

Sunday, July 30, 2017
8th Sunday after Pentecost

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

"Little Prelude in C"

J.S. Bach

GATHERING SONG *"I Love Thy Kingdom Lord!"

**I love your kingdom, Lord,
the house of your abode,
the church our blest Redeemer saved
with his own precious blood.**

**I love your church, O God.
Her walls before you stand,
dear as the apple of your eye,
and graven on your hand.**

**For her my tears shall fall;
for her my prayers ascend;
to her my cares and toils be given,
till toils and cares shall end.**

**Beyond my highest joy
I prize her heavenly ways:
her sweet communion, solemn vows,
her hymns of love and praise.**

**Sure as your truth shall last,
to Zion shall be given
the brightest glories earth can yield,
and brighter bliss of heaven.**

***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**

"We Are Called" vv 1&3

ELW 720

**Come! Live in the light!
Shine with the joy and the love of the Lord!
We are called to be light for the kingdom,
to live in the freedom of the city of God.**

Refrain

**We are called to act with justice,
we are called to love tenderly;
we are called to serve one another,
to walk humbly with God.**

**Sing! Sing a new song!
Sing of that great day when all will be one!
God will reign, and we'll walk with each other
as sisters and brothers united in love. *Refrain***

***PRAYER OF THE DAY**

☞ *Beloved and sovereign God,*

☞ **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

"He Loved Us"

Doug Holck/Tom Fettke

Sharmyn Thompson, soprano

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. In verse 13 God gives him additional honor and riches beyond compare.

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 your great people?"

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."

Reflection

If you read the first two chapters of 1 Kings, you discover that the political struggles our country is experiencing are nothing compared to what happened in Israel after David became too ill to rule. Solomon was not only God's choice; he was a clever politician in gaining the throne of his father David. What was Solomon's most important characteristic? (verse 3) The reference to "the high places" are those places outside of Jerusalem where people worshiped. The only problem was, those places were also where other gods were worshiped. And yet, what happens in Gibeon, one of the high places? What does God offer to Solomon? (verse 5) How does Solomon testify to his faith in God? (verses 6-8) What does he ask of God? (verse 9) What is God's response? (verses 10-12) If you could ask God for anything, what would it be? What do you think would be God's answer to you?

Psalm 119:129-136

- ¹²⁹Your de- | crees are wonderful;
therefore I 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 gra- | cious 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 up- | on your servant
and teach | me your statutes.
- ¹³⁶**My eyes shed | streams of tears,
because people do not | keep your teaching.**

Reflection

As you may remember, Psalm 119 (the longest Psalm) is an extended meditation on the greatness of God's word. This text is a combination of reflections about God's commandments, and prayers of the psalmist to God. As you read it, what part of it speaks most clearly to you?

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 sighs too deep for words. ²⁷And God, who searches the heart, 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, 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 Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. ³⁵Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, 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 conquerors 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.

Reflection

In this text, we come to the end of this magnificent chapter in which Paul lays out what he believes about Jesus and God's purpose in sending Jesus. Do you ever wonder what you should pray for or how you should pray? What does Paul say about this? (verse 26) How does God become both the prayer and the answer to prayer? (verse 27) In what way do “all things work together for good”? Does that mean that every bad thing that happens will turn out okay? Here's what I think: I know of too many people who have suffered, who have died, to think that this means “everything will be all right.” I have little to no patience with those who think that getting a parking place, or winning the lottery is somehow because God has answered their prayers. Instead, I think Paul is talking about something greater and deeper even than illness and death, but is talking about the eternal will of God for all for whom Jesus died. What do you think? As you consider this, think about who has been called by God “according to his purpose.” Can you think of anyone who has not been called by God? (Christians have disagreed about this question through the ages.) In the next verses, Paul speaks to this very question, I think. What does he say about God's favor? (verses 31-32) If someone were to condemn us, who speaks for us? Note: the word “elect” in this context means chosen. (verses 33-34) Even those who seem to be condemned are loved by God! Note again: the word “separate” means “divorce”—so Paul is asking who can divorce us from God's love. (verses 35-36) As you think of “all these things,” Paul seems to be reflecting on every terrible thing that can happen to us. What does it mean to be “conquerors” in such circumstances? In verses 38-39 (which are my confirmation verse, and especially beloved by me!), Paul lists everything that people might think could divorce us from God. What is his proclamation? As bad, evil, terrible, awful, or even just not very good things happen to us, these verses remind us of God's love, which is greater than everything that might come up against it. These are verses worth memorizing! How have you experienced the love of God and God's ability to overcome anything that might defeat you?

***GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

“Thy Word” refrain only twice

**Thy word, is a lamp unto my feet
and a light unto my path.**

**Thy word, is a lamp unto my feet
and a light unto my path.**

***GOSPEL**

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 someone found and hid; 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; ⁴⁶on 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 been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

Reflection

This text is five short parables that help us to know about the kingdom of heaven. What is the idea that each of these has in common? (here's a clue that's not in the verses of our text: verse 35) Think about a mustard seed—if you planted it, could you find it in the ground? What is the result of planting the mustard seed? I bake bread, and I can testify that if the flour has yeast in it, you can't see it. But what happens if you bake bread with the flour and yeast? (verse 33) Verse 44 is the story of buried treasure—what does someone who buys the field get? Verse 45 tells of a merchant who finds a wonderful pearl. What does he do? Verses 47-50 tell off a catch of fish—are the fishers able to sort out the good fish from the bad as they are catching the fish? What do you think all this means? Is the kingdom of God obvious? As you think about these parables, remember also the text from Romans. As we reflect on the state of the world, it usually looks pretty bad. Where is the kingdom of God, according to these parables? Can God's love be defeated? I think my favorite verse in this is verse 51. "Have you understood all this?" I think Matthew is laughing at us, if we are among those who answer yes. Maybe we see a little bit, but the kingdom is always being revealed in new ways among us! What new sign of the kingdom do you see today?

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Kris Langdon

SERMON

"God's Bond of Love"

Rev. Roger Lenander

HYMN OF THE DAY

"You Are My All In All"

**You are my strength
When I am weak
You are the treasure**

**That I seek
You are my all in all
Seeking You as a precious jew'l
Lord to give up I'd be a fool
You are my all in all**

**Jesus Lamb of God
Worthy is Your name
Jesus Lamb of God
Worthy is Your name**

**Taking my sin
My cross my shame
Rising again I bless Your name
You are my all in all
When I fall down You pick me up
When I am dry You fill my cup
You are my all in all**

**Jesus Lamb of God
Worthy is Your name
Jesus Lamb of God
Worthy is Your 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** **"Seek Ye First"** v 1 before prayer; v 2 after prayer

**Seek ye first
the kingdom of God
and its righteousness,
and all these things
shall be added unto you.
Allelu, alleluia.**

**Ask and it shall
be given unto you;
seek and you shall find;
knock nad the door
shall be opened unot you.
Allelu, alleluia.**

***PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Generous, compassionate God, we gather before you to pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

Shine the light of understanding on your church on earth. Bind us together in the word to share your love with the world. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Protect birds and their nests, fields full of crops, the seas and the fish that swim in them. Inspire us to care for the creation you love. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Raise up just and wise advocates and judges from small-town courts to international tribunals. Enlighten all leaders to discern what is right and do what is good. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Nurture faith in those who doubt. Lift up those who are weak in body, mind, or spirit. Surround with love those facing their last days, comfort the grieving, and heal 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.

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.

Expand the understanding of this assembly to see our neighbors as you see them. Let the yeast of your word grow beyond us to expand your boundless love to those around us. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Sustain us by the intercession of your Holy Spirit. Let the Spirit's sighs, too deep for words, comfort us until we rejoice with those already united with you (*especially*). Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Into your hands we place all our prayers, spoken and unspoken, trusting in the mercy of Christ Jesus.

Amen!

***SHARING OF THE PEACE**

☐ The peace of Christ be with you always.

☑ **And also with you!**

OFFERTORY

"More Precious Than Silver"

**(Oh) Lord You are
More precious than silver
Lord You are
More costly than gold
Lord You are
More beautiful than diamonds
And nothing I desire
Compares with You**

**(Oh) Lord You are
More precious than silver
Lord You are
More costly than gold
Lord You are
More beautiful than diamonds
And nothing I desire
Compares with You
Ooo nothing I desire
Compares with You
Ooo nothing I desire
Compares with You**

***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**

Ⓟ *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**

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

Ⓞ **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**

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

***BLESSING**

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

Ⓞ **Amen!**

***PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Ⓟ *We give you thanks, almighty God,*

Ⓞ **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 "Shout to the Lord"**

**My Jesus, my Savior,
Lord, there is none like you.
All of my days I want to praise
the wonders of your mighty love.
My comfort, my shelter,
tower of refuge and strength;
let ev'ry breath, all that I am
never cease to worship you.**

**Shout to the Lord, all the earth, let us sing
power and majesty, praise to the King.
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar
at the sound of your name.
I sing for joy at the work of your hands;
forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand.
Nothing compares to the promise I have in you.**