

Bethlehem Lutheran & St. Stephen's Episcopal



9th Sunday after Pentecost

Announcements

Welcome to all who came to Bethlehem & St. Stephen's today!

Holy Communion may be received at the altar with individual cups of wine/juice and bread; or if you choose to remain seated, individual cups of wine/juice and wafer are available in the narthex. Those at home, we welcome you to the table with your own bread and wine/juice.

Please remember in your prayers: Doug & Nick, Dennis, Laura, Barb, Kay, Sylvia & family, Lyle, Lisa & Lindsey, Pastor Kim & Terri, Eva, Josh, Joyce, Howard & Donna. If you are in need of pastoral leadership or spiritual counsel, or want to add a name to the prayer list, please email bethlehembillings@gmail.com or office@ststephensbillings.org or call Father Stephen at (307)633-6454.

Women's Bible Study will be Aug 13
The next Congregational Council Meeting will be Aug 16

Special Offering for July is ELCA World Hunger

The online service is available at <https://www.youtube.com/@saintstephensbillings>

Showers for our unhoused neighbors – We at Bethlehem and St. Stephen's, in cooperation with St Vincent DePaul and the Salvation Army, provide showers for our unhoused neighbors on Mondays and Wednesdays. If you are willing to help, call Chelsea Meisner at 360-915-2762 or Terri Wilker at 406-425-3713
Also needed are donations of backpacks, blankets, and tarps!

Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church

St Stephen's Episcopal Church

40 10th Street West

Billings, MT 59102

9th Sunday after Pentecost

July 26, 2026

9:30 Worship

Chosen People

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!

Greeting

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.**

Gathering

P: The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God. Welcome! Let us join together in the Gathering Song "We are Gathered Here."

WE ARE GATHERED HERE

Larry Olson
Karol Baer
David Lee Brown

We are gath-ered here in the name (of the Maker).
(of the Savior)
(of the Spirit)

We are gath-ered here to sing God's praise.

We are gath-ered here in the name (of the Maker).
(of the Savior)
(of the Spirit)

Cho - sen by God's grace.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Please rise if it is comfortable.

P: Merciful God,

**C: We have not lived as your chosen people
We have not loved your daughters and sons.
We have not walked in the footsteps of others.
We have not followed the Servant your Son.**

**Sometimes I hate, sometimes I lie,
Sometimes I waste, sometimes I cheat.**

**We have not lived as your chosen people
We have not loved your daughters and sons.
We have not walked in the footsteps of others.
We have not followed the Servant your Son.**

**Sometimes I am selfish, sometimes I am prejudiced,
Sometimes I am uncaring, sometimes I am destructive.**

**We have not lived as your chosen people
We have not loved your daughters and sons.
We have not walked in the footsteps of others.
We have not followed the Servant your Son.**



KYRIE ELEISON

Larry Olson

Kyr-i - e E-lei - son on our wor-ld and on our way.

Kyr-i - e E-lei - son ev - 'ry day. For
That
For
For your

peace in the world, for the health of the church, for the u - ni - ty of all.
we may live out your im - passionate re - sponse to the hun - gry and the poor.
peace in our hearts, for peace in our homes, for friends and fam - i - ly.
spir - it to guide, that you cen - ter our lives in the wa - ter and the word.

For this ho - ly house, for all who wor - ship and praise,
That we may live out truth and jus - tice and grace,
For life and for love, for our work and our play,
That you nour - ish our souls with your bod - y and blood,

let us pray to the Lord! — let us pray to the Lord! —

Words of Forgiveness

C: Even though we are in bondage to sin, there is hope for freedom.
Not by our own doing but because we are chosen by God to receive the gift
of forgiveness. Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we
know this is true.
Amen.

JOURNEY OF PRAISE

Larry Olson
David Lee Brown
Karol Baer

The musical score is written on six staves in treble clef, key of D major (two sharps), and common time (C). The lyrics are as follows:

We are all on a jour - ney from the
We can feel suf - fer - ing. There is
cra - dle to the grave. We are
some - one near in need. We are
giv - en life through the price our
giv - en choice, heart, hands, voice. They
Sav - ior with - had in to pay. Oh let our
are with - in our reach.
hearts praise the Lord. Oh let our hands praise the Lord. Oh let our
voices praise the Lord. Oh let our lives praise the Lord.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

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.

WORD

*God Speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching and song.
Congregation May be Seated*

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.

⁵ At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, “Ask what I should give you.” ⁶ And 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. ⁷ And 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. ⁸ And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. ⁹ Give 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?”

¹⁰ It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. ¹¹ God 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, ¹² I 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.”

P: Word of God, word of life.

C: Thanks be to God.

Psalm: Psalm 119:129-136

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

¹²⁹ Your decrees 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.**

¹³¹ I 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.**

¹³³ Order 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.**

¹³⁵ Let 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.

²⁶ The 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. ²⁷ And 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.

²⁸ We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For 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. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

³¹ What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³² He 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? ³³ Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who 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. ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? ³⁶ As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all day long;
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than victorious through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor 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.

R: Word of God, Word of Life.

C: Thanks be to God.



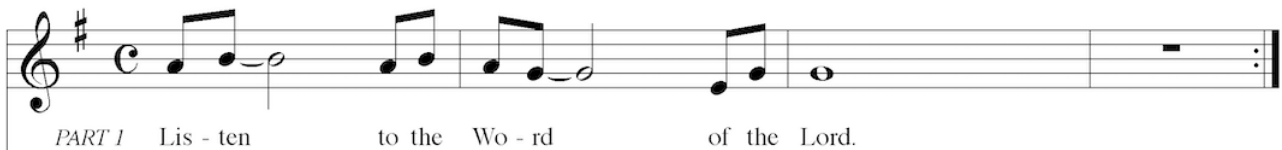
GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(please rise if it is comfortable)

David Lee Brown
Larry Olson

LISTEN

Sing eighths with a triplet feel



PART 1 Lis - ten to the Wo - rd of the Lord.

P: The holy gospel according to Matthew the 13th chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

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;³² it 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."

³³ He 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; ⁴⁸ when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. ⁴⁹ So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰ and 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." ⁵² And 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."

P: The gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

Hymn of the Day *Be Thou My Vision, O Lord of My Heart* ELW #388

Prayers of Intercession

Trusting in God's steadfast love for all God has made, let us pray for the church, the world, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

God our wisdom and our song, we pray for bishops, candidacy committees, those preparing for seminary, those awaiting call as deacons or pastors, and all who seek to lead your disciples in any way. God of grace,

C: hear our prayer.

Romans 8:26

THE SPIRIT INTERCEDES FOR US

Larry Olson



The Spir-it in-ter-cedes for us with sighs too deep for words to ex-press oh, oh, oh.

God our breath and our heartbeat, help us to recognize signs of your presence among us. Protect and support diverse ecosystems, from national parks to family farms, from ranches to wild places.

God our peace and our guide, help civic leaders hear all their peoples' stories with compassion and curiosity, and remind us of your love from which we can never be separated.

God our intercessor and our lawgiver, dismantle the barriers to care and recognition of all who live with chronic illness, mobility struggles, pain, and uncertainty. We pray especially **for Doug & Nick, Dennis, Laura, Barb, Kay, Sylvia & family, Lyle, Lisa & Lindsey, Pastor Kim & Terri, Eva, Josh, Joyce, Howard & Donna.**

God of grace,

C: hear our prayer.

Romans 8:26

THE SPIRIT INTERCEDES FOR US

Larry Olson



The Spir-it in-ter-cedes for us with sighs too deep for words to ex-press oh, oh, oh.

God our redeemer, may we trust your love above and beyond all else that distracts, annoys, frightens, exhausts, or divides us.

God who seeks, finds, and saves, for our community's part in the ongoing gift of creation, and for the riches of faith and hope which came before, we give you thanks. God of Grace,

C: hear our prayer

Romans 8:26

THE SPIRIT INTERCEDES FOR US

Larry Olson



The Spir- it in-ter- cedes for us with sighs too deep for words to ex-press oh, oh, oh.

Grateful for your abundant provision and trusting in your goodness, we cast all our cares upon you, through the abundant grace of Christ Jesus.

C: Amen.

Peace

P: The Peace of Christ be with you always.

C: And also with you

Please share a sign of Peace with your neighbors!

Offering

The collection globe is available at the rear of the church. Online viewers can mail an offering to: Bethlehem Lutheran Church—40 10th Street West, Billings, MT. 59102. Thank you for your support in our ministries!

Offering Prayer

Loving God,

we offer at your table the gifts of our hearts.

**Help us take heart in you and share freely of your love,
so that all creation can taste your abundance.**

**We ask this in the name of Jesus,
through the Spirit abiding with us now and forever.
Amen.**

GREAT THANKSGIVING

If it is comfortable, please stand.

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to the Lord.

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

C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

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;
who on this day overcame death and the grave,
and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life.
And so, with all the choirs of angels,
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,
heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry, full of your glo-ry. Ho -
san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high -
est. Bless-ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho -
san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.

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 to all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

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

**C: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever.
Amen.**

Invitation to Communion

P: Heaven has come near. Come, share in the feast!

Lamb of God



Communion

The body of Christ, given for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

Communion Hymn

EVERYBODY'S GOT SOMETHING TO OFFER

Larry Olson

Ev - ery - bo - dy's got some - thing to of - fer; young and old the
prince and the pau - per. Ev - ery - bo - dy's got some - thing to of - fer
in the name of the Lord.
To the lost and the low - ly ones the mes - sage it is
To the be - liev - ers gath - ered here the mes - sage it is
clear; we have all got a gift to give our hands,
true; we have all got a gift to give in all
our hearts, our tears. Ev - ery - bo - dy's got
we say and do. Ev - ery - bo - dy's got

P: The Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

C: Amen

Prayer after Communion

P: Compassionate God,

C: through the gifts of bread and wine

our hearts are filled with the abundance of your love.

Strengthen us that we, through this holy meal,

may share your love freely, as you have shared with us.

We ask this in the name of Jesus,

through the Spirit nourishing us now and forever.

Amen.

Blessing
 Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer,
 ✠ one God,
 bless, heal, and hold you
 today and always.
Amen.

Sending Hymn

WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

David Lee Brown
 Larry Olson
 Karol Baer

We can make a dif - ference in ev - 'ry - thing we do. _____

We can make a dif - ference it's up to me and you.

Chil - dren of the light, the Spir - it shows us how. _____

We can make a dif - ference now.

Some say — we should - n't be heard; we've got some - thing to say. _____
 He needs some - one to lean on; it just takes one shoul - der.

Some say — we are lost; we can find the way. _____
 She has a lone - ly heart; just takes one to hold her.

Some say — we don't care; we've got love to - day. _____
 They're a - fraid to take a chance; just takes one who's bold - er.

We can make a dif - ference.
 You can make a dif - ference.

Dismissal

P: Heaven has come near. Go, share the good news!
C: Thanks be to God.

All Are Welcome

Christian community should be a place of absolute welcome. Christ has welcomed us, whoever we are. Because of this, we at Bethlehem Lutheran Church are glad to welcome you. None of the distinctions that seem to divide our world apply here!

We welcome you if you are:

- * young, old or in between;
- * white, black, native, Hispanic, or whatever your ancestry;
- * married, single, divorced, a single parent, or whatever your family of choice;
- * rich, poor, middle class, employed or unemployed;
- * a lifelong Christian, just now seeking faith, or not really sure;
- * straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, questioning, or any other identity;
- * healthy of mind and body, living with mental illness, disabled or sick;
- * struggling with addiction, in recovery, or if you love those who are;
- * liberal, conservative, or ambivalent;
- * homeless, a former convict, or in any way someone longing for acceptance.

At Bethlehem, we offer safety, love and the ministry of Word and Sacrament to everyone who seeks it. Come and be part of this welcome, as an equal, as a free and beloved child of God!

ALL ARE WELCOME!

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