

ORDER OF SERVICE

Service of the Word ELW (red), p. 211-222

16th Sunday after Pentecost

[* Indicates when the congregation is standing as able]

[**Bolded** section of text is for congregation to recite]

Music Director: Lois Horst

Gathering

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

Call to Worship

Sing praise to God who rescues us when we fall!

Sing praise to God who walks with us on all our journeys!

Even though we fall, God lifts us and places us on paths of peace.

Even though we stray, God finds us and brings us back to lives of hope.

Thanks be to God, whose love is continually with us.

Praise be to God, whose mercy is over us all. Amen.

Children's Message with Blessing for the New Schoolyear

Dear God,

As we start a new school year, please be with us and guide us along the way. Help us to learn, do our best, and not give up when things get hard. Please bless our teachers, classmates, and families. Help us to be kind, patient, and supportive of each other. We pray that this school year will be filled with new experiences, good friendships, and lots of opportunities to grow. Help us remember that You are always with us, no matter what challenges we face. Thank You for being by our side. **Amen.**

* Hymn (red) ELW 520 Dearest Jesus, at Your Word

- 1 Dearest Jesus, at your word
we have come again to hear you;
let our thoughts and hearts be stirred
and in glowing faith be near you
as the promises here given
draw us wholly up to heaven.
- 2 All our knowledge, sense, and sight
lie in deepest darkness shrouded
till your Spirit breaks the night,
filling us with light unclouded.
All good thoughts and all good living
come but by your gracious giving.
- 3 Radiance of God's glory bright,
Light of light from God proceeding,
Jesus, send your blessed light;
help our hearing, speaking, heeding,
that our prayers and songs may please you,
as with grateful hearts we praise you.
- 4 Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
praise to you and adoration!

Grant us what we need the most:
all your gospel's consolation
while we here on earth await you,
till in heav'n with praise we greet you.

Text: Tobias Clausnitzer, 1619-1684, sts. 1-3; *Gesangbuch*, Berlin, 1707, st. 4; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827-1878, adapt.

*** Apostolic Greeting (p. 213)**

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

Response: **And also with you.**

*** Canticle of Praise (p. 213)**

Refrain

Glory to God, glory to God, glory to God in the highest;
glory to God, glory to God, and peace to God's people on earth.

- 1 Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory. *Refrain*
- 2 Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer. *Refrain*
- 3 For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Final Refrain

Glory to God, glory to God, glory to God in the highest;
glory to God, glory to God, and peace to God's people on earth,
and peace to Gods' people on earth.

*** Prayer of the Day**

We sing and speak your praise, O God, grateful for the many ways in which you have healed us. Keep our hearts, our minds, and our spirits open to learn ways in which we can offer healing love for others. For we ask this in Jesus' Name. **Amen.**

Word

First Reading: Genesis 50:15-21

The First Reading is from the book Genesis, chapter 50:

¹⁵ Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said, "What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?" ¹⁶ So they approached Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this instruction before he died, ¹⁷ 'Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.' Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. ¹⁸ Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said, "We are here as your slaves." ¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? ²⁰ Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. ²¹ So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones." In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

Response: Word of God. Word of Life. Thanks be to God.

Psalm 103:8-13 (sung responsively)

Psalm 103 is sung responsively:

⁸ LORD, you are full of compas-|sion and mercy,
slow to anger and abounding in | steadfast love;

⁹ **you will not al- | ways accuse us,
nor will you keep your an- | ger forever.**

¹⁰ You have not dealt with us according | to our sins,
nor repaid us according to | our iniquities.

¹¹ **For as the heavens are high a- | bove the earth,
so great is your steadfast love for | those who fear you.**

¹² As far as the east is | from the west,
so far have you removed our transgres- | sions from us.

¹³ **As a father has compassion | for his children, so you have
compassion for those who fear | you, O LORD.**

*** Gospel Acclamation (p. 216)**

Alleluia. Lord, to whom shall we go?

Alleluia. You have the words of eternal life.

Alleluia, alleluia.

*** Gospel: Matthew 18:21-35**

Response: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

²¹ Peter came and said to [Jesus,] "Lord, if my brother or sister sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" ²² Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times. ²³ "For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴ When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him, ²⁵ and, as he could not pay, the lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions and payment to be made. ²⁶ So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' ²⁷ And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him by the throat he said, 'Pay what you owe.' ²⁹ Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' ³⁰ But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. ³¹ When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³² Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴ And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. ³⁵ So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

Response: **Praise to you, O Christ.**

*** Hymn (red) ELW 605 Forgive Our Sins As We Forgive**

1 "Forgive our sins as we forgive,"
you taught us, Lord, to pray;
but you alone can grant us grace
to live the words we say.

2 How can your pardon reach and bless
the unforgiving heart

that broods on wrongs and will not let
old bitterness depart?

- 3 In blazing light your cross reveals
the truth we dimly knew:
how trifling others' debts to us;
how great our debt to you!
- 4 Lord, cleanse the depths within our souls
and bid resentment cease;
then, by your mercy reconciled,
our lives will spread your peace.

Text: Rosamond E. Herklots, 1905-1987, alt. Text © Oxford University Press 1969

Message

Grace and peace from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Leading up to Friday social media, TV and streaming services heavily focussed on 9/11. 25 years – a quarter of a century – another life time, so long ago and yet sometimes it feels it just happened yesterday. A day has become synonymous with shock and grief. Most of us can tell what they did that day – even me in far away Germany. I was just working on my second career as a broadcasting journalist and had been attending a school for journalism in Northern Germany away from home. My classmates and myself practiced our skills with authentic news service material and therefore we were supposed to create news mostly with the aftermath of 9/11. It was awful, because we were all scared to death, and were asked to show at least some sort of professionalism.

I am certain that, right now, you have flashbacks to that day, that beautiful morning. You probably see images of burning and tumbling buildings in front of your inner eye, the charred scar in the Pentagon building, the remains of a plane in a field in Pennsylvania. Images of immense destruction and death. Most of us just couldn't believe what was happening that morning. It just couldn't be, it wasn't supposed to be. The act of terrorism of that magnitude was just unfathomable. Not only the USA, but the whole western world was hit at its core.

People knew that things would never be the same. That the world had changed that morning. The churches open their sanctuaries for silent prayer that day, and people came. People prayed. People cried. People tried to make sense out of this senseless act of violence, and people were looking for direction. I think it is quite remarkable that people turn to God in times when nothing seems to make sense anymore in life. That people instinctively know that God is a God who knows suffering and loss, and that God is a God who just waits for it to be turned to when our world is turned upside down. I already talked about the horrible images of that day. But when I think of the events of 9/11 and their aftermath, I also remember another image. In the midst of destruction and chaos, a section of the cross beams that had helped hold up the WTC were found – a section that reminded many of the central symbol of the Christian faith: the cross.

Of course there were those who believed that this 'cross' was purposely placed by God in the ruins. Others, myself included, think it was merely a coincidence. But I don't think it really matters. We see the cross – and this is, what counts. It is the *symbol* of the cross and all the cross stands for which touched responders and those who took on the sad and horrifying task of cleaning up the ruins. Placed there by God or not, those who saw the cross were reminded of God's suffering and power. It gave strength and hope to many.

There is the story of the worker, who, after a day of searching for survivors and bodies in the rubble, needed a time out and stumbled over this cross. He reports how he broke down and cried when he saw it, and how it helped him carry on with his gruesome work.

At Ground Zero as much as in everyday Christian life, the cross was and is a symbol of death and resurrection, a symbol of the good that eventually overcomes evil. There is a special power of the cross, the power to give hope, the power to transform and transcend.

But then there is yet another aspect to the cross which often is overlooked by culture at large, sometimes even by Christians. And that is the aspect of forgiveness and reconciliation. God died for a fallen humanity. God died for us. Christ's death on the cross wasn't just a random and senseless act, but Christ suffered for us and with us, and Christ died for us and with us, in solidarity with our human weaknesses, and in order to bring us back to God.

This is huge. An enormous debt has been paid by God. And this is what Jesus talks about in the parable we heard in today's gospel. The king represents God, who forgives us our debt, our failings, our selfishness, our indifference, our shortcomings. Looking at the cross found at ground zero, looking at any cross for that matter, we are reminded that forgiveness and reconciliation is not only what God has done for us, but that forgiveness and reconciliation is something we are called to, each and every day, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. By the way, those numbers have deep symbolic meaning in Judaism. The number seven symbolizes wholeness, fullness, completion – think of the seven days of creation; seventy-seven times means over and over. Forgiveness never ends, Jesus says. And ain't that true! But only through forgiveness can we experience true healing.

We need to mend broken relationships. We need to heal. And in order to heal, we need to forgive. God has paid an enormous, unfathomable price to set us free from failings and to make us truly live. By forgiving others, we don't only set them free, but we free ourselves as well from feelings of grudge and resentment and hatred, feelings which keep us from living the present instead of being trapped in some hell of the past. I have seen it more than once how this stubborn holding on to grudges destroys relationships and sucks life out of a person. Is forgiven one another really that hard?

And forgiving does not mean forgetting. How could we forget the atrocities, the pain, the deaths, the horror of 9/11? How could we forget the atrocities of NAZI Germany? How could we forget the children of our indigenous siblings suffering in residential schools? No, we need to remember, in order to learn, in order to live in the here and now and to go into the future, as people transformed by the experiences of the past. Only if we remember the past and forgive and ask for forgiveness ourselves at the same time can we work for peace in the present – peace with others – peace with ourselves – peace with God. How many times should we forgive? Forgiveness never ends, says Christ. God forgives you – God forgives us – each and every day. Amen

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

*** Hymn (red) ELW 359 Where Charity and Love Prevail**

- 1 Where charity and love prevail,
there God is ever found;
brought here together by Christ's love,
by love we thus are bound.
- 2 With grateful joy and holy fear,
God's charity we learn;
let us with heart and mind and soul

now love God in return.

- 3 Let us recall that in our midst
dwells Christ, God's holy Son;
as members of each body joined,
in him we are made one.
- 4 Let strife among us be unknown;
let all contentions cease.
Be God's the glory that we seek;
be his our only peace.
- 5 Let us forgive each other's faults
as we our own confess,
that we may love each other well
in Christian gentleness.

Text: Latin hymn, 9th. cent.; tr. Omer Westendorf, 1916-1997, alt. Text © 1960 World Library Publications. 3708 River Rd., Suite 400, Franklin Park, IL 60131. All rights reserved.

* **Apostles' Creed (p. 217)**

With the whole church we confess our Christian faith.

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**

Response: Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Reminded of God's gracious and abundant love, we offer our prayers, confident that God hears us. Each prayer petition concludes with the response: 'Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great'.

A brief silence.

Move your church throughout the world away from judging and despising others. Lead us to embody the forgiveness you have given us in Jesus. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

The endless beauty of your creation reminds us of your mercy. Protect those who care for farms and ranches. Guide those who lead us to wonder at your creation. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Raise up leaders to hold all in authority accountable for any misuse of the power entrusted to them. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Calm the fears of all in need with your promises. Compassionately free the lives of any who feel bound by their failures. Remember your children in need, especially those on our prayer list and those we name in our hearts Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Ground this congregation in the welcome you show us in forgiving our wrongdoings. Inspire each of us to welcome others for your honour and glory. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

With you is found the joy and promise of eternal life. Keep us in that joy as we remember those who have gone before us. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Grant the prayers we have offered, what we have forgotten to ask, and whatever else you see that we need. We ask this in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

*** Peace (p. 218)**

The Peace of Christ will be with you always.

Response: **And also with you.**

Thanksgiving

Offering

*** Hymn (red) ELW 184 Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful**

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

Text © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

*** Thanksgiving for the Word (p. 220)**

O God of justice and love, we give thanks to you that you illumine our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, awaken us to the needs of others, and at the end bring all the world to your feast; through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit be honour and glory forever. **Amen.**

*** Lord's Prayer (p. 221)**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Sending

*** Blessing**

The God of love draw you into full accord and one mind, in the body of Christ Jesus. The God of hope grant you strength and joy in all circumstances through the interceding of the Spirit. The God of grace bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

*** Hymn 'Go Now in Peace' (Besig/Price)**

Go now in peace, never be afraid.
God will go with you each hour of every day.
Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true.
Know He will guide you in all you do.
Go now in love and show you believe.

Reach out to others, so all the world can see.

God will be there, watching from above.

Go now in peace, in faith and in love.

Amen, Amen, Amen.

*** Dismissal**

Go out in joy. Be led forth in peace. **Thanks be to God.**

Postlude

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