

Sunday, July 23, 2017
7th Sunday after Pentecost

INTRODUCTION

It is an age-old question: why is there evil in the world? In the parable of the wheat and the weeds Jesus suggests that both grow together until the harvest. With Paul, we long for the day that all creation will be set free from bondage and suffering. Having both weeds and wheat within us, we humbly place our hope in the promises of God, and from the Lord's table we go forth to bear the fruit of justice and mercy.

PRELUDE

"Great Is Thy Faithfulness"

Jack Schrader

***GATHERING SONG**

"Great Is Thy Faithfulness"

ELW 533

**Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father;
there is no shadow of turning with thee;
thou changest not, thy compassions they fail not;
as thou hast been, thou forever wilt be.**

Refrain

**Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
all I have needed thy hand hath provided;
great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!**

**Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,
sun, moon, and stars in their courses above
join with all nature in manifold witness
to thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love. *Refrain***

**Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside! *Refrain***

***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.**

***CANTICLE OF PRAISE "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come" v 1&4 ELW 693**

**Come, ye thankful people, come;
raise the song of harvest home.
All be safely gathered in
ere the winter storms begin.
God, our maker, doth provide
for our wants to be supplied.
Come to God's own temple, come,**

raise the song of harvest home.

**Even so, Lord, quickly come
to thy final harvest home.
Gather then thy people in,
free from sorrow, free from sin,
there, forever purified,
in thy garner to abide.
Come, with all thine angels, come,
raise the glorious harvest home!**

***PRAYER OF THE DAY**

☞ *Faithful God, most merciful judge,*

☞ **you care for your children with firmness and compassion. By your Spirit nurture us who live in your kingdom, that we may be rooted in the way of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen!**

SPECIAL MUSIC

"Simple Gifts"

Aaron Copland

"At The River"

David Bezona, tenor

FIRST READING

Isaiah 44:6-8

God claims the right to sole rule, because God announces things that actually do happen, while supposed divine opponents remain silent. God is Israel's redeemer, that is, the best brother or sister they ever had.

⁶Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel,
and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts:
I am the first and I am the last;
besides me there is no god.

⁷Who is like me? Let them proclaim it,
let them declare and set it forth before me.
Who has announced from of old the things to come?
Let them tell us what is yet to be.

⁸Do not fear, or be afraid;
have I not told you from of old and declared it?
You are my witnesses!
Is there any god besides me?
There is no other rock; I know not one.

Reflection

Who is speaking this text? (verse 6) What do these titles in verse 6 mean? It is not sufficient to worship some "Deity," because the Lord is a specific God. What does it mean that the Lord is the King of Israel? What does it mean that the Lord is "his [that is, Israel's] Redeemer"? The Lord is unique (verse 7). What does that mean for any other god that might claim worship. How does God prove unique divinity? (verse 7) What is the result for those who have faith in God, the only God? (verse 8) Why is this text important to us? We do not worship other Gods—or do we? What other gods may interfere with our devotion to God alone? What do you fear?

PSALM 86:11-17

¹¹Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk | in your truth;
give me an undivided heart to re- | vere your name.

¹²**I will thank you, O Lord my God, with | all my heart,
and glorify your name for- | evermore.**

¹³For great is your | love toward me;
you have delivered me from the | pit of death.

¹⁴**The arrogant rise up against me, O God, and a band of violent people | seeks my life;
they have not set you be- | fore their eyes.**

¹⁵But you, O Lord, are gracious and full | of compassion,
slow to anger, and full of kind- | ness and truth.

¹⁶**Turn to me and have mer- | cy on me;
give your strength to your servant, and save the child | of your handmaid.**

¹⁷**Show me a sign of your favor, so that those who hate me may see it and be | put to
shame;**

because you, Lord, have helped me and com- | forted me.

Reflection

As you read this text from Psalm 86, what might cause the psalmist to fear? (verse 14) How does the psalmist deal with this fear? (verses 15-17) What is the psalmist's prayer as he faces fear? (verse 11) What does it mean to revere God with an undivided heart? How do you thank God with your whole heart?

SECOND READING

Romans 8:12-25

For Paul, true spirituality means that we experience the reality of the Spirit, which enables us to pray as God's children, keeps us in solidarity with creation, and gives us unseen hope that God will liberate us and creation from bondage to death and decay.

¹²So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—
¹³for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

¹⁸I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. ¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; ²⁰for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²²We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; ²³and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Reflection

What does it mean to live according to the flesh? (verses 12-13) Another way of asking this question is this, what does Paul say is the opposite of faith (living according to the Spirit)? (verse 15) How does the

Spirit bear witness that we are children of God? (verses 15-17) Does being an heir of God mean that we will not have to suffer? (verses 17-18) In this text Paul talks not only of human suffering, but the suffering of creation. What evidence do you see of the creation's bondage to decay? I think of the ice shelf that broke apart in Antarctica, the suffering of elephants who are killed for their ivory, mountains that have their tops cut off to get to the coal in them, crops that fail because of drought or flood or insects or drifting insecticides. How are we to interpret such suffering? (verses 22-23) What is waiting to be born? Do we know what a new creation will look like? (verses 24-25) What is the difference between waiting with patience in hope, and indifference? As a chaplain, I often had the opportunity to talk with people about patience. One observation I often made is that if you feel impatient but are still waiting, perhaps that is patience. What do you think about suffering, hope, patience, and a new creation?

***GOSPEL ACCLAMATION "Alleluia! Give the Glory"**
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Alleluia!
Give the glory
and the honor
to the Lord! (repeat)

***GOSPEL** **Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43**
Jesus tells a parable about the co-existence of good and evil in this world. God's judgment will remove all evildoers and causes of sin, but not until the end of human history.

²⁴[Jesus] put before [the crowds] another parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field;²⁵but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. ²⁶So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. ²⁷And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?' ²⁸He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' The slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' ²⁹But he replied, 'No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. ³⁰Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.' "

³⁶Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." ³⁷He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; ³⁸the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, ³⁹and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, ⁴²and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!"

Reflection

Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a field with both wheat and weeds. (verses 24-26) What did the slaves of the householder want to do with them? (verses 27-28) What does the householder do instead? (verses 29=30) As I reflect on this, and on Jesus' announcement that "the kingdom of heaven has come near" in Matthew 4:17, this is surprising to me. The kingdom of heaven is not at the end, when

the wheat and the weeds are separated, but is in the patience of the householder and his slaves in leaving the weeds and the wheat together. What do you think? In verses 36-43, Jesus makes it clear that the weeds are not going to just be left forever, for they will be burned up. When will this happen? (verse 40) What will happen to "all causes of sin"? In reflecting on this parable, it helps to think about the Romans text about the suffering of creation. I also think it's good to remember the many ways in which we as Lutherans (in our best theology) refuse to divide people into good and bad. We are called on in our baptism to repent daily (which means all the time, not just once a day) for the evil in our hearts, and be filled with the Spirit of Christ's righteousness. Lutherans say that we are 100% saints and 100% sinner. So at the end of the age (or the end of the day, or the end of my life) those causes of sin and evil within me will be collected and destroyed, and I and all believers will "shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father." (verse 43) And furthermore, we confess that this happens daily as we die to sin and rise with Christ to new life. What do you think?

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Debbie Kunz

SERMON

"Living With Sin"

Rev. Roger Lenander

HYMN OF THE DAY

"Blessed Be Your Name"

**Blessed be Your name
In the land that is plentiful
Where Your streams of abundance flow
Blessed be Your name**

**Blessed be Your name
When I'm found in the desert place
Though I walk through the wilderness
Blessed be Your name**

Refrain

**Ev'ry blessing You pour out I'll
Turn back to praise
When the darkness closes in Lord
Still I will say
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your name
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your glorious name**

**Blessed be Your name
When the sun's shining down on me
When the world's all as it should be
Blessed be Your name**

**Blessed be Your name
On the road marked with suffering
Though there's pain in the offering
Blessed be Your name *Refrain***

**Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your name
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your glorious name**

**You give and take away
You give and take away
My heart will choose to say
Lord blessed be Your name *(repeat)***

**Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your name
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your glorious name**

***APOSTLES' CREED**

**☩ 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!**

***PRAYER SONG "*Cares Chorus*"**

**I cast all my cares upon You
I lay all of my burdens
Down at Your feet
And anytime that I don't know
What to do
I will cast all my cares upon You**

***PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Called together in the Spirit's embrace, let us pray for the mending of God's world.

A brief silence.

Enliven your church with love for your world, O God. Give undivided hearts to Christians from Africa and the Americas, Asia and Europe. Make us one in faithful witness to your will. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Renew the life of this earth, O God, even as it groans because of misuse and decay. Cultivate in us an eager longing for a healthy and life-giving earth. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Bridge the chasms that divide the nations, O God. Inspire a reconciling vision among the world's leaders, and bring together people of differing commitments for the sake of the world's most vulnerable people. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

We pray for all the men and women of our armed forces, at home and abroad. We especially lift up to you, Jason Shields. Defend them day by day with your heavenly grace; strengthen them in their trials and temptations; give them courage to face the perils which beset them; and grant them a sense of your abiding presence wherever they may be. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Embrace those who suffer, O God. Give peace to all who are near death, hope to those who are depressed, shelter to the homeless, and healing to the sick *especially Jim, Lin, Kathy, Roberta, Robert, Bill, Dorothy, Chester, Terry, Linda, and Alva. We also pray for those we name before you aloud or silently in our hearts (pause for 10 seconds).* Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Embolden our witness to your love, O God. Send us out into the world with courageous hearts, persistence, and holy wisdom. Inspire us to tend to and delight in our children's faith. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Raise up your saints, O God. Inspire us by the lives of all reformers and renewers of your church. Receive our thanks for the saints among us who have recently died. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

All these things, and whatever else you see that we need, we entrust to your care through Christ our Lord.

Amen!

***SHARING OF THE PEACE**

☞ The peace of Christ be with you always.

☞ **And also with you!**

Refrain

**As the grains of wheat once scattered on the hill
were gathered into one to become our bread;
so may all your people from all the ends of earth
be gathered into one in you.**

**As this cup of blessing is shared within our midst,
may we share the presence of your love. Refrain**

**Let this be a foretaste of all that is to come
when all creation shares this feast with you. Refrain**

***OFFERTORY RESPONSE "For the Fruit of All Creation" v. 3 ELW 679**

**For the harvests of the Spirit,
thanks be to God.
For the good we all inherit,
thanks be to God.
For the wonders that astound us,
for the truths that still confound us,
most of all, that love has found us,
thanks be to God.**

***OFFERING PRAYER**

P *Merciful God,*

G **you open wide your hand and satisfy the need of every living thing.
You have set this feast before us. Open our hands to receive it. Open
our hearts to embrace it. Open our lives to live it. We pray this
through Christ our Lord. Amen!**

***DIALOGUE**

P *The Lord be with you.*

G **And also with you.**

P *Lift up your hearts.*

G **We lift them to the Lord.**

P *Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.*

G **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

***PREFACE**

P *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. Fulfilling the promise of the resurrection, you pour out the
fire of your Spirit, uniting in one body people of every nation and tongue. And
so, with Mary Magdalene and Peter and all the witnesses of the resurrection, with*

earth and sea and all their creatures, and with angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

***HOLY, HOLY, HOLY**

**Holy, holy, holy, holy,
holy, holy is our God,
God, the Lord of earth and heaven.
Holy, holy is our God.
Holy, holy, holy, holy,
holy, holy is our God,
God, the Lord of all of hist'ry.
Holy, holy is our God.**

***THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE**

P *In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.*

*Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.*

***LORD'S PRAYER**

P *Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.*

Q **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**

P *Come, let us eat, for now the feast is spread. Our Lord's body let us take together.*

***BLESSING**

P *The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.*

G **Amen!**

***PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

P *We give you thanks, almighty God,*

G **that you have refreshed us through the healing power of this gift of life. In your mercy, strengthen us through this gift, in faith toward you and in fervent love toward one another; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen!**

***BENEDICTION**

P *May God, whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine, grant you the gifts of faith and hope.*

Almighty God, Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

G **Amen!**

***SENDING SONG "Days of Elijah"**

**These are the days of Elijah
Declaring the Word of the Lord
And these are the days
Of Your servant Moses
Righteousness being restored
And though these are days
Of great trials
Of famine and darkness and sword
Still we are the voice
In the desert crying
Prepare ye the way of the Lord**

Refrain

**Behold He comes
Riding on the clouds
Shining like the sun
At the trumpet call
So lift your voice
It's the year of Jubilee
And out of Zion's hill
Salvation comes**

**And these are the days of Ezekiel
The dry bones becoming as flesh**

**And these are the days
Of Your servant David
Rebuilding a temple of praise
And these are the days of the harvest
The fields are as white in the world
And we are the labourers
In Your vineyard
Declaring the Word of the Lord Refrain**

Bridge

**There is no god like Jehovah
There is no god like Jehovah
There is no god like Jehovah
There is no god like Jehovah (hey)**

**Behold He comes
Riding on the clouds
Shining like the sun
At the trumpet call
So lift your voice
It's the year of Jubilee
And out of Zion's hill
Salvation comes**