

St. Paul Lutheran Church, LCMS

503 S. State Street, Caro, MI 48723

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Rev. Michael Stahl, Vacancy Pastor

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—PROPER 20

September 20, 2026, 8:30 AM

Contemporary Service

AS WE GATHER



On the surface, the parable of the laborers in the vineyard seems wrong. Shouldn't the worker receive the wages he or she deserves for his or her time and labor? It offends our sense of fair play that one who worked less should receive the same as one who worked more. If you only focus on the perspective of the laborer, that might seem true, but if you focus on the generosity of the vineyard owner, you get a very different perspective. God's mercy is not the reward

for our labor but a pure gift of grace given to those who deserve none of His kindness. When you begin to look at this parable from that perspective, God's abundant generosity becomes clear. The Lord does what none of us would do—forgives all our sins, no matter how great, and bestows upon us the mercy and salvation we did nothing to earn and could never deserve. How can anyone begrudge Him such generosity?



FOR THOSE DESIRING HOLY COMMUNION

The Lord's Supper is celebrated at this congregation in the confession and glad confidence that, as He says, our Lord gives into our mouths not only bread and wine but His very body and blood to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of sins and to strengthen our union with Him and with one another.

Our Lord invites to His table those who trust in His words, repent of all sin, and set aside any refusal to forgive and love as He forgives and loves us, that they may show forth His death until He comes. Because those who eat and drink our Lord's body and blood unworthily do so to their great harm and because Holy Communion is a confession of the faith which is confessed at this altar, any who are not yet instructed, in doubt, or who hold a confession differing from that of this congregation and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and yet desire to receive the Sacrament, are asked first to speak with the Pastor. For further study, see Matthew 5:23ff; 10:32ff; 18:15-35; 1 Cor. 11:17-34.)

PRE-SERVICE MUSIC

“Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)”

(Verse, Verse, Chorus, Verse, Chorus, Chorus, Verse)

**Amazing grace
How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now I'm found
Was blind, but now I see**

**'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed**

**Chorus:
My chains are gone
I've been set free
My God, my Savior has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy reigns
Unending love, Amazing grace**

**The Lord has promised good to me
His word my hope secures
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures
Chorus: (2x)**

**The earth shall soon dissolve like snow
The sun forbear to shine
But God, Who called me here below
Will be forever mine
Will be forever mine
You are forever mine**

WELCOME

(Please stand)

INVOCATION

In the name of the Father and of the ✙ Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

Almighty God,

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of all things, and judge of all people, we confess to You that we have sinned. We have turned away from one another in our thinking, speaking, and doing. We have done the evil You forbid and have not done the good You desire. We do repent and are truly sorry for these our sins. Because of the obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us, forgiving us all that is past and granting us the Holy Spirit to guide us into the future.

God has promised forgiveness of sins to those who repent. The Lord keep you in His grace and favor and bring you to everlasting life. Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✙ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

He who began this good work within you will bring it to completion on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

INTROIT

Psalm 116:12–13, 15–16; antiphon: v. 17

I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving
and call on the name of the LORD.

**What shall I render to the LORD
for all his benefits to me?**

I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the LORD.

**Precious in the sight of the LORD
is the death of his saints.**

O LORD, I am your servant;

I am your servant, the son of your maidservant. You have loosed my bonds.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever. Amen.

I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving
and call on the name of the LORD.

(Please be seated)

SONG OF PRAISE

“Death was Arrested”

(Verse, Verse, Chorus, Verse, Chorus, Verse, Chorus, Bridge, Bridge, Ending)

Alone in my sorrow and dead in my sin
Lost without hope with no place to begin
Your love made a way to let mercy come in
When death was arrested and my life began

Ash was redeemed only beauty remains
My orphan heart was given a name
My mourning grew quiet my feet rose to dance
When death was arrested and my life began *(Chorus)*

Chorus:

Oh, Your grace so free
Washes over me
You have made me new
Now life begins with You
It's your endless love
Pouring down on us
You have made us new
Now life begins with You

Released from my chains I'm a prisoner no more
My shame was a ransom He faithfully bore
He cancelled my debt and He called me His friend
When death was arrested and my life began *(Chorus)*

Our Savior displayed on a criminal's cross
Darkness rejoiced as though heaven had lost *(pause)*
But then Jesus arose with our freedom in hand
That's when death was arrested and my life began *(Chorus)*

Oh, we're free, free forever we're free
Come join the song of all the redeemed
Yes, we're free free forever amen
When death was arrested and my life began (*repeat Bridge*)

When death was arrested and my life began
When death was arrested and my life began

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. Lord God, heavenly Father, since we cannot stand before You relying on anything we have done, help us trust in Your abiding grace and live according to Your Word; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT READING: Isaiah 55:6–9

⁶“Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near;
⁷let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
⁸For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.
⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

EPISTLE: Philippians 1:12–14, 19–30

¹²I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, ¹³so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.
¹⁴And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. . . .

¹⁹for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, ²⁰as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²²If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. ²⁴But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. ²⁵Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

²⁷Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. ²⁹For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, ³⁰engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

(Please stand)

HOLY GOSPEL: Matthew 20:1–16

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the twentieth chapter.

Glory to You, O Lord.

¹[Jesus said:] “The kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. ²After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, ⁴and to them he said, ‘You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.’ ⁵So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. ⁶And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’ ⁷They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too.’ ⁸And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last,

up to the first.’ ⁹And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. ¹⁰Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. ¹¹And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, ¹²saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ ¹³But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?’ ¹⁴Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. ¹⁵Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?’ ¹⁶So the last will be first, and the first last.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ.

NICENE CREED

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, whose kingdom will have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church, I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

(Please be seated)

CHILDREN'S SONG OF THE MONTH: "This is My Commandment"

(Verse 1 = Love, Verse 2 = Trust, Verse 3 = Serve)

**This is My commandment,
that you love one another that your joy may be full;
This is My commandment,
that you love one another that your joy may be full.
That your joy may be full, that your joy may be full.
This is My commandment,
that you love one another that your joy may be full.**

CHILDREN'S SERMON

SONG OF THE DAY

"Freely, Freely"

(Verse, Chorus, Verse, Chorus)

**God forgave my sin in Jesus' name,
I've been born again in Jesus' name,
And in Jesus' name I come to you.
To share His love as He told me to.**

Chorus:

**He said, "Freely, freely you have received;
Freely, freely give.
Go in my name; and because you believe,
Others will know that I live."**

**All power is given in Jesus' name,
In earth and heaven, in Jesus' name;
And in Jesus' name I come to you
To share His power as He told me to. Chorus**

SERMON

OFFERING *(Please fill out the fellowship pad beside you)*

(Please stand)

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

LORD'S PRAYER

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.

SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT

HOLY COMMUNION

(Visitors, please read the statement at the beginning of this service folder.)

WORDS OF OUR LORD

PEACE OF CHRIST

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

Amen.

LAMB OF GOD

**Christ, O Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world
have mercy on us.**

**Christ, O Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world
have mercy on us.**

**Christ, O Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world
give us Your peace.**

(Please be seated)

RECEIVING THE LORD'S SUPPER

DISTRIBUTION SONG

"Full Attention"

(Verse, Chorus, Verse, Chorus, Ending)

**May Your voice be louder
And may Your voice be clearer
Than all the others, than all the others
And may Your face be dearer
And may Your words be sweeter
Than all the others
Than all the others in my life**

Chorus:

**Please keep my eyes fixed on You
Please root my heart so deep in You
Keep me abiding keep me abiding
Keep me abiding that I
Oh, that I may bear fruit**

**And may Your presence be truer
And may Your presence be nearer
Than all the others, than all the others
And may Your light shine brighter
And may Your love move deeper
Than all the others
Than all the others in my life Chorus**

Ending Chorus:

**Please keep my eyes fixed on You
Please root my heart so deep in You
Keep me asking keep me kneeling
Keep me abiding that I
Oh, that I may bear fruit**

DISTRIBUTION SONG

“Hide Me in Your Holiness”

(Repeat once)

**Hide me, Lord, in Your holiness,
Ev’ry sin I now confess.
Praise to you, forgiving Lord,
Hide me in Your holiness, Hide me in your holiness.**

(Please stand)

PRAYER OF THANKS

Amen

BLESSING

(Please be seated)

SONG TO DEPART

(repeat once, then ending)

**To the Only God
Who is able to keep us
Able to keep us from falling
To the Only God
Be all glory and honor
Majesty and power
For all ages now and forevermore.**

Ending:

**Forevermore. Be all glory, and honor,
majesty and power.
For all ages now, and forevermore.
Forevermore**

LEAVING

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Creative Worship for the Lutheran Parish, Series A, Quarter 1.

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