



Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Sunday, September 27, 2026

Esther Lutheran Church, ELCA

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

Introduction:

Jesus' parable about two sons who don't do what they say reveals surprises in the reign of God. In the reading from Ezekiel the people claim the ways of the Lord are unfair, while God offers repentance and new life. Paul urges us to look to Christ as a model of humility, putting the interests of others above our own. Nourished by the broken bread and shared cup, we offer our lives for the sake of our needy world.

PRELUDE

BELL

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BEHOLD WEEKLY CHALLENGE QUESTION

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God

Please stand as you are able

***CALL TO WORSHIP:**

P: Let us tell the story!

C: **The story we were told!**

P: The story of God's mighty deeds!

C: **The story of God's wondrous love!**

P: God opened the sea for Israel to walk through!

C: **God brought water from the desert rocks!**

P: Let us tell the story!

C: **The story of God's power and love!**

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: Merciful God,

C: **You show us how to live as your servants, yet we act as though your teaching applies to everyone else but us. We pass judgment on others, devalue ourselves and disrespect your creation. Show us the way back to the path which leads to life, and help us repair the damage we have caused to our relationships, ourselves and this earth, for Jesus' sake. Amen.**

P: Through God's love we are forgiven, and all things are being made new through Christ. God's grace is enough to cover us and make us whole again, to live and serve another day. Let us rejoice that our God is full of mercy!

C: **Amen.**

***GATHERING HYMN: "Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling" (ELW 608)**

**1 Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling,
calling for you and for me.
See, on the portals he's waiting and watching,
watching for you and for me.**

Refrain

**"Come home, (Come home,
come home! (come home!)
You who are weary, come home."
Earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling,
calling, "O sinner, come home!"**

- 2 **Why should we tarry when Jesus is pleading,
pleading for you and for me?
Why should we linger and heed not his mercies,
mercies for you and for me?**

Refrain

**"Come home, (Come home,
come home! (come home!)
You who are weary, come home."
Earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling,
calling, "O sinner, come home!"**

- 3 **Oh, for the wonderful love he has promised,
promised for you and for me!
Though we have sinned, he has mercy and pardon,
pardon for you and for me.**

Refrain

**"Come home, (Come home,
come home! (come home!)
You who are weary, come home."
Earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling,
calling, "O sinner, come home!"**

Text: Will L. Thompson, 1847-1909

***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: God of love, giver of life,

C: **You know our frailties and failings. Give us your grace to overcome them, keep us from those things that harm us, and guide us in the way of salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen**

Please be seated

PRESENTATION OF BIBLES

(Children receiving bibles and their parents please come to the front)

P: Today we have children with us here at the font. When you were baptized, your family and your church family made some promises to God. They promised to live with you among God's faithful people, bring you to the word of God and the holy supper, teach you the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments, place in your hands the holy scriptures, and nurture you in faith and prayer.

You are now at an age when you are beginning to read well and can read the Bible for yourself! Together we are going to fulfill our promise to God to place in your hands the holy scriptures. Parents/grandparents, I invite you to place the Bible in your child's hands.

In turn, each household presents their child with a Bible as they say:

Parents: _____, God's word is a lamp to your feet and a light to your path.

The congregation blesses the children.

C: **May you find God in these scriptures, the holy story of God's love for us, and may it open your eyes to see God in the world around you. Amen.**

WORD

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

FIRST READING: EXODUS 17:1-7

Water from the rock in the wilderness

¹From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. ²The people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?" ³But the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?" ⁴So Moses cried out to the Lord, "What shall I do for this people? They are almost ready to stone me." ⁵The Lord said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile and go. ⁶I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the Lord, saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?" Here ends the first reading.

PSALM 78:1-4, 12-16 ~ Congregation reads the *bold*

We will recount to generations to come the power of the Lord. (Ps. 78:4)

¹Hear my teaching, O my people; incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

²I will open my mouth in a parable; I will declare the mysteries of ancient times—

³that which we have heard and known, and what our forebears have told us, we will not hide from their children.

⁴We will recount to generations to come the praiseworthy deeds and the power of the Lord, and the wonderful works God has done.

¹²God worked marvels in the sight of their ancestors, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan,

¹³**splitting open the sea and letting them pass through; making the waters stand up like walls;**

¹⁴leading them with a cloud by day, and all the night with a glow of fire;

¹⁵**splitting the rocks in the wilderness and giving them drink as from the deep;**

¹⁶bringing streams out of a rock, making them flow down like a river.

SECOND READING: ACTS 3:1-19

After healing in Jesus' name, Peter preaches at the temple

¹One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, at three o'clock in the afternoon. ²And a man lame from birth was being carried in. People would lay him daily at the gate of the temple called the Beautiful Gate so that he could ask for alms from those entering the temple. ³When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked them for alms. ⁴Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." ⁵And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. ⁶Peter said, "I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk." ⁷And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. ⁸Jumping up, he stood and began to walk, and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. ⁹All the people saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰and they recognized him as the one who used to sit and ask for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, and they were filled with wonder and astonishment at what had happened to him. ¹¹While he clung to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's Portico, utterly astonished. ¹²When Peter saw it, he addressed the people, "Fellow Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk? ¹³The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of our ancestors, has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. ¹⁴But you rejected the holy and righteous one and asked to have a murderer given to you, ¹⁵and you killed the

author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. ¹⁶And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you. ¹⁷“And now, brothers and sisters, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. ¹⁹Repent, therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out.” 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 21:23-32

After driving the moneychangers out of the temple (21:12), Jesus begins teaching there. His authority is questioned by the religious leaders, who are supposed to be in charge of the temple.

²³When [Jesus] entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?” ²⁴Jesus said to them, “I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?” And they argued with one another, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why, then, did you not believe him?’ ²⁶But if we say, ‘Of human origin,’ we are afraid of the crowd, for all regard John as a prophet.” ²⁷So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And he said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things. ²⁸“What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ ²⁹He answered, ‘I will not,’ but later he changed his mind and went. ³⁰The father went to the second and said the same, and he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but he did not go. ³¹Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. ³²For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him, and

even after you saw it you did not change your minds and believe him.” The Gospel of the Lord...**Thanks be to God.**

CHILDREN’S TIME & SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY: “I Love to Tell the Story” (ELW 661)

- 1** I love to tell the story
of unseen things above,
of Jesus and his glory,
of Jesus and his love.
I love to tell the story,
because I know it's true;
it satisfies my longings
as nothing else would do.

Refrain

I love to tell the story;
'twill be my theme in glory
to tell the old, old story
of Jesus and his love.

- 2** I love to tell the story:
how pleasant to repeat
what seems, each time I tell it,
more wonderfully sweet!
I love to tell the story,
for some have never heard
the message of salvation
from God's own holy word.

Refrain

I love to tell the story;
'twill be my theme in glory
to tell the old, old story
of Jesus and his love.

3 I love to tell the story,
for those who know it best
seem hungering and thirsting
to hear it like the rest.
And when, in scenes of glory,
I sing the new, new song,
I'll sing the old, old story
that I have loved so long.

Refrain

I love to tell the story;
'twill be my theme in glory
to tell the old, old story
of Jesus and his love.

Text: Katherine Hankey, 1834-1911

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE:

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

A brief silence.

L: If Jesus, our master, can take on the form of a servant, then so also can we.
Give us his heart for justice and humility, that we might seek to glorify you
alone. God of wisdom,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: With cloud and fire you led your chosen people across the desert into the
land you had promised them. Show us now the signs that are there for us to
see—in the ocean's depths and the arctic ice, in the winds and rains and
earthquakes—that our abiding vision might be for a world restored and
renewed according to your will. God of wisdom,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: You can bring water from a stone, O God. Therefore, we trust you to bring
healing to our infirmities, our interpersonal rifts and all that separates us
from living life abundantly. We lift up today Jerry, Bruce, Cheryl, Kristy,
Ricky, Larry, Joan, Dennis, Lois, Bev, Gary, Shirley, Joyce, Allison, Becky, Kim,

Sara, Marg, Karen, Pete, Lynnsy, Barb, Wes, Audrey, and Dirk. God of wisdom,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Whenever we are in doubt, hold before us the example of your faithful saints who overcame uncertainties, persecution, and in many cases, fear of their own death. Assure us of your spirit's guidance and our place alongside them in your heavenly city. God of wisdom,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We place into your hands these things for which we pray. Your promises are certain and your mercy sure, for the sake of Jesus.

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:

"Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer to Thee!" vs. 4 (CLH 426)

**4 Then, with my waking thoughts bright with thy praise,
out of my stony griefs Bethel I'll raise;
so by my woes to be
nearer, my God, to thee;
nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!**

United Methodist Hymnal, 1989

Please stand as you are able

***OFFERTORY PRAYER:**

P: O God,

C: **You ask us to look not to our own interests, but to the interests of others.
Accept now these gifts which we bring before you in the name of your
kingdom's work, that all your children may know and experience your love
and provision. For the sake of Jesus. 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: “Thy Word”

THY WORD 92

Amy Grant; M. W. Smith

Thy word is a lamp un- to my feet and a light un- to my path.

1. When I feel a- fraid, think I've lost my way,
2. I will not for- get your love for me and yet,

still you're there right be- side me; noth- ing will I fear as
I'll for- ev- er be wand- 'ring; Je- sus be my guide

long as you are near. Please be near me to the end.
hold me to your side. I will love you to the end.

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***DISMISSAL:**

P: Go out in joy. Be led forth in peace.

C: **Thanks be to God!**

IN OUR PRAYERS

Jerry Anderson Kristy Fyhrie
Larry Sather Joan Burquest
Dennis Rosenquist Lois Rosenquist
Ricky Hart Sara Skoglund
Cheryl Farber – mother of Melissa Schlosser
Rev. Bruce Miller- father of Karin Wagner
Marg Peterson -friend of the Thoms
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
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
Wes & Barb Hoyhtya – friends of the Thoms
Audrey Plessner - sister of Kathy Mittag
Dirk Bergquist – friend of Esther members
Family and Friends of: Katie Jahnke, Colleen Burquest, Doug Tvedt,
Jerry Pogose, Terry Burns, Bruce Carter, Gary Willie, Connie Pesta,
Kathy Wilkins, Ivy Christensen, Jim Schlosser, Leroy Olson, Dale
Flemming, Wally Schlosser, and Carter Stockert

THIS WEEK AT ESTHER

Sunday, September 27th - Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Sunday Fellowship Before and After Worship

9 am - Sunday School

9 am – Third Grade Bible Class

9:15 am – Behold Connect & Reflect: Coffee & Conversation
10 am – Worship led by SAM Jewel Townsend
2 pm – Worship at St. William's

Wednesday, September 30th

6 pm – Confirmation: Meal: Reid Gardner

Sunday, October 4th - Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Sunday Fellowship Before and After Worship

9 am - Sunday School

9:15 am – Behold Connect & Reflect: Coffee & Conversation

10 am – Worship with Holy Communion led by Pastor Greg Billberg

11 am – 9th Grade Confirmation Student Meeting

2 pm – Worship at St. William's

NEWS AND NOTES

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."

Connect & Reflect: Coffee & Conversation will be held Sundays starting at 9:15 – 9:40 am. We invite you to grab a cup of coffee and join us for a casual Sunday morning chat. Each week, we'll look back at the Behold devotion sent out the previous Monday morning. Together we'll share our thoughts, stories, and everyday experiences with that week's challenge question. Whether you read it on Monday or just want to listen in, you are welcome here as we build our faith and community together!

9th grade Confirmation students will meet October 4th at 11 am. We will be planning your Confirmation worship service, answer any questions, pick out gowns, and run through your faith statements. Please turn in your faith statement to Jewel by October 1st.

Spruce Hill Church Open House is Saturday, October 3rd. The Open House will run 12:00-4:00 pm featuring live music from Brad Lambrecht at 1:00-2:00 pm on the church's historic reed organ. Come see behind the scenes of the current

restoration and repair work at Spruce Hill Church, located at 12553 Ottertail Trail NE, Miltna.

Luther Crest Annual Meeting will be held Saturday, October 10th at 10 am.

26th Annual Domestic Violence Luncheon will be held on Wednesday, October 14th from 11:45 am – 1 pm at the Broadway Ballroom in Alexandria. This annual event brings our community together to raise awareness, support survivors, and remember those whose lives have been impacted by domestic violence.

This year's speaker is Kari Kerr, MA, LPC. She is the Vice President of Prevention, Education and Violence Intervention at the Community Violence Intervention Center in Grand Forks, ND. Kari comes with more than 24 years of experience in victim advocacy, violence prevention, and professional training. Tickets: \$25 for individual, \$200 for a table of 8. Please let Luella Thom know if you would like to attend.



The Bell Tower is leaking and needs to be repaired. Because of the high reach and difficult area to work with, we do not have an exact idea of cost, but it could surpass \$50,000. Please consider helping with this important and much needed repair. Help keep the bell ringing!

Please send your donation to the church: 11019 625th Ave Parkers Prairie, MN 56361 or scan the QR code.

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 "Give to 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.



We welcome you to join in the weekly "Behold the New Has Come" devotions available on our website estherlutheran.com on the "Behold" tab. Devotions are posted to the website and emailed out each Monday. If you are not currently on the email list and want to be, please notify Mandy in the office. Each weekly

devotion includes a challenge for the week. This past week's challenge is:

We all need and want the grace of Jesus Christ. When we acknowledge our sinful nature, and we face sin and temptation with Jesus in our hearts, we are trusting in Christ's presence in the most difficult of times. When we go to Jesus in prayer, we live a little more like Jesus, and a little less like who the world tells us to be.

We are able to face obstacles in our relationships with mercy, grace, and kindness because the Lord is there to help us. As Matthew tells us, Jesus said, *"there I am with them."* Any time you are gathered with more than two this week, remember that Jesus is there with you.

We hope these devotions and weekly challenges will inspire conversations and stories that we can share with one another as, together, we grow in faith through this initiative.

WELCA Fall Conference Gathering: Conference 8: October 24th at Grace Lutheran in Brandon, MN. Speaker will be a mother and son from Health Partners from Tanzania. Grace Lutheran supports this mission regularly. Contact Luella Thom for details.

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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