

16th Sunday after Pentecost
September 20, 2020
Cross of Glory Lutheran Church
Brooklyn Center, MN

PRELUDE

WELCOME

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, who creates, redeems, and sustains us and all of creation. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Faithful God, **have mercy on us. We confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We turn from your loving embrace and go our own ways. We judge others before examining ourselves. We place our own needs before the needs of our neighbors. Humble us, have mercy on us, and turn us again to life in you; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

God hears the cries of all who call out in need, and through his death and resurrection, Christ has made us his own. Hear the truth that God proclaims: Your sins are forgiven in the name of † Jesus Christ. Led by the Holy Spirit, live in freedom and newness to do God's work in the world. **Amen.**

WORSHIP SONG

You're Worthy of My Praise

Worship Team

1 I will worship (I will worship)
With all of my heart (with all of my heart)
I will praise You (I will praise You)
With all of my strength (all my strength)

Chorus I will give You all my worship
I will give You all my praise
You alone I long to worship
You alone are worthy of my praise

I will seek You (I will seek You)
All of my days (all of my days)
I will follow (I will follow)
All of Your ways (all Your ways)

2 I will bow down (I will bow down)
And hail You as King (and hail You as King)
I will serve You (I will serve You)
Give You everything (everything)

I will lift up (I will lift up)
My eyes to Your throne (my eyes to Your throne)
I will trust You (I will trust You)
Trust You alone (You alone)

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.**

SONG OF PRAISE**Trust in You****Worship Team**

- 1** Letting go of every single dream
I lay each one down at Your feet
Every moment of my wondering
Never changes what You see
- 2** I've tried to win this war I confess
My hands are weary I need Your rest
Mighty warrior King of the fight
No matter what I face You're by my side

Chorus When You don't move the mountains
I'm needing You to move
When You don't part the waters
I wish I could walk through
When You don't give the answers
As I cry out to You
I will trust I will trust
I will trust in You

- 3** Truth is You know what tomorrow brings
There's not a day ahead You have not seen
So in all things be my life and breath
I want what You want Lord and nothing less

You are my strength and comfort
You are my steady hand
You are my firm foundation
The Rock on which I stand
Your ways are always higher
Your plans are always good
There's not a place where I'll go
You've not already stood

PRAYER OF THE DAY The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Let us pray . . . **Living God, in times of uncertainty and doubt, open us to see your provision and your presence in the manna of our daily lives, that we might share it with all who hunger; through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord, Amen.**

READING: Exodus 16:2-15

²The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.

³The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

⁴Then the LORD said to Moses, "I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not. ⁵On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days." ⁶So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you shall know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, ⁷and in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your complaining against the LORD. For what are we, that you complain against us?" ⁸And Moses said, "When the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning, because the LORD has heard the complaining that you utter against him—what are we? Your complaining is not against us but against the LORD."

⁹Then Moses said to Aaron, "Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, 'Draw near to the LORD, for he has heard your complaining.'" ¹⁰And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked toward the wilderness, and the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. ¹¹The LORD spoke to Moses and said, ¹²"I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.'"

¹³In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. ¹⁴When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. ¹⁵When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat."

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL: Matthew 20:1-16

The holy gospel according to St. Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹“The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. ²After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. ³When he went out about nine o’clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; ⁴and he said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went. ⁵When he went out again about noon and about three o’clock, he did the same. ⁶And about five o’clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, ‘Why are you standing here idle all day?’ ⁷They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard.’ ⁸When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, ‘Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.’ ⁹When those hired about five o’clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. ¹⁰Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. ¹¹And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, ¹²saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ ¹³But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? ¹⁴Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. ¹⁵Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ ¹⁶So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.**SERMON****Pastor Ali Tranvik**

O God, open our ears, that we may hear your word in the world. Open our eyes, that we may see your word in the world. Open our hearts, that we may be your word in the world. Amen.

The story was off to a good start. Prior to our passage in Exodus chapter 16, God had defended the Israelites against the plagues, liberated them from slavery, protected them from the Egyptian army as they crossed the Red Sea, and promised to accompany them as they made their way through the wilderness toward the promised land.

It had been quite the journey but the Israelites had finally made it, and they praised God, singing “The Lord is my salvation...The Lord will reign forever and ever...Sing to the Lord!” (Ex 15:1-20)

But their praise faded as their mouths started to dry and their stomachs started to grumble. They began to complain to Moses, saying “you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger” (Ex 16:3). The Israelites were hungry, they were thirsty, and as they looked out over endless desert, the only thing they were certain about was that they would die in the wilderness.

Our Minneapolis bishop, Ann Svennungsen, who preached at Cross of Glory last week, recently wrote a reflection on this passage and said: “I sometimes wonder if the wilderness grumbling of the Israelites was as much about coping with unknowns as it was about physical hardships. Yes, food was scarce; so was water. But, it was also hard to wander year after year without a clue about what was ahead.”

For the Israelites, the wilderness was a time of immense **uncertainty**, of not knowing where they were going or what their life would be like on the other side. It was a time of disorientation and distrust. A time of wandering, of wondering: How far? How long? *Where is God?*

As we continue to walk through the wilderness of the Covid pandemic, this is a time of immense uncertainty for us too—of not knowing how long this will last, when we can gather in person again, what life will look like on the other side. It's a time of not knowing when we can hug a friend or hold a grandchild for the first time. Not knowing how we're going to be able to homeschool our kids and work a full-time job, how we're going to pay next month's rent, how

we're going to make it another day (week? month? year!?) living with this crushing sense of loneliness. It's a time of not knowing if we or someone we love will get sick, or will die. Yes, we too may be asking: How far? How long? *Where is God?*

But God hears the cries of his people, or (as one pastor put it) God has "big ears" (Storey). So God promises to "rain bread from heaven" that the Israelites were to gather each morning. The condition, though, was that they could only gather enough for one day. If the Israelites tried to hoard it, as we see later in the story, it rotted and crawled with worms. The only the exception to this one-day-limit rule was the sixth day, when they were to gather 2x as much so they could observe the Sabbath (Ex 16:4-5).

And sure enough, when the Israelites woke up the next morning, they found a fine, white, flaky substance on the ground around them. "What is it?" they ask. They called it manna, which in Hebrew literally means "what is it?"

Now, many scholars have also speculated about "what it is," but as Rev. Barbara Brown Taylor says, "if you go to the Sinai Peninsula, it will not stay a mystery very long. The Bedouin who live [in that region] still gather it and bake it into bread, which they still call manna. Manna comes from lice that feed on the local tamarisk trees. Because the tree's sap is poor in nitrogen, the bugs have to eat a lot of it in order to live. They excrete the extra in a yellowish-white flake or ball of juice that is rich in carbohydrates and sugars. The excrement decays quickly and attracts ants, so a daily portion is the most anyone gathers." ...sound familiar?

Taylor continues: Some Christians reject this explanation because they think it takes away from the miracle of manna, but I wonder about that. Does manna have to fall from the sky in order to qualify as a miracle? Or is the miracle that God heard the complaining of hungry people and fed them with bug juice—that is, with food that never would have occurred to them to eat? In other words, what makes something bread from heaven—is it the thing itself or the one who sends it?

"How you answer those questions," Taylor says, "has a lot to do with how you sense God's presence in your life. If your manna has to drop straight out of heaven looking like a perfect loaf of butter-crust bread, then chances are you are going to go hungry a lot. When you don't get the miracle you're praying for, you're going to think God's ignoring you or punishing you. You're going to start comparing yourself to other people and wondering why they seem to have more to eat than you do. You're going to *miss* a lot of other things God is already doing for you because they are too ordinary" (like bug juice) or too shocking (like bug juice). *If*, on the other hand, you are willing to look at everything around you as a gift from God, then there will be no end to the manna in your life."

Manna will become one more tomato from your plant outside that you thought was done for the summer. Manna will become an unexpected call from a friend. Manna will become the squawking of the birds outside of your window to let you know it's time to wake up. Manna will become Zoom, where the body of Christ is brought together to worship through this (totally frustrating) but also amazing gift of technology. Manna is not a matter of *what it is* as much as it's about the God who gives it—morning by morning. Not in ways we expect, or want (i.e. bug juice), but in ways we desperately need.

But in order to see it, we have to *look around*—and that's the hard part. At least it's hard for me. In times of uncertainty, I don't want to take a good look around. I don't want to dwell in the danger of the wilderness, the reality of hunger, the discomfort of not knowing what's next. So I do what the Israelites did: either look *back* at the past (we see this when they say, "if only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread"), or look *forward* to the future (we see this in their ongoing "are we there yet?" kinds of questions as they continue on through the wilderness and anxiously await the promised land).

I think we struggle with this kind of bifurcated vision as well—either yearning for the past (which, as was true for the enslaved Israelites, turns out was never as great as we remember it), or obsessing about the future that we think could be great again someday. Not unlike a golden calf, we make idols out of our pasts and futures.

But the other problem is that when the Israelites yearned for the bread they ate in Egypt or longed for the milk and honey of the promised land, they failed to see the manna that was already all around them. Similarly, when our eyes are fixed to past or the future, we miss the presence of

God in the present, the God of the meantime, the God of the middle, the God who explodes our categories of time altogether, the God who is an ever-unfolding, living, here-and-now God. Which is to say that if we thought God got locked up in all our church buildings when we had to close them down, or if we're waiting to meet God in the promised land of re-opened church buildings, then we might miss the God who's in our living room (literally!) right now.

Our call today, my friends, in this wilderness moment, is to stop looking *behind* or *ahead* and start looking *around*. Our call today is to a different kind of seeing: Seeing bug juice as bread. Seeing sufficiency in the midst of apparent scarcity. Seeing the gift of restraint in a world of constant consumption and wretched excess. Seeing the gift of Sabbath in a world that measures worth according to production. Seeing the company alongside us, the community around us when it may feel like we're walking alone. Seeing the gifts of others in a world that emphasizes their limitations. Seeing differences between us as a chance to listen and learn rather than as a threat to our way of life. Seeing God's presence *now* in a world bent on salvaging the supposedly great past or forging into the future. Seeing God's presence *period* when we're convinced God is nowhere to be seen.

To be more specific, though, perhaps our call today is not merely to look *around* for manna, but to look *down* below us. For it was on the *ground* that manna appeared to the Israelites. So maybe it's on the ground—that is, the places “below” us, the people who have been cast down, the poor, the vulnerable, the marginalized—where God's presence is most visible.

Now, it's not easy to fix our eyes on what's around us, or to hold our gaze on what's below us. Because we'll quickly find that when we look around, we'll be looking into the face of suffering. We will see hunger. We will see that there are neighbors in need. We will see that there is work to do, and that *we* are the ones to do it. It will be much easier to avert our eyes, to look away, to dwell in our memories of the past or in our visions of the future.

But here in the wilderness, we will also see the God who is *here*, who is with us, who is present and who is providing manna—bug juice!—morning by morning, to sustain us for the work of each new day. Thanks be to God! Amen.

Sources:

- Alan Storey, “The Wilderness School,” *Manna and Mercy*, 2012.
- Ann Svennungsen, “The Gift of Daily Bread,” *Minneapolis Area Synod Blog*, August 18, 2020.
- Arundhati Roy, “The Pandemic is a Portal,” *Financial Times*, April 3, 2020.
- Mark Ramsey, “Fugitivity: A Conversation with J. Kameron Carter,” *The Ministry Collaborative*, August 19, 2020.
- Martin Luther, “Whether one May Flee from a Deadly Plague,” (LW 43: 119-38).
- Sarah Stadler, “The Real Work,” *Sermon at Grace in the City Lutheran Church*, March 19, 2017.
- Taylor, Barbara Brown. *Bread of Angels* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 1997).

HYMN OF THE DAY

#461

All Who Hunger Gather Gladly

1 All who hunger gather gladly;
holy manna is our bread.
Come from wilderness and wand'ring.
Here in truth we will be fed.
You that yearn for days of fullness,
all around us is our food.
Taste and see the grace eternal.
Taste and see that God is good.

2 All who hunger, never strangers;
seeker, be a welcome guest.
Come from restlessness and roaming.
Here in joy we keep the feast.
We that once were lost and scattered
in communion's love have stood.
Taste and see the grace eternal.
Taste and see that God is good.

3 All who hunger, sing together,
Jesus Christ is living bread.
Come from loneliness and longing.
Here in peace we have been fed.
Blest are those who from this table
live their days in gratitude.
Taste and see the grace eternal.
Taste and see that God is good.

CONFESSION OF FAITH 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.

OFFERTORY

At this time, we invite you to prepare your offering. You may send a check to the church (5929 Brooklyn Blvd, Brooklyn Center, MN 55429), or contact Sue in the office to learn more about how to set up automatic, online giving. Thank you for the ways you continue to generously support the work of Cross of Glory!

OFFERTORY RESPONSE #326

1 Bless now, O God, the journey
that all your people make,
the path through noise and silence,
the way of give and take.
The trail is found in desert
and winds the mountain round,
then leads beside still waters,
the road where faith is found.

Bless Now, O God, the Journey

2 Bless sojourners and pilgrims
who share this winding way;
your hope burns through the terrors,
your love sustains the day.
We yearn for holy freedom
while often we are bound;
together we are seeking
the road where faith is found.

3 Divine eternal lover,
you meet us on the road.
We wait for land of promise
where milk and honey flow,
but waiting not for places,
you meet us all around.
Our covenant is written
on roads, as faith is found.

OFFERING PRAYER

Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. You have given us these gifts of your good creation. Nourish us with the gifts you provide, and send us forth to set tables in the midst of a suffering world, through Jesus Christ, the bread of life. Amen.

PRAYERS of the PEOPLE

Trusting that God hears our cries, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need...

God who provides, we give you thanks for the gifts you give us, morning by morning: food to eat, water to drink, a place to call home, neighbors to love and be loved by. Fix our eyes not behind us or ahead of us, but to the manna all around us. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God who creates manna and quail, we give you thanks for the abundance of your creation. When our actions neglect or destroy the resources you've given us, forgive us. We pray today especially for all those affected by the wildfires in CA, OR, and WA and by Hurricane Sally AL. Comfort those who are grieving the loss of loved ones or homes, and equip us to share our resources as they begin to rebuild. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God who reconciles, we lament the division that separates neighbor from neighbor. As we enter into this election season, we pray for presidents and congress people, state senators and governors, mayors and city council members, and help us all to create communities guided by justice,

humility, truth-telling, and compassion, that our world might reflect your upside-down kingdom, where the last are first and the first are last. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God who walks with us, in this wilderness of COVID-19, grant us courage in our fear, community in our loneliness, and assurance of your presence in our uncertainty. Bless this faith community and the work those within it do to share your love--the prayer chain, Worship, Music, and Arts committee, the Building and Grounds committee, the COVID-19 Task Force, worship leaders and tech support, staff and Council. We pray that Cross of Glory would be a welcoming home for all who are wandering, weary, and worn, and that you would enliven us all again with the blessings of life together, even while apart. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God who hears us, your Spirit sighs with every hurt and need. Pour your healing mercies into the lives of all who need your loving care on this day, especially for Bev Hoium, Gil Hartlage, Terry Stejskal, the family of Barb Sunnaborg, and the family of Carol Sjoquist. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For all the prayers offered aloud, and those that remain unspoken, we pray in the name of Jesus, Christ who gives and is our daily bread. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered together as one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray the prayer 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.

BLESSING

Mothering God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you and lead you into life. **Amen.**

SENDING FORTH SONG #733 Great is Thy Faithfulness

1 Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father;
there is no shadow of turning with thee;
thou changest not, thy compassions they fail not;
as thou hast been, thou forever wilt be.

Refrain Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
all I have needed thy hand hath provided;
great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

2 Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,
sun, moon, and stars in their courses above
join with all nature in manifold witness
to thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love. **Refrain**

3 Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside! **Refrain**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Love your neighbor.
Thanks be to God.

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| <p style="text-align: center;">Congregational Support as of 8/31/2020 Annual Budget: \$225,000.00 Year to Date Budgeted: \$150,166.68 Year to Date Received: \$147,842.03 Difference: \$-2,324,65</p> |
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Community Announcements

- Following the Zoom worship service, you're invited to Virtual Coffee Hour, an opportunity to connect with one another for a brief time of small-group fellowship. Council will meet on Zoom following coffee hour.
- Join us for Bible Study on Tuesday mornings at 9:30 am on Zoom as we explore the texts for the upcoming week.
- If you're interested in supporting local students and families this semester, whether through 1:1 tutoring/mentoring, pen pals, donating additional school supplies, etc., please let Pastor Ali know.
- Cross of Glory is organizing teams of people to visit members at homes or in care facilities. Teams will make short, outdoor visits with signs to greet members on their lawns or through their windows. If you're interested in receiving a visit or being part of a Visit Team on Sunday 9/27 from 12-3, RSVP to Sue (763-533-8602, office@crossofglory.us). For more info, reach out to Dawn Simons Bailey (612-280-0690, dawn.bailey@live.com).
- The Cross of Glory softball team plays again on 9/21 at 6:20 pm at the north field of Centennial Park. Join us for some outdoor, physically-distanced fellowship!
- Cross of Glory is grateful to be part of Wildfire, a collaboration of eight ELCA churches in our surrounding communities that join together for fellowship, worship, youth gatherings, and community organizing. Look for more information in the coming weeks and months about ways we can be the church together with our Wildfire partners!
- Our community newsletter, the Glory Banner, will resume in October. If you have an article you'd like to submit, please send it to Sue (svukelich@crossofglory.us) by 9/21.
- Please contact Pastor Ali with any other announcements or pastoral concerns and needs. You can reach her by email (atranvik@crossofglory.us) or phone (763-533-8602).