The Workers in the Vineyard

'These men who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.' Matthew 20:12 (NIV)

Based on Matthew 20:1-16

D V O M O N E Y Q K J F E Q L
R Y H Q P G Y Y V V D B S K P
E U G V H E H E A V E N U I H
C S S Z Q N M J N R U N N N O
E A V I N E Y A R D R S F G U
I M I D T R I Z V E B M A D R
V W R S X O U F N P D T I O V
E O S P M U Q W M E E B R M C
D R D G B S O K R R T Q E R A
E K R Y P D M I T H V L U S W
H E Y V N P H E G E B Q E A A
O R C A V S Y I C M W G P K L
N S L H N Q R G U B A R W J K
U H G S Z L W R U W H I F E G
G B Z Y G D G T X R E V Q B N

MONEY	HOUR	EQUAL	WORKERS	VINEYARD
LANDOWNER	HEAVEN	GRUMBLE	KINGDOM	GENEROUS
WAGES	HIRED	UNFAIR	RIGHT	RECEIVED

ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH

319 South 5th Street, Albion, Nebraska 68620
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Office Hours: Mon-Thurs: 9am-4pm; Fri: Office Closed

September 20, 2026 ☩ Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

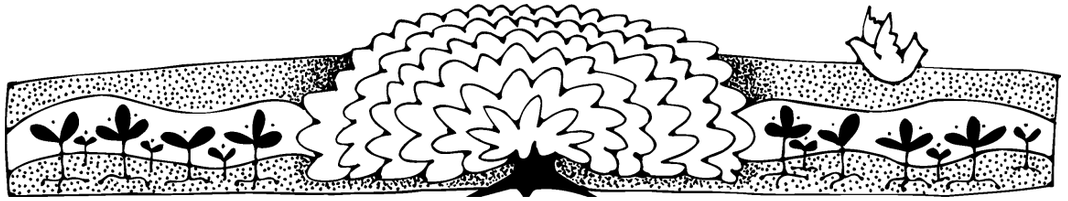
Matthew narrates one of Jesus' controversial parables in which Jesus says that the reign of God is like that of a landowner who pays his workers the same wage no matter what time of day they began to work. When God changes God's mind about punishing Nineveh for their evil ways, Jonah is angry. Yet God is gracious and merciful, abounding in steadfast love. In baptism we receive the grace of God that is freely given to all. As Martin Luther wrote, in the presence of God's mercy we are all beggars.

☩ GATHERING ☩

Prelude
(The prelude is a call to silent, personal preparation for worship.)

Welcome
Welcome to Zion Lutheran Church in Albion! We offer a warm welcome to all who are worshipping in person or by way of Facebook Live. We hope that you encounter a word of God's grace and love in this worship service.

Holy Communion will be celebrated today. At the table of our Lord Jesus Christ, God nourishes faith, forgives sin, and calls us to be witnesses to the Gospel. All who are baptized and believe in the real presence of Christ are welcome to share in the Lord's meal. Holy Communion will be distributed in person or by pre-packaged elements. If you are uncomfortable coming forward, please pick up the communion elements as you enter worship. We will partake of the sacrament as directed by the pastor within the worship service. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak with an usher. Gluten Free wafers are available on request.



The Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

Confession and Forgiveness

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

When we claim to be without sin,
we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
But if we would confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just,
will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Today we rejoice in the nearness of God,
who calls us to work as partners in his vineyard.
(Let us take a moment of silence for reflection and confession.)
Most merciful God,
we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves.
We have been content to let others carry on the work of ministry;
we have not turned to you for pardon.
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.

As God invites Israel to seek the Lord
and as workers are called even to the eleventh hour,
so God desires to bring to completion the good work he has begun in us.
Almighty God has given his Son to die for us,
and for his sake, forgives us all our sins.
In the name of God, and by his authority,
I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins,
in the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

The Workers in the Vineyard

'These men who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.' Matthew 20:12 (NIV)

Each number represents a letter of the alphabet. Substitute the correct letter for the numbers to reveal the coded words.

1 T	2 O	3 J	4 Z	5 H	6 F	7 A	8 D	9 S	10 U	11 E	12 I	13 N	14 X	15 Y	16 V	17 L	18 W	19 Q	20 B	21 R	22 P	23 K	24 C	25 G	26 M

1. 25-11-13-11-21-2-10-9 _____
2. 18-2-21-23-11-21-9 _____
3. 6-12-21-9-1 _____
4. 10-13-6-7-12-21 _____
5. 16-12-13-11-15-7-21-8 _____
6. 26-2-13-11-15 _____
7. 5-2-10-21 _____
8. 25-21-10-26-20-17-11 _____
9. 5-12-21-11-8 _____
10. 17-7-9-1 _____

VINEYARD	UNFAIR	WORKERS	GRUMBLE	HIRED
LAST	GENEROUS	FIRST	MONEY	HOUR

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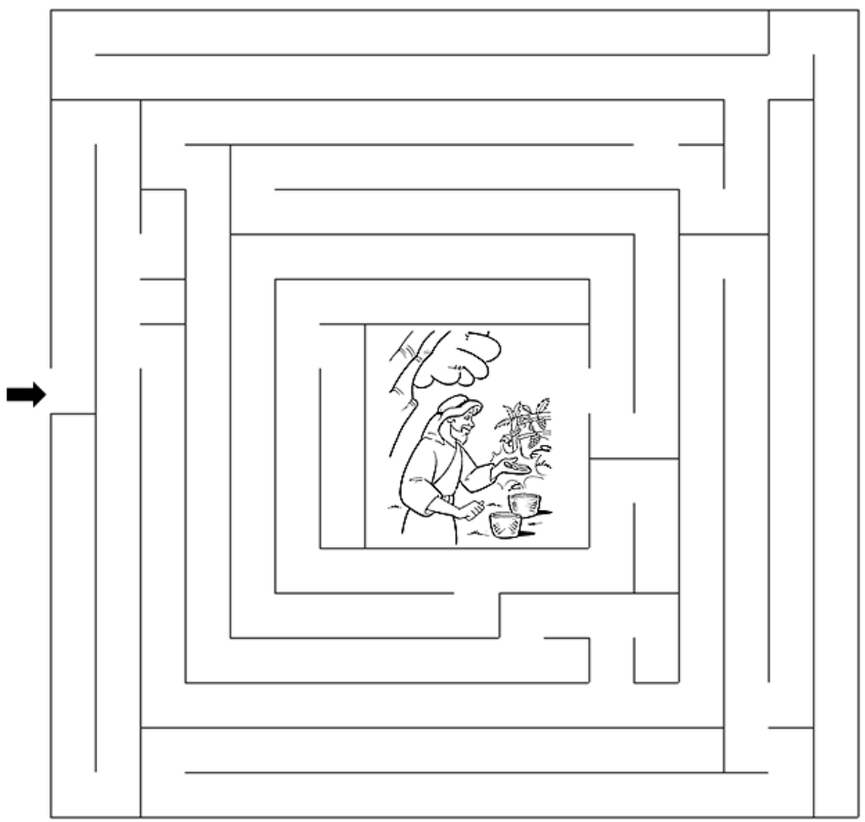
Music: William H. Walter, 1825-1893; Public Domain

Dismissal

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Parable of Vineyard Workers Maze



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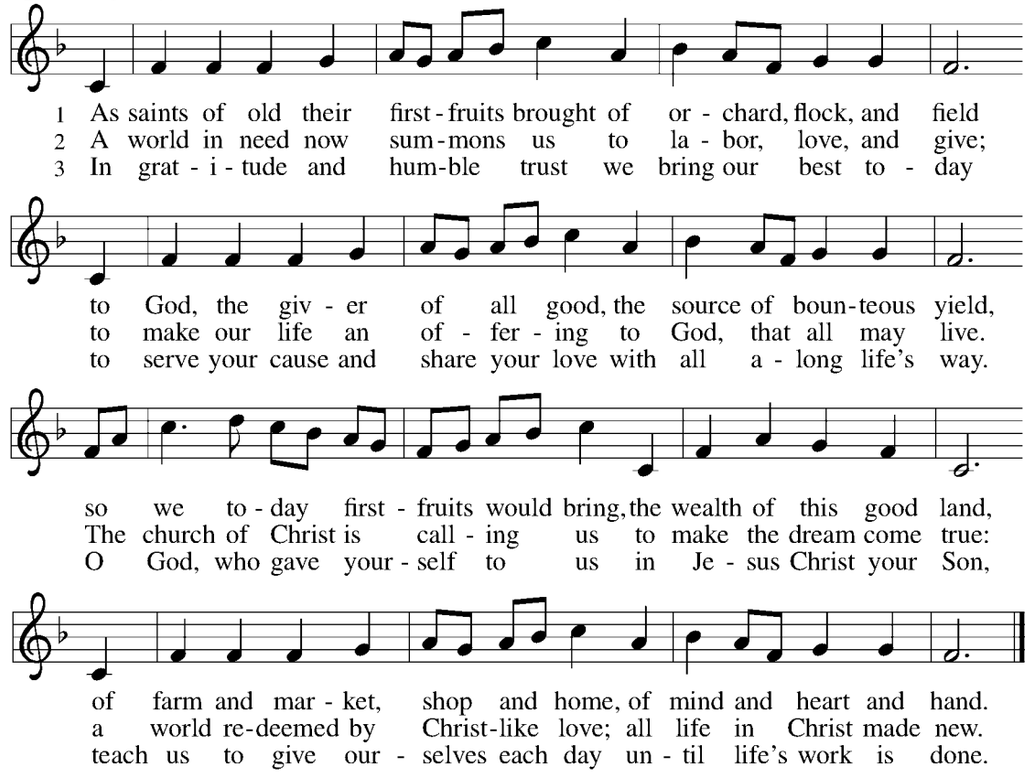
Opening Hymn ***As Saints of Old*** #695



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Music: English folk tune, arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1872-1958
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Opening Litany

While we walk this earth, God guides us and gives us direction.
May we follow the plans he has for our lives.

While we walk this earth,
God takes us to places we never would expect to go.
May we have the courage
to face the challenges that God set before us.

While we walk this earth, God is always introducing us to new people — both believers and unbelievers.
May we be strengthened by the faith of others
and be eager to share the Gospel message with all who will listen.

While we walk this earth,
God gives us work to do in his kingdom.
May we open our eyes
to the many opportunities God has given us to serve.

While we walk this earth,
God provides his people with protection and care.
May we come to God for help when we feel weak and discouraged.

While we walk this earth,
God is preparing us for a greater life.
May we remember always that, with each passing day,
we are drawing closer to life everlasting,
where we will be with all the saints in light.

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.

Hymn of Praise ***Glory Be to God*** *Family of God*

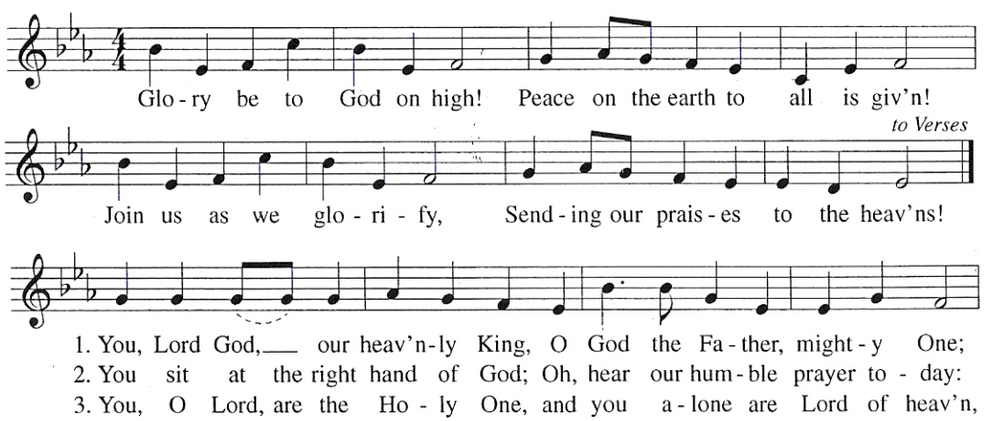



Table Blessing
May the body and blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,
strengthen you and preserve you unto eternal life. **Amen.**

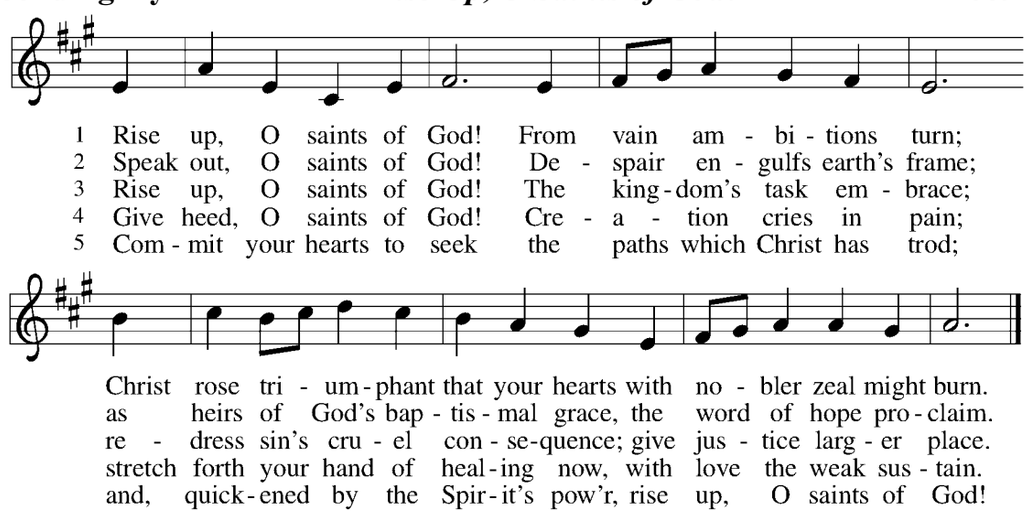
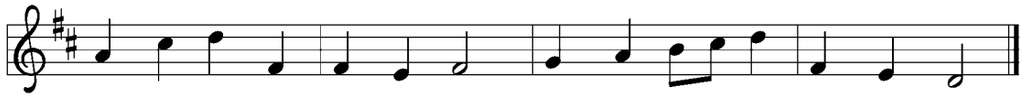
Post-Communion Prayer
Let us pray… *(A brief silence is kept.)*
Sustaining God,
with this bread and cup,
you nourish us with mercy and abundant life.
By your Spirit, send us from this table to serve a needy world.
Make us living signs of your liberation, healing, and love,
following the way of Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

✢ SENDING ✢

Announcements

Benediction
God all mighty, God most merciful,
bless us, keep us, and grant us peace.
In the name of the Father, ✢ Son, and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Sending Hymn ***Rise Up, O Saints of God!*** #669



take my mo-ments and my days; let them flow in cease-less praise.
take my feet and let them be swift and beau-ti-ful for thee.
take my lips and let them be filled with mes-sag-es from thee.
take my in-tel-lect, and use ev-'ry pow'r as thou shalt choose.

5 Take my will and make it thine;
it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne.

6 Take my love; my Lord, I pour
at thy feet its treasure store;
take myself, and I will be
ever, only, all for thee.

Text: Frances R. Havergal, 1836-1879, alt. ↑
Music: William Havergal, 1793-1870
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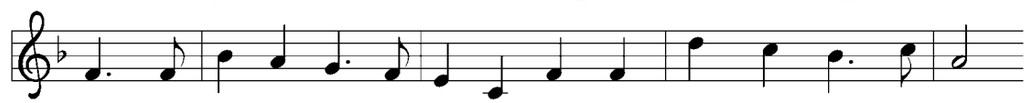
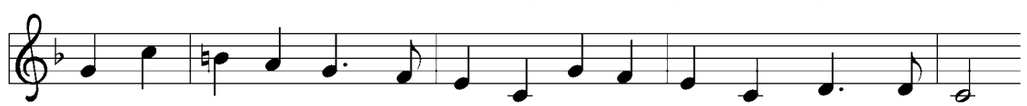
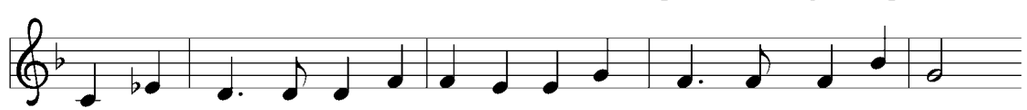
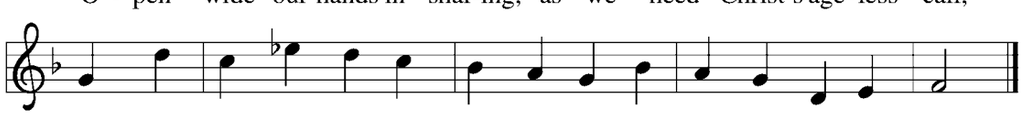
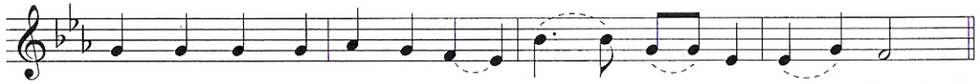
Distribution Hymn *God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending* #678

1 God, whose giv-ing knows no end-ing, from your rich and end-less store:
2 Skills and time are ours for press-ing toward the goals of Christ, your Son:
3 Trea-sure, too, you have en-trust-ed, gain through pow'rs your grace con-ferred;

na-ture's won-der, Je-sus' wis-dom, cost-ly cross, grave's shat-tered door,
all at peace in health and free-dom, rac-es joined, the church made one.
ours to use for home and kin-dred, and to spread the gos-pel word.

gift-ed by you, we turn to you, of-f'ring up our-selves in praise;
Now di-rect our dai-ly la-bor, lest we strive for self a-lone;
O-pen wide our hands in shar-ing, as we heed Christ's age-less call,



thank-ful song shall rise for-ev-er, gra-cious do-nor of our days.
born with tal-ents, make us ser-vants fit to an-swer at your throne.
heal-ing, teach-ing, and re-claim-ing, serv-ing you by lov-ing all.

1. Je-sus Christ, to you we sing, O Lord, on-ly be-got-ten Son. (Ref.)
2. Lamb of God, have mer-cy on us– Je-sus, take our sins a-way. (Ref.)
3. Reign-ing with the Ho-ly Spir-it and the Fa-ther. A-men. (Ref.)

Prayer of the Day

Let us pray… *(A brief silence is kept.)*
Almighty and eternal God,
you show perpetual lovingkindness to us your servants.
Because we cannot rely on our own abilities,
grant us your merciful judgment,
and train us to embody the generosity of your Son,
Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

✢ WORD ✢

First Reading Jonah 3:10 — 4:11

After Jonah's short sermon in 3:4, the Ninevites all repented and God decided to spare the city. Jonah objected to this and became even more angry when God ordered a worm to destroy a plant that was providing shade. The book ends with a question that challenges any who are not ready to forgive: You, Jonah, are all worked up about a bush, but shouldn't I be concerned about a hundred and twenty thousand Ninevites?

A reading from Jonah.

10 When God saw what [the people of Ninevah] did, how they turned
from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he
had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.
4:1 But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. 2 He
prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD! Is not this what I said while I
was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the
beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to
anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from
punishing. 3 And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is
better for me to die than to live." 4 And the LORD said, "Is it right for you
to be angry?" 5 Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the
city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade,
waiting to see what would become of the city.

[6]The LORD God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah,
to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah
was very happy about the bush. [7]But when dawn came up the next day,
God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. [8]When
the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on
the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He
said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

[9]But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the
bush?" And he said, "Yes, angry enough to die." [10]Then the LORD said,
"You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and
which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a
night. [11]And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in
which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who
do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?"
The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 145:1-8

Let us read Psalm 145 responsively.

[1]I will exalt you, my God and king,
and bless your name forever and ever.

[2]**Every day will I bless you**
and praise your name forever and ever.

[3]Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised!
There is no end to your greatness.

[4]**One generation shall praise your works to another**
and shall declare your power.

[5]I will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty
and all your marvelous works.

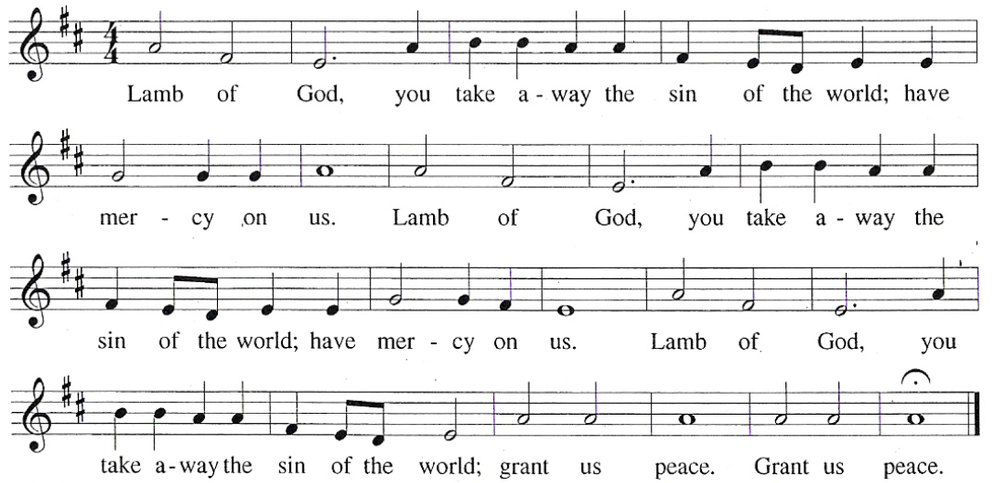
[6]**They shall tell of the might of your wondrous acts,**
and I will recount your greatness.

[7]They shall publish the remembrance of your great goodness;
they shall sing joyfully of your righteousness.

[8]**The LORD is gracious and full of compassion,**
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

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.

Agnus Dei ***Lamb of God*** *Family of God*

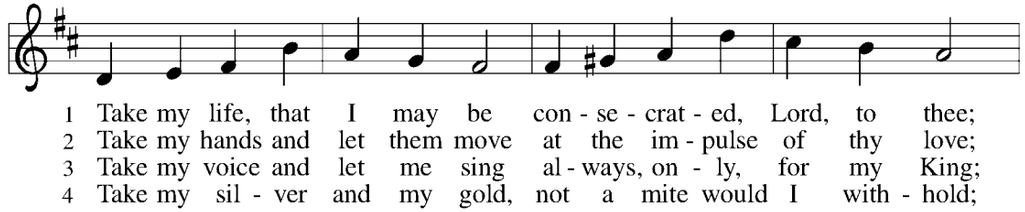


Distribution

If you are joining us from home or are taking communion from your seat:

The body of Christ, given for you. ***Amen.***
The blood of Christ, shed for you. ***Amen.***

Distribution Hymn ***Take My Life, That I May Be*** #685



Hymn continues on next page.

"Take, eat: this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me."

After supper Jesus took the cup.
Again he gave you thanks, and gave it to his disciples saying,

"Drink this, all of you: this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Great is the mystery of faith.
Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Ever-bountiful God, listen to the hunger of your children
and nourish their true life in you.
Draw near to those who toil for daily wages
and all who wonder where they will find daily bread.
Bless any whose days are spent looking for work or waiting for hire.
Give each of your sons and daughters a place in your kingdom
and fruitful work in your vineyard,
not only for a passing day but for eternity.
By your Holy Spirit in your holy church,
make the labors of our hands tell the good news
of your harvest of plenty,
and hasten the day when in one great sharing around your table
with your people throughout the ages
we shall taste and see that you are good.
Through Christ and with Christ and in Christ,
all honor and glory are yours,
Almighty Father, now and forever. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Let us pray together as Jesus taught us...
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,

Second Reading Philippians 1:21-30

Paul writes to the Philippians from prison. Though he is uncertain about the outcome of his imprisonment, he is committed to the ministry of the gospel and calls on the Philippians to live lives that reflect and enhance the gospel mission.

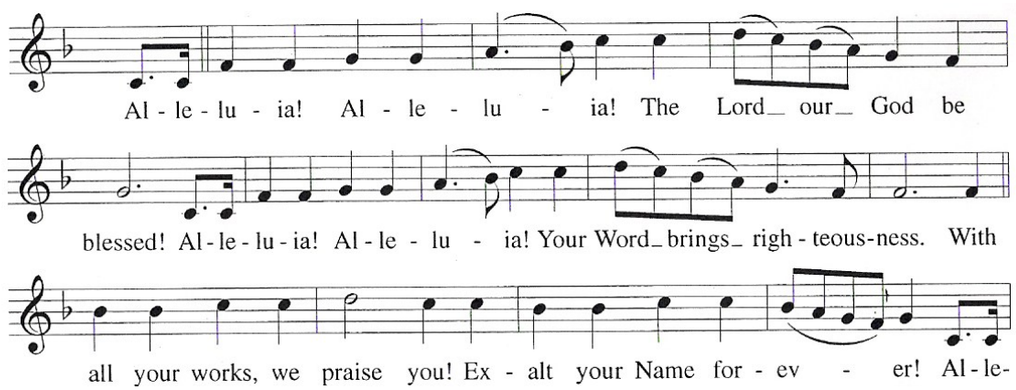
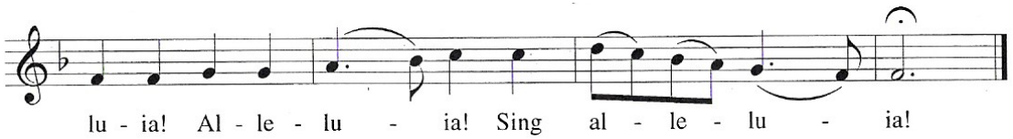
A reading from Philippians.

[21]For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. [22]If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. [23]I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; [24]but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. [25]Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, [26]so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

[27]Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, [28]and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. [29]For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well — [30]since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Alleluia Verse *Family of God*



Holy Gospel Matthew 20:1-16

Jesus tells a parable about God's generosity, challenging the common assumption that God rewards people according to what they have earned or deserve.

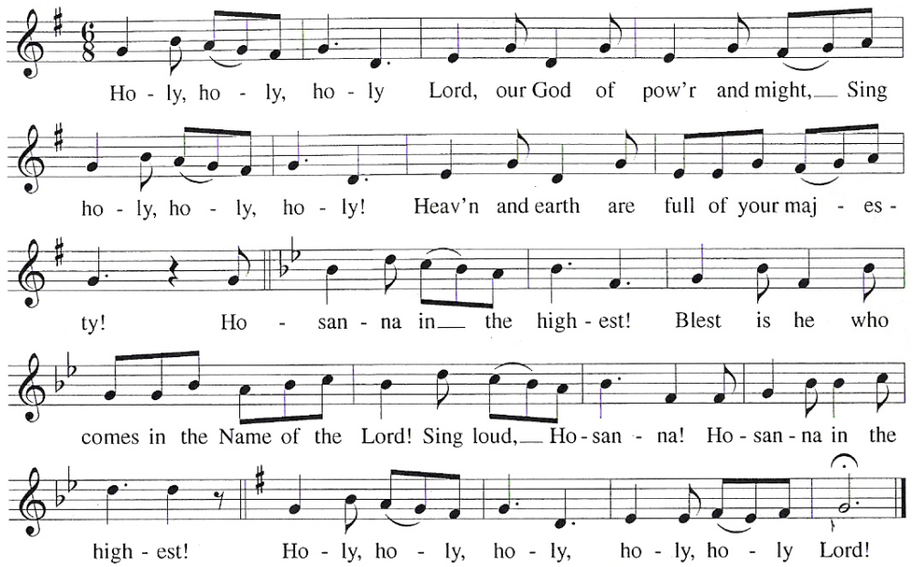
The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 20th chapter.
Glory to you, O Lord.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] [1]"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. [2]After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. [3]When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; [4]and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. [5]When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. [6]And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?' [7]They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.' [8]When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.' [9]When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. [10]Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. [11]And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, [12]saying, '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.' [13]But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? [14]Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. [15]Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?' [16]So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

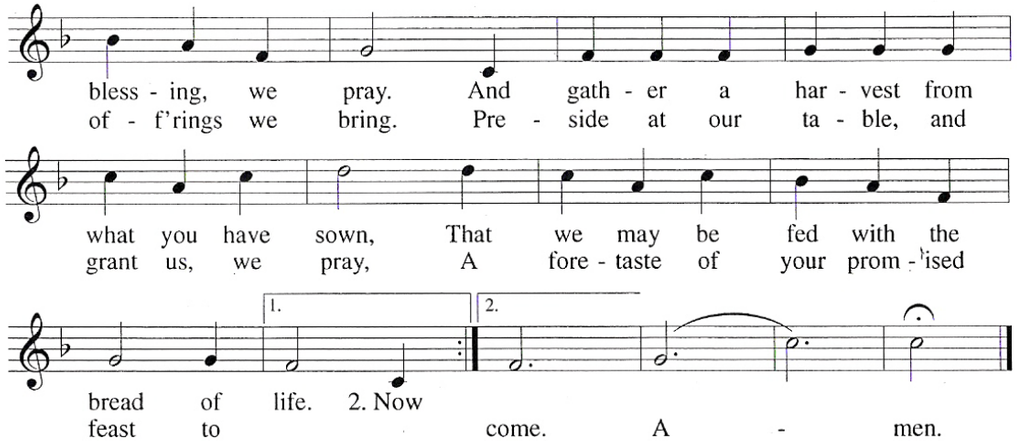
His cross and resurrection turn the emptiness of sin
into the fullness of everlasting life.
And so we join with angels and archangels
and all the company of heaven,
singing the hymn of unending praise.

Sanctus ***Holy, Holy, Holy*** *Family of God*



Eucharistic Prayer & Words of Institution

We give you thanks and praise, Lord God,
for in your Son Jesus you became the true bread from heaven,
the manna sustaining us in every wilderness,
the bread of abundant life that never runs out.
Send down your Holy Spirit upon us now,
that we might become living bread for your hungry world.
Give us your very self in these gifts of bread and wine
and make them for us the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ;
who, at supper with his disciples, took bread, gave you thanks,
broke the bread, and gave it to them, saying,



☩ MEAL ☩

Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to the Lord.

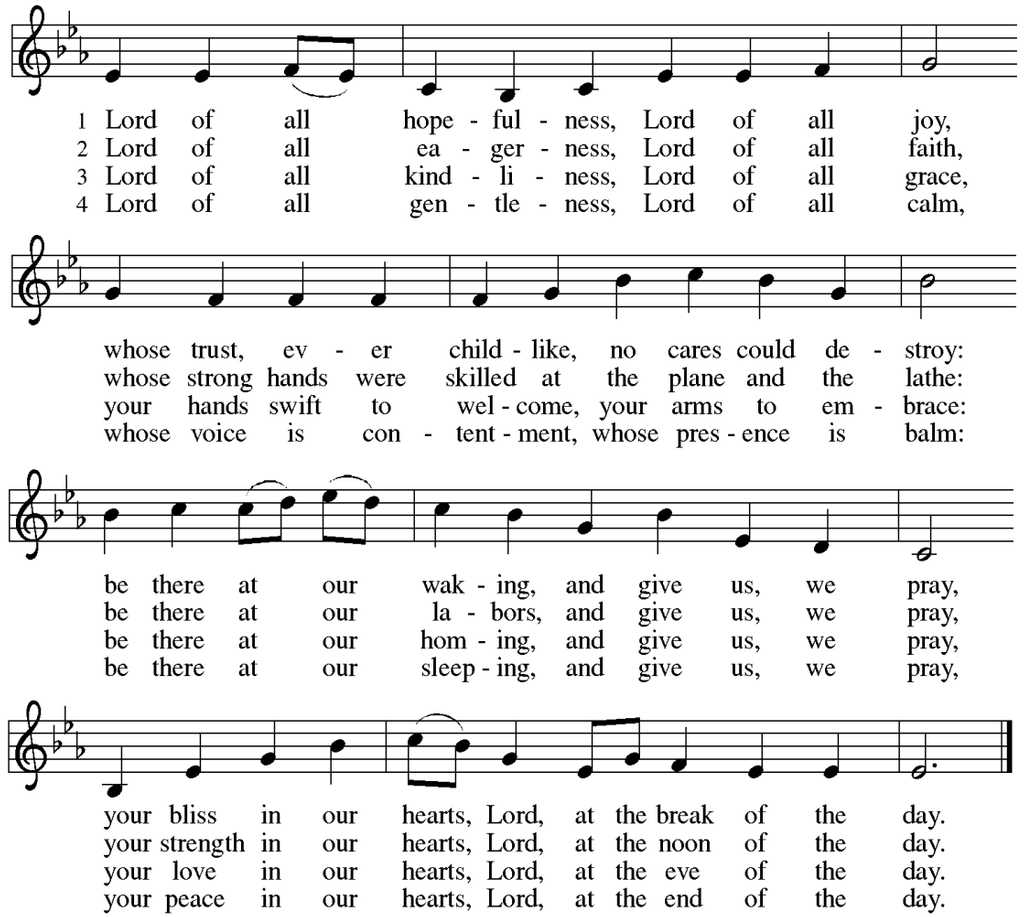
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God,
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Proper Preface

We lift our hearts to you, gracious God,
because you made the dazzling creation out of nothing,
yet made us to share eternity with you.
In covenant love you called your chosen people to an imagination
as plentiful as the stars in the sky and the sands of the desert.
Your Son Jesus transformed our hearts
from the scarcity of mammon to the wondrous abundance of manna,
and through the church you gather us to share in the holy feast
where your grace abounds for all, forever.

Children's Time
Sermon

Hymn of the Day ***Lord of All Hopefulness*** #765



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Apostles' Creed

Living together in trust and hope, let us 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 into hell.
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 the People

P Reminded of God's gracious and abundant love,
we offer our prayers, confident that God hears us.

A brief silence.

A Hold your church accountable
for our unwillingness to share your good news
and our anger at your generosity to others.
Nourish us by your grace to be witnesses to your love.
Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

P Guide scientists and researchers
studying responses to the climate crisis so that all your creation
may inspire us to give thanks for your great goodness.
Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

A Show employers the benefits of equal pay standards
for all their employees. Reconcile conflicts between employees.
Fill places of employment with camaraderie,
and bring an end to employment disparity.
Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

P Encourage any who cannot work or who cannot work a full day
with the truth that their value comes from your everlasting love for them.
Provide for those who are injured, ill, and for all in any need,
especially...
Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

A Strengthen all those in this congregation
whose labor serves the needs of others in the community.
Inspire all in this congregation
to support community endeavors with our time and talents.
Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

P Here other intercessions may be offered either aloud or in silence.
Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

A Comfort us with the promise of the resurrection
as we remember all our loved ones
whose desire to be with Jesus is fulfilled.
Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

P Grant the prayers we have offered, what we have forgotten to ask,
and whatever else you see that we need. We ask this in Jesus' name.
Amen.

Peace

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

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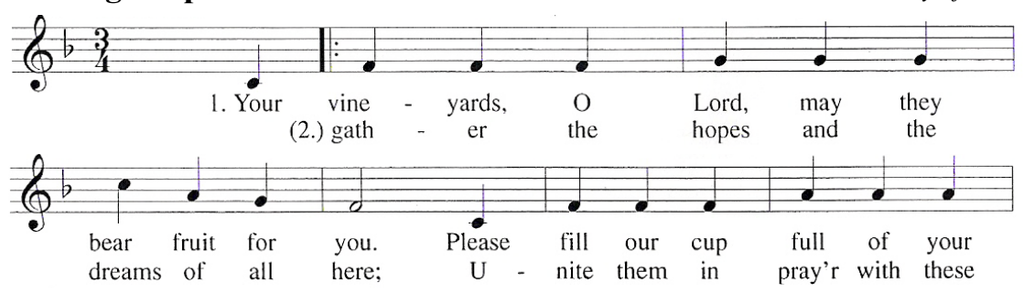
Offering Response *Family of God*