

**ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**Aitkin, Minnesota**  
**September 4, 2022**  
**The Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost**  
**ONLINE ORDER OF WORSHIP**

P In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

P Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

P Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C **who made heaven and earth.**

P I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,

C **and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.**

P O almighty God, merciful Father,

C **I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.**

P Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

## Introit

Make me understand the way of your | precepts,\*  
and I will meditate on your | wondrous works.

My soul melts away for | sorrow;\*  
strengthen me according | to your word!

Put false ways | far from me\*  
and graciously teach | me your law!

I have chosen the way of | faithfulness;\*  
I set your just decrees be- | fore me.

I cling to your testimonies, | O LORD;\*  
let me not be | put to shame!

I will run in the way of your com- | mandments\*  
when you en- | large my heart!

**Glory be to the Father and | to the Son\*  
and to the Holy | Spirit;**

**as it was in the be- | ginning,\*  
is now, and will be forever. | Amen.**

Make me understand the way of your | precepts,\*  
and I will meditate on your | wondrous works.

## Collect of the Day

P Let us pray.

O merciful Lord, You did not spare Your only Son  
but delivered Him up for us all. Grant us courage  
and strength to take up the cross and follow Him,  
who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

## Old Testament Reading

*Deuteronomy 30:15–20*

“See, I have set before you today life and good, death  
and evil. If you obey the commandments of the LORD

your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

## **Epistle**

*Philemon 1–21*

Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,

To Philemon our beloved fellow worker and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, because I hear of your love and of the faith

that you have toward the Lord Jesus and all the saints, and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.

Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus— I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.) I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own free will. For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. Yes,

brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.

Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

## Holy Gospel

*Luke 14:25–35*

Now great crowds accompanied [Jesus], and he turned and said to them, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

“Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C **Praise be to Thee, O Christ.**

### **Apostles' Creed**

C **I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, His 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 into hell.**

**The third day He rose again from the dead.**

**He ascended into heaven**

**and sits at the right hand of God the Father**

**Almighty.**

**From thence He will come to judge the living  
and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,**

**the holy Christian Church,**

**the communion of saints,**

**the forgiveness of sins,**

**the resurrection of the body,**

**and the life everlasting. Amen.**

### **Sermon Text – Deuteronomy 30:15-20**

#### **Theme – Choose Life**

The other day, I was driving near where my father and mother used to live in the Twin Cities and saw a church there with the name “Obedience Alliance Church.” I thought to myself that I doubt you would find a Lutheran congregation with the name “Obedience

Lutheran Church.” Lutherans tend to want to emphasize the Gospel and not our response to it.

In case you were wondering, there is a list on the internet of the top 10 most common names for congregations of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. The most common name is “Trinity Lutheran Church.” There are 569 of them. That’s almost 1 out of every 10 congregations. The next most common name is “St. John Lutheran Church.” There are 466 other congregations in The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod that have the same name as our congregation does. The third most common name is “St. Paul Lutheran Church.” There are only 3 fewer of them than those with St. John for their name. Other common names in the Missouri Synod include: Immanuel, Zion, Grace, and Faith.

I remember when I was a kid, a congregation of which I was a charter member thought carefully about what name to choose. Newer congregations seem to choose names that are “cooler” than Trinity or St. John or St. Paul. That congregation didn’t choose “Obedience” for their name. They chose the name “Cross View.” A few years back when I attended that congregation’s 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration, one of the members asked me why that name was chosen. Was it only because one can see the cross town highway from the church? I told them that was part of the reason, but the main reason was that they wanted to point people to the cross of Jesus Christ and His death there.

While that word “obedience” may make some of us Lutherans uncomfortable, in our text for today, the Lord through Moses calls for the obedience of God’s

people. It begins: <sup>15</sup>**See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil.** <sup>16</sup>**If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it** (Deuteronomy 30:15-16). Then, our text goes on to say that if they do not show obedience they **“shall surely perish”** (Deuteronomy 30:18). And, then Moses tells them to **“choose life”** (Deuteronomy 30:19).

This, by the way, is what we Lutherans would call “the Law.” The Law tells us how we are to live; the Law also tells what we deserve for our disobedience to the Law. We understand that if we choose foolishly, if we choose to disobey God that brings curses and ultimately death.

In the Old Testament we see this play out again and again. When God’s people foolishly choose to turn away from the LORD to worship other gods, things did not go well for them, as they suffered defeat and even exile into a foreign land.

Sadly, we see this also play out in our own congregation, in our own families, and in our own lives. There are times when we are lured away to follow other gods, like power, prestige, and possessions.

There are consequences for sin. Some of those consequences are felt in this life; some of the consequences might be felt in the life to come. Again, that’s the Law. We all need to hear this Law. That way

we will recognize our sin and the consequences we deserve for our sin. Once we do that, then we need to hear the Gospel.

The Gospel is the good news that God blesses His people. God had brought His Old Testament people out of slavery in Egypt and now, as Moses speaks to them in our text, they are about ready to enter into the Promised Land, a good land, a land which God would use to supply His people with all that they needed to support their daily life. They didn't deserve His blessings. He blessed them anyway. It was all by grace.

That was true for the children of Israel; that is true for you and me. We don't deserve His blessings, but He blesses us anyway. He has given us a good land, a land which He uses to supply us with all that we need. Besides that He has given us Jesus who brings us out of slavery to sin and wants to lead us to the Promised Land of heaven. In the meantime, Jesus gives us the blessing of forgiveness.

In addition, He blesses us with the gift of the Holy Spirit who enables us to choose life as He works faith in our hearts. In addition, the Holy Spirit enables us to better obey God's commandments. In response to God's love of us in Jesus we want to love the Lord and keep His commandments. It is all because God has chosen us, working faith in our hearts, faith which is seen by the way we live. AMEN

- P The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.
- C **Amen.**

## Prayer of the Church

O God, our King, You counted the terrible cost of our salvation and sent Your Son to give His life on the cross. Inspire our hearts to trust fully in His sacrificial victory, that we would follow in His way through death and into eternal life.

Divine Shepherd, You give life to Your Church through Your Holy Word. Grant Your people always to walk in Your way and receive Your blessings as they serve You in this world and in the life to come. *[Bless all pastors, including \_\_\_\_\_.]*

Heavenly Father, You are our life and length of days, and You set before us Your gift of life in Your Holy Word. Preserve Your institutions of marriage and family. Guard husbands and wives, parents and children, both from despising and from idolizing one another. Instead, let every relationship in the home exemplify Your unconditional love for us in Christ, and grant that all might follow Him in their service to one another.

Good Lord, preserve us from the ways of the wicked, and prosper us in Your paths. We commend to You all who bear office in our land and ask You to make them a blessing to those they serve. Grant to us every joy in the calling You have given to us, that we might render service to You in our works of love toward our neighbor. Remember those in need of honest labor and daily bread, and give them gainful employment according to Your good and gracious will.

O Lord, give the strength of the Spirit to all who are suffering or in any kind of need, and especially to

those we have been asked to remember, *[including \_\_\_\_\_,]* that they may all have the courage and will to take up their crosses and follow the Savior through suffering into the joys of life everlasting.

Almighty God, You have set before us life and death, blessing and curse in Your Holy Word. Now at the altar, through His own Word, Your Son sets before us His own body and blood. Grant that all who receive the Sacrament today might do so with prepared and penitent hearts, rejoicing in Your gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation for the sake of Jesus.

Preserve us, O Lord, from all temptation and grant us faith, that we may rest all our prayers and the desires of our hearts in Your merciful arms, for the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

### **Lord's Prayer**

- C 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.**

## **Benediction**

*LSB 202*

P The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you.  
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and T give you peace.

C **Amen.**

## **Acknowledgments**

Divine Service, Setting Three from Lutheran Service Book

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