

Welcome to Christ Lutheran Church & Preschool September 8, 2024

16th Sunday after Pentecost “God’s Work. Our Hands.” Sunday

Today’s worship is conducted by Lay Leaders

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Member of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
(ELCA – www.elca.org)



All Are Welcome – All the Time!

You do not need to be a member of this church or Lutheran to participate in any part of worship. If you wish to take communion, we ask that you desire a relationship with Jesus. His body and blood were given and shed for you.



Christ Lutheran Church & PreSchool is a community committed to the work of equity and inclusion, bringing justice and support for all of God's beloveds. We welcome those who are seeking God's love and grace for the first time or as a life-long believer. We welcome because Jesus shows us how to welcome, regardless of race, culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, economic resources, relationship status, health challenges or anything else that too often divides us. It is in our welcome which we commit ourselves to being an anti-racist space, a space where we seek daily to deepen our work of inclusion in the life of our church. Our unity is in Christ. All are welcome here.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & SHARING OF PRAYER CONCERNS

By Kathy Davis, who will provide updated Prayers of Intercession

INVOCATION

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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

– Silence for reflection –

Most merciful God,

We confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves.

**We have sinned against you in thought, word and deed,
by what we have done and what we have left undone.**

We have not loved you with our whole heart.

We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ have mercy on us.

**Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may
delight in your will and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together in Christ. By grace we have been saved. In the name of + Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven.

Almighty God strengthen us with power through the Holy Spirit that Christ may live in our hearts. **Amen.**

SONG – Open Our Eyes Lord

(Printed on bulletin insert)

Open our eyes, Lord. We want to see Jesus.

To reach out and touch Him, and say that we love Him.

Open our ears Lord, and help us to listen.

Open our eyes Lord. We want to see Jesus. ***(Repeat)***

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you. **And also with you!**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Gracious God, throughout the ages you transform sickness into health and death into life. Open us to the power of your presence, and make us a people ready to proclaim your promises to the whole world, through Jesus Christ, our healer and Lord. **Amen.**

READING – Isaiah 35:4-7a

Say to those who are of a fearful heart, “Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.”

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be opened; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water.

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God

RESPONSIVE READING – Psalm 146

Praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord, O my soul!

I will praise the Lord as long as I live;

I will sing praises to my God all my life long.

Do not put your trust in princes,

in mortals, in whom there is no help.

When their breath departs, they return to the earth;

on that very day their plans perish.

Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,

whose hope is in the Lord their God,

who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them;

who keeps faith forever;

who executes justice for the oppressed;

who gives food to the hungry.

The Lord sets the prisoners free;

the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.

The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;

the Lord loves the righteous.

The Lord watches over the strangers;

he upholds the orphan and the widow,

but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

The Lord will reign forever,

Your God, O Zion, for all generations.

Praise the Lord!

READING – James 2:1-10, 14-17

My brothers and sisters, do not claim the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ of glory while showing partiality. For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, “Have a seat here in a good place, please,” while to the one who is poor you say, “Stand there,” or, “Sit by my footstool,” have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor person. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into the courts? Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you?

If you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you do well. But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Surely that faith cannot save, can it? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

– Please stand as you are able –

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (SUNG) – ELW 172

Halle, halle, halle – lujah. Halle, halle, halle – lujah.

Halle, halle, halle – lujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah!

THE GOSPEL – Mark 7:24-37

The Holy Gospel according to Mark. **Glory to You, O Lord.**

From there (Jesus) set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet.

Now the woman was a gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, “Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.” But she answered him, “Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” Then he said to her, “For saying that, you may go – the demon has left your daughter.” And when she went home, she found the child lying on the bed and the demon gone.

Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went by way of Sidon toward the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.

Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one, but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. They were astounded beyond measure, saying, “He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

The Gospel of our Lord. **Praise to You, O Christ.**

MESSAGE: An Unpacking of the Gospel

Provided by the ELCA on this celebration of "God's Work. Our Hands." Sunday

Written by Carmine Bernini

In today's Gospel, which we just heard, Jesus said, "...for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs (Mark 7:27b)."

Jesus said that. No matter how many times we hear this passage read in worship, it never gets easier. Jesus said these words to a gentile Syrophenician woman in the region of Tyre, a woman who daringly and desperately approached Jesus on behalf of her demon-possessed daughter. Biblical commentaries have attempted to diminish or excuse the problem of Jesus' callousness towards a desperate mom who breaks nearly every social convention in an attempt to find relief for her daughter.

Much ink has been spilled attempting to locate the Syrophenician woman's social status as one way to mitigate Jesus' abrasive response. Since the Syrophenician woman was from Tyre, a Hellenized and affluent port city, this possibly places the woman in an upper economic whereas Jesus and the Jews would have been in the lower class. If we entertain this possibility, then Jesus' remarks to her, "Let the children be fed first (Mark 7:27)," turn social conventions on their head: the poor, not the rich, will be fed first.

However, if this is the case, and that is a big "if," there are still many problems with the interaction. Even if the Syrophenician woman is affluent, Jesus' treatment of her is harsh. More, why did she approach Jesus by herself, a culturally atypical move. Was she a widow/poor? Regardless of the Syrophenician woman's social status, Jesus' rebuke of her inquiry left a little girl hanging in the balance which raises the question, "Is it morally acceptable to punish a child because of the parent?" Most would say no.

This incident between Jesus and the woman is also a display of a gentile/Jew dichotomy. Jesus' denial of help can be framed within the trope of othering where Jesus plays into an ancient cultural stereotype which characterized gentiles as "dogs." No matter how you interpret the text, it isn't pretty. There is greater meaning, however, in accepting Jesus' callousness rather than attempting to provide theological cover for it.

The miracle in this text is that Jesus' mind was changed. One may ask, "How can God's mind be changed?" But the question about God's mind being changed focuses exclusively on Jesus' divinity (fully divine) while ignoring Jesus' humanity (fully human). Jesus' displays his full humanity in his interaction with the Syrophenician woman. Jesus' rudeness does and should make us feel uncomfortable. Jesus acts just like any other human in our text. Recognizing the rudeness in others can open the door to personal change.

Like most humans, we are a people who struggle to change our minds. We all know how difficult it is to change our own mind let alone another person's mind. As a people, we have prioritized the accumulation of wealth over all other aspects of human existence. The "heroes" of our society are not those who demonstrate strong moral conviction, but rather those who are successful in business and entrepreneurship where success' sole definition is material accumulation.

According to the United Nations, it would take \$7,000,000,000 (seven billion dollars) to feed, "42 million people that are literally going to die if we don't reach them." (Footnote 1) Where we put our money discloses our priorities and, while seven billion dollars sounds like a lot, in 2023 people in the United States spent a whopping \$12,000,000,000 (twelve billion) on Cyber Monday alone. For the entire year of 2023, consumers spent an unbelievable \$574.8 billion or over \$1 million a minute on Amazon. Gifts to ELCA World Hunger in 2019 totaled \$23 million.

Given these financial realities, hunger is a choice that we have decided to live with. We have decided to live with it because we collectively possess the power, awareness, and financial capacity to end it, but we spend our money on "things" rather than alleviating the suffering of people. Can our minds be changed? Our priorities?

Seen in this light, Jesus' change of mind is truly divine. Jesus, a product of his patriarchal, violent, classist, and ethnocentric environment (just like us), was able to listen to the Syrophenician woman, hear what she was saying, admit to being outwitted by her, and then be moved to heal her daughter. As a direct result of Jesus' turn around, a girl's life was spared. Think for a moment about world hunger: how many lives would be spared if we, like Jesus, were willing to change our minds about our financial priorities and, like Jesus, act on our humble new perspectives? How many lives would be saved?

To this message I add the following:

Friends of Christ Lutheran Church in Vernon Hills, it is within this context of priorities and hunger and wealth and rudeness that we continue to do what we do. Here at our little church, we do our best to give back what we have been given so abundantly. We work to keep changing our own minds about what is possible. We work to keep changing the narrative of “who is our neighbor.”

Today after worship we will pack canned goods, create birthday celebration kits, and do our best to make a dent in the great need in our world.

Thank you for helping with these projects. Thank you for all you all year.

Thank you for going against the priorities and social norms of this world.

Thank you for choosing to make a difference.

It is God’s work we are doing. Thank you for being God’s hands.

Amen.

Footnote 1: Executive Director, David Beasley of the UN World Food Program

<https://www.wfpusa.org/articles/how-much-would-it-cost-to-end-world-hunger/>

SONG: God’s Work, Our Hands (Tune: Earth & All Stars)

Text: Wayne L. Wold © 2019 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

(Printed on bulletin insert)

God's work, our hands: working together; building a future, repairing the world,
raising up homes, planting new gardens; feeding the hungry and shelt'ring the cold

Bless, God, our hands as we work in your name,
sharing the good news of your Gospel.

God's work, our feet: trav'ling together; following Jesus to places unknown,
walking as friends, marching for freedom; running the race with God's future the goal.

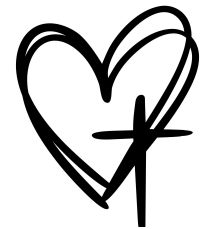
Bless, God, our feet as we follow your way,
sharing the good news of your Gospel.

God's work, our voice: singing together; praising, proclaiming to all who will hear,
praying for peace, shouting for justice; claiming God's love for the lost and the least.

Bless, God, our voice as we speak in your name,
sharing the good news of your Gospel.

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

(Merciful God... Receive our prayer.)

Gathered into God's embrace, let us lift our voices on behalf of a weary and wounded world. *(Brief silence for reflection)*

God of love, send us out filled with your love and life. Be known in our daily living, that your love may be known through our proclamation. *Merciful God... Receive our prayer.*

God of creation, remind us to be good stewards of your diverse and beautiful world. *Merciful God... Receive our prayer.*

God of peace, fill the hearts of those who rule, govern and lead. Give them and us compassion to guide the peoples of this world in the ways of truth, justice, equity and peace. We especially pray for your peace to come to Gaza, Israel, Ukraine, Russia and other places of chaos and turmoil. *Merciful God... Receive our prayer.*

God of service, give us strength and humility. In our service to those near and far, whose needs are visible or invisible, may we find you in the faces of our neighbors. Guide our work that we may do your work and your will in the world. *Merciful God... Receive our prayer.*

God of healing, visit those who yearn for your wholeness. Encourage all those who bear another's burdens. Give wisdom and perseverance to all who work in health care professions. We especially lift up Charles, Larry, Roger, June, Doug, Mayra, John, Sharon, Anelly, Allie, Jase, Allen, Debbie, Joe, Chuck, Jackie, Calvin, Karen, Keith, Judd and Kitty. We pray for the souls and loved ones of Billy, Barb, Glenda, Quinn and Michael. We pray for our Pastors, including Pastor Pdraig, Pastor & Mrs. Puotinen, Pastor Pfeffer, Pastor Gleasman, Pastor & Mrs. Selbo, Pastor Heidtke, Pastor Dailey, Pastor Holmes, Pastor Severson, Pastor Klein, Bishop Curry and Bishop Eaton.

We lift up the staff & residents of Victory Center, travelers, and our nation as we prepare for an election. We also lift up:

And those we name now... **Merciful God... Receive our prayer.**

Into your wounded hands of love, O God, we place all our prayers, trusting in your mercy through the crucified and risen one Jesus. **Amen.**

THE 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.

PRAYER FOR OUR PROJECT

After worship, we will gather in the Fellowship Hall to create Birthday Cake Celebration Kits and Food Bags for distribution to our local pantries and other places where they can be of service. Thank you for joining us in this effort. Together, we bless the project, including those who work and those who will receive.

Let us pray...

Heavenly Father, we ask your blessing upon the project we are preparing to complete. Bless the pieces we assemble – the cake mix, candles, balloons, canned goods, and love we place in each container.

Bless the hands that do the work, today and every day.

Bless those who will receive these items – may they be nourished, strengthened, and encouraged.

May may these gifts be a sign of your love to all people. **Amen.**

BENEDICTION

May the Lord bless us and keep us.

May the Lord make His face shine on us and be gracious to us.

May the Lord look upon us with favor and give us His peace.

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

**SONG – All People That on Earth Do Dwell, ELW 883
& Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow, ELW 884**

(Printed in Hymnal and on bulletin insert)

All people that on earth do dwell; Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;
Him serve with mirth, his praise forth tell; Come ye before him and rejoice.

Know that the Lord is God indeed; Without our aid he did us make.
We are his folk, he doth us feed; And for his sheep he doth us take.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise him, all creatures here below;
Praise him above, ye heavenly host; Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

DISMISSAL

We are God's hands at work in the world!

Go in peace! Serve the Lord!

Thanks be to God!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **God's Work Our Hand's – today!** Assembling Birthday Cake Celebration Kits and food bags after worship; to be delivered to our local pantries and places of need.
- **Cub Scout Info Meeting – Thursday, Sept 12 from 6:30 to 7:30 at Christ Lutheran.** Children/families ages Kindergarten through high school are encouraged to stop by the church to learn more about Scouting. Working to relaunch the Cub Scout Pack – reach out to Holly or Bill Jones (jonesbill@earthlink.net) if you can assist or if you have families who would be interested in getting involved. Thanks for supporting Scouting America Troop 273!
- **PreSchool Underway** – Please keep the children, families and staff of Christ Lutheran PreSchool in your prayers.
- **Caring Hands** – Sept 21, Oct 19 and Nov 16 from 9a to noon – reach out if you would like patterns for prayer shawls or comfort blankets (CaringHandsVernonHills@gmail.com)
- **Thank you to our Lawn Team** – Bill, Holly, Theresa, Bob, Tom, Kathy and others. Reach out if you would like to help. Thank you.
- **Support for Anelly** – Our ministry partner Anelly, a young mother of two who has supported refugees in Chicago, has a recurrence of cancer and is facing a variety of challenges. Please lift her in prayer and consider supporting the Meal Train with meals or donations. (HollySJ@earthlink.net)
- **Encampment Collection** – Thank you to all who contribute to our deliveries to the Chicago homeless encampment near Pastor Pdraig's house. We continue to collect blankets/ sleeping bags (new or gently used/clean), socks, feminine products, hygiene items and Mariano's gift cards (store closest to camp).
- **Sanctuary Support** – For asylum seekers living in Chicago shelters. Wishlist includes diapers, formula, coats, children's clothes (baby to teen), children's/adult cold medicines, Advil/Tylenol, shoes, jackets, strollers, book bags, suitcases, storage bins with lids.
- **Sue's Pantry** – Call for toilet paper! Also flour, cooking oil, sugar. And anything needed to keep a home and family clean – dish soap, laundry detergent, body wash, shampoo.
- **Love INC** – Housewares, nonperishables and volunteers. Want to learn more? Have a child or family in need of a bundle of clothes or housewares? Give the details to Natalie she will get us covered! (Thanks, Natalie.) (<https://loveinclakecounty.org/>)
- **COOL Ministries** – We support the COOL pantry in Waukegan and Vernon Township Pantry with non-perishables. Collection bins in hallway or give online. (CoolMinistries.org)
- **Prayer concerns?** Please consider reaching out so that our network of Prayer Warriors can pray. You may remain anonymous. Please email ChristLutheranVH@aol.com with your request. If you would like to be part of the Prayer Team, please send an email.
- **THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT.** Your presence in worship is very important. Thank you for being part of this community of faith. If you would like to support the efforts of this community, we welcome donations, which can be provided by credit card or Paypal through the link at the bottom of our webpage, ChristLutheranVH.org. Thank you.