



Sunday, July 30, 2023
9th Sunday after Pentecost



BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

Sunday, July 30, 2023 ~ 9th Sunday after Pentecost

PRELUDE

Nun bitten wir den Heiligen Geist, BuxWV 208

Dietrich Buxtehude

(Now Pray We to the Holy Spirit)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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!

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

Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty

ELW 533

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

The musical score is written for a single melodic line in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of six staves of music. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across multiple notes. The final note of the sixth staff is a double bar line.

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. 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.

HEARING GOD'S WORD

READING: 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.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

GOSPEL: 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.

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;³²it 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

HYMN OF THE DAY	Build Us Up, Lord	ELW 670
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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 Almighty God, we pray for the church and all servants of the gospel. Equip rostered and lay ministers to proclaim that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Form confirmands and catechumens into disciples.

God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

#2 Gracious God, we pray for the well-being of creation. Safeguard the environment, clean polluted rivers and lakes, preserve mighty trees and tiny mustard seeds, and send advocates for sustainable practices. God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

#3 Compassionate God, we pray for the nations. Instill in all who govern the ability to discern between good and evil, free those who are oppressed, and protect those facing danger. Promote peace across the world and in our towns and neighborhoods. 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: Charlyne & David, Christine & Mike (Sam), Peter, Sydney, and Marianne & Mark. 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 in need of healing, especially:

- Brian B., who remains hospitalized with health challenges
- 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.

OFFERING OF MUSIC

Sicilienne in G Minor, op. 78

Gabriel Fauré

Sue Cardinal, flute

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

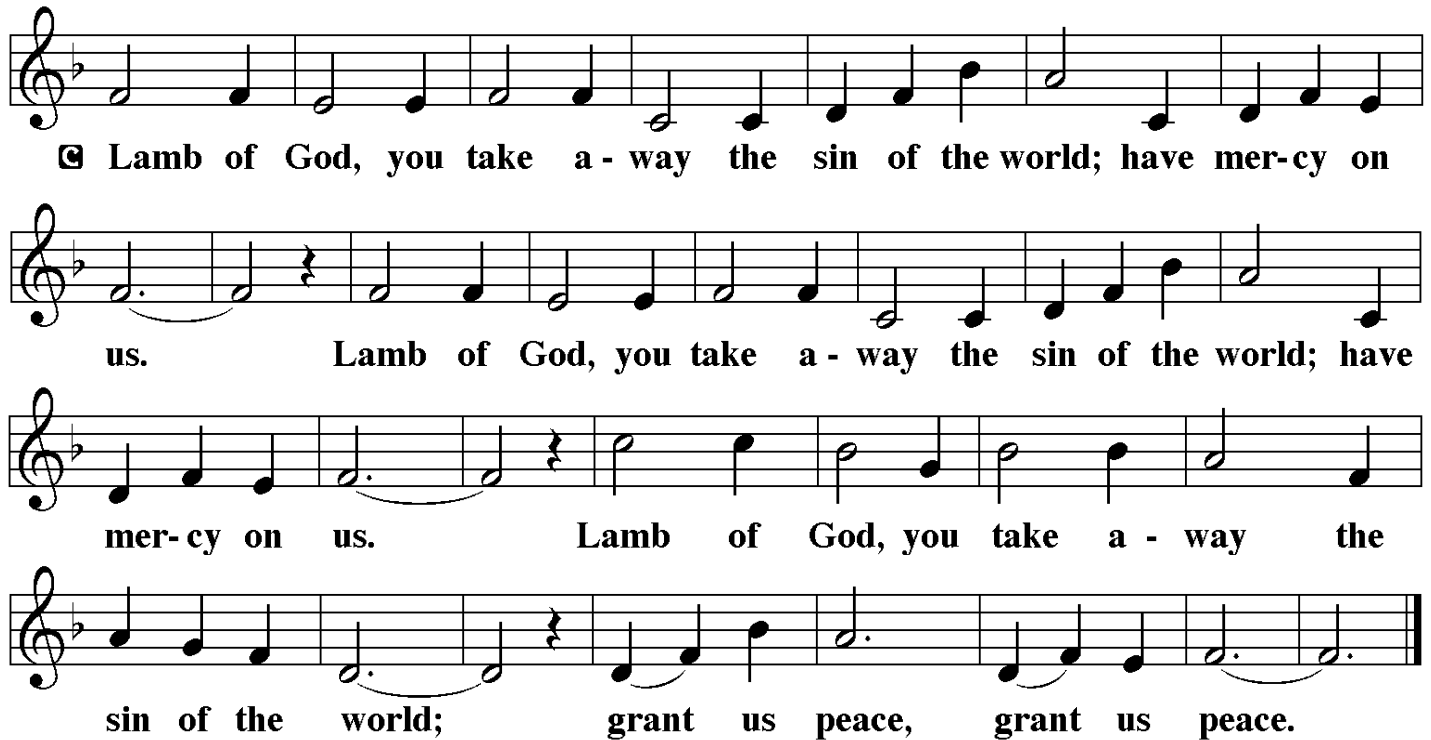
All are called to Christ's table. Come, eat what is good.

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

Eat This Bread, Drink This Cup

WOV 706

Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God

WOV 783

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 - jice 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	Oh, Sing to God Above	WOV 726
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DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

Sortie

Léon Boëllmann

from *Heures Mistiques*, op. 29, no. 4

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.

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. 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 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 or 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

The Kingdom of Heaven Is Like . . .

A string of parables describe the kingdom of heaven, and then we hear Jesus' question: "Have you understood all this?" The mustard seed, yeast, hidden treasure, pearls—these bring good news of growth and joy and riches. Then come the fish, the furnace of fire, and the weeping and gnashing of teeth. Once again this week we hear of a God of mercy and justice. Once again there is good news to be heard in Paul's letter to the church at Rome—nothing will ever separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus. How will we reconcile these two images of God?

"Kingdoms" are not common in our world. When most of us think about kingdoms, we call up images of British royalty—Queen Elizabeth, Princess Diana, jeweled crowns, a palace. At the time the Gospel of Matthew was written, the people were subject to the empire, or kingdom, of Rome. Perhaps the writer wants us to contrast the oppressive rule of Rome with a vision of heaven's kingdom of love and mercy. The translation of the Greek *basileia*, a feminine word, usually rendered in English as "kingdom" is difficult. The writer of Matthew may have used the expression "kingdom of heaven" instead of "kingdom of God" in order not to offend Jewish Christ-believers who honored the word for God by avoiding its use.

King Solomon asks God (1 Kings 3:5–12) for the wisdom to discern between good and evil, for the understanding to live out both justice and mercy as a ruler of God's people. God was pleased with Solomon's request. The wisdom Solomon seeks to rule his earthly kingdom reflects the wisdom of the kingdom of heaven. King Solomon was variously successful in his discernment of good and evil, as are we.