



Queen Anne

LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

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✘ *Staff* ✘

Pastor	The Rev. Dr. Dan Peterson
Cantor	Kyle Haugen
Children's Ministry Coordinator	Terry Anderson
Parish Administrator	Barbara Bash
Sexton	John Bryant

✘ *In Worship Today* ✘

Pastor	The Rev. Dr. Dan Peterson
Cantor	Kyle Haugen
Lector	Jan Olson

This service of worship can also be heard as audio online. Go to queenannelutheran.org and click on "WORD OUT" to find audio, video, and print resources for worship at home.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 9, 2020

"Word Out #23 audio transcript

Prelude

Prelude in C major (from Well-Tempered Clavier), BWV 846
J.S. Bach (1685–1750)

Welcome

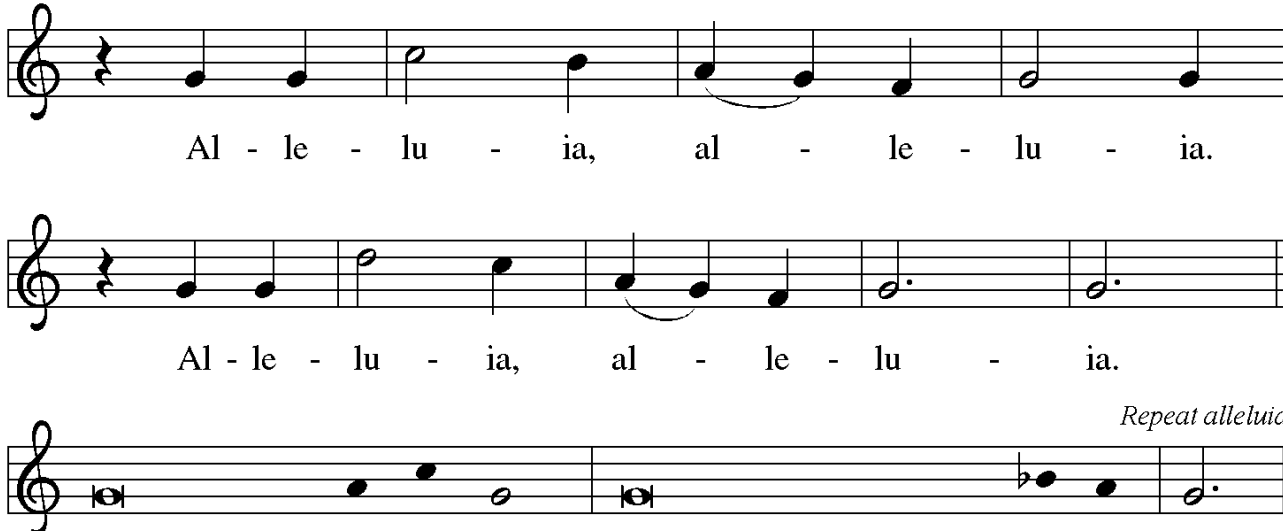
- ☐: Welcome, this tenth Sunday after Pentecost. Wherever you are listening, whatever is happening in your life, however you may be struggling, we invite you into this space: one where you can hear the good news in proclamation, spoken and sung; a time when you can be still and know God is God.
- ☐: According to 1 Kings 19, the prophet Elijah experiences the presence of God not in earthquake, wind, or fire, but in the peace that follows: the sound of sheer silence or in "the whispers" as the King James translation reads. When the disciples face a great storm on the sea, they cry out with fear. Jesus promises them peace as well. He says, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." In the storms of life, we gather to seek the calm presence of Christ that soothes our fears. And in the comforting words of scripture, God grants us peace and sends us forth to be a sign of God's presence to others.

Greeting

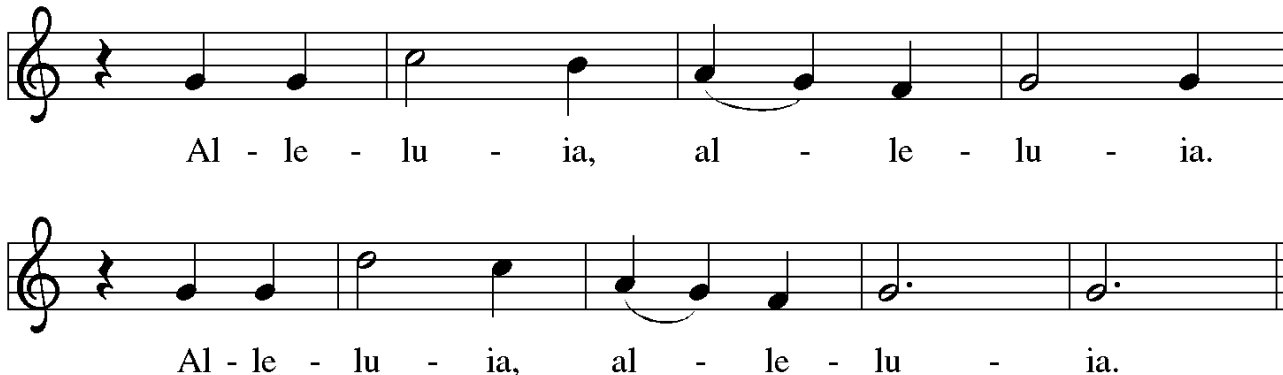
- ☐: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
- ☑: **And also with you.**

Gospel Acclamation

Psalm 130:5

C: 

A: I wait for you, O LORD; in your word is my hope.

C: 

The Holy Gospel

Matthew 14:22-33

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

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

²²[Jesus] made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side [of the Sea of Galilee], while he dismissed the crowds. ²³And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. ²⁵And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. ²⁶But when

the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out in fear. ²⁷But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.”

²⁸Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” ²⁹He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. ³⁰But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” ³¹Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” ³²When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

A: The Gospel of the Lord.

G: Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

Permission to Fail
Pastor Daniel Peterson

Recently I heard a remarkable sermon on Matthew 14:22-33. The preacher, Pastor Paul Corner of Wallingford United Methodist Church, spoke of what he called the “common reading” of today’s story. I’m sure you know it: the disciples encounter Christ walking toward them on the Sea of Galilee. They cry out in fear. Jesus identifies himself, attempting to calm them. Peter, always weak in faith, presses him further. “Lord, if it is you,” he says, “command me to come to you on the water.” Jesus complies and moments later Peter, now out of the boat, finds himself walking toward him. Lacking faith, however, he starts to sink, and as he does, the moral of the story becomes clear: he should have kept his eyes on Christ.

Peter, in other words, failed.

This is the common reading. In fact, up until I heard Pastor Corner’s sermon, thanks to the recommendation of Barb Bash, our parish administrator who attends Wallingford United, I would have assumed it was the *only reading* of

this story – or at least *one* of the only readings. The only other I heard was during my first week years ago now in seminary.

Our preacher then was Dr. Timothy Lull, a great speaker and gifted Luther scholar who would become one of the most important mentors in my life until his tragic and unexpected death in 2003. The reason Peter failed, he said, was that just as he stepped out of the boat and onto the water, he looked back to see how the other disciples were doing. He compared them to himself, and in so doing he sank.

“Be careful,” Lull said to each of us as he surveyed the room that first week of our seminary career. “Resist the temptation to compare yourselves to one another; otherwise, like Peter, you will sink.” It was a message, quite appropriate for its audience, that stayed with me throughout my days in seminary, and even though I sometimes fell short, it resonated with me then, and it still does now.

Lull’s reading differs from the common one Pastor Corner mentions in a crucial way. Rather than simply condemning someone for failing like Peter did, it helps us understand *why* we sometimes stumble, especially in competitive settings. I can imagine, for example, how Lull’s message would resonate not only with high school, college, or graduate students, but also with athletes or business professionals. Do your best, Lull would say, but don’t make out-performing others the focus and goal of your life.

Keep your eyes, as Peter should have, on Christ.

Recently I received a sermon suggestion that I think Lull’s reading of the Peter story would answer well. “Is it wrong,” the person asked, “to strive for success as a Christian?” “Surely,” I might reply, “if you find yourself looking over your shoulder at others as Peter did, the answer would be yes. Striving for success in and of itself may not be bad, but if it occurs at the expense of your neighbor’s well-being or undermines yours by making the out-performing of others your focus or goal (i.e., your god), then Peter’s failure should give you pause. There is more to life than besting others *in your field* if you are a working professional, or *on the field* if you are a competitive

athlete. Competition, to be sure, can be healthy and good. It can help us become better versions of ourselves, but like anything else in God's creation it can be corrupted."

Lull's reading of the story, in short, offers more insight into our behavior than the common one. But it, too, has a shortcoming. No matter how much it might apply, especially to those of us with competitive dispositions in competitive settings, it still makes *Peter* the focus. *Peter* is the one who messes up. *Peter* is the one who lacks faith. *Peter* is the one who fails. Let us not forget, however, that Peter did one important thing the others didn't.

Peter is the one who stepped out of the boat!

"He is the one," says Pastor Corner, "that in the moment took a risk. He is the one that wasn't afraid to fail, wasn't afraid to sink down in the water. He didn't know what was going to happen." Peter shows us that faith is a risk. "Any sort of faith is a risk," Pastor Corner continues. "Faith in a vision of justice and equality and life is a risk that we take by stepping out of the boat into something [where] we don't know what is going to happen."

Imagine that. Peter shifts right before our eyes from being an example of failure to being an example of faith! He is the one who stepped out of the boat and took the risk. The Lutheran philosopher Søren Kierkegaard once described faith as being *suspended* over 70,000 fathoms of abyss, possibly alluding to this story. But maybe, I submit, there is more faith in that first step of Peter's than there is in any kind of "suspension" that follows.

One additional element appears in today's story according to Pastor Corner, and that element, so to speak, is water. In this narrative and in many ancient cultures, water symbolizes chaos, which means that Peter, Pastor Corner observes, "is stepping out into the chaos trusting God is there."

Wow. I'd like you to think for a moment of how often we as individuals or even we as a church do as the disciples did, hunkering down in the boat out of fear – fear of the unknown, fear of repercussions, fear of judgment, fear of what others might think or say or do. And then I'd like you to think of Peter, the one who *faces* that fear, the one who hears the call of Jesus and ventures

forth, even as he sinks. Peter, thanks be to God, gives us the *permission* in this story to fail even as we hope we might succeed.

Permission to fail – that is good news!

This morning or afternoon, wherever or whenever you are listening, I'd like you to pause and ponder the following: In what way is Jesus calling *you* forward from across the water the way he called Peter? And in what ways – as protests, the pandemic, and political pandemonium prevail – might Jesus be calling *us* forward as a congregation?

It's tempting and common to dismiss Peter as a failure in today's story, to blame him, others, and ourselves when we venture forth and fail. But's in that willingness to risk, not to mention the failing itself, Peter reveals the greatest faith. Would that his faith be yours and mine.

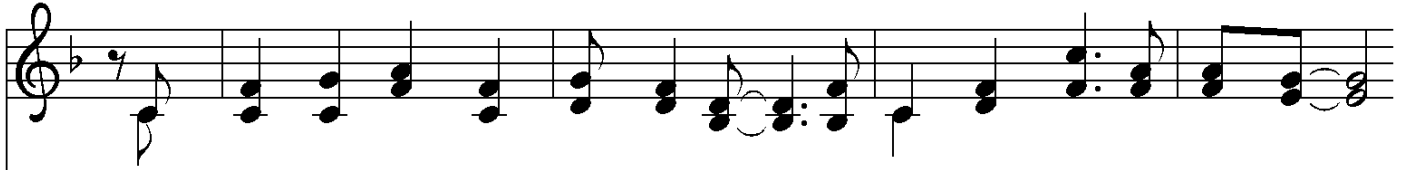
Amen.



Icon photo by Fr. Ted Bobosh

Hymn of the Day
(Stanzas 1, 2 & 4)

My Life Flows On in Endless Song
(How Can I Keep from Singing) ELW 763



1 My life flows on in end - less song; a - bove earth's lam - en - ta - tion,
2 Through all the tu - mult and the strife, I hear that mu - sic ring - ing.
3 What though my joys and com - forts die? The Lord my Sav - ior liv - eth.
4 The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart, a foun - tain ev - er spring - ing!



I catch the sweet, though far-off hymn that hails a new cre - a - tion.
It finds an ech - o in my soul. How can I keep from sing - ing?
What though the dark - ness gath - er round? Songs in the night he giv - eth.
All things are mine since I am his! How can I keep from sing - ing?



Refrain



No storm can shake my in - most calm while to that Rock I'm cling - ing.



Since Christ is Lord of heav - en and earth, how can I keep from sing - ing?



Prayers of the Church

P: Confident of your care and helped by the Holy Spirit, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

P: Holy God, we pray for your whole church throughout the world. Give courage in the midst of storms, so that we might see and hear Jesus calling: "Take heart, it is I: do not be afraid." May we follow Christ wherever he leads. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

P: For the well-being of your creation. Protect waterways, forests, lands, and wildlife from exploitation and abuse. Help all of us endeavor to sustain and be sustained by the resources of your hand. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

P: For the nations and their leaders. In you, steadfast love and faithfulness meet, and righteousness and peace embrace. May nations in conflict know the peace that is the fruit of justice, and the justice that is the path to peace. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

P: For those in need. Accompany all who are lonely, hear the voices of those who are sick and cry out, and support those who are facing or experiencing unemployment as the pandemic continues. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

P: For our congregation. You have gathered us in spirit as your people and we thank you for this gift. We pray for those who are new to this community, for administrators and officials making decisions about the coming school year, for students and teachers, and for those struggling with unexpected hardship. Supply us generously with your grace for our life together. 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: We give you thanks, O God, for the saints of the whole church from all times and places, and for the saints in our lives and in our community whom you have gathered to yourself, including Lois and Francoise. Lord, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you; 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.

P: Receive now the blessing:

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.

G: Amen.

Dismissal

P: Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

G: Thanks be to God.

Postlude

The Whole Armor of God
Lani Smith (1934–2015)

