

# Moxham Lutheran Church

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# Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 24, 2023 + 10:00 a.m.

## Introducing Today's Readings

It's a shame we associate the name Jonah with his underwater taxi ride. I have always wondered if the contentious debates among churches over the details of the Jonah story (like being swallowed by a big fish) is not our way of avoiding the painful truth and conclusion of the book itself.

The Israelites had been through a terrifying national experience. Their sacred temple had been destroyed. Their leaders beheaded. Their craftsmen and young exiled. Their women enslaved. In this parable, Jonah gives expression to their bitterness and their desire for a word from God that will support their thirst for vengeance. God belongs exclusively to them and surely Yahweh would not waste divine energy seeking repentance from enemies who are not worth one iota of mercy.

The Gospel reading from Matthew 20 reminds the reader what Jonah was forced to learn: "God is God, and we are not!" God's mercy is often surprising, and even offensive.

## 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:** "Lord of Light"

**No. 688**

### **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.**

### **Prayer of the Day**

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**

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

### **Children's Message**

#### **First Reading: Jonah 3:10--4:11**

<sup>10</sup>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.

<sup>4:1</sup>But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." <sup>4</sup>And the LORD said, "Is it right for you to be angry?" <sup>5</sup>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.

<sup>6</sup>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. <sup>7</sup>But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. <sup>8</sup>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.”

<sup>9</sup>But God said to Jonah, “Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?” And he said, “Yes, angry enough to die.” <sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>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: Psalm 145:1-8**

<sup>1</sup>I will exalt you, my God and king,  
and bless your name forever and ever.

<sup>2</sup>**Every day will I bless you  
and praise your name forever and ever.**

<sup>3</sup>Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised!  
There is no end to your greatness.

<sup>4</sup>**One generation shall praise your works to another  
and shall declare your power.**

<sup>5</sup>I will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty  
and all your marvelous works.

<sup>6</sup>**They shall tell of the might of your wondrous acts,  
and I will recount your greatness.**

<sup>7</sup>They shall publish the remembrance of your great goodness;  
they shall sing joyfully of your righteousness.

<sup>8</sup>**The LORD is gracious and full of compassion,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**

### **Second Reading: Philippians 1:21-30**

<sup>21</sup>For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. <sup>22</sup>If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. <sup>23</sup>I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; <sup>24</sup>but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. <sup>25</sup>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, <sup>26</sup>so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

<sup>27</sup>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, <sup>28</sup>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. <sup>29</sup>For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well—<sup>30</sup>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.**

## **Gospel Acclamation**

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### **Gospel: Matthew 20:1-16**

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

Jesus said to the disciples: <sup>1</sup>“The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. <sup>2</sup>After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. <sup>3</sup>When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; <sup>4</sup>and he said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went.

<sup>5</sup>When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. <sup>6</sup>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?’ <sup>7</sup>They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard.’ <sup>8</sup>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.’ <sup>9</sup>When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage.

<sup>10</sup>Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. <sup>11</sup>And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, <sup>12</sup>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.’

<sup>13</sup>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? <sup>14</sup>Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. <sup>15</sup>Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ <sup>16</sup>So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

## Sermon

*Brief silence for reflection.*

**Hymn of the Day:** “Lord of All Hopefulness”

**No. 765**

**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.*

God who is gracious and merciful, teach your church to invite and welcome all. Challenge your church to choose respect and compassion over judgment. Lead us to be grateful for the blessing of community. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

God who sends the wind and the sun, you know every worm and bush by name. Send the Holy Spirit to show us how to best care for the earth and it’s creatures and to share the humblest parts of creation that are precious to you. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

God, impart your compassionate wisdom to those who work in public service. Provide courage and compassion to all involved in law enforcement and public safety. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

God who saves, like the people Ninevah turned from their evil ways, protect your children from calamity and disaster when in harm’s way. Encourage all who are in despair or pain of any kind (*especially*). Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

God who is slow to anger, may we boast about the goodness of Jesus just as Paul did so when in prison. Inspire us to lead lives of joy and curiosity. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

God who abounds in steadfast love, we give thanks for the saints called to the kingdom of heaven. United with them in spirit, hold us firm as we labor in this life and look to life eternal with you. 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 of Christ with others.*

## **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 our 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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Gracious God,

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*

We remember that though he was crucified,

you raised him to life,

and now he gives himself with scandalous extravagance

to all who respond to his call,

the early comers and late comers alike.

Bless these elements of your grace and goodness,

that they may be for us the real presence of your Son

that we may remember this truth,

that to live is Christ and to die is gain. **Amen.**

## **Lord's Prayer**

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## **Invitation to Communion**

Jesus invites you to this table.

Come, eat, and live.

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

*We return by the side aisles.*

**Songs of Distribution:** “Take My Life, That I May Be”

**No. 685**

“O Bread Life from Heaven”

**No. 480**

**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 God of glory,  
✠ Jesus Christ, name above all names,  
and the Spirit who lives in you,  
bless you now and forever.

**Amen.**

**Sending Song:** “Rise Up, O Saints of God”

**No. 669**

**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. God is at work in you.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Postlude**