

Home Service for September 20, 2026

Welcome and Announcements

You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship.

“Live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.”

Call to Worship:

In their wilderness wandering, the Israelites grumbled. The Lord lighted their way and provided nourishment. In our life journeys, we will give thanks for the providence of the Holy One. In their daily work, the laborers in the field grumbled with resentment over gracious giving. In our daily lives, we will rejoice at generosity shown to others. As we seek to live our lives by the example of Christ, may we delight in God’s grace. We will offer caring presence and abundant generosity. We will even endeavor to give up our grumbling.

Opening Prayer:

Mighty God, we enter your presence with thanksgiving and hope. You have formed us as your people. You join us on the journey of life through valleys, upon mountains, and on the plains. We set our attention and seek your wisdom, encouragement, and grace. Reveal your will and display your glory among your people as we worship your holy name. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Our greatest hope, O God, is to love as Jesus did, with grace and compassion. Clear the wandering paths of our minds and hearts, that your Spirit may fill us with grace to receive and share your blessings. Amen.

Words of Assurance:

The Lord heard the complaints of the Israelites and offered guiding presence. Jesus calls us to celebrate generosity and grace, not just in our own lives but in the lives of others. Know this: In all things, the Lord hears us, sees us, and loves us just as we are. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

Read Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45

Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name;
make known among the nations what he has done.

² Sing to him, sing praise to him;

tell of all his wonderful acts.
³ Glory in his holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.
⁴ Look to the Lord and his strength;
seek his face always.
⁵ Remember the wonders he has done,
his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced,
⁶ you his servants, the descendants of Abraham,
his chosen ones, the children of Jacob.
³⁷ He brought out Israel, laden with silver and gold,
and from among their tribes no one faltered.
³⁸ Egypt was glad when they left,
because dread of Israel had fallen on them.
³⁹ He spread out a cloud as a covering,
and a fire to give light at night.
⁴⁰ They asked, and he brought them quail;
he fed them well with the bread of heaven.
⁴¹ He opened the rock, and water gushed out;
it flowed like a river in the desert.
⁴² For he remembered his holy promise
given to his servant Abraham.
⁴³ He brought out his people with rejoicing,
his chosen ones with shouts of joy;
⁴⁴ he gave them the lands of the nations,
and they fell heir to what others had toiled for—
⁴⁵ that they might keep his precepts
and observe his laws.
Praise the Lord.^[a]

Prayers of the People:

Lord, your blessings abound in our lives and we lift our voices in gratitude for these lovely gifts from you. We also lift our voices as our hearts cry out our concerns for those who are ill, who feel stressed, who mourn, who feel lost, who fear. We offer to you both our joys and concerns, so often intermingled in our lives. Be with each of us and for those whom we name with our voices and in our hearts. Be those we do not know about, but need your presence in their lives. Lord, you have heard our cries and our shouts of joy. Make your presence known to us again through the love and forgiveness of others as we have loved and forgiven them. In Jesus' name, we pray. AMEN.

Lord's Prayer

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

Read the Old Testament Lesson: Exodus 16:2-15

In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. ³ The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death."

⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. ⁵ On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days."

⁶ So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you will know that it was the Lord who brought you out of Egypt, ⁷ and in the morning you will see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?" ⁸ Moses also said, "You will know that it was the Lord when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the Lord."

⁹ Then Moses told Aaron, "Say to the entire Israelite community, 'Come before the Lord, for he has heard your grumbling.'"

¹⁰ While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the Lord appearing in the cloud.

¹¹ The Lord said to Moses, ¹² "I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, 'At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God.'"

¹³ That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. ¹⁴ When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. ¹⁵ When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was.

Moses said to them, "It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat.

Read the Epistle Lesson: Philippians 1:21-30

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ²² If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! ²³ I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; ²⁴ but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.

²⁷ Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit,^[a] striving together as one for the faith of the gospel ²⁸ without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. ²⁹ For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, ³⁰ since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Matthew 20:1-16

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. ² He agreed to pay them a denarius^[a] for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

³ “About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. ⁴ He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ ⁵ So they went.

“He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. ⁶ About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’

⁷ “‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered.

“He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’

⁸ “When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’

⁹ “The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. ¹⁰ So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. ¹¹ When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. ¹² ‘These who were hired last worked

only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.'

¹³ "But he answered one of them, 'I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius?' ¹⁴ Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. ¹⁵ Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?"

¹⁶ "So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

Message

Every day you and I and everyone else in this world make choices, value judgments. According to our own standards we decide what is important or not important. We judge what is valuable or not so valuable. This is just a fact of life. At times we use the age-old excuse of "I do not have time" when we have judged something not to be worth our time or effort. Today's Epistle lesson once again provides us with a great comfort and encouragement for our daily living, our heavenly Father has judged that we are worthy of his time. In God's eyes every soul is eternally important and valuable to him. As believers we have been given grace to see God's great love for each one of us though we are sinners. Knowing that fact reminds me of another letter Paul wrote, 1 Timothy 1:16: "But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life." Today's lesson reminds us of what as believers our response to God's great love and free grace should be. We are moved to live lives worthy of God's gospel.

The apostle Paul wrote today's letter when hundreds of miles separated him from Philippians. Paul was in a Roman prison, in chains. Yet, he provided words of confidence, even though Paul's earthly outcome was unknown. Paul struggled with life and death. He had seen everything and longed to be in heaven. Whether life or death he was confident, for he saw both living or dying as a gain. He ponders his choices, for Paul was torn, but he chooses to live. The decision is made and Paul is to stay to encourage the believers and share in their joy in faith. Even in prison and in chains Paul was confident in his faith. He was united to Christ by faith, Paul also found great comfort and encouragement as he thought about being united by faith to other believers. Paul felt their prayers for him! His deliverance was assured, by either in living or by death.

As believers we live by faith and not by sight. This is what our heavenly Father wants us to remember from these verses. Our lives have been drastically changed by God's grace. No longer do we live in the darkness. We are God's children of

light. No longer do we serve ourselves selfishly and without concern for our neighbor. We are united in God by faith. We want to live lives worthy of God's gospel. This is done not by our own reason or strength. God-pleasing lives are possible solely by the power of God and God alone.

Paul writes these words as a prisoner who is separated from all his Christian friends and family. Yet there is confidence in him, alone in solitary confinement. For, Paul knows and believes that God has not forsaken him. He knows that his fellow believers also care for him. They are praying for him. This is the boldness and confidence we all should have as believers in our Heavenly Father who sent His Son to die in our place.

It really takes a journey and life of faith to have the same struggle that Paul describes in today's lesson. I wonder if any of us ready or can say "I have seen enough and done enough, I am ready to be in heaven," for I know I am not there yet, but may I be ready when God chooses the time. I am sure such a statement in longing for heaven seems to come with a very mature faith, for I have seen it. I am not sure of the age or what experiences the person must have for them to change their love of earthly things into a longing for the heavenly. It is good that we live our lives here longing for the best that is yet to come, for it takes mature faith. But while we are living here, even if we are longing for heaven, may we still make it our goal to please God.

Paul's letter to the Philippians is a letter of joy and rejoicing. Paul was joyful because even in prison in Rome, he was able to preach the gospel. He was going to continue to rejoice because the gospel was freely proclaimed. Remember that Paul also found great joy in being united to believers who were praying for him, even though Paul did not really know if he would see them again, face-to-face. But he did know that he was to remain for their benefit and their joy of a growing faith. Paul's joy was contagious. The believers' joy was to be the same, overflowing.

All believers have joy as they are united by faith to God and one another. We would have to admit that in our nation we are blessed with great freedom. There is a certain joy in being able to make individual choices even about our faith without persecution. Therefore, there is an even greater joy for every believer. We are reminded that at one time we were prisoners. We were held captive by our own sinful nature. Now, by God's grace and gift of faith we have been set free from the power of sin and death. We rejoice and continue to rejoice for this simple gospel truth that is ours. We may not always find joy in everything in this life. We might feel forgotten or rejected because of our stand on the teachings of Scripture. The world does not like that word sin and may include you as a radical extremist,

because you believe in the words of the Bible. The disciples felt persecution was a joy because it meant that others saw in them Christ, whom the world not only persecuted but also even put to death.

May our lives always be filled with joy. This is especially true today as the world looks and finds very little, if anything at all, to be joyful about. Here is the great difference between believers and everyone else. We are able to be joyful in the midst of sadness. We are able to find hope when others look at hopelessness. The world around us, those without faith, quickly give up and give in to overwhelming feelings of despair. They are alone, because they are not united to Christ. Joy is missing for them. May we never lose joy from in our lives! May our hope which is found in our faith, always overflow into the lives of others!

Christ came to earth to live and suffer and die for us. He became poor so that we might become rich. Our souls are valuable in God's eyes. Christ rose from the dead and now prepares a place for us in heaven. Believers can live lives worthy of God's gospel, because they are united by faith to God and other believers. This unity leads to joyfulness in faithful, godly living. Amen.

Benediction:

Go now in the name of the God who goes before us, and in the name of Christ, whose love and grace abound within us.

Go seeking the call of Spirit to a place beyond complaint, a place of gratitude.

Go in peace. Amen.