

*Gather the  
wheat into  
my barn*

MATTHEW 13:30

*Sunday, July 23, 2023  
8<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost*





48 Perrin Street, Fairport, NY ~ (585) 223-0634 ~ [www.blcfairport.org](http://www.blcfairport.org)  
The Rev. Abigail Zang Hoffman and The Rev. Amy Walter-Peterson, co-Pastors

**Sunday, July 23, 2023 ~ 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**

PRELUDE

Holy Spirit, Ever Dwelling

*IN BABILONE*  
setting, Wilbur Held

ANNOUNCEMENTS

*It is an age-old question: why is there evil in the world? In the parable of the wheat and the weeds Jesus suggests that both grow together until the harvest. With Paul, we long for the day that all creation will be set free from bondage and suffering. Having both weeds and wheat within us, we humbly place our hope in the promises of God, and from the Lord's table we go forth to bear the fruit of justice and mercy.*

**GATHERING**

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, who looks upon us in compassion, forgives our sin, and heals our lives.

**Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Have mercy, O God,

**against you, you alone, we have sinned. In your compassion, cleanse us from our sin and take away our guilt. Create in us a new heart and give us a steadfast spirit. Do not cast us away, but fill us with your Holy Spirit and restore your joy within us. Amen.**

As tender as parent to child, so deep is God's compassion for you. As high as heaven is above earth, so vast is God's love for you. As far as east is from west, so far God removes your sin from you, renewing your life through Jesus Christ. Blessed be God who crowns us with mercy and love.

**Blessed be God forever.**

GATHERING HYMN	O Holy Spirit, Enter In	ELW 786
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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.**

HYMN OF PRAISE

Glo - ry to you, God, for yours is the earth;  
yours the a - noint - ing, the ra - di - ant worth.  
Ours the re - joic - ing for spir - its a - flame;  
ours the thanks - giv - ing to your ho - ly name.  
Ours be the tell - ing of deeds great - ly done;  
yours be the glo - ry, O God, yours a - lone.

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. Faithful God, most merciful judge, you care for your children with firmness and compassion. By your Spirit nurture us who live in your kingdom, that we may be rooted in the way of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

## HEARING GOD'S WORD

READING: Romans 8:12-25

*For Paul, true spirituality means that we experience the reality of the Spirit, which enables us to pray as God's children, keeps us in solidarity with creation, and gives us unseen hope that God will liberate us and creation from bondage to death and decay.*

<sup>12</sup>So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—<sup>13</sup>for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup>For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. <sup>15</sup>For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” <sup>16</sup>it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup>and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

<sup>18</sup>I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup>For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; <sup>20</sup>for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup>that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup>We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; <sup>23</sup>and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup>For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? <sup>25</sup>But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



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

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

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

GOSPEL: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

*Jesus tells a parable about the coexistence of good and evil in this world. God's judgment will remove all evildoers and causes of sin, but not until the end of human history.*

<sup>24</sup>[Jesus] put before [the crowds] another parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field;<sup>25</sup>but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. <sup>26</sup>So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. <sup>27</sup>And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?' <sup>28</sup>He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' The slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' <sup>29</sup>But he replied, 'No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. <sup>30</sup>Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.' "

<sup>36</sup>Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." <sup>37</sup>He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; <sup>38</sup>the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, <sup>39</sup>and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. <sup>40</sup>Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. <sup>41</sup>The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, <sup>42</sup>and

they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. <sup>43</sup>Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!”

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY

Come, Ye Thankful People, Come

ELW 693

APOSTLES' CREED

Living together in trust and hope, we confess our 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.**

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

*Our prayers are always offered on behalf of the whole community.*

Trusting in God's abundant mercy, let us offer our prayers for a world in need..

*A brief silence.*

#1 You brought forth all creation and called it good. We pray for all those who toil to bring food to our tables. Direct policymakers to protect lands and seas. Bring rain to sun-parched fields and protect areas impacted by natural disasters. God, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

#2 You desire peace among nations and peoples. Guard our neighborhoods from hatred, watch over police officers and firefighters, and teach us to advocate for those who live in fear. God, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

#3 You name each of us as your children. Guide our hospitality ministry to welcome all, our education ministry to equip us for faithful living, and our social concerns ministry as they enact the gospel in our community. God, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, you make all things new. Strengthen and renew the relationships we share with these members and friends of Bethlehem and their families: Kevin & Kristina (Alison, Elizabeth, Josie, Marilyn), Olaf, Jim & Renee (Katy), Joshua, and Robert. Bring new life and growth to the ministry of our sisters and brothers in our twinned parish in Shurugwi, Zimbabwe. God, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

Breathe your abundance into all people.

*We pray for those who are grieving, especially the family and friends of:*

- Mike B. (colleague of Mike K.), who died on 7/4
- Beatrice (Bea) F., aunt of Jeff C., who died on 6/30

*We pray for those in need of healing, especially:*

- Brian B., recently hospitalized with pneumonia
- Sandy, friend of John C., who is facing health challenges
- Carol, friend of John C., who is facing health challenges
- Phil, friend of John C., who is facing health challenges



Hear these prayers we raise to you in our hearts or on our voice.

*Silence for individual prayer.*

God, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

Receive our prayers and answer us, O God, in the name of Jesus Christ.  
**Amen.**

## **SHARING GOD'S MEAL**

### THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.  
**And also with you.**

*Share the peace in a way that cares for friend and neighbor.  
If you worship virtually, share the peace through the comments section or text.*

### OFFERING

*Information about supporting Bethlehem's ministry with your offerings is available in the Welcome insert in your pew rack or by visiting [blcfairport.org/support-our-ministry](http://blcfairport.org/support-our-ministry).*

### OFFERING OF MUSIC

Comfort Ye  
Ev'ry Valley Shall Be Exalted  
(from *Messiah*, HWV 56/Part I)

Isaiah 40:1-3  
Isaiah 40:4  
George Frideric Handel

Paul O'Malley, tenor

## OFFERTORY



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

Let us pray. God of goodness and growth,

**all creation is yours, and your faithfulness is sure. Word and water, wine and bread: these are signs of your abundant grace. Receive the gifts we bring, and nourish us to proclaim your abiding love in our communities and in the world, through Jesus Christ, our strength and our song.**

**Amen.**

## GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

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

## WORDS OF INSTITUTION

God, you open wide your hands

And feed all creation with your goodness.

**Open us to receive all that you give us –**

**Your mercy, your grace, your love, your very self. Amen**

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Spirit, we 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**

## INVITATION TO COMMUNION

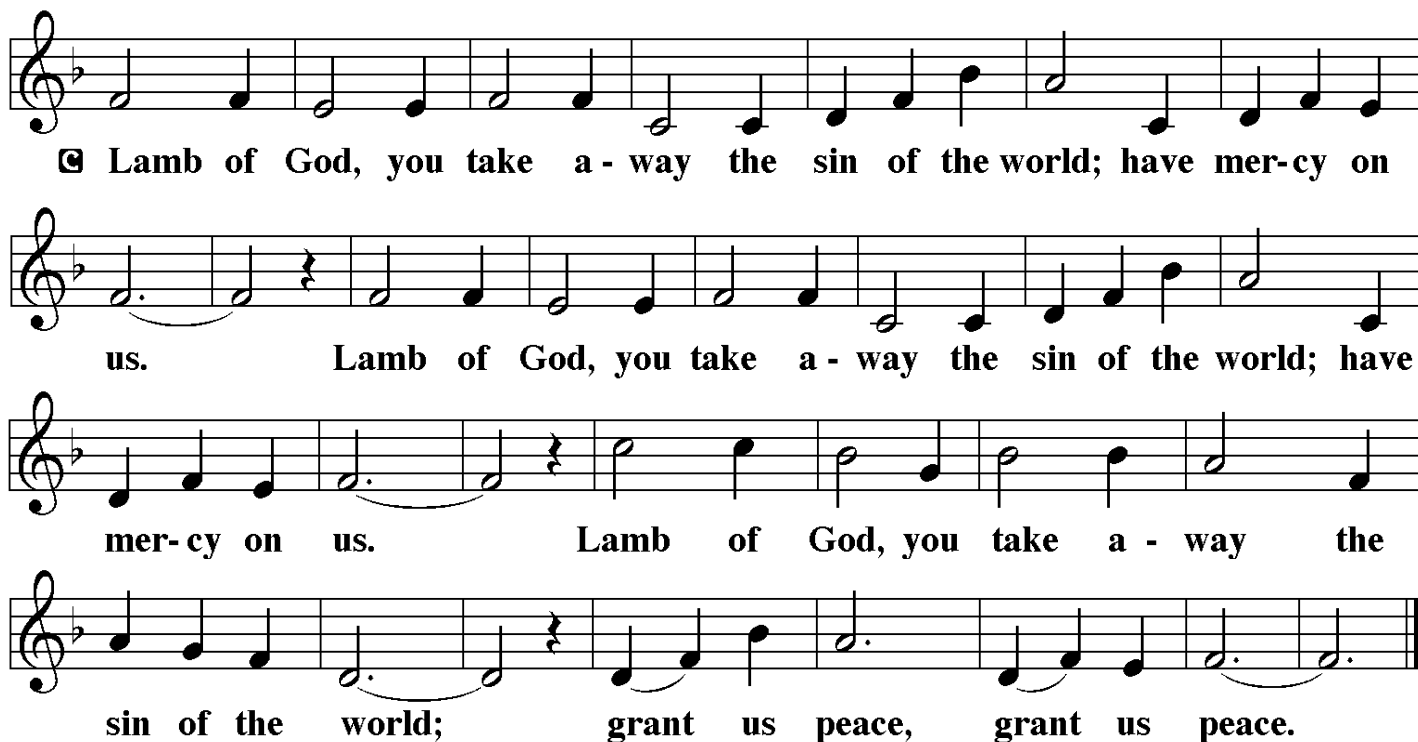
All are called to Christ's table. Come, eat what is good.

**Thanks be to God!**

## DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

*Our communion bread is gluten-free, unless noted by the pastor. Grape juice is available; indicate your need to the communion assistant. If you worship through the Livestream and wish to receive communion, please reach out to one of the pastors.*

## THE COMMUNION



**☩ 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 HYMNS

As the Grains of Wheat

ELW 465

O Christ, Our Hope

ELW 604

## TABLE BLESSING

## POST-COMMUNION CANTICLE



**☩ 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.

## LEAVING TO SERVE

### BENEDICTION

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in † Christ Jesus.

**Amen.**

SENDING HYMN	For the Fruit of All Creation	ELW 679
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### DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### POSTLUDE

Nun danket alle Gott

(Now Thank We All Our God)

Johann Crüger  
setting, Jeffrey Blersch

## **BLC Musicians**

Raelynn Clare, Music Director and Organist

Dr. Jim Jefferis, Director of The Chancel Choir

Rich Towsley, Director of The Folk Group and BLC Dulcimers

**Thank you** to all those who participated in worship this Sunday! Want to learn more about what roles are needed in worship or sign-up for a pre-scheduled role? Talk with Mark Finke or one of the pastors following worship or contact Mark directly at [volunteersupport@blcfairport.org](mailto:volunteersupport@blcfairport.org).

**Communicate with us:** Share more about who you are, request further information, or leave a prayer request or comment through our website - <https://blcfairport.org/share-in-worship/> - scroll down the page to request or share information.

**What's happening at BLC this week?** Visit the Calendar of Events at [www.blcfairport.org](http://www.blcfairport.org). Zoom links for virtual meetings are also found there. If you would like to schedule a meeting or event, please email the church office at [office@blcfairport.org](mailto:office@blcfairport.org) or visit <https://blcfairport.org/blc-facility-request/>

**Church office hours:** Our co-Pastors are available Sunday-Thursday and on-call for emergencies. Contact them directly to schedule an appointment either by calling (585) 223-0634 or emailing [pastor.hoffman@blcfairport.org](mailto:pastor.hoffman@blcfairport.org) or [pastor.amy@blcfairport.org](mailto:pastor.amy@blcfairport.org).

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We'd love to see how  
your flowers are growing.

Tag @blcfairport



Text us  
Pictures at  
585.364.1554

or email at  
[office@blcfairport.org](mailto:office@blcfairport.org)

## Judgment and Mercy

Matthew's gospel knows little compromise: sheep or goats, wheat or weeds, good or evil. Finding the good news of God's love for all people, for all creation, can be a challenge in this book. Today's gospel is no exception. Jesus interprets a parable for the disciples; he announces that all evildoers will be thrown into the furnace of fire, while the righteous will shine like the sun. The "Son of Man" will judge the world. Matthew's phrase "for the kingdom of heaven may be compared to . . ." occurs here for the first time in this gospel. Jesus' parable is a genuine metaphor—it is best viewed as a whole with no point-by-point comparison. The kingdom of believers has the same potential as those of the world to do good and to do evil. Jesus' allegorical interpretation encourages believers to strive for righteousness, and emphasizes God as judge.

St. Paul, however, in his letter to the church at Rome focuses on God as merciful judge. He proclaims that all creation will be freed from decay and receive redemption. Paul reminds us our hope lies with God, our parent through a spirit of adoption. This dichotomous picture of God as judge and giver of mercy began with last Sunday's texts and evidences itself in readings from Romans and Matthew across the next four Sundays. In some cases the God of mercy is highlighted in Paul's letter, at other times in the gospel. This good news, however, is always present!

The exercise of judgment and mercy reflects God's emphasis on justice over fairness. A fair God condemns those who do evil. A just God moves beyond fairness to justice, peace, and reconciliation. As evil doers, sinners, one and all, we are grateful for God's justice towards us and all people.