

Moxham Lutheran Church

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Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 10, 2023 + 9:30 a.m.

Introducing Today's Liturgy

The Templeton Foundation funded a major nationwide study on people's attitudes toward forgiveness. Co-sponsored by the University of Michigan and the National Institute for Mental Health, the study found that 75% of Americans are "very confident" they have been forgiven by God for their past offenses. The lead researcher, Dr. Loren Toussaint, expressed great surprise at such high confidence, especially since most of these same people are not regular church attenders. Still, three-quarters of the people surveyed had few doubts about God's penchant to let bygones be bygones.

The picture was less bright, however, when it came to interpersonal relations. Only half of the people surveyed claimed they were certain they had forgiven others. Whereas God may be a first-class forgiver, they struggle. It's difficult to forgive other people with whom you are angry. It's even difficult to forgive yourself sometimes. But where forgiveness does take place, the study found a link between forgiveness and better health. The more prone a person is to grant forgiveness, the less likely he or she will suffer from stress-related illnesses.

Today's gospel presents a strategy for good health in the Christian community.

Gathering

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

Welcome

Prelude

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 Song: "Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee"

No. 836

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.

Dialogue on the Word

Our sins weigh heavily upon us,
and we waste away because of them.

The Lord God insists, I take no pleasure in your wasting away.

Turn from your ways and live!

Teach me, O Lord. Give me understanding,
that I may keep your teaching with my whole heart.

My teaching concerning the commandments is summed up in this word,
"Love. Love your neighbor as yourself."

Praise, my soul, the King of Heaven,
to his feet your tribute bring.

Prayer of the Day

O Lord God, enliven and preserve your church with your perpetual mercy. Without your help, we mortals will fail; remove far from us everything that is harmful, and lead us toward all that gives life and salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Word

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

First Reading: Ezekiel 33:7-11

⁷So you, mortal, I have made a sentinel for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. ⁸If I say to the wicked, “O wicked ones, you shall surely die,” and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but their blood I will require at your hand. ⁹But if you warn the wicked to turn from their ways, and they do not turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but you will have saved your life.

¹⁰Now you, mortal, say to the house of Israel, Thus you have said: “Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?” ¹¹Say to them, As I live, says the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm: Psalm 119:33-40

³³Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes,
and I shall keep it to the end.

³⁴**Give me understanding, and I shall keep your teaching;
I shall keep it with all my heart.**

³⁵Lead me in the path of your commandments,
for that is my desire.

³⁶**Incline my heart to your decrees
and not to unjust gain.**

³⁷Turn my eyes from beholding falsehood;
give me life in your way.

³⁸**Fulfill your promise to your servant,
which is for those who fear you.**

³⁹Turn away the reproach that I dread,
because your judgments are good.

⁴⁰**Behold, I long for your commandments;
by your righteousness enliven me.**

Second Reading: Romans 13:8-14

⁸Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet”; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

¹¹Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; ¹²the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; ¹³let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

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Gospel: Matthew 18:15-20

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus said to the disciples: ¹⁵“If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. ¹⁶But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

Brief silence for reflection.

Hymn of the Day: “Where Charity and Love Prevail”

No. 359

Apostles’ Creed

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Prayers of Intercession

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

A brief silence.

Hold us accountable to one another, O God. We lift up those who are gathering this week for the Lutheran World Federation Assembly in Krakow, Poland. May the Holy Spirit guide their work as a global Lutheran faith community for a just, peaceful, and reconciled world. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Reveal to us your miracles, O God. Move us to cherish this world as we behold the wonders of your creation. Help us to be attentive to the natural world and turn us to ways of living that seek Earth's thriving. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Inspire us to work for change, O God. That we might understand and advocate for justice and fairness for all. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Comfort those who suffer, O God. During this Suicide Prevention Week, help us to move towards and build connections, provide reassurance, and offer care for those who may be contemplating harm to themselves. Bring peace to all who are vulnerable, frightened, despairing, or sick (especially). Guard their waking and their sleeping. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Awaken us, O God. Direct us that we may have the strength and humility to treat others with love, respect, and compassion, especially those we find difficult to love or whose personal values, politics, religious belief or worldview differ from our own. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Be our hope, O God. We remember with thanksgiving your disciples who died in faith especially, Peter Claver, a Jesuit missionary to Colombia known as the patron saint of slaves, African missions, and interracial Justice. May your disciples' trust in your promise be our protection and our hope. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

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

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

We share the peace with a holy wave.

Meal

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

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 God 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 has poured your love into our hearts through your Holy Spirit given to us.

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:

Holy, Holy, Holy

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The Psalmist, looked inside himself
at your enumerable blessings and sang:

“Bless the Lord, O my Soul,

let all that is within me, bless God's holy name.”

Likewise, we confess that every knee should bow

and every tongue give you praise,

for in you is extravagant mercy

and you have saved us from all that would destroy us.

Jesus' Words of Institution.

Though he was crucified,

you raised him from death

making him the Lord of both the living and the dead.

Bless these elements of your grace

that we might live in your truth

knowing that whether we live or die

we belong to you.

And in gratitude for your mercy and grace,

may we forgive as you have forgiven us.

Lord's Prayer

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Invitation to Communion

The food of God, for the people of God.

Thanks be to God!

We come forward down the center aisle to kneel or stand at the communion rail.

We return by the side aisles.

Songs of Distribution: “As We Gather at Your Table”

No. 522

“God, When Human Bonds Are Broken”

No. 603

Prayer after Communion

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 make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace.

Amen.

Sending Song: “Earth and All Stars!”

No. 731

Dismissal

Together, we go into the world — **sharing God’s word, serving others, growing in faith, practicing stewardship as a way of life.**

Go in peace. Love one another.

Thanks be to God.

Postlude