

*Faith Lutheran Church*

Sunday, September 27, 2020  
*17<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost*



Welcome

Call to Worship

We gather together in the name of the Father, and of the Son+, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Call to Confession

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.**

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. May we take a moment to go before God in open and honest confession.

Prayer of Confession (please join in confessing our sins)

Most merciful God,

**we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by 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**

Declaration of Forgiveness

In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for His sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ, and by His authority alone, 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.**

Opening Prayer

Please join me in prayer:

**God of love, giver of life, You know our frailties and failings. Give us Your grace to overcome them, keep us from those things that harm us, and guide us in the way of salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

Readings and Psalm

- Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32
- Psalm 25:1-9
- Philippians 2:1-13

*The fairness of God's way*

*Remember, O Lord, Your compassion and love. (Ps. 25:6)*

*Christ humbled to the point of death on a cross*

### **The Holy Gospel according to Matthew 21:23-32**

*After driving the moneychangers out of the temple (21:12), Jesus begins teaching there. His authority is questioned by the religious leaders, who are supposed to be in charge of the temple.*

<sup>23</sup>When [Jesus] entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him as He was teaching, and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?” <sup>24</sup>Jesus said to them, “I will also ask you one question; if you tell Me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. <sup>25</sup>Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?” And they argued with one another, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ <sup>26</sup>But if we say, ‘Of human origin,’ we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet.” <sup>27</sup>So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And He said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

<sup>28</sup>“What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ <sup>29</sup>He answered, ‘I will not’; but later he changed his mind and went. <sup>30</sup>The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, ‘I go, sir’; but he did not go. <sup>31</sup>Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you; the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. <sup>32</sup>For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to You, O Christ.**

### **Sermon**

**Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

How is one given authority?

One way that a person obtains authority is based on a position to which they were elected. The President or Prime Minister of a country is given authority after they win an election and are sworn in. All elected officials receive a degree of authority once they begin the office. They have rules and procedures to uphold so their authority is regulated. After their term is up, constituents get to decide if they were pleased or not with the official’s job performance. They then vote to give them another term or vote them out and replace them with another candidate. This is certainly a hot topic as we near another presidential election.

One gets authority based on a position to which they were hired. Teachers receive authority over students. Police officers have authority over citizens. Bosses have authority over employees. Though doctors may not have total authority over patients, they have authority over what medications are prescribed to the patient and what tests are ordered.

Parents have authority over their children. Even that teenager. Especially that teenager. I would say that ends when the child becomes an adult, but I’m living proof that’s not always correct! I think even in my late thirties, my mom had *some* authority over me. I don’t know if that was realized or if it was just my perception. But I knew when my mom told me to do certain things, she most likely said that thinking she *had* the authority to do so. Maybe because, in most cases, I often did what she told me to do!

Pastors receive authority when they are Called and installed at a congregation. In most cases, they have been voted on to receive the Call though some denominations appoint pastors to a specific congregation. The congregation imparts on the pastor a sacred trust to preach, teach, and administer the sacraments, among other ministry work.

The church doesn't function well if the *pastor* has total authority over the congregation. Nor does the church function well if the *congregation* has total authority over the pastor.

This came up in a round-about-way at a recent colleague Zoom meeting. And I won't tell you what denomination since I serve both the ELCA and the PCUSA!

The question discussed was who makes the decisions in the church, the Session or the pastor? Ok, well maybe that gave it away! The conversation leading up to it was about how the church makes decisions during this time of the pandemic. Does the Session decide how and when in-person services resume, what restrictions to impose, etc.? Or is it up to the pastor to decide? Do they work together?

I would hope that the leadership in my congregations would say that the decisions were mutually-agreed-upon. There must be a mutual understanding of what is in the best interest of the members. That doesn't mean everyone agrees with every decision. But they have to come to an agreement that's best for the majority of the membership. Kind of like in politics. Kind of like with school systems. With businesses. And in our homes.

In our gospel reading from Matthew 21 today, the chief priests and the elders asked Jesus, “*By what authority* are you doing these things, and who gave You this authority?”

It truly was a trap. Jesus knew it was a trap.

We just heard the bantering when I read the gospel. Jesus said You answer My question and then I'll answer your question. The chief priests and the elders realized Jesus turned the tables on them.

“Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?” Hmm. The chief priests and scribes had to think about this. If we say it was from heaven, then He will ask us why we didn't believe John. And if we answer it the other way, of human origin, we will anger the crowd because they believed John *was* a prophet. It's a no-win situation.

Deciding to play it safe with a simple, “We do not know”, Jesus said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”

We know the answer, right? God gave Jesus authority. That was God's plan when God sent Jesus into this world. Even before Jesus was born into the world.

Numerous times throughout scripture we hear God's authority bestowed upon Jesus.

Even before He was born, God gave Jesus authority. The angel prophesied to Jesus' mother, Mary, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name Him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end. (Luke 1:30-33)

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be holy; He will be called Son of God.” (Luke 1:35) Through the angel’s proclamation, Jesus received authority.

God gave Jesus authority in the Temple at the age of 12. After the Festival of the Passover, Jesus became separated from His parents. When they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him, they found Him sitting among the teachers in the temple, listening to them and asking them questions.

Jesus questioned His parents who were clearly upset that He wandered off (typical teenager?), “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” (Luke 1:49) It is, again, through the identification that Jesus is God’s Son that granted Him authority; in this case, authority to participate and be counted among the spiritual leaders.

God gave Jesus authority at His baptism, acknowledging Jesus as God’s Son and bestowing on Him the Holy Spirit; “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:17)

During His transfiguration, God *again* gave Jesus authority through God’s relationship with Him, “This is my Son, the Beloved; with Him I am well pleased; listen to Him!” (Matthew 17: 5) This time, however, God commands Peter and James and John to *listen* to Jesus. Jesus *has* the authority of God.

Throughout His life, Jesus recognizes and acknowledges that His authority is from God.

Even after His death and resurrection, Jesus acknowledged His authority from God and placed it on the disciples as we hear in Matthew 28:18-20, “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’”

The words of the Great Commission. The words that Christ gave to us. The authority by which we are to carry Christ’s mission and ministry into the world.

*This* authority is more powerful than any election a politician could win or any position a person could hold. *This* authority is granted to us by God through God’s Son, Jesus Christ. *This* authority commands us to share the love and light of Christ to all. Let *us* go and do likewise. **Amen.**

### **Blessing**

And now, may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. (*Philippians 4:7*)

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Drawn together in the compassion of God, we pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. *A brief silence.*

In all the world, give Your church unity. Inspire all the baptized with the mind of Christ. Where the church is powerful and where it struggles, shape us with humility and obedience so that Your love may be at work in us.

Your Son took on all of bodily life in our world, even to death. Preserve and keep Your creation, O God. Mend and redeem places that are polluted and damaged, so that all of creation confesses You as Lord.

Turn the nations toward life. Where our ways are unfair, give us new hearts and new spirits. Where sin permeates our cultures and institutions, change our minds and teach us to trust Your authority.

Our lives are Yours, O God. Relieve the suffering of those who are ill in body, mind, or spirit. Defend the lives and welfare of children who are abused or neglected, hungry or exploited, bullied or lonely. We continue to pray for all who are affected by the coronavirus. Grant comfort and peace to all who are ill, especially those we name in our hearts, our minds, and with our voices...(please name your prayer concerns).

Turn this congregation away from our own interests toward the interests of others. Fill us with Your compassion and sympathy. Bless ministries of care in our community; make us into signs of Your mercy and justice for our neighbors.

Thank You for those who have gone into the kingdom ahead of us—tax collectors and prostitutes, likely and unlikely, obedient and slow to learn. By their witness, teach us to confess Jesus Christ as Lord in life and in death.

All these things and whatever else You see that we need, we entrust to Your mercy; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **Our Lord's Prayer**

*I invite you to join in praying the prayer our Lord 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors;**

**and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen**

### **Offering**

It is generally at this time during the service that worshipers are invited to share their gifts for the Mission and Ministry of the church. Whether you choose to pause at this time or make your contribution following this service, we encourage you to continue your support of the ministry.

### **Offertory Prayer** *(please join in prayer)*

Blessed are you,

**O Lord our God, maker of all things. Through Your goodness You have blessed us with these gifts. With them we offer ourselves to Your service and dedicate our lives to the care and redemption of all that You have made, for the sake of Him who gave Himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

### **Benediction**

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord's face shine on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord look upon you with favor and grant you peace; in the name of God the Father, God the Son+, and God the Spirit that makes us one. **Amen.**

### **Dismissal**

Go in peace. Remember the poor.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **Sources:**

[www.presbyterianmission.org](http://www.presbyterianmission.org)

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

❖ **Pastor Melinda's email HAS CHANGED! It is now:** [orlcrev@jamadots.com](mailto:orlcrev@jamadots.com)

❖ **Watch Faith's Worship Service Live on Sundays at our Facebook page!** - You can catch our Service at 10:30am every Sunday at [www.facebook.com/FaithLC1966](https://www.facebook.com/FaithLC1966) . You can also find us online by searching for **FaithLC1966** in any browser. If you have any questions or comments, please call the church office at (906) 632-7246.

❖ **ELCA World Hunger** - Thank you to everyone who donated while we collected for the ELCA's World Hunger Campaign. We managed to raise \$211.88 for this wonderful cause!

❖ **Do you have any Christian music vinyl records?** - Sean in the office knows someone who is interested if you've got any you are looking to get rid of. So if you do, you can call the church office at 906-632-7246.

❖ **The Women of Faith (WELCA)** - We regret to inform our congregation that we will not be hosting our annual Bazaar & Luncheon due to the possible spread of the Coronavirus. It would normally be held in early October. We appreciate that our women are always so willing to support this event by making salads, desserts, baked goods and crafts and by helping on the day of the Bazaar. Thank you for all that you've contributed in the past. We look forward to your help & generosity next October, 2021 when we hope to host another Bazaar & Luncheon.

❖ **YOUTH CAN DRIVE**—Due to COVID-19, we are not able to accept these items at this time. It is a health risk for those who handle the returnable containers. If you so choose, please return the cans and bottles to the store at your convenience and mail your deposit receipt to Faith. A member will then return the deposit receipt to the store for redemption. Thank you!

### ❖ **FORTUNE LAKE LUTHERAN CAMP'S UPCOMING VIRTUAL FALL FEST AUCTION—**

We are gearing up for our Virtual Fall Fest Auction! We've got over 80 hand-made quilts and fine art items, and we'll also be auctioning some Fortune Lake experiences! This event is our largest fundraiser of the year, and all proceeds offset the cost of our ministry.

**All bidding will take place on our secure auction website:**  
[www.auctria.com/auction/fortunelake](http://www.auctria.com/auction/fortunelake)

Here is the timeline and information on what to expect:

- **September 23, 12 noon CDT: Virtual Silent Auction Opens**  
Bidding will begin for those who have registered on Auctria (see link above).
- **September 24, 3-7pm CDT: In Person Preview in the Chapel**  
This socially distanced, masked event will allow people to see the items that are available for bidding. Staff and volunteers will be on hand to assist with registering as online bidders. **NO ITEMS WILL BE SOLD ONSITE**, but Draffle tickets can be purchased for \$5/one ticket or \$10/three tickets.
- **October 3, 10-11am CDT: Virtual LIVE Auction**  
Join us remotely for the opportunity to bid on select, high-quality items. The LIVE stream will be broadcast on our Facebook page, and the bidding will take place on Auctria. We are asking tech savvy people to help those who are less confident but want to participate.
- **October 3, 1pm CDT: Virtual Silent Auction Closes**