

Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church

St Stephen's Episcopal Church

40 10th Street West

Billings, MT 59102

15th Sunday after Pentecost

September 6, 2026

9:30 Worship

Setting 10

Introduction

Conflict is a part of relationships and life in community. Jesus' words in today's gospel are often used in situations having to do with church discipline. The prophet Ezekiel tells of warning the wicked to turn from their ways, and Paul reminds us that love is the fulfilling of the law. We gather in the name of Christ, assured that he is present among us with gifts of peace and reconciliation.

Gathering

P: The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

Confession and Forgiveness

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✙ one God, who pours love into our hearts and healing upon the earth.

C: Amen.

P: Confident that God justifies us by grace through faith, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

P: Compassionate God,

C: we confess that we struggle to embody your goodness in the world and in our own hearts.

Creation groans from overuse.

Jealousy and bitterness strain our relationships.

Indifference keeps us from seeking justice.

Divisions disrupt your call to show genuine love to others.

Turn our hearts back to you.

Restore our world and reconcile us to one another.

Renew us to live as your holy people, following the way of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

P: Hear this good news:

We have peace with God through ✙ Jesus Christ, in whom there is no condemnation, but only forgiveness and the promise of eternal life. Receive freely this healing gift of grace.

Amen.

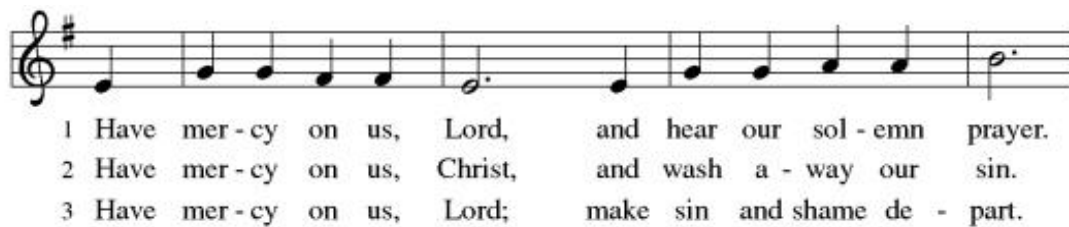
Gathering Hymn *ELW#731 Earth and All Stars*

Greeting

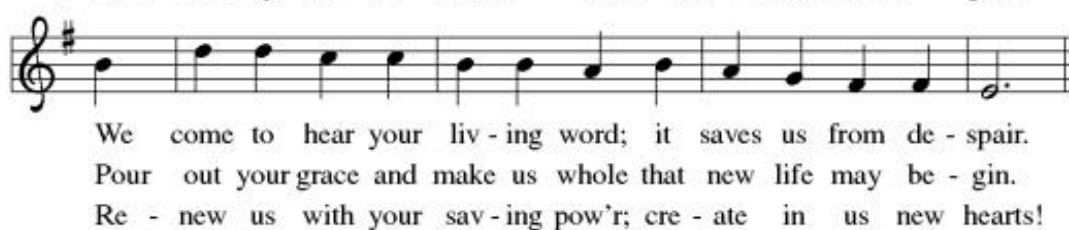
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

Kyrie

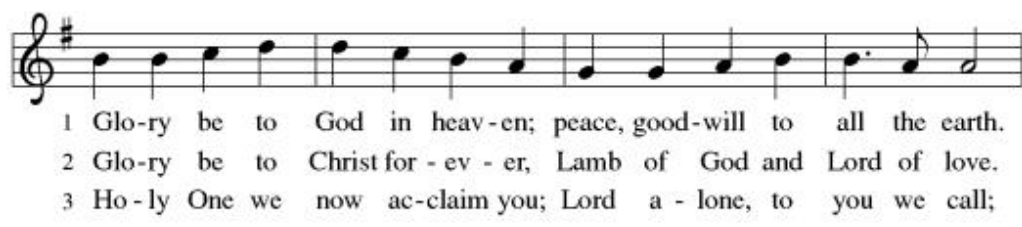


1 Have mer-cy on us, Lord, and hear our sol-emn prayer.
2 Have mer-cy on us, Christ, and wash a-way our sin.
3 Have mer-cy on us, Lord; make sin and shame de-part.

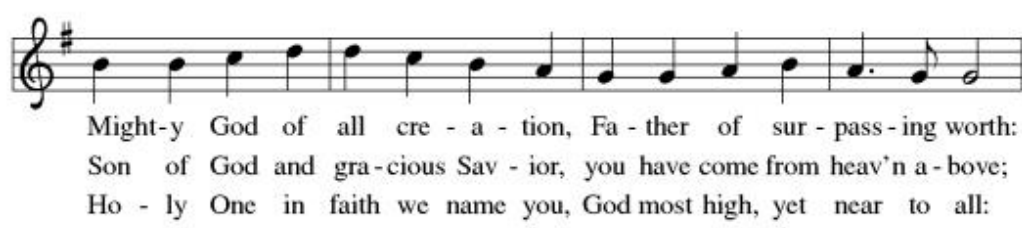


We come to hear your liv-ing word; it saves us from de-spair.
Pour out your grace and make us whole that new life may be-gin.
Re-new us with your sav-ing pow'r; cre-ate in us new hearts!

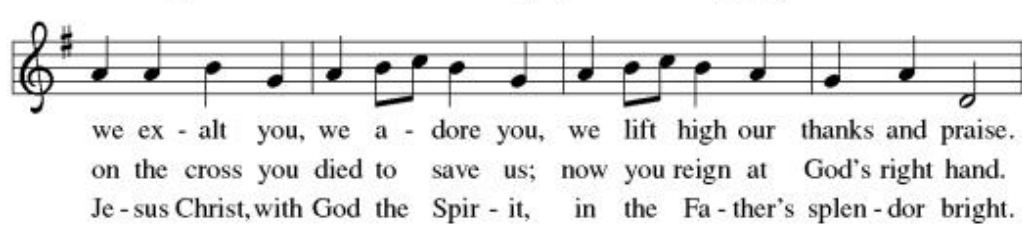
Canticle of Praise



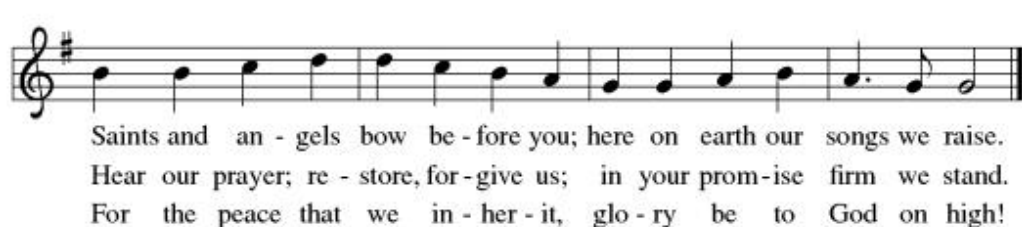
1 Glo-ry be to God in heav-en; peace, good-will to all the earth.
2 Glo-ry be to Christ for-ev-er, Lamb of God and Lord of love.
3 Ho-ly One we now ac-claim you; Lord a-lone, to you we call;



Might-y God of all cre-a-tion, Fa-ther of sur-pass-ing worth:
Son of God and gra-cious Sav-ior, you have come from heav'n a-bove;
Ho-ly One in faith we name you, God most high, yet near to all:



we ex-alt you, we a-dore you, we lift high our thanks and praise.
on the cross you died to save us; now you reign at God's right hand.
Je-sus Christ, with God the Spir-it, in the Fa-ther's splen-dor bright.



Saints and an-gels bow be-fore you; here on earth our songs we raise.
Hear our prayer; re-store, for-give us; in your prom-ise firm we stand.
For the peace that we in-her-it, glo-ry be to God on high!

Prayer of the Day

**O Lord God, enliven and preserve your church with your perpetual mercy. Without your help, we mortals will fail; remove far from us everything that is harmful, and lead us toward all that gives life and salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.**

WORD

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

First Reading: Ezekiel 33:7-11

God appointed Ezekiel as a sentinel for the house of Israel. Ezekiel must faithfully convey God's warnings to the people. Remarkably, God—who is about to attack Jerusalem—gives a warning with the hope that repentance will make the attack unnecessary.

⁷ So you, mortal, I have made a sentinel for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. ⁸ If I say to the wicked, “O wicked ones, you shall surely die,” and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but their blood I will require at your hand. ⁹ But if you warn the wicked to turn from their ways and they do not turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but you will have saved your life.

¹⁰ Now you, mortal, say to the house of Israel: Thus you have said: “Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?” ¹¹ Say to them: As I live, says the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked but that the wicked turn from their ways and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?

R: Word of God, Word of Life

C: Thanks be to God.



Psalm: Psalm 119:33-40

I desire the path of your commandments. (Ps. 119:35)

³³ Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes,
and I shall keep it to the end.

³⁴ **Give me understanding, and I shall keep your teaching;
I shall keep it with all my heart.**

³⁵ Lead me in the path of your commandments,
for that is my desire.

³⁶ **Incline my heart to your decrees
and not to unjust gain.**

³⁷ Turn my eyes from beholding falsehood;
give me life in your way.

³⁸ **Fulfill your promise to your servant,
which is for those who fear you.**

³⁹ Turn away the reproach that I dread,
because your judgments are good.

⁴⁰ **Behold, I long for your commandments;
by your righteousness enliven me.**

Second Reading: Romans 13:8-14

The obligation of Christians is to love one another and so fulfill the heart and goal of the law. Clothes make the person as we “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” and live today in light of the future God has in store for us.

⁸ Owe no one anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery; you shall not murder; you shall not steal; you shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

¹¹ Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is already the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; ¹² the night is far gone; the day is near. Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; ¹³ let us walk decently as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in illicit sex and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

R: Word of God, Word of Life

C: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia. In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself,* entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. *Alleluia.* (2 Cor. 5:19)



P: The holy gospel according to Matthew, the 18th chapter.

C: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

Gospel: Matthew 18:15-20

Jesus offers practical advice to his disciples on how individuals—and the church as a whole—should go about restoring relationships when one member has sinned against another.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹⁵ “If your brother or sister sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If you are listened to, you have regained that one. ¹⁶ But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷ If that person refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸ Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

P: The gospel of the Lord.

C: **Praise to you, O Christ**

Sermon

Hymn of the Day ELW# 603 *God, When Human Bonds Are Broken*

Prayers of Intercession

Reminded of God's gracious and abundant love, we offer our prayers, confident that God hears us.

A brief silence.

Proclaiming God, empower your church throughout the world to announce the words you give us. Open us to receive your word in unexpected ways. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

Forming God, renew the cycles of your creation that provide for the needs of all. Protect grasslands, marshes, swamps, and all places of transition. Heal communities crying out after disaster (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

Governing God, turn all who create, enforce, or interpret legislation away from selfish gain and toward your promise of good for all, especially the good of all who labor. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

Attending God, wake us up to any around us who are in need. Restore broken relationships, failing health, frayed emotions, and the hurts we carry with us. We pray especially for **Brian, Cody & Joy, Doug & Nick, Dennis, Laura, Barb, Cindy, Joan, Sylvia & family, Lyle, Lisa & Lindsey, Pastor Kim & Terri, Eva, Josh, Howard & Donna, and the family of Joyce Peterson.**

Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

Gathering God, resolve conflicts in this community through your righteousness and grace. Reconcile us to each other, making your good news known even through our imperfections. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

Loving God, all who die in faith have life with you. We give you thanks for the nearness of your salvation for (*name/s, and*) all who have gone before us. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

Grant the prayers we have offered, what we have forgotten to ask, and whatever else you see that we need. We ask this in Jesus' name.

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

**God of creation,
you send rain and the earth springs forth abundantly.
All blessings are from you;
make us generous with what we have.
Use our gifts, our abilities, and our hearts
in service to you and in love to our neighbors,
today and always.
Amen.**

GREAT THANKSGIVING

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

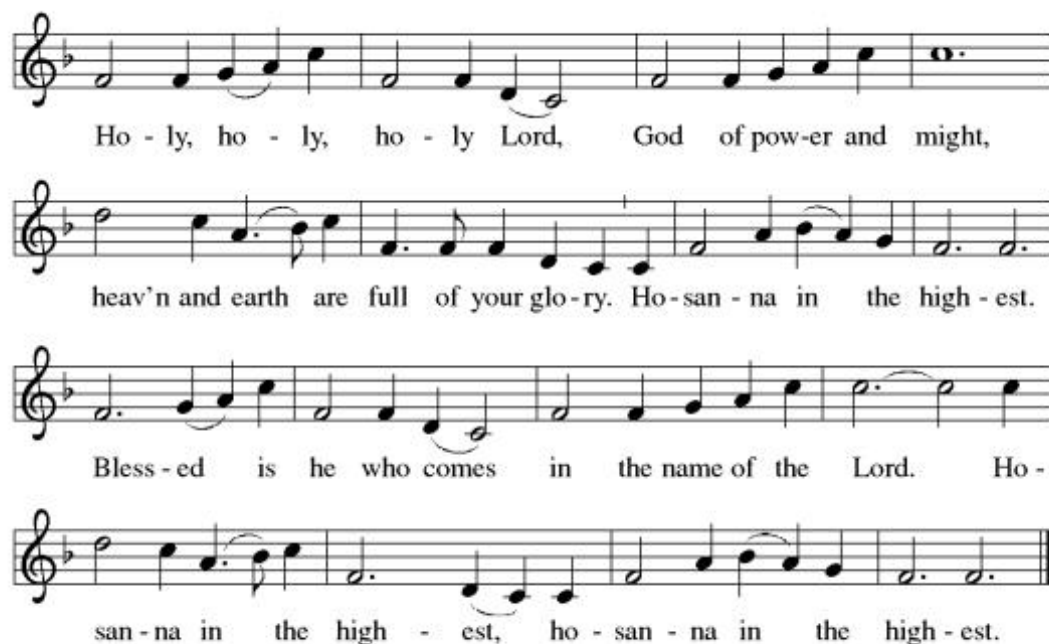
C: We lift them to the Lord.

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



Thanksgiving at the Table

You are indeed holy, almighty and merciful God.
You are most holy,
and great is the majesty of your glory.

You so loved the world that you gave your only Son,
so that everyone who believes in him may not perish
but have eternal life.

We give you thanks for his coming into the world
to fulfill for us your holy will
and to accomplish all things for our salvation.

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.

For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup,
we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Remembering, therefore, his salutary command,
his life-giving passion and death, his glorious resurrection and ascension,
and the promise of his coming again,
we give thanks to you, O Lord God Almighty,
not as we ought but as we are able;
we ask you mercifully to accept our praise and thanksgiving
and with your Word and Holy Spirit to bless us, your servants,
and these your own gifts of bread and wine,
so that we and all who share in the body and blood of Christ
may be filled with heavenly blessing and grace,
and, receiving the forgiveness of sin,
may be formed to live as your holy people
and be given our inheritance with all your saints.

To you, O God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be all honor and glory in your holy church, now and forever.
C: Amen.

Lord's Prayer

P: 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

Christ invites you to this table.

All who are thirsty, all who are hungry, come!

Lamb of God



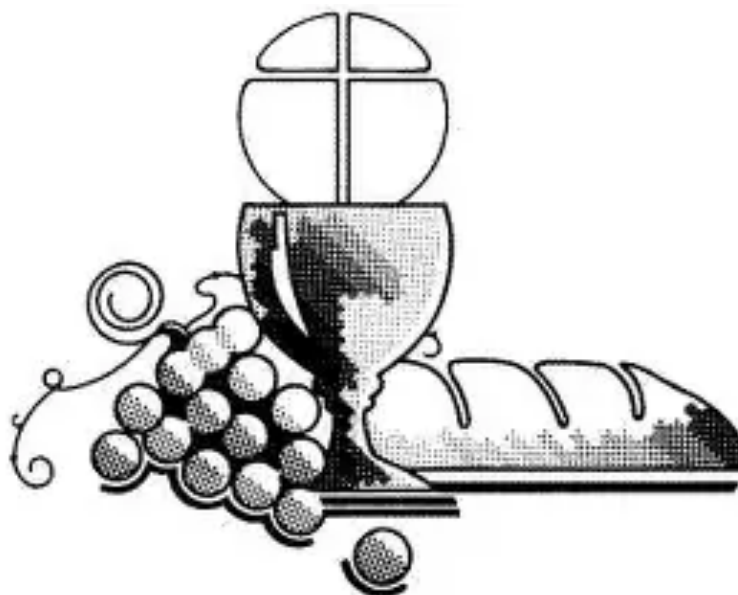
1 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;
2 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;
3 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;

you suf-fered death our lives to save: have mer-cy now, we pray.
you set us free from guilt and grave: have mer-cy now, we pray.
e - ter-nal peace with God you made: give us your peace, we pray.

Communion

The body of Christ, given for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.



Communion Hymn

Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God

783

Descant

The musical score is written for three systems. Each system consists of a vocal line (treble clef), a piano accompaniment line (treble clef), and a bass line (bass clef). The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is common time (C). The first system includes a descant. The lyrics are arranged in three parts, with the first part having three verses. The chords are indicated below the piano line.

System 1:

Al - le - lu - ia, al -
 D F#m G D G

1 Seek ye . . . first the king - dom of God and its
 2 Ask and it shall be giv - en un - to you; seek and
 3 We do not live by bread . . . a - lone, but by

System 2:

le - lu - ia, al - le -
 D Em A⁷ D F#m

righteous - ness, and all these things shall be
 you shall find; knock and the door shall be
 ev - 'ry word that pro - ceeds from the

System 3:

lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.
 G D G D Em A D

add - ed un - to you. Al - le - lu, al - le - lu - ia.
 o - pened un - to you. Al - le - lu, al - le - lu - ia.
 mouth . . of . . . God. Al - le - lu, al - le - lu - ia.

Prayer after Communion

**C: Sustaining God,
with this bread and cup,
you nourish us with mercy and abundant life.
By your Spirit, send us from this table to serve a needy world.
Make us living signs of your liberation, healing, and love,
following the way of Jesus, in whose name we pray.
Amen.**

Blessing

**P: The God of love
draw you into full accord and one mind,
in the body of Christ Jesus.**

Sending Hymn *ELW #543 Go My Children With My Blessing*

Dismissal

**P: Go out in joy. Be led forth in peace.
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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St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

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