

Moxham Lutheran Church

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The Rev. Rebecca West, Pastor

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Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 17, 2023 + 10:00 a.m.

Introducing Today's Readings

The scariest word in the New Testament is the tiny little word “as!” Think what Jesus is teaching us when he has us use it in the Lord’s Prayer as he instructs us to pray: “Lord, forgive us our sins *AS* we forgive those who sin against us.” Really? Do we really want that? Forgive us in the very same way we forgive others? That vital connection between God’s abiding forgiveness of us and, in turn, our forgiveness of others insists we must forgive.

The reason God expects us to forgive because of our being forgiven is the same reason you can expect to be wet after diving into a lake: water is wet and when you immerse yourself in it, you get wet. So, it also with forgiving grace. When God immerses you in grace and saves your life eternally by it, you will be dripping with grace yourself. You will be so full of grace and truth you won’t be able to stop yourself from spreading it to others.

Gathering

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

Welcome

Prelude

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the Holy Trinity, + one God,
who forgives all our sin,
whose mercy endures forever.

Amen.

Let us boldly approach the throne of grace,
trusting in God’s mercy and love.

A Silence Is Kept for Reflection.

Generous and faithful God,

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

**Though you made us your people,
we treat strangers with suspicion.**

**Though you forgave our debts,
we collect ours without mercy.**

**Though you are merciful and slow to anger,
we are quick to pass judgement on others.**

**Have mercy on us, O God,
and remember your promise to us
for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen.**

The grass withers, the flower fades,
but the word of our God stands forever.
Through the living Word, + Jesus Christ,
God forgives our every debt, our every sin,
and gives us a new heart and a right spirit.
Amen.

Gathering Song: “Awake, O Sleeper, Rise from Death”

No. 452

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

O Lord God, merciful judge, you are the inexhaustible fountain of forgiveness.
Replace our hearts of stone with hearts that love and adore you, that we may delight in
doing your will, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.

Word

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

Children’s Message

First Reading: Genesis 50:15-21

¹⁵Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph’s brothers said, “What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?” ¹⁶So they approached Joseph, saying, “Your father gave this instruction before he died, ¹⁷‘Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.’ Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father.” Joseph wept when they spoke to him. ¹⁸Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said, “We are here as your slaves.” ¹⁹But Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? ²⁰Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. ²¹So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones.” In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Psalm: Psalm 103:1, 8-13

¹Bless the Lord, O my soul,

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

⁸**Lord, you are full of compassion and mercy,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love;**

⁹you will not always accuse us,
nor will you keep your anger forever.

¹⁰**You have not dealt with us according to our sins,
nor repaid us according to our iniquities.**

¹¹For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so great is your steadfast love for those who fear you.

¹²**As far as the east is from the west,
so far have you removed our transgressions from us.**

¹³**As a father has compassion for his children,
so you have compassion for those who fear you, O Lord.**

Second Reading: Romans 14:1-12

¹Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. ²Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. ³Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. ⁴Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

⁵Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. ⁶Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God.

⁷We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. ⁸If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. ⁹For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

¹⁰Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹¹For it is written,

“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,
and every tongue shall give praise to God.”

¹²So then, each of us will be accountable to God.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.



Gospel: Matthew 18:21-35

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

²¹Peter came and said to Jesus, “Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” ²²Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

²³“For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; ²⁵and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made.

²⁶So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ ²⁷And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’ ²⁹Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ ³⁰But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt.

³¹When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³²Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’ ³⁴And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt.

³⁵So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

Brief silence for reflection.

Hymn of the Day: “Our Father, We Have Wondered”

No. 606

Apostles’ Creed

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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

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

A brief silence.

We pray for the church. We ask for your guidance and wisdom as our church body discerns God’s will and navigates the challenges and opportunities of a changing world through the ELCA’s Future Church Initiative. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

We pray for creation and for relief for those in the US who are facing extreme weather conditions because of drought, high temperatures, and flooding. May we be grateful for those organizations such as Lutheran Disaster Response, who respond to and care for those people in the aftermath of these disasters. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

We pray for all who govern. Guide us as we hold our civic leaders accountable and encourage those in positions of power to lead with empathy, practice forgiveness, and care for those who struggle. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

We pray for our neighbors who are dealing with illness of any kind. For those who are facing financial difficulties, for all living with chronic pain, mental illness, addiction, or who are otherwise afraid or in harm's way. Protect all who cry out for mercy (especially). Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

We pray for this congregation. Open our hearts to forgive each other, practice patience, and to welcome others not with judgment, but with sincere love and grace. May we be open to the Spirit's fresh whispers of change and renewal in our midst. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

We give thanks for the saints who died in faith. Show us how to live faithfully, creatively, and lovingly in your church and world. 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

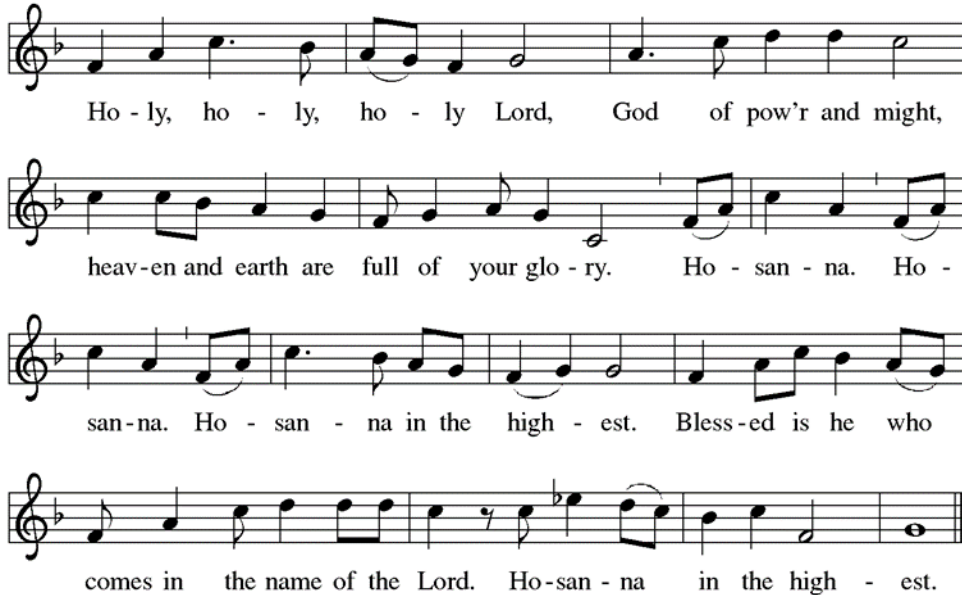
The Lord be with you. **And, also with you.**
Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord**
Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

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 on this day overcame death and the grave,
and by his glorious resurrection

opened to us the way of everlasting life.
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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Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,
heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -
san-na. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless-ed is he who
comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san - na in the high - est.

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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Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

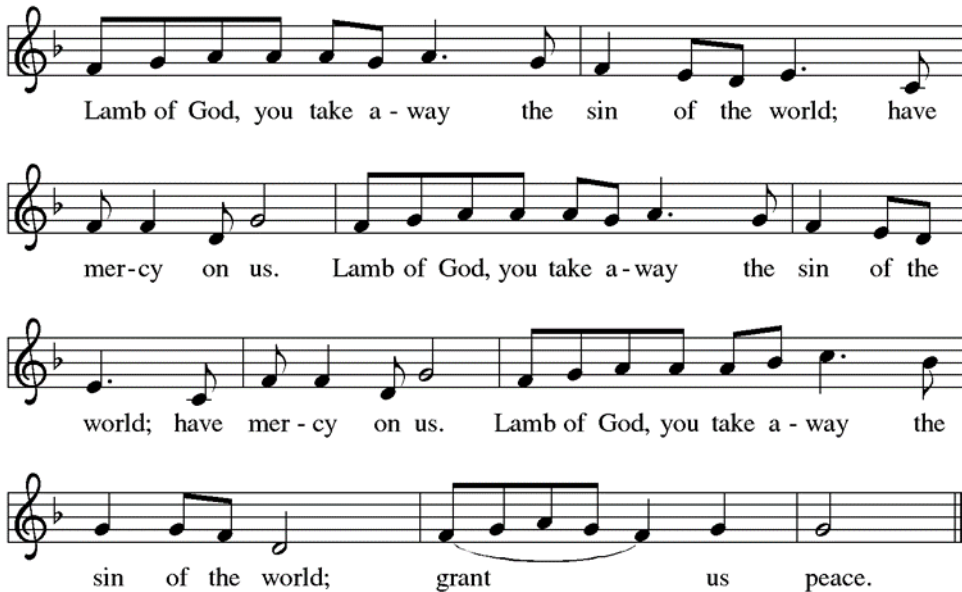
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

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

Invitation to Communion

Lamb of God

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Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the
world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; grant us peace.

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

Songs of Distribution: “In Thee is Gladness”
“Abide with Me”

No. 867

No. 629

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: “Go, My Children, with My Blessing”

No. 543

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

Assisting Today in Worship
Assisting Minister: Kathie McCreary
Communion Assistant: Mark Koch
Council Representative: Randy Lear
Lector: Mark Koch + **Greeter:** Kathi Lepere
Musician: Luis Gonzalez

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