



Queen Anne

LUTHERAN CHURCH

*Called to Proclaim God's Love in Christ for Every Person*

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✘ *In Worship Today* ✘

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Cantor	Kyle Haugen
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**THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

*June 21, 2020*

*"Word Out #16 audio transcript*

**Prelude**

*Pastorale (excerpts)  
Joel Martinson (b. 1960)*

**Welcome**

**☞**: Welcome, this third Sunday after Pentecost. Wherever you are listening, we invite you into this space: one where we will hear the good news through proclamation, spoken and sung, a time where you can be still and know God is God.

**P:** God does not promise that the path of the disciples will be easy. In today's Gospel reading, Jesus declares that his words may bring stark division, a message that has particular resonance presently. Even so, though the Gospel may divide us for the sake of truth, we ask God to make us ultimately instruments of unity, reconciliation, and peace.

### 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.

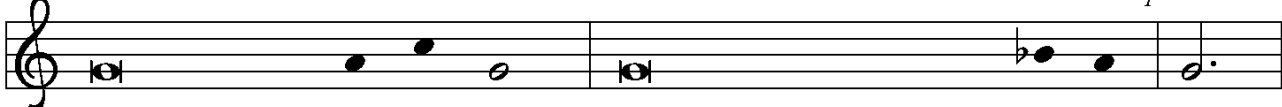
### Gospel Acclamation

John 15:26-27


**C:**   
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.


  
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

*Repeat alleluia*

  
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

**P:** Jesus says, The Spirit of the Lord will testify on my behalf, and you also are to testify.

**C:**   
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

  
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

**A:** The Holy Gospel according to Matthew, the tenth chapter.

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

[Jesus said to the twelve:] <sup>24</sup>“A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; <sup>25</sup>it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master to the house of Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

<sup>26</sup>“So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. <sup>27</sup>What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. <sup>28</sup>Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. <sup>29</sup>Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. <sup>30</sup>And even the hairs on your head are all counted. <sup>31</sup>So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

<sup>32</sup>“Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; <sup>33</sup>but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

<sup>34</sup>“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

<sup>35</sup>For I have come to set a man against his father,  
and a daughter against her mother,  
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;

<sup>36</sup>and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household.

<sup>37</sup>Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; <sup>38</sup>and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. <sup>39</sup>Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.”

**A:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**G:** **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Beneath the Earth lies a region of unimaginable terror, the dwelling place not merely of the dead, as the Old Testament teaches, but of the damned. Die in your sin and your immortal soul will spend eternity there as you weep and wail in the torments of hellfire. Live a life of virtue, on the other hand, and trust in Christ as your savior, and your soul will abide in heavenly glory where you will bask everlastingly in the presence and light of God. Trillions of years will be yours to pass, the first few of which will include the opportunity to look down on your loved ones while they look up toward you, confident that you are now in a “better place.”

What I have just described is a view of the afterlife, plus or minus the talk about hell, that you will hear across the board in churches, conservative and liberal; outside churches among the religiously non-affiliated; and yes, even among “C and E” Christians, that is, people of faith who make it to church twice a year on Christmas and Easter. It is, by extension, the view I grew up believing and one I often hear now as a pastor when presiding at funerals or attempting to comfort the bereaved. “Right now,” someone will say of the deceased, we’ll call him Eugene –

“Right now, I bet Eugene is up there in heaven doing just what he loved doing down here – fishing.”

Those who hear the remark chuckle, grateful at least for the release that comes with humor in the midst of grief. But do they not also chuckle because they know it *isn't* true – that, in fact, it is patently absurd and *that's* what makes it funny? Eugene, after all, isn't “up there” fishing. Not even a child would believe that! His body is down here decomposing beneath the ground, or being scattered as ash and dust on the coattails of a warm evening breeze.

As a pastor and caregiver, I empathize. I know from deep within the corridors of my own experience what the Apostle Paul calls “the sting of death,” the total shock that comes with losing a loved one, and the sheer disbelief that

accompanies loss – the feeling that it doesn't quite seem real even though it is simultaneously inescapable.

But there is something else I know, and that is the importance of integrity. How can I smile politely and say nothing when someone at a funeral jokes about the deceased looking down from heaven while engaging in her or his favorite hobby when **I know this trivializes and denies the reality of the person's death? How can I remain silent and turn my eyes to the floor knowing that neither the New Testament nor the early creeds of the church teach this view?** Am I obliged to say something in that moment? Or should I wait and find another, more appropriate opportunity?

You can probably guess my answer. Of course I'd wait. I'd find a time to address the topic generally, perhaps in a sermon. And that's what I propose to do here. I will share with you what the New Testament does, and does not, say about "life after death" by looking at three words in Matthew 10:24-39, our Gospel reading for today, along with Paul in 1 Corinthians 15. Our goal will be to answer this question: What might God have in store for Eugene, especially according to Paul? Let's see if we can figure this out.

First, we turn our attention to Matthew. The first evangelist, as noted, uses three words in today's passage that relate to life after death. The first is one you could have heard just as easily from your high school English teacher as from your pastor in Confirmation. It appears in verse 25. Can you guess what it is?

The New Testament uses a variety of names and descriptions for the figure in question. The Gospel of John calls him the "prince of this world" and the "Father of Lies." 1 Peter compares him to a roaring lion who prowls around seeking people to devour. Matthew describes him as the enemy, and in addition to Mark, Paul, and Luke, speaks of him synonymously as the Devil or Satan. In today's reading, he's called Beelzebul.

The name Beelzebul appears just five other times in the New Testament. By the end of the first century, Jewish and Christian tradition had designated Beelzebul ruler of the demons, the chief power of evil in the world. Jesus identifies him explicitly as Satan according to Mark 3:24. But the name goes back to a time even

before Jesus. 2 Kings in the Old Testament refers to him – not as *Beelzebul* but as *Baal-zebul*. Do you hear (or see) the difference?

Baal, you may recall from your reading of Scripture, was the storm and fertility god of the Canaanites. The word simply means “Lord.” The term “zebul” means “exalted” or “of lofty abode,” which makes sense given that his jurisdiction as the god of stormy weather was the sky. The author of 2 Kings, though, wasn’t fond of Baal-zebul, and we know this in part because he changes the last part of his name to “zebul” which in Hebrew means “flies.” By the single stroke of a pen, the “Lord of the Skies” became the “Lord of the Flies,” which, of course, happens to be the name of the classic 1954 novel by William Golding that practically every student in America over the last 50 years has read at some point in her or his high school career!

Knowing a little about Beelzebul, which again is another name for Satan in the New Testament, is important because when it comes to this testament’s view of life after death his kingdom is not *under* this world! He and his minions contend with God and the forces of good *within* this world. His time, however, is almost up. “The God of peace,” Paul writes to the Christians in Rome, “will shortly crush Satan under your feet” (16:20). Hell is not Paul’s concern. He never even mentions it! We need to be saved, he says, *in this world* from the power of sin, Satan, and ultimately death, not from a world of torment and death that awaits us after we die!

Our second and third words appear in Matthew 10:28. There Jesus tells his followers not to fear those who can kill only the body, but to fear “him” who can destroy body and soul in hell. The two words for us to consider here are “soul” and “hell.” Now some of you already have an inkling of hell, or rather what hell is, before I even say anything: you’ve heard Baptist ministers preach sermons that last 45 minutes to an hour! In Matthew’s Gospel, however, Jesus seems to be working with a slightly different understanding of hell.

The word Jesus uses for hell in Greek, the language of the New Testament, is *Gehenna*, which comes from the Hebrew word “Gehinnom.” As Aaron Gale of *The Jewish Annotated New Testament* points out, Gehinnom was “a valley south of Jerusalem associated with child sacrifice . . . Its murky reputation resulted in

Gehinnom, by the New Testament era, being associated with purgatory and/or hell, where the wicked according to some traditions are tortured after death” (20). Indeed, the rabbis mention Gehenna as a place of eternal fire where evildoers are punished; yet while the fire burns without end, the suffering of those consumed by it does not, which takes us to our third and final term: soul.

The soul, according to almost all biblical teaching in the Old and New Testaments, **cannot suffer eternally because it’s not eternal**. Let me explain: the word for “soul” in Hebrew (*nephesh*) typically just means “person.” Even in English we hear of how, say, over 100,000 American souls perished in the First World War. That is another way of saying in our language that over 100,000 American people *died* in that conflict. Souls, as you can recognize even from common linguistic usage, perish.

*Nephesh* has another meaning in Hebrew as well. It can refer to the animating force that makes a person alive. When God, for example, breathes life into Adam, Adam becomes a “living soul” (Gen 2:7). As Mark Allan Powell writes in the *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*, “Adam does not *have* a soul; Adam is a soul (i.e., a person, a living being)” (986). “To lose one’s soul” simply means, as in the example above, to die—to lose the breath or animating force that makes you alive. This is far removed from the idea that a person can sell her or his soul to the devil! That’s because, in Scripture at least, the soul isn’t an immaterial substance or “thing” one possesses that is unaffected by change; in its most common usage, it means person or the life that animates a person.

Those of you who have taken a philosophy course in college or enjoy reading frequently may recall that it was the Greek philosopher Socrates (as Plato presents him) who posited the idea of the “immortality of the soul.” Instead of the soul merely being another word for person or the animating force, the breath, that gives us life, Socrates portrayed it as an immaterial essence “trapped” inside the prison of the human body. This essence never changes; it remains constant through all the vicissitudes of life. When the body dies, it is released and lives on forever.

As early Christianity ventured from its Jewish beginnings into the world of the Greeks, it gradually came to embrace this view of the soul. Greek-friendly

Christians nevertheless insisted that **God** is the one who frees the soul by performing what the theologian Ted Peters calls a “soulechtsomy” or “soul-removing operation.” God receives the soul from the body that housed it. The soul returns to its heavenly abode thereafter to live with its Lord.

You can see now how Eugene, our heavenly fisherman – or rather, Eugene’s soul – ended up there after he died! The influence of Greek philosophy on Christianity has radically shaped the way we understand who and what we are, eclipsing the biblical narrative in favor of speculative reasoning. This doesn’t mean Greek philosophy is bad, but it should give us pause if we regard the Bible as an authority and see Jesus as somehow necessary for our salvation.

But here’s another problem: while most of the New Testament rejects this Greek way of thinking, a few of its over 8,000 verses speak of the soul in the way I just described, namely, as an independent reality within ourselves that continues to live on after the physical body dies.

Matthew 10:28, it turns out, is one of them. When Jesus says that no one besides God can kill the soul, he affirms the Greek notion of a soul as something that intrinsically outlives the husk of its mortal body. Only God, presumably the referent of the pronoun “him” in this verse, can destroy it.

Revelation 6:9 affirms likewise the post-mortem existence of the soul. There the seer observes the “souls” of those who had been martyred on account of their devotion to Christ. These tiny glimmers of Greek influence, however, should not replace the overwhelmingly Jewish character of the Christian Scriptures which, in 98% of all its other occurrences equates “soul” as part of God’s **finite creation** – a temporary phenomenon of limited duration, a light that flickers out as the human being breathes his last.

Our journey regarding what the New Testament actually teaches about life after death winds down now, like a weary soul, to its end. Along the way we discovered, thanks to three single words in Matthew 10, how the devil, at least for now, reigns over demons in this world, not the underworld; how the rabbis and early Christians came to their understanding of hell, which was not beneath the Earth but in a valley associated with child sacrifice outside of Jerusalem; and



how the word “soul” most often just means “person” in the Bible or what makes a person alive.

No soul on earth can outlast its being – no ghost in the shell of poor old Eugene.

## Epilogue

You might be wondering, from a Christian perspective, what God has in store for Eugene. The Socratic view, after all, seems pretty clear: if your soul is not intrinsically immortal, then you have no hope of life beyond the grave. Nobody can save you.

In the Christian tradition, by contrast, one person can. Martin Luther knew who he was and how he would do it. When Magdalena, Luther’s daughter, died tragically in early adolescence, he apparently stood up at the funeral and shouted, “There will be a resurrection!”

Notice here what Luther didn’t say. He didn’t say, “She’s up in heaven now with God.”

He said, “There will be a resurrection!”

The resurrection, which was how Jesus conquered death, presupposes the mutual termination of soul (the “life force”) and body at death; on the last day of creation, God will raise the dead or “sleeping” soul (which is why we say “rest in peace”) and give it a new, imperishable or spiritual body (see 1 Cor 15:44, 54).

Powell puts it beautifully. “Paul,” he says, “argues against the notion of an ‘immortal soul’ in 1 Cor. 15, because the Greek idea that one’s soul survived after death would obviate the need for resurrection. Paul’s view is that God will bring the dead back to life, meaning that those whose souls are dead will be revived by the power of God (and, incidentally, given new immortal bodies, since in Paul’s Hebraic thinking a soul cannot exist apart from a body)” (987).

**The resurrection, in other words, would be unnecessary if the human soul was immortal!** Jesus would have died and rose to give us what we *already have*, making his “victory” meaningless. No wonder the Christian professes in the

Apostles' Creed "I believe in the resurrection of the body" instead of "I believe in the immortality of the soul."

If each of us in our totality "comes up like a flower and withers, flees like a shadow and does not last," as Job 14:1 says, a view I find *much* easier to believe than the immortality of the soul, then the only hope we have for life beyond the grave is the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And this is a hope that belongs not only to us. It is good news for all creation: on the Last Day, God promises to make all things new (see Rev. 21:5). That includes you and me. It includes the people we love and the communion of saints. It includes people of every tribe and nation. Most importantly, it includes those whose lives have been cut short by injustice, the Emmanuel 9, for example, along with victims of police brutality like George Floyd.

The good news of the Christian faith is not that the soul lives on by its own power after death. The good news is that Christ is risen, the first fruits of God's new creation, and on the last day we will be raised as He is.

There will be a resurrection.

And yes, of course, it includes good old Eugene.

Amen.

# Hymn of the Day

(stanzas 1, 2 and 3)

# God of Grace and God of Glory

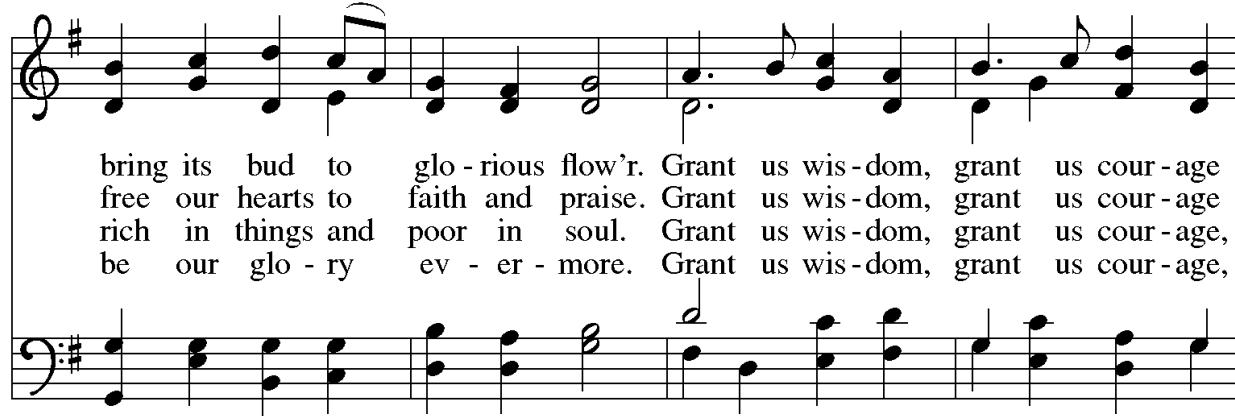
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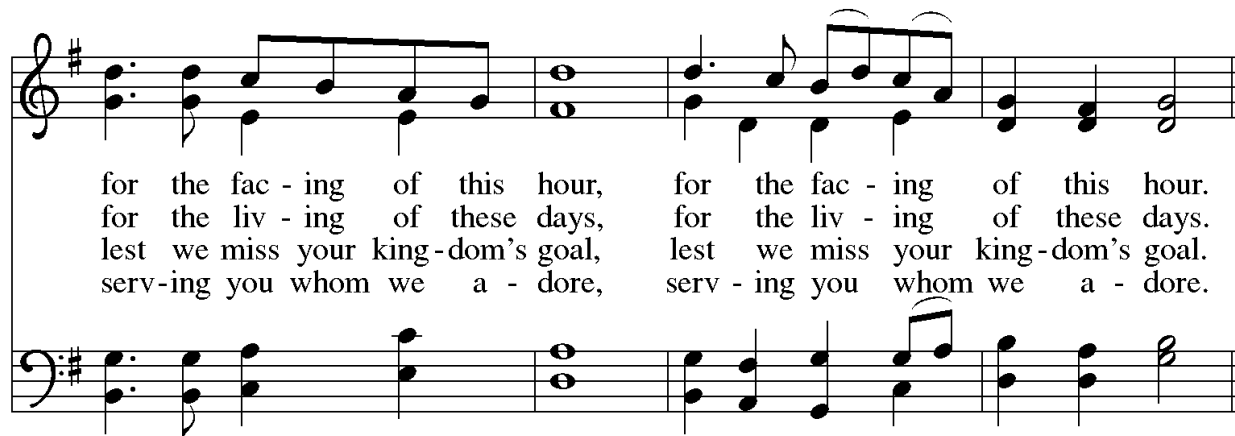
1 God of grace and God of glo - ry, on your peo - ple  
2 Lo! The hosts of e - vil round us scorn the Christ, as -  
3 Cure your chil - dren's war - ring mad - ness; bend our pride to  
4 Save us from weak res - ig - na - tion to the e - vils



pour your pow'r; crown your an - cient chur - ch's sto - ry;  
sail his ways! From the fears that long have bound us  
your con - trol; shame our wan - ton, self - ish glad - ness,  
we de - plore; let the gift of your sal - va - tion



bring its bud to glo - rious flow'r. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age  
free our hearts to faith and praise. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age  
rich in things and poor in soul. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,  
be our glo - ry ev - er - more. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,



for the fac - ing of this hour, for the fac - ing of this hour.  
for the liv - ing of these days, for the liv - ing of these days.  
lest we miss your king - dom's goal, lest we miss your king - dom's goal.  
serv - ing you whom we a - dore, serv - ing you whom we a - dore.

## Prayers of the Church

**P**: Called into unity with one another and the whole creation, let us pray for our shared world.

*A brief silence.*

**P**: Holy God, you bring diverse voices together to form your church. Open our hearts, enabling us to listen and learn from one another, that differences might not overshadow our unity in Christ. Lord, in your mercy,

**G**: **hear our prayer.**

**P**: Providing God, your creation shows us that life comes from death. Renew the places where our land, air, and waterways have been contaminated by pollution. Direct the work of all who care for birds of the air as well as their habitats. Lord, in your mercy,

**G**: **hear our prayer.**

**P**: Ever-present God, sustain and keep safe all who work to defend others across the world. Revive and strengthen organizations dedicated to caring for refugees and migrants while their homelands struggle for peace. Lord, in your mercy,

**G**: **hear our prayer.**

**P**: Loving God, you promise to be with all who are persecuted for your sake. Guide all who speak your word of justice and console any who are tormented or targeted for being who they are. Lord, in your mercy,

**G**: **hear our prayer.**

**P**: Compassionate God, you are with us and we are never alone. Bless this Father's Day all fathers and father figures who strive to love and nurture as you do. Comfort all who long to be fathers and all for whom this day is difficult. Lord, in your mercy,

**G**: **hear our prayer.**

**P**: For who or what else do the people of God pray?

*A silence is given so that your prayers may be offered.*

**P**: Lord, in your mercy,

**C**: **hear our prayer.**

**P**: Gracious God, you bless us with guides and caretakers in the faith. As we give thanks for those who have died, increase our care for one another until we walk with them in newness of life. Lord, in your mercy,

**C**: **hear our prayer.**

**P**: Receive these prayers, O God, and those too deep for words; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**C**: **Amen.**

### **Lord's Prayer**

**P**: Lord remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**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.**

### **Announcements**

**P**: We thank you for joining us for this service. If you would like to hear other services, or access the newest edition of *the Quill*, our newsletter, we invite you to go to our website at [queenannelutheran.org](http://queenannelutheran.org).

## **Benediction**

**A:** Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

**P:** Almighty God, the Father, † the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
bless and preserve you.

**C:** **Amen.**

## **Dismissal**

**P:** Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

**C:** **Thanks be to God.**

## **Postlude**

*Chorale improvisation on CWM RHONDDA*  
Paul Manz (1919–2009)



