

**He gives
more grace.**

James 4:6

**September 22, 2024
Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost
10:30 AM Worship**

First Lutheran Church
709 5th Ave. – P.O. Box 218
Washburn, North Dakota 58577
www.flcwashburn.com
701-462-3775

PRELUDE AND BELLS

AS WE GATHER

(As we celebrate the official installation of our new Pastor today, we are also reminded that to be considered great in God's Kingdom is to be about service to others in the name of Christ. It's who we are as God's people as we live each day for Jesus. Welcome to God's house today!)

WELCOME

(put prayer requests on yellow cards)

HYMN LBW #543
“Praise to the Lord, the Almighty”

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

543

1 Praise to the Lord, the Al - might - y, the King of cre -
 2 Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things is won - drous - ly -
 3 Praise to the Lord, who will pros - per your work and de -
 4 Praise to the Lord! Oh, let all that is in me a -

a - tion! O my soul, praise him, for he is your
 reign - ing And, as on wings of an ea - gle, up -
 fend you; Sure - ly his good - ness and mer - cy shall
 dore him! All that has life and breath, come now with

health and sal - va - tion! Let all who hear Now to his
 lift - ing, sus - tain - ing. Have you not seen All that is
 dai - ly at - tend you. Pon - der a - new What the Al -
 prais - es be - fore him! Let the a - men Sound from his

tem - ple draw near, Join - ing in glad ad - o - ra - tion!
 need - ful has been Sent by his gra - cious or - dain - ing?
 might - y can do If with his love he be - friend you.
 peo - ple a - gain. Glad - ly for - ev - er a - dore him!

Text: Joachim Neander, 1650-1680; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1829-1878, alt.
 Tune: Erneuwerten Gesangbuch, Stralsund, 1665

LOBE DEN HERREN
 14 14 478

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESSp. 56

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

C: Amen

P: 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.

C: Amen

P: 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.

Silence for reflection and self-examination.

P: Most merciful God,

C: 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

P: Almighty God, in his mercy, has given his Son to die for us and, for his sake, forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ, 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.

C: Amen

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Let us pray.

C: Heavenly Father, you draw all humanity to yourself and welcome us as beloved children. Help us to divest ourselves of worldly ambition and teach us to serve and welcome all, especially the least and most vulnerable among us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

THIRD GRADERS RECEIVE BIBLES FROM FLCW

FIRST READING Jeremiah 11:18-20
from The New Living Translation (NLT)

(When evil men plot against the prophet Jeremiah, he commits his cause to God. We are called to do the same.)

18 Then the Lord told me about the plots my enemies were making against me. 19 I was like a lamb being led to the slaughter. I had no idea that they were planning to kill me! "Let's destroy this man and all his words," they said. "Let's cut him down, so his name will be forgotten forever."

20 O Lord of Heaven's Armies,
you make righteous judgments,
and you examine the deepest thoughts and secrets.
Let me see your vengeance against them,
for I have committed my cause to you.

PSALM (Read responsively)Psalm 54:4-7
(God is the helper of His people and delivers them from every trouble. As he did for his people then, God continues to do for us today.)

⁴Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life.
⁵**He will return the evil to my enemies; in your faithfulness put an end to them.**

⁶With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to you; I will give thanks to your name, O Lord, for it is good.

⁷**For he has delivered me from every trouble, and my eye has looked in triumph on my enemies.**

CHOIR “Make a Joyful Noise”

SECOND READING James 3:13-18
(James calls upon followers of Christ to live their faith by putting it into action.)

¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.
¹⁴But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. ¹⁵This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. ¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

ALLELUIAp. 62

Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the
words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 7th chapter.

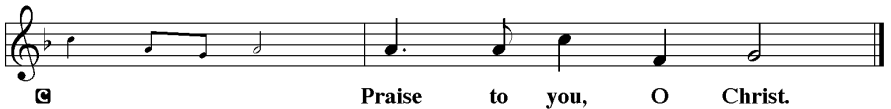
Glo - ry to you, O Lord.

GOSPEL READINGMark 9:30-37
(Where is true greatness found? Contrary to the world’s view, true greatness is found in humble service to others in the name of Christ.)

³⁰{Jesus and his disciples} went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, ³¹for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill

him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.” ³²But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him. ³³And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you discussing on the way?” ³⁴But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. ³⁵And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.” ³⁶And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.”

P: The Gospel of the Lord.



SERMON Rev. Dr. Eric Riesen
President of the North American Lutheran Seminary
“The Kingdom: Conspiracy and Conversion” – Mark 9:30-37

APOSTLES’ CREEDp. 65

P: God has made us his people through our Baptism into Christ. Living together in trust and hope, we confess our faith.

C: I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the virgin Mary. He 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, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again 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

"Take My Life, that I May Be"

Take My Life, that I May Be

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The musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of two systems of music. The first system has a vocal line in the treble clef and a piano accompaniment in the bass clef. The second system also has a vocal line in the treble clef and a piano accompaniment in the bass clef. The lyrics are printed below the vocal lines.

1 Take my life, that I may be Con - se - crat - ed, Lord, to thee;
 2 Take my hands and let them move At the im - pulse of thy love;
 3 Take my voice and let me sing Al - ways, on - ly, for my King;
 4 Take my sil - ver and my gold, Not a mite would I with-hold;

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.

The Installation of Rev. Dr. Paul Krueger as Pastor of First Lutheran Church

The congregation stands. The pastor to be installed and a representative of the calling body come before the presiding minister and the assembly.

P: Having been authorized by the church to install Rev. Paul Krueger, our co-worker in the gospel, as pastor, I now ask for certification of this call.

A representative of the calling body addresses the presiding minister.

Council President: After prayerful deliberation, we, the members of First Lutheran Church, have called Rev. Paul Krueger as pastor. I present him, and this letter of call, certifying his call.

The presenter gives the presiding minister the letter certifying that the call has been received and accepted. The congregation is seated.

The presiding minister addresses the pastor being installed.

P: A reading from John: Jesus said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." (John 20:21-23)

A reading from Matthew: Jesus said, "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." (Matthew 28:18-20)

A reading from First Timothy: Set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Till I come, attend to the public reading of scripture, to preaching, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophetic utterance when the council of elders laid their hands upon you. Practice these duties, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. Take heed to yourself and to your teaching; hold to that, for by doing so you will save both yourself and your hearers. (1 Timothy 4:12-16)

The presiding minister questions the pastor being installed.

P: Pastor Krueger, in the presence of this congregation will you commit yourself to this new trust and responsibility, and promise to discharge your duties in harmony with the constitutions of the church?

Response: I will, and I ask God to help me.

P: Will you preach and teach in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and the Confessions of the Lutheran Church?

P: Will you carry out this ministry in harmony with the constitutions of the North American Lutheran Church?

Response: I will, and I ask God to help me.

P: Will you love, serve, and pray for God's people? Will you nourish them with the Word and Holy Sacraments, leading them by your own example in the use of the means of grace, in faithful service and holy living?

Response: I will, and I ask God to help me.

P: Will you give faithful witness in the world, that God's love may be known in all that you do?

Response: I will, and I ask God to help me.

P: Almighty God, who has given you the will to do these things, graciously give you the strength and compassion to perform them. **Amen.**

All stand.

P: And you, people of God, will you receive this messenger of Jesus Christ, sent by God to serve all people with the gospel of hope and salvation?

Will you regard him as a servant of Christ and a steward of the mysteries of God?

C: We will.

P: Will you pray for him, help and honor him for his work's sake, and in all things strive to live together in the peace and unity of Christ?

C: We will.

The presiding minister addresses the pastor being installed.

P: The office of pastor is now committed to you in the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

The Blessings

The newly installed pastor may kneel for the blessing.

P: The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do His will, working in you that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be the glory forever and ever. **Amen.**

*The presiding minister escorts the pastor to the **font**. A representative of the congregation says:*

R: You have been called to be among us to baptize, to teach, and to forgive sins.

*They proceed to the **pulpit**. A representative of the congregation says:*

R: You have been called to be among us to proclaim the good news.

*They proceed to the **altar**. A representative of the congregation says:*

R: You have been called to be among us to lead worship and preside at Holy Communion.

A representative of the congregation and the presiding minister welcome the pastor.

The congregation may offer acclamation with applause.

Our Hymn of Praise..... LBW #564
Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise him, all creatures here below; Praise him above, ye heavenly host; Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

OFFERINGS ARE RECEIVED

OFFERTORYp. 75



Cre-ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re-new a right spir -
it with-in me. Cast me not a-way from your pres-ence, and take
not your Ho - ly Spir - it from me. Re-store to me the
joy of your sal-va - tion, and up-hold me with your free Spir - it.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

C: Benevolent God, you have granted us in abundance with all the good things that life has to offer. May we be truly grateful for our daily bread, even as we return a portion of what you have first given us as a sign of our humility and thanksgiving for your bounteous gifts. Let the treasures we have received from you be used to serve the world you love. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

P: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

LORD'S PRAYERp. 76

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, for ever and ever. Amen

BENEDICTION

Psalm 32:10

P: 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

Numbers 6:24–26

In the name of the Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

HYMN LBW #170

“Crown Him with Many Crowns”

Crown Him with Many Crowns

1 Crown him with man - y crowns, The Lamb up - on his throne; Hark,
 2 Crown him the vir - gin's Son, The God in - car - nate born, Whose
 3 Crown him the Lord of love— Be - hold his hands and side, Rich
 4 Crown him the Lord of life, Who tri - umphed o'er the grave And

how the heav'n - ly an - them drowns All mu - sic but its own. A -
 arm those crim - son tro - phies won Which now his brow a - dorn; Fruit
 wounds, yet vis - i - ble a - bove, In beau - ty glo - ri - fied. No
 rose vic - to - rious in the strife For those he came to save. His

wake, my soul, and sing Of him who died for thee, And
 of the mys - tic rose, Yet of that rose the stem, The
 an - gels in the sky Can ful - ly bear that sight, But
 glo - ries now we sing, Who died and rose on high, Who

hail him as thy match - less king Through all e - ter - ni - ty.
 root whence mer - cy ev - er flows, The babe of Beth - le - hem.
 down - ward bend their burn - ing eyes At mys - ter - ies so bright.
 died, e - ter - nal life to bring, And lives that death may die.

5 Crown him the Lord of peace,
 Whose pow'r a scepter sways
 From pole to pole, that wars may cease,
 Absorbed in prayer and praise.
 His reign shall know no end,
 And round his pierced feet
 Fair flow'rs of paradise extend
 Their fragrance ever sweet.

6 Crown him the Lord of years,
 The potentate of time,
 Creator of the rolling spheres,
 Ineffably sublime.
 All hail, Redeemer, hail!
 For thou hast died for me;
 Thy praise and glory shall not fail
 Throughout eternity.

Text: Matthew Bridges, 1800-1894; Godfrey Thring, 1823-1903
Tune: George J. Elvey, 1816-1893

DIADEMATA
 SMD

ANNOUNCEMENTS

RECOGNITION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

DISMISSAL

P: Go in peace. Serve the Lord!

C: Thanks be to God!

POSTLUDE

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Today's Worship Leaders & Volunteers – Thank You!

PASTOR Pastor Paul Krueger
GUEST PASTORS..... Rev. Dr. Eric Riesen
President of the North American Lutheran Seminary
Rev. Pam Thorson
Dean of the Minkota Mission District
USHERS/GREETERS Patty Winn Family, Hank Helm
ACOLYTES Bodie Winter, McKayde Baumann
READER Sarah Rosenquist
ORGANIST LeAnn Richard
BRASS PLAYERS Trumpets:
Brent Petersen, Kacy Hardt, Jaxon Solomonson
Baritone: Chloe Erber
Trombone: Kesia Boeshans
Tuba: Liam Solomonson, Randy Hall
ALTAR GUILD..... Sonja Bergstedt & Carla Bickert
FELLOWSHIP/COFFEE HOUR No Coffee Hour
SERVICE GROUP COORDINATORS Emily Retterath
Suzy Jacobson & Beth Knutson

First Lutheran Church
709 5th Ave. - PO BOX 218
Washburn ND 58577
701-462-3775

PASTOR: Paul Krueger email: revpaulkrueger@gmail.com
Cell phone: 701-240-4712

ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY: Jeannette Rost
Church Office: 701-462-3775
Email: flc@westriv.com

Website: www.flcwashburn.com

COORDINATOR OF STUDENT MINISTRIES: Melissa Rothe
Email: fly@westriv.com

OFFICE HOURS: T-T-F 9:00 am - 12:30 pm, 1:30 - 3:30
W – 9:00 am - 12:30 pm

ORGANISTS: Theresa Petersen and LeAnn Richard

CHOIR DIRECTOR: Randy Hall

BELL CHOIR DIRECTOR: Gwen Hall

CUSTODIAN: Jeff Schmidt

Our Mission

“Working hand in hand to know Christ and make Christ known through Worship, Christian Education, Evangelism, Fellowship, Caring Ministries, and Service.”

Welcome to all who have come to worship.

Welcome to worship in the name of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – who created you, saved you and makes you holy. Amen.

Visitors

We welcome all visitors to First Lutheran today and ask that you sign our guest book in the narthex.

Nursery

The nursery, located beside the narthex, is available for use for any parent feeling the need to use it during worship services with their child.

Thank you for your giving

Sunday, September 15, Attendance – 112

Online Viewing – 25

General Fund & Plate Giving - \$6,319.00

Altar Flowers

Altar flowers today are from the congregation in honor of Pastor Paul Krueger. Congratulations on your installation and official welcome to First Lutheran Church.

Hearing Assist

First Lutheran has hearing assist systems to be used during the worship services. If you feel you could benefit from this or want to try it, please see the ushers in the narthex.

Pastoral Care

Please call Pastor Paul (701-240-4712) or the church office (701-462-3775) if you or a loved one are in the hospital or know you will be going to the hospital. The church does not get informed of your stay by any of the hospitals even if you are registered under our congregation's name. We want to make sure you get pastoral care. Thank you!

This week we pray for:

This Week's New Prayer Requests:

Prayers of Christian Sympathy:

Long Term prayer requests:

Members: Al Rall, Alton Krebsbach, Howard Johnson, Karen Goehring

* The person in parenthesis is who the person is related to or friends of. Please feel free to ask these individuals how best you can pray for their family/friend.

This month we pray for:

Members: Nancy Liffbrig, Liam Williams (Steve & Peggy Wollmuth), Randy Hall, Helen Samuelson, Sande Wagner

Friends & Family: Komal Petersen (Brent & Theresa Petersen), Clara Olson (Sharon Chrest), Steve Reynolds (Brad & Cathy Sheldon)

This Quarter we pray for:

Members and Nonmembers: Corrine Kerzmann (Donna Gunderson), Marion Narum (Peggy Moran), Ty Brown (Jody & Nicole Brown), Alice Richard, Jackie Olson

Military Prayer and Card List

We pray for the Men & Women in our Military who protect our country, especially those assigned to serve overseas or away from home.

- **Members of First Lutheran on Active Duty in the Military and the National Guard:**
 - SGT Bryce Rost – Army National Guard
 - SPC Olivia Retterath – National Guard - Deployed
 - SPC Cassidy Sommer – National Guard
 - SGT Jonathan Melvard – Army National Guard

- **Friends and Family on Active Duty in the Military and in the National Guard:**

SGT Dustin Enockson – National Guard

Emily Johnson – Air Force

Bryar Anderson – Marines

1SGT Jordan Ternes – Army National Guard

Tech. SGT Andre Austin – Air Force

Hunter Feigum – National Guard

Morris Duffy – Medical Air Guard

Adam Walsvik – National Guard

SGT Tom Heidelberger – Army

2LT Tony Heidelberger – Air Force

Notice of Prayer List Policy

We have a monthly /quarterly prayer list cycle. When you add someone to our prayer list the request will remain on our monthly list for four weeks and then be removed. If you would like to have the request moved to our quarterly list, please contact the office and the request will be added to our “This Quarter we pray for:” list for the next three months. Please help us keep our prayer list current by communicating updates to the office at 701-462-3775. Thank you all for your faithful prayers for all of God’s people.

Large Print Bulletins

We have large print bulletins for those wanting or needing larger print. Ask the ushers for one.

Installation of Pastor Paul Krueger

Today Pastor Paul will be installed during the worship service. We welcome Rev. Dr. Eric Riesen, President of the North American Lutheran Seminary, our guest preacher and Rev. Pam Thorson, the Dean of our Minkota Mission District. A meal follows the service.

Third Grade Bibles

The following third graders will receive their Bibles from the FLCW during the worship service today:

Sarah Anderson
Porter Kadrmas
Carson Richards
Paizley Schmitz
Remi Solomonson
Case Torrez
Myla Vetter

Quilting & FLCW Quilters LWR Service Project

Women! Join us this Thursday, September 26th, at 9:00 am for quilting and getting items ready for the service project. ***Join us also at 7:00 pm on the 26th for our LWR service project.*** We will be putting together kits to be send to LWR in October. Many hands are needed to get this done in a shorter period of time.

8:30 AM Sunday Bible Study

There will be no 8:30 am Bible Study on September 29th. They will resume on October 6th.

FLCW Women's Retreat

FLCW will have a Women's Retreat on Saturday, October 12th, from 10:00 am – 2:00 pm here at the church. There will be a program, Bible Study, crafts, muffins in the morning and lunch at noon. The theme is "When Life Gives You Lemons". All women are welcome to attend. A sign-up sheet will be in the narthex from September 29th – October 6th. Please join us.

Super Sunday Supper

Super Sunday Supper will be next Sunday, September 29th, from 4:00 – 6:00 pm. They will be serving soup and sandwich. Freewill offering. Questions or meal delivery please call Judy at 220-4410 or Rhonda at 315-0656.

Confirmation Meal Signup Sheet

We are looking for volunteers to make and serve a meal on Wednesday nights for our confirmation students and volunteers. A signup sheet is in the narthex on the big poster board. Thank you to those who have already signed up.

Altar Flower Signup Sheet

A signup sheet for altar flowers through December 29th is on the table in the narthex. Signup for the Sunday you want before it is taken. You furnish the flowers and make sure they get to the church.

Connections Magazine

The September/October issue of *Connections* is in the magazine racks in the narthex. Pick up a copy today to read updates on LCMC, NALC and other interesting articles.

Our Daily Bread and Portals of Prayer

The September/October/November issue of *Our Daily Bread* and the July - September 2024 issue of *Portals of Prayer* are in the magazine racks in the narthex. Pick up a copy to use with your daily devotions.

THIS WEEK AT FIRST LUTHERAN

TODAY	8:30 AM	<u>NO</u> Bible Study
	9:30 AM	Sunday School
		Fireside Bible Study
	10:30 AM	Worship w/Installation of Pastor Paul Followed by Meal 3rd Graders Receive Bibles
	7:00 PM	AA Meeting Al-Anon Meeting
TUES.	10:00 AM	Mommy's Group
WED.	5:30–6:15 PM	Confirmation Meal
	6:15 PM	Confirmation
	7:00 PM	Bell Choir
	7:45 PM	Choir
	7:45 PM	FLY
THURS.	9:00 AM	Quilting
	7:00 PM	FLCW Quilters Service Project
SUN.	8:30 AM	<u>NO</u> Bible Study
	9:30 AM	Worship w/Holy Communion
	10:30 AM	Fellowship/Coffee Hour
	10:45 PM	Sunday School Fireside Bible Study
	7:00 PM	AA Meeting Al-Anon Meeting

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 20) – September 22, 2024

“A harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”

– James 3:18 –

Justice or Mercy?

Who is my enemy? Strangely enough, that’s not a biblical question. I find it intriguing that a quibbler once asked Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?” But no one ever seems to have asked for an enemy identification. We know who our enemies are — or do we?

One psalmist petitions, “O Lord, save me by your name and vindicate me by your might” and as for those enemies, “put an end to them” (Psalm 54:1, 5b). The prophet Jeremiah credits God with revealing his enemies’ evil deeds, at which the prophet prays, “[L]et me see your vengeance upon them” (Jeremiah 11:20b). The Old Testament is full of such prayers for retribution—humanly inspired and divinely implemented. With enemies clearly in their sights, petitioners appeal to God as Judge, Jury, and Executioner.

For followers of Jesus, the difficulty of these prayers is twofold: Either we empathize with their victim perspective and so pray for God’s vengeance on our own enemies, or we assume the judge’s position ourselves and condemn those petitioners who have obviously failed to be Christlike in attitude. But in both those temptations we are in danger of forgetting the cross. And the cross changes everything! At the foot of the cross, we see Jesus — only Jesus — exalted. There we see the Divine Sacrifice, submitted to God’s judgment and suffering for us. By the cross we are humbled; we dare not climb on the garbage heap of self-righteousness to condemn anyone.

Jesus tells his disciples in advance that he will soon be delivered into the hands of evil men who will kill him. The disciples might have shown some sympathy, if not empathy. But they don’t. Instead, they blow past his suffering and argue among themselves about who will be glorified with him. Knowing how blind they were to their own sins and how deaf they were to God’s word, Jesus takes up a defenseless child to shame them for their selfish ambition and show them the love that should humble them.

Lord, make us peacemakers as we see the enemy in ourselves and the mercy of God in Christ.