



Ninth Sunday After Pentecost

Sunday, July 26, 2026

Esther Lutheran Church, ELCA

Knowing Christ – Making Christ Known Through Faith, Hope & Love

Introduction:

As Solomon prays for wisdom, we seek to more deeply know the treasures of faith. In today's gospel Jesus offers everyday images that reveal to us the reign of God: a tree that becomes a sheltering home, yeast that penetrates and expands, a treasured pearl, a net that gains a great catch. Even as we seek the riches of God's reign, the great surprise is that God's grace finds us first!

PRELUDE

BELL

ANNOUNCEMENTS

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God

Please stand as you are able

*CALL TO WORSHIP:

P: Let us give thanks to God,

C: **And make God's name known to everyone.**

P: Sing praises to our creator,

C: **And tell about the great things God does.**

P: Seek God's presence all the time,

C: **And you will see God's promises fulfilled.**

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✠ one God, whose compassion endures forever.

C: **Amen.**

***CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS:**

P: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

P: Patient God,

C: You have taught us all we need to be your faithful people. And yet we persist in going our own way, doing our own thing, and minding our own business when we ought to be about the business of your kingdom. Forgive our selfish neglect of others and bring us back into wholeness with our brothers and sisters. Amen.

P: God is merciful, patient, kind and forgiving. We have been pardoned for all that we have done, and all that we have overlooked. May we give now as we have received: generously and extravagantly, in the way of our loving teacher, savior and friend.

C: Amen.

***GATHERING HYMN: “Gather Us In” (ELW 532)**

**1 Here in this place the new light is streaming,
now is the darkness vanished away;
see in this space our fears and our dreamings
brought here to you in the light of this day.
Gather us in, the lost and forsaken,
gather us in, the blind and the lame;
call to us now, and we shall awaken,
we shall arise at the sound of our name.**

**2 We are the young, our lives are a myst'ry,
we are the old who yearn for your face;
we have been sung throughout all of hist'ry,
called to be light to the whole human race.
Gather us in, the rich and the haughty,**

gather us in, the proud and the strong;
give us a heart, so meek and so lowly,
give us the courage to enter the song.

3 Here we will take the wine and the water,
here we will take the bread of new birth,
here you shall call your sons and your daughters,
call us anew to be salt for the earth.
Give us to drink the wine of compassion,
give us to eat the bread that is you;
nourish us well, and teach us to fashion
lives that are holy and hearts that are true.

4 Not in the dark of buildings confining,
not in some heaven, light years away—
here in this place the new light is shining,
now is the kingdom, and now is the day.
Gather us in and hold us forever,
gather us in and make us your own;
gather us in, all peoples together,
fire of love in our flesh and our bone.

Text: Marty Haugen, b. 1950

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***GREETING:**

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

C: And also with you.

***KYRIE: *sung* (ELW pg. 213)**

Kyrie eleison: **Lord, have mercy.**

Christe eleison: **Christ, have mercy.**

Kyrie eleison: **Lord, have mercy.**

***CANTICLE OF PRAISE “*Glory to God*” (ELW pg. 213)**

Glory to God, glory to God,
glory to God in the highest;
glory to God, glory to God,
and peace to God's people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you,
we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Glory to God, glory to God,
glory to God in the highest;
glory to God, glory to God,
and peace to God's people on earth.

Lord Jesus Christ,
only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.

Glory to God, glory to God,
glory to God in the highest;
glory to God, glory to God,
and peace to God's people on earth.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Glory to God, glory to God,
glory to God in the highest;
glory to God, glory to God,

**and peace to God's people on earth,
and peace to God's people on earth.**

***PRAYER OF THE DAY:**

P: Beloved and sovereign God,

C: **Through the death and resurrection of your Son you bring us into your kingdom of justice and mercy. By your Spirit, give us your wisdom, that we may treasure the life that comes from Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

Special Music – Esther Harmony

Please be seated

WORD

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

FIRST READING: 1 KINGS 3:5-12

Because Solomon did not ask for long life, riches, or the defeat of his enemies, God gave him what he asked for: wisdom to govern the people well.

⁵At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, "Ask what I should give you." ⁶And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you, and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. ⁷And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. ⁸And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. ⁹Give your servant, therefore, an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil, for who can govern this great people of yours?" ¹⁰It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. ¹¹God said to him, "Because you have asked this and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or for the life of your enemies but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, ¹²I now do according to your word. Indeed, I give you a wise and discerning

mind; no one like you has been before you, and no one like you shall arise after you.” Here ends the first reading.

PSALM 119:129-136 ~ Congregation reads the *bold*

When your word is opened, it gives light and understanding. (Ps. 119:130)

¹²⁹Your decrees are wonderful; therefore obey them with all my heart.

¹³⁰**When your word is opened it gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.**

¹³¹I open my mouth and pant because I long for your commandments.

¹³²**Turn to me and be gracious to me, as you always do to those who love your name.**

¹³³Order my footsteps in your word; let no iniquity have dominion over me.

¹³⁴**Rescue me from those who oppress me, and I will keep your commandments.**

¹³⁵Let your face shine upon your servant and teach me your statutes.

¹³⁶**My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep your teaching.**

SECOND READING: ROMANS 8:26-39

These words celebrate the depth of God’s actions for us. Through Christ’s death for us and the activity of the Spirit praying for us, we are fused to God’s love poured out in Jesus Christ. Nothing, not even death itself, is able to separate us from such incredible divine love.

²⁶The Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷And God, who searches hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. ²⁸We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large

family. ³⁰And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. ³¹What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³²He who did not withhold his own Son but gave him up for all of us, how will he not with him also give us everything else? ³³Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is to condemn? It is Christ who died, or rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. ³⁵Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? ³⁶As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷No, in all these things we are more than victorious through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Here ends the second reading.

THE GOSPEL ACCLAMATION: (ELW pg. 216)

Alleluia, Lord, to whom shall we go?

Alleluia. You have the words of eternal life.

Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL READING: MATTHEW 13:31-33, 44-52

Throughout Matthew's gospel, Jesus and his disciples proclaim the good news that "the kingdom of heaven is near!" Here, Jesus offers several brief parables that explore the implications of this announcement for people's lives.

³¹[Jesus] put before [the crowds] another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field;³²it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." ³³He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened."

⁴⁴"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and reburied; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. ⁴⁵"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine

pearls; ⁴⁶ on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. ⁴⁷“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; ⁴⁸when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. ⁴⁹So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁵¹“Have you understood all this?” They answered, “Yes.” ⁵²And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.” The word of the Lord... **Thanks be to God.**

CHILDREN’S TIME & SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY: “*Be Thou My Vision*” (ELW 793)

- 1 Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
naught be all else to me, save that thou art:
thou my best thought both by day and by night,
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.**
- 2 Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word;
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord.
Thou my soul's shelter, and thou my high tow'r,
raise thou me heav'nward, O Pow'r of my pow'r.**
- 3 Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise,
thou mine inheritance, now and always:
thou and thou only, the first in my heart,
great God of heaven, my treasure thou art.**
- 4 Light of my soul, after victory won,
may I reach heaven's joys, O heaven's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be my vision, O Ruler of all.**

Text: Irish, 8th cent.; vers. Eleanor H. Hull, 1860-1935, alt.; tr. Mary E. Byrne, 1880-1931

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE:

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: If we truly saw your kingdom for the treasure it is, we would stop being dissatisfied with our lives and striving after more to acquire. Show us the riches which already surround us, that we might share them with our neighbors and know the deep joy you bring to all who seek you. Bountiful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: From the tiniest of seeds great things grow. May we not underestimate what you have planted and who you have planted. Show us that all have a role to play within your vast kingdom. Bountiful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We pray for all who have taken on the role of parenting, and those who have found themselves in it by circumstance. Bless all who foster, nurture, mentor and guide the young, raising a new generation to love you and tend the earth responsibly. Bountiful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We know that nothing on earth can separate us from your love, O God, not even trials, illness or death. Be with all who struggle with their own health or who care for loved ones who are ill. Extend a special blessing to those whom we know need it today, especially Jerry, Bruce, Cheryl, Chris, Kristy, Ricky, Larry, Joan, Dennis, Lois, Dale, Bev, Gary, Shirley, Joyce, Allison, Becky, Kim, Cadence, Sara, Marg, Leroy, Karen, Pete, Margaret, and Lynnsy. Bountiful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: If you are for us O God, who can be against us? Your saints have fought the good fight throughout the centuries; strengthen us like them to be your faithful servants, regardless of what comes our way. Bountiful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: The Spirit helps us in our weakness and knows what to say when we do not.
Thank you for hearing the prayers we cannot speak aloud, and for
answering before we even ask. In Jesus' name we pray.

C: **Amen.**

Please stand as you are able

***APOSTLES' CREED: (ELW pg. 217)**

**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.**

***SHARING OF THE PEACE**

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

C: **And also with you.**

Please be seated

OFFERING

We thank you for our gifts of time, talent, and treasure that help this congregation, to continue our ministry together, and to make Christ known in our communities and the world.

OFFERING HYMN: “God of Grace and God of Glory” vs. 1 (ELW 705)

- 1** God of grace and God of glory,
 on your people pour your pow'r;
 crown your ancient church's story;
 bring its bud to glorious flow'r.
 Grant us wisdom, grant us courage
 for the facing of this hour,
 for the facing of this hour.

Text: Harry E. Fosdick, 1878-1969

Please stand as you are able

***OFFERTORY PRAYER:**

P: Dear God,

C: All things are working together for your good, O God. Take these gifts we offer and use them for your purposes on earth, that all might be fed, clothed and nurtured in the life of the Spirit. Amen.

***THE LORD’S PRAYER: *sung* (CLH 632)**

Our Father, which 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.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to our neighbor in need

***BLESSING:**

Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer,
✝ one God,
bless, heal, and hold you
today and always.

THREE FOLD AMEN

***SENDING HYMN: “Blessed Assurance” (ELW 638)**

- 1** Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.

Refrain

This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Savior, all the day long:
this is my story, this is my song,
praising my Savior all the day long.

- 2** Perfect submission, perfect delight,
visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
angels descending bring from above
echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

Refrain

This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Savior, all the day long:
this is my story, this is my song,
praising my Savior all the day long.

- 3** Perfect submission, all is at rest;
I in my Savior am happy and blest,
watching and waiting, looking above,

filled with his goodness, lost in his love.

Refrain

**This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Savior, all the day long:
this is my story, this is my song,
praising my Savior all the day long.**

Text: Fanny J. Crosby, 1820-1915

***DISMISSAL:**

P: Go in peace, serve the Lord, and may his blessings be upon you this week.

C: **Thanks be to God!**

IN OUR PRAYERS

Jerry Anderson	Kristy Fyhrie
Larry Sather	Joan Burquest
Dennis Rosenquist	Lois Rosenquist
Ricky Hart	Sara Skoglund

Margaret Wehking
Leroy Olson – father of Becky Arvidson
Cheryl Farber – mother of Melissa Schlosser
Rev. Bruce Miller- father of Karin Wagner
Marg Peterson -friend of the Thoms
Dale Flemming – father of Laurie Ratajesak
Gary Borst – friend of the Andersons
Shirley Nesges – friend of the Thoms
Bev Lorine – mother of Mandy Arvidson
Joyce Muyres – friend of the Thoms
Bev Guse-Ohlrech – friend of the Pedersons
Allison Dotzler – friend of Kathy Mittag
Cadence Smith – friend of Mandy Arvidson
Becky Yttrie – friend of the Townsends
Kim Casavan – friend of Mandy Arvidson
Karen Schlosser – mother of Justin Schlosser
Pete Baugh – brother-in-law of Pr. Ken Bowman
Chris Clapshaw – step-brother of Mark Ratajesak

Family and Friends of: Sarah Pomeranz, David Anderson, Katie Jahnke, Colleen Burquest, Doug Tvedt, Alma Robinson, Jerry Pogose, Terry Burns, Wayne Lund, Bruce Carter, Inez Nelson, Gary Willie, Connie Pesta, Kathy Wilkins, Ivy Christensen, and Jim Schlosser

THIS WEEK AT ESTHER

Sunday, July 26th - Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

10 am – Worship led by Megan Townsend

11-3 pm – Ice Cream Social & Country Store

2 pm – Worship at St. William's

Sunday, August 2nd – Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Sunday Fellowship Before and After Worship

10 am – Worship with Holy Communion led by SAM Jewel Townsend

2 pm – Worship at St. William's

Monday, August 3rd

Luther Crest Bible Camp Golf Scramble at the Lake Miltona Golf Club. Check out luthercrest.org for more information.

NEWS AND NOTES

Join us for our Ice Cream Social and Country Store TODAY after worship! 11-3pm.



Vanco online giving platform is a great way to set up a scheduled giving plan for even when you cannot make it to church. Scan the QR code, go online to estherlutheran.com, go to the tab "ways to support Esther Lutheran Church" and click on the link <https://secure.myvanco.com/L-ZP4R> or download the app Vanco Mobile Faith Engagement. Any questions please ask Mandy Arvidson.

Check out the Esther Calendar on our website to stay up to date on everything happening! Go to estherlutheran.com and click on "Esther Calendar."

You belong here. We believe that each person has unique gifts, are created in God's image, and is a beloved child of God. We welcome you to join us each week to share in the community of faith at Esther - "Knowing Christ - making Christ known through faith, hope and love". If you would like to become a member of Esther, please contact Mandy in the church office at 218-338-2171 or secretary@estherlutheran.net or Jewel Townsend at 320-760-2503 or jewellht17@gmail.com.

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