

September 17, 2023  
16th Sunday After Pentecost



ST. STEPHEN  
Evangelical Lutheran Church

\*Congregation is invited to stand as able  
Please be aware that video cameras are in use during our hybrid (combined) Worship Service and that images are being shared with the online participants.

You can receive our weekly email/letter with events and information, ways to grow in faith, opportunities for service and worship, as well as ways to support the ministry of the congregation by submitting your email address to [office@ststephenlc.org](mailto:office@ststephenlc.org) or by calling the office at 717-766-2168 and providing your email and/or your mailing address.

In today's second reading Paul questions why we judge one another, since we all stand before the judgment of God. Yet we do sin against one another, and Jesus' challenge that we forgive seventy-seven times reveals God's boundless mercy. When we hear the words of forgiveness in worship and sign ourselves with the cross, we are renewed in baptism to be signs of reconciliation in the world.

### Announcements

#### Our Mission

**We respond to Christ's love by feeding those who hunger in body, mind, and spirit.**

#### Prelude

*"Like the Murmur of the Dove's Song"*

Lau

#### **Gathering**

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

### \*Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be God, the one who forms us, † Jesus who bears the cross, the Spirit who makes our joy complete.

**Amen.**

Let us bow before God in humility, confessing our sin.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Steadfast and faithful God,

**you have revealed the ways of justice, yet we fail to follow you. We are overwhelmed by the world's violence and suffering. We are afraid to risk what we have for the sake of others. For the harm we have caused, known and unknown, forgive us. For the unjust demands we place on others and your creation, forgive us. For the ways we turn away from you and our neighbor, forgive us. Lead us back to you and set us on the right path; in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior.**

**Amen.**

Beloved in Christ,

God's justice stretches beyond all understanding. God's compassion is beyond compare. In Jesus, God is always making a new way for us. In † Christ, you are already and always forgiven.

**Amen.**

**\*Gathering Hymn**

*“Awake, O Sleeper, Rise from Death”*

Hymn#452

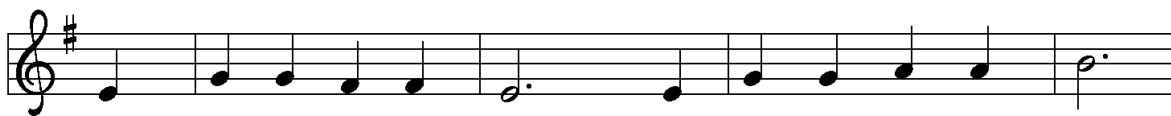
- 1 Awake, O sleeper, rise from death,  
and Christ shall give you light;  
so learn his love, its length and breadth,  
its fullness, depth, and height.
- 2 To us on earth he came to bring  
from sin and fear release,  
to give the Spirit's unity,  
the very bond of peace.
- 3 There is one body and one hope,  
one Spirit and one call,  
one Lord, one faith, and one baptism,  
one God who made us all.
- 4 Then walk in love as Christ has loved,  
who died that he might save;  
with kind and gentle hearts forgive  
as God in Christ forgave.
- 5 For us Christ lived, for us he died,  
and conquered in the strife.  
Awake, arise, go forth in faith,  
and Christ shall give you life.

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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 (Cantor)**



- 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.

**O Lord God, merciful judge, you are the inexhaustible fountain of forgiveness. Replace our hearts of stone with hearts that love and adore you, that we may delight in doing your will, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.**

**Amen.**

### **Word**

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

### **The First Lesson** (Lector)

**Genesis 50:15-21**

*After Jacob's death the brothers of Joseph begged for forgiveness for the crime they had done against him. You intended to do me harm, Joseph said, but God used this as an opportunity to do good and save many lives.*

A reading from the book of Genesis, the 50th chapter.

<sup>15</sup>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?" <sup>16</sup>So they approached Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this instruction before he died, <sup>17</sup>'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. <sup>18</sup>Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said, “We are here as your slaves.” <sup>19</sup>But Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? <sup>20</sup>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. <sup>21</sup>So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones.” In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

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

**Psalm** (Cantor)

**Psalm 103:1-13**

<sup>1</sup>Bless the LORD, <sup>1</sup>O my soul,  
and all that is within me, bless God's <sup>1</sup>holy name.  
<sup>2</sup>**Bless the LORD, <sup>1</sup>O my soul,  
and forget not <sup>1</sup>all God's benefits—**  
<sup>3</sup>who forgives <sup>1</sup>all your sins  
and heals all <sup>1</sup>your diseases;  
<sup>4</sup>**who redeems your life <sup>1</sup>from the grave  
and crowns you with steadfast <sup>1</sup>love and mercy;**  
<sup>5</sup>who satisfies your desires <sup>1</sup>with good things  
so that your youth is renewed <sup>1</sup>like an eagle's.  
<sup>6</sup>**O LORD, you provide <sup>1</sup>vindication  
and justice for all who <sup>1</sup>are oppressed.**  
<sup>7</sup>You made known your <sup>1</sup>ways to Moses  
and your works to the chil- <sup>1</sup>dren of Israel.  
<sup>8</sup>**LORD, you are full of compas- <sup>1</sup>sion and mercy,  
slow to anger and abounding in <sup>1</sup>steadfast love;**  
<sup>9</sup>you will not al- <sup>1</sup>ways accuse us,  
nor will you keep your an- <sup>1</sup>ger forever.  
<sup>10</sup>**You have not dealt with us according <sup>1</sup>to our sins,  
nor repaid us according to <sup>1</sup>our iniquities.**  
<sup>11</sup>For as the heavens are high a- <sup>1</sup>bove the earth,  
so great is your steadfast love for <sup>1</sup>those who fear you.  
<sup>12</sup>**As far as the east is <sup>1</sup>from the west,  
so far have you removed our transgres- <sup>1</sup>sions from us.**  
<sup>13</sup>As a father has compassion <sup>1</sup>for his children,  
so you have compassion for those who fear <sup>1</sup>you, O LORD.

**The Second Lesson** (Lector)

**Romans 14:1-12**

*This Christian community has significant struggles with diversity. Here Paul helps us understand that despite different practices in worship and personal piety, we do not judge one another. All Christians belong to the Lord Jesus Christ who died for all of us and will judge each of us.*

A reading from St. Paul's letter to the Romans, the 14th chapter.

<sup>1</sup>Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. <sup>2</sup>Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. <sup>3</sup>Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. <sup>4</sup>Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.  
<sup>5</sup>Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. <sup>6</sup>Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God.  
<sup>7</sup>We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. <sup>8</sup>If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. <sup>9</sup>For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

<sup>10</sup>Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. <sup>11</sup>For it is written,

“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,  
and every tongue shall give praise to God.”

<sup>12</sup>So then, each of us will be accountable to God.

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 18:21-35**

*When Peter asks about the limits of forgiveness, Jesus responds with a parable that suggests human forgiveness should mirror the unlimited mercy of God.*

A reading from the Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 18th chapter. **Glory to You O Lord.**

<sup>21</sup>Peter came and said to [Jesus], “Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” <sup>22</sup>Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

<sup>23</sup>“For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. <sup>24</sup>When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; <sup>25</sup>and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. <sup>26</sup>So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ <sup>27</sup>And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. <sup>28</sup>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.’ <sup>29</sup>Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ <sup>30</sup>But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. <sup>31</sup>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. <sup>32</sup>Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. <sup>33</sup>Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’ <sup>34</sup>And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. <sup>35</sup>So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

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

**Children’s Message**

Rev. Joel Petruschke

**Sermon**

Rev. Joel Petruschke

- 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.  
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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 Intercession**

*Congregational response after each petition:*  
AM: ...Merciful God,. **C: Receive our prayer.**

Remembering the caring and generous works of God, we pray for the church, creation, and the needs of our neighbors.

*A brief silence.*

We pray for the church. Bless the missions and ministries of diverse congregations, that they uplift the good news of salvation in ways that can be understood. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for creation. Send rain to lands experiencing drought and healing to rivers clogged with pollution. Enrich the soil for trees and plants. Protect the crops needed to feed those who hunger. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for all who govern. Encourage those in positions of power to lead with empathy, practice forgiveness, and care for those who struggle. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for our neighbors who face illness of any kind. For those strained financially; for all living with chronic pain, mental illness, the disease of addiction, or otherwise afraid or in harm's way. Protect all who cry out for mercy. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for this congregation. Open our hearts to practice intentional invitation. Help us to forgive each other, practice patience, and choose welcome over judgment. Move us to care for those in our community seeking refuge and safety. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We give thanks for the saints who died in faith. Show us how to live faithfully, creatively, and lovingly in your church and world. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

Remember us according to your steadfast love as we offer these and the prayers of our heart, trusting in your compassion made known through Jesus Christ.

**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**

*(Please refer to the back of the bulletin for various options to give.)*

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.

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.

**Anthem**

*"Holy Manna"*

Andrews

**\*Doxology**

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
praise him, all creatures here below;  
praise him above, ye heav'nly host;  
praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Text: Thomas Ken, 1637-1711

**\*Offertory Prayer**

Let us pray.

God of power, God of plenty, all things belong to you. We bring your gifts to the table, that all might be fed. Form us into the body of your Beloved, Jesus Christ, our Savior.

**Amen.**

**Meal**

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

(Zoom participants—please prepare your elements for communion.)

**\*The 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.**

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ; who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and might,  
heav'n and earth are full of your glo-ry. Ho-san - na in the high - est.  
Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho -  
san - na in the high - est, ho - san - na in the high - est.

In the night in which he was handed over, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection, and ascension, we await his coming in glory. Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord, and unite the wills of all who share this heavenly food, the body and blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord; to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, now and forever.

**Amen.**

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:



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.

**\*Invitation to Communion**

Jesus invites you to this table. Come, eat and live.



1 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;  
 2 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;  
 3 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;



you suf-fered death our lives to save: have mer-cy now, we pray.  
 you set us free from guilt and grave: have mer-cy now, we pray.  
 e - ter-nal peace with God you made: give us your peace, we pray.

**\*Communion of the Faithful**

**\*Post Communion Blessing**

The body and blood of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, strengthen you and keep you in His grace. **Amen**

**\*Post Communion Prayer**

Let us pray.

Blessed be your name, O God, for we have feasted on your Word, Christ Jesus, the joy and delight of our hearts. Strengthened by this food, send us to gather the world to your banquet, where none are left out and all are satisfied. In Jesus' name we pray.

**Amen.**

**Sending**

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

**\*Blessing**

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy. The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace. **Amen.**

**\*Sending Hymn**

*"Go, My Children, with My Blessing"*

Hymn #543

- 1 "Go, my children, with my blessing, never alone.  
Waking, sleeping, I am with you, you are my own.  
In my love's baptismal river  
I have made you mine forever.  
Go, my children, with my blessing, you are my own."
- 2 "Go, my children, sins forgiven, at peace and pure.  
Here you learned how much I love you, what I can cure.  
Here you heard my dear Son's story,  
here you touched him, saw his glory.  
Go, my children, sins forgiven, at peace and pure."
- 3 "Go, my children, fed and nourished, closer to me.  
Grow in love and love by serving, joyful and free.  
Here my Spirit's power filled you,  
here my tender comfort stilled you.  
Go, my children, fed and nourished, joyful and free."

Text: Jaroslav J. Vajda, b. 1919, alt.

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**\*Dismissal**

Go in peace. Share the harvest. **Thanks be to God.**

**Postlude**

*Immortal, Invisible"*

Roberts

We thank our choir members and worship helpers who served today.





There are several ways to make your offering:

Go to [www.StStephenLC.org](http://www.StStephenLC.org) and click on the DONATE button (or the Giving tab for more options.)

Text your offering dollar amount to 1-833-539-6991. Text "help" for options.

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](mailto:office@StStephenLC.org).

Mail in your check, made payable to St. Stephen Lutheran Church. Our address is:

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