapes?**
¹³The wild boar of the forest has ravaged it,
and the beasts of the field have grazed upon it.
¹⁴**Turn now, O God of hosts,
look down from heaven;**
¹⁵behold and tend this vine;
preserve what your right hand has planted.

SECOND READING

Paul reviews some of his supposed credentials, which no longer have any bearing in comparison to the right relationship he has been given through the death of Christ. The power of Christ's resurrection motivates him to press on toward the ultimate goal, eternal life with Christ.

Philippians 3:4b-14

[Paul writes:] ^{4b}If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

⁷Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. ⁸More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. ¹⁰I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, ¹¹if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

¹²Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

P: The word of the Lord. C: **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Acclamation

Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia.

Jesus tells a parable to the religious leaders who are plotting his death, revealing that their plans will, ironically, bring about the fulfillment of scripture.

The gospel according to Matthew 21:33-46

Glory to you, O Lord.

[Jesus said to the people:] ³³“Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. ³⁴When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. ³⁵But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. ³⁶Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. ³⁷Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ ³⁸But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.’ ³⁹So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. ⁴⁰Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” ⁴¹They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.” ⁴²Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the scriptures: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is amazing in our eyes’? ⁴³Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. ⁴⁴The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.” ⁴⁵When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. ⁴⁶They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

P: The gospel of the Lord. C: **Praise to You, O Christ.**

Sermon

Last Sunday, I walked around the south corner of the parsonage, and stopped. By the north, front corner of the church, I saw a squirrel. The squirrel was busily nibbling on an ear of dried corn. It had already eaten 1/3 of the kernels, and no doubt, I had interrupted its meal! It looked up at me, and froze...waiting to see if I would come

closer. I did need to go to the church, so I moved forward and the squirrel scurried away. But, I left the corn on the cob where it was, so the squirrel could return at a later time to finish its meal.

As I looked at the retreating squirrel, I wondered where the corn had come from. We don't have a squirrel feeder at the church. Perhaps one of the neighbors has a feeder, but that would mean that the squirrel had to drag the corn on the cob all the way to the churchyard. It is possible that someone placed the corn there for the squirrel to eat. I do not know. But, it is likely that the squirrel chose to bring the corn on the cob to the churchyard, because it seemed to be a "safe haven:" a place where the squirrel could eat without worrying that anyone or anything would hurt it or take the corn away from it. The squirrel came here, because this was a place where it felt protected from the challenges of those who would harm it or steal from it.

Our sermon for today, focuses on God's creation and God's church. It highlights God's hope for the church as a place where people acknowledge God's authority and seek to do God's will. As we consider the context for our gospel passage, we realize that it is a continuation of last week's pericope. In that pericope, Jesus was questioned by the chief priests and elders about his authority. This occurred after Jesus cleansed the temple of the money changers, and while he was teaching in the temple. When the chief priests and elders questioned Jesus, he responded by asking them by what authority John baptised. They chose not to respond, because either answer would have trapped them.

Today, Jesus offers another parable. Like the parable of last week, it is set in a vineyard. The story includes the owner of the vineyard and the tenants, who persist in beating, killing, or stoning the owner's slaves when they come to collect the owner's produce. The owner's request is customary and reasonable. By providing land to the tenants, the owner is entitled to a portion of the grapes and wine. He is also entitled to send his servants to collect his due! Yet, both times that the slaves are sent to the vineyard, the tenants respond with violence. The owner, surprisingly, demonstrates great patience with the tenants! After sending servants twice, the third time the owner sends his son, thinking that surely his son will be treated with respect! But he too, is mistreated, thrown out of the vineyard, and killed.

The vineyard represents Israel. The owner of the vineyard is God. God provides all that is needed for a rich and fruitful harvest. God provides the seeds, water, sunshine and all that is needed. God even selects tenants to supervise the work at the vineyard! God sends his slaves--prophets and others who serve God and seek to do God's will, to the vineyard to collect the owner's due. The tenants, representing the chief priests and the elders, respond as if they are the one's in authority. They look not to what is right regarding the owner's

authority, but rather focus on themselves--on obtaining riches, power, and authority in their own eyes and the eyes of others. The son in the parable is God's own son, Jesus. His treatment by the tenants foreshadows what will happen to Jesus in his final days in Jerusalem.

The parable raises questions for us, as it most likely did for the chief priests and elders. But, they may not have heard the parable as just described! The chief priests and elders may have initially identified themselves with the landowner! They may have thought that the tenants were those who were working for, or against, them! This parable highlights how difficult it can be to accept and follow God's authority rather than one's own. For this parable is about God sending his prophets and his son to encourage the church to be what God created it to be--a community that welcomes others and that respects God's creation. A community where God's people are nourished and fed by God's almighty hand. A community where leaders do not look to their own glory, but to God's glory. A community where God receives the honor and praise that God is due!

As I thought about this passage, I was reminded of God's creation as an important part of God's kingdom. I was also reminded of Francis of Assisi, whom we remember today. Like the story of the squirrel at the beginning of my sermon, there are two stories about Francis that relate to God's creation and what God's kingdom can be. These stories highlight how God's creatures can work together! For God invites us to show our love for all that God has created. Whether human, animal, plant or other living thing, all are to give God, God's due. All are to show respect for God and all that God has created.

The first story regarding Francis, relates to birds. We often see statues of Francis with his hands extended, holding seeds to feed the birds. The statues may have a bird, or another animal, resting on his shoulder or standing near his feet. Yet, we know that birds can be a nuisance to farmers, including those with vineyards! Birds can eat crops, which results in lost income for the farmers. But, Francis gathered the birds around him, talked with them, and fed them. Francis was even said to preach to the birds! He is the patron saint of ecologists (Biography.com). "Some regarded Francis as a madman or a fool, but others viewed him as one of the greatest examples of how to live the Christian ideal since Jesus Christ himself" (Biography.com).

The second story is about a fierce wolf in Gubbio. The wolf was causing grief for many area farmers. It was killing livestock and destroying farmers' livelihoods in the process. The farmers had raised these animals. They had fed them, watered them, cared for them, but now, this wolf was killing these animals for its own food! There would be no money from the sale of these animals. The farmers would have nothing to show for their hard work! As a result, the farmers felt that their only option was to destroy the wolf, but those who tried were attacked and killed by it. Francis did not want to see the wolf killed. After making the sign of the cross, he went

out and spoke to the wolf (as Francis often spoke to the animals). He made the wolf promise to stop killing! He then brought the docile wolf to the village. There, he gathered the townspeople together and told them that if they would agree to feed the wolf, the wolf would no longer kill their animals, or them. They agreed, and a solution to a vexing problem was resolved without further bloodshed (*Wikipedia*).

Francis was the son of a wealthy merchant, but as an adult, he "abandoned a life of luxury for a life devoted to Christianity after reportedly hearing the voice of God, who commanded him to rebuild the Christian church and live in poverty. Francis' embrace of Christ-like poverty was a radical notion at the time. The Christian church was tremendously rich, much like the people heading it, which concerned Francis and many others, who felt that the long-held apostolic ideals had eroded. Francis set out on a mission to restore Jesus Christ's own, original values to the now-decadent church" (Biography.com).

Our stories for today, invite us to think about God, God's church, and our place in furthering God's kingdom. They speak of ways in which we can do, or not do, so. We, like the chief priests and elders, can turn away from God's work in the world. We can harden our hearts and do things our way, rather than God's way! But, God has asked us to care for creation. God has given us, and continues to give us, so much--food, water, a beautiful place to live, family, friends, and other Christians to strengthen and encourage our faith. God asks us to acknowledge God's authority, not our own authority. God asks us to believe in God's son, who died on the cross for all humanity, so that we might have forgiveness of sins and new life in him.

How can the church be what God wants it to be? Let us recall these stories and give to God, God's due. Let us further God's kingdom on behalf of all God's creation. Let us welcome the weary and lift up the broken hearted. Let us invite, not condemn, those who seek to learn about God and God's will. Let us strengthen the church with expressions of God's grace, peace and love. For in the words of Desmond Tutu, "Goodness is stronger than evil; love is stronger than hate; light is stronger than darkness; life is stronger than death; victory is ours through God who loves us." Amen.

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 INTERCESSION

With confidence in God's grace and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

Holy God, you call us to work for peace and justice in your vineyard. Refresh the church with your life, that we may bear fruit through work and service. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Thank you for the abundant harvest of the earth. Bless and care for those whose hands bring the fruits of the earth to the tables of all who hunger. May we be inspired by your servants who cared deeply for your creation especially Francis of Assisi, whom we commemorate today. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Curb the impulses of greed and pride that lead us to take advantage of others. Grant that world leaders seek the fruits of the kingdom for the good and welfare of all people. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Sustain all who suffer with the promise of new life. Assured of your presence, heal our pain and suffering, and equip us to embrace all bodies aching for wholeness of mind, body, and soul. We call to mind those who are struggling today especially Katie, Dakota, Carla, Ruth, Judy, Alrita, Dick, Lisa, Pam, Curt, Deb, Lois, Tessa, Doug, Chris, Karl, Annette, and all those we name aloud and in our hearts. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

We pray for all managers in our community and for all who seek employment. Give hope and a future to those who lack meaningful work, those who have been marginalized or abused in the workplace, and those who desire new opportunities. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

O God, you so love the world that you sent Jesus, and our world so needs your love. With the whole Church we implore you to call forth pastors, deacons, and congregational leaders to lead us in bearing Christ to all the world so that the world may know your love. We pray especially for those in this faith community the Holy Spirit may be nudging to public ministry in the church and Christ-like service in the world. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Thank you for the saints who teach us to live faithfully in your vineyard. May our chorus join theirs until our labor is complete. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Listen as we call on you, O God, and enfold in your loving arms all for whom we pray, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

SENDING

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

Blessing

Hymn

Creating God, Your Fingers Trace



1 Cre - at - ing God, your fin - gers trace the bold de -
2 Sus - tain - ing God, your hands up - hold earth's mys - t'ries
3 Re - deem - ing God, your arms em - brace all now de -
4 In - dwell - ing God, your gos - pel claims one fam - 'ly



signs of far - thest space; let sun and moon and stars and
known or yet un - told; let wa - ter's frag - ile blend with
spised for creed or race; let peace, de - scend - ing like a
with a bil - lion names; let ev - 'ry life be touched by



light and what lies hid - den praise your might.
air, en - a - bling life, pro - claim your care.
dove, make known on earth your heal - ing love.
grace un - til we praise you face to face.

Text: Jeffery Rowthorn, b. 1934

Music: PROSPECT, W. Walker, *Southern Harmony*, 1835

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P: Go in peace. Remember the poor.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

IN OUR PRAYERS

Katie Wallace, Bill Collar, Dakota Holiday, Carla Von Haden, Ruth Johnson, Judy Bever, Alrita Ornes, Dick Krause, Lisa Rhodes, Pam Liefke, Curt Brueggen, Deb Paeth, Lois Reineke, Tessa Klipstein.

IN THE MILITARY

Jacob Picha, Todd Nofsinger, Dylan Dougherty, Danelle Dougherty, Seth Tormoen, Robert Cale.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE

The Red Cross collected a total of 55 units at yesterday's blood drive. We had a number of cancellations due to donors being advised they had been in contact with an individual who had tested positive for COVID-19.

CONGRATULATIONS

We extend our congratulations to Renee and Matt Mayme on the birth of their son, Arden, this past week. Jack and Mary Ann Arndt are the proud grandparents.

PRAY FOR THE CHILDREN

We urge you to remember the children of our church, as well as children throughout the world, in your prayers.

Lord, Jesus Christ, I bring to you:

Jada, Myles, & Conner Garske; Britain Hahn, Gracie & Kaden Brandau; Katie Pagel, Amara Brandau; Chase Brandau; Avery Brueggen; Riley Brueggen; Nolan & Logan Buchholz; Thadyn & Ayawyn Conner; Vanessa & Elliott Ornes; Lailah Eckes; Lena Ornes; Porter Sorenson; Kennedy & Josie Ornes; Brooklyn, Madelyn, Kaylin, Emma, Bryce, Marah, Bria, Ava, Katie, & Benjamin Gruen; Brady Zimmerman; Braylee Zimmerman; MaKenzie & Cooper Powell; Wesson Mayne; Vanessa, Mia, & Brek Anderson; Tyler & Jaden Bever; Carlee, Collin, & Camden Neidfeldt; Morgan Speicher; Avery & August Arndt; Krista & Sierra Cook; Tyler Brandau; Franklin & Douglas Wildes; Sophia, Derek & Deacon Erdman; Kody Tormoen; Angel Brueggen; Robert Cale; Callie Fleming; Miranda, Daphne & Linus Arndt; Natalie, Brodie & Fynlie Stanek; Emma Elder; Bryson Lamb; Alaina & Braxton Holthaus; Jada Leis; David, Sam & Zachary Ross; Gannon Tormoen; Jase & Margo Picha.

That your spirit will dwell with them according to your will. That they will grow in the knowledge of you and know that they are dearly loved by you. I pray that you will protect them from deception by the evil one and all his darts that would lead them astray. May they do well in school, learning and discerning what direction you have in mind for them. I also pray for all children everywhere, that you would keep them in your care.

In Jesus' name I pray.
Amen

ELCA WORLD HUNGER

ELCA World Hunger, like many organizations that work to end hunger, has experienced a decline in donations because churches are not operating in their normal capacity. Yet, due to the pandemic, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of people that are experiencing food insecurity and acute hunger. **To help support ELCA World Hunger, a virtual benefit for ELCA World Hunger entitled "Hunger in the Time of Covid-19; Life for Today & Hope for Tomorrow" will be held on September 24th at 7 pm.** This will be led by ELCA Presiding Bishop Eaton, Rick Steves, and Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee. We encourage you to participate in this event.. Register at: <https://community.elca.org/online-registration/sept-24-rick-steves-virtual-hunger-event>

SAMARITAN'S PURSE OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

We will have shoeboxes available in the next couple of weeks for those who wish to participate in Operation Christmas Child. In the meantime, you can be putting together items such as; toy cars, jump ropes, yo-yos, toothbrushes, bar soap, washcloths, combs, school supplies, socks, sunglasses, doll, stuffed animal. The list can really go on and on. Of course, the most important gift the child will receive is printed material, in their language, about the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

On Tuesday, September 29, I was watching the Morning Show on WKBT News 8. One of the reports highlighted a new board game entitled, "Trials and Triumph." The game was created by April Preyar, a Chicago Defense Attorney. It includes 54 scenarios in which players respond to various challenges and make decisions related to them. The purpose of the game is to help persons understand how to interact with police officers.

This game may be especially important now, because of recent news reports concerning examples of racial injustice and police brutality. A boy interviewed on the News 8 broadcast, stated that he didn't realize that he could be arrested based on some of his responses! This perhaps highlights a key benefit of the game; it allows players to vicariously experience challenges they might face in real life. It also helps them to determine the best ways to respond. With this knowledge, past players may make healthier/better/safer choices when faced with real life challenges. (Churches and youth organizations were mentioned as organizations that have purchased games to use as teaching-tools.)

As Christian believers, we too face trials and potentially, triumphs. When we hear Jesus' parables in the Bible, we can vicariously learn how to respond to challenges in our own lives. When we listen to God's word, we can place ourselves in the sandals of those who have faced trials in the past. When we read the Ten Commandments, we can learn about the ways in which God wants us to live our lives. Through reading the Bible and experiencing God's word in action, we can potentially respond with good, rather than evil.

When we read the stories of the strong women and men in the Bible, their examples of faith can motivate us to do likewise. For many of them embraced God's teachings, persisted in times of trial, and with God's help, triumphed! Through their faith in God, through their willingness to acknowledge God's authority and power, they humbled themselves, and God blessed them.

In our times of challenges, throughout all our trials, may we place our faith and trust in God. For the Bible states, "In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths" (Proverbs 3:6, NRSV).

Thanks be to God.

Peace,

Pastor Cathy

CONTACTS DURING CORONAVIRUS CLOSURE

In case of emergency, contact Pastor Cathleen, via text, 608-865-1074, Justin Arndt (608-435-6336) (414-587-6642) or Nalani Bever (608-387-2311).

To activate the prayer chain, please contact Nalani or Louise Buchholz (608-435-6435).

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