



Queen Anne

LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

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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
Guest Preacher	Rev. Terry Kyлло
Cantor	Kyle Haugen
Lector	Lori Lynn Phillips
Piano	Annika Lundsgaard

We welcome Terry Kyлло to the pulpit today. Rev. Kyлло is director of Neighbors in Faith (NIF), an effort undertaken by Christians and Muslims to encourage neighborly relationships between Muslims and people of all faith and nonfaith traditions. NIF is supported by both Muslims and Christians and is authorized by the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia, and both the NW and SW WA Synods of the ELCA.

## SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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September 27, 2020

"Word Out #30 audio transcript



### Prelude

*Promenade (2nd)* from *Pictures at an Exhibition*  
Modest Mussorgsky (1839–1881)  
Annika Lundsgaard, piano

### Welcome

☐: Welcome, this seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost. Wherever you are listening, 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 where you can be still and know God is God.

After driving money-changers out of the temple, Jesus begins teaching there. Religious leaders, who are supposed to be in charge of the temple, question his authority. Jesus responds with a parable that leads to a startling conclusion about the kingdom of God.

### 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

John 10:27

**C:**

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

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

*Repeat alleluia*

**P:** My sheep hear my voice, says the Lord;  
I know them and they follow me.

**C:**

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

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

# The Holy Gospel:

Matthew 21:23-32

**P:** The Holy Gospel according to Matthew, the twenty-first chapter.

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

**P:** <sup>23</sup>When [Jesus] entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" <sup>24</sup>Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I

will also tell you by what authority I do these things. <sup>25</sup>Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?" And they argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' <sup>26</sup>But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet." <sup>27</sup>So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

<sup>28</sup>"What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' <sup>29</sup>He answered, 'I will not'; but later he changed his mind and went. <sup>30</sup>The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, 'I go, sir'; but he did not go. <sup>31</sup>Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. <sup>32</sup>For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him."

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

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

## Sermon

Pastor Terry Kyлло

So, it's good to be with you all, even in this virtual setting. I'm sitting here in my office in Anacortes, Washington, talking to myself, that's what it feels like. But I also know many of you because of our previous times together, and I can imagine you sitting in the church there, and so I'll try to preach with that in mind.

So today we come to a text that is painful for me, painful for the church, painful for human beings everywhere, because Jesus is talking about *passivity*. He's talking about the passivity of the son who said he would go, and yet did not go, in comparison with the one who said, "I'm not going to go," and then actually went out and did the work in the vineyard.

So, let's talk about the setting for a minute. So, Jesus is entering the temple and he's teaching, and the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him and asked him by what authority he's doing these things. And Jesus asked them a second question, kind of a prerequisite for him responding to them, which was about whether John the Baptist was from heaven, or was just teaching his own thing.

And you notice in the text that they really refuse to answer by saying, "I don't know," and the rationale given in Matthew, is that if they say, "from heaven," then Jesus would say to them, "Why didn't you follow Him?" and if they say that John is *not* a prophet, he wasn't speaking from God's deep message – then the crowd would be upset.

And so what was their primary concern? Their primary concern at that point was politics; was their status in their larger community. Now, this is by no means something that only the chief priests were concerned about. We'll talk about that more in a minute. We also have to recognize that we can hear, because of millennia-long anti-semitism, Jesus making a critique of Judaism here. Even though he was talking to the chief priests, Jesus is not kind of prosecuting a case against Judaism itself.

The chief priests were in a tough spot, and we have to recognize that. The chief priests were a party who was in charge of a temple, being the religious leaders of the people of Israel; but we have to remember that the dynamic that they were in was one of occupation by Rome.

As I may have said to you before, the Chief Priest was selected by the Roman Governor, and the vestments to the Chief Priest were actually in the Governor's headquarters. And so sometimes the chief priests would go to get the vestments to do the ceremonies, and would never emerge from the building.

So their job was to maintain the religious tradition, but was also to keep the Governor, and by definition the Caesar of the time, happy. And what made them happy? A population that didn't get too excited; a population that didn't remember its real tradition of freedom from Egypt and Babylon; a tradition that kept people quiet, a tradition that kept people, at that time, divided.

And so someone like John was an obvious threat, because he was drawing all kinds of folk. And with some of the expectations around armed insurrection, essentially, to kick out the Romans, the chief priests were often in this really difficult spot. Trying to keep their religion alive; trying to keep people alive, even. But at the same time, keeping Caesar happy. And so they're worried about their political and cultural influence. They're worried about their status. And they're even worried about their survival.

So, their first instinct here is not, "Was John speaking deep to the heart of the Abrahamic tradition?" Their first response was, "What's going to best suit us for keeping our position and keeping our status, for keeping things quiet?"

And so then Jesus tells the story. He said, "What do you think? A man had two sons. He said to the first, "Go and work in the vineyard today," and the first son said, "Yes," but then didn't go. And the second son said, "No," but then went. Which of the two did the will of his father?" And they said, Well, you know, the one that actually went, right?

So Jesus is taking on this incredible reality in human experience: that we can *say* we're up for something, and that when the time comes, well, we don't go.

And I just want to say, and it's difficult and painful for me, thinking back on my career, and difficult in thinking through the Church, and how we have functioned in this culture, and in this society, and in this political environment. We have to say that quite often we're the son, we're the child, that said they would go, and didn't. I mean, isn't worship itself a way for us to say, "Yes, we'll go!"?

But then how often have we went to work in the vineyard? "The vineyard" being a metaphor for the life of the people of Israel: producing fruit, so that all the nations of the world can be fed, and can be healed, and can be whole.

What I've learned in the last five years working to counteract anti-Muslim bigotry in the world, is that we're in a culture that actively dehumanizes certain groups, and that that act of dehumanization leads to policies against them; that that act of dehumanization excuses those policies; and that it leads to violence against those groups, either institutionally, structurally, or by individuals – or

even the violence that comes when people internalize racist ideas about themselves. So we're living in a society right now where there's tremendous dehumanization, and that dehumanization leads to violence.

But I've also come to realize, in my own development as a person of faith, as a pastor, and as a preacher, and teacher, and just a person, that in the Hebrew Scripture, the core of the Abrahamic tradition, the key value there, the key mission statement there is **to be a blessing to all the families of the world.**

It's right there in Genesis, chapter twelve: God calls Abraham and Sarah and says, "I will bless you and I'll make you great, you're going to have a wonderful family and a nation that's going to spring from you, but you're going to be a blessing to all the people of the world."

Well, that's the work of the vineyard, right? That's the work of the people of Israel in the vineyard! And Jesus is saying to the chief priests that in worship, every day they worshiped, that they were saying, "Yes, we'll go, we'll go work in the vineyard, we'll go work and be a blessing to all the nations of the world."

But that they weren't actually *doing the work*.

They were saying "Yes," they were getting the smile from the head of the household when they said yes; they were hearing their songs and their chants and their prayers and their sacrifices; but they didn't actually get up and go.

And so in this story, really, it's a metaphor or, here, it's an allegory, right?

Which of the two sons, the two children, has the Church been? Now, this is a lot more painful for me to say sitting in my room looking at this camera, than it would be if I was with you, because I would know that after the sermon, we could share the peace, and after the sermon was over, if you're mad at me, you could come and tell me – and that makes what I'm going to say next a little bit harder for me, because I'd rather have you be able to tell me:

But how often have we in the church, been willing to be more concerned about our status in the community? How often have we been more willing, you know, to sort of avoid difficult subjects in order to maintain our community and keep people coming on Sunday morning? How often have we been the child that says "Yes," in our prayers, in our songs, in our recitation of the Psalms, in our

Sunday school classes, and our prayer groups; how often have we been willing to be among those who say, “Yes,” but then don’t look outside the church for the work of the vineyard that is there to be done?

I mean, let’s think about redlining in Seattle. We know that there was a policy in Seattle, Washington that said that some people of color were not able to be in some neighborhoods; they weren’t able to get loans there. And if you look at Seattle today, we know that those neighborhoods are the ones where house prices have gone crazy.

How often have churches in that area, including yours, including mine, done the work of looking at the way those kind of systemic injustices have not only benefited us, but have also really oppressed other people? Because if you don’t have any money to pass on to your children, how can you buy a home in this environment? If you don’t have a lot of family wealth, because you were never able to buy a home, because the Federal Housing Administration was unwilling to back your loan because you’re a person of color, well, how do you survive a pandemic, if you lose your job? Because you and your family don’t have the resources passed on generationally.

All too often in the Church – and I’m not just talking about yours – but all too often in the Church, we spend a lot of time talking about theology and Bible study – and all that’s wonderful, and necessary, and good – but then maybe we don’t spend as much time studying what’s happening to our neighbor, and why what’s happening to our neighbor also benefits us in some ways – benefits white people, I should say, in some ways.

So, this is a painful text. Jesus is asking us to go into the vineyard, and sometimes we say “Yes” and then we don’t even recognize that “the vineyard” isn’t just the congregation, it’s the community, it’s the city, it’s the state, the nation, it’s the world. And picking one thing, one issue, that we want to take on to do the work in the vineyard – because nobody can do all the work in the vineyard; nobody can prune the trees, and hoe the weeds, and make sure water is going to the roots, and and pick the fruit, and process the fruit, and make the wine; no one can do all that. It takes the community, it takes many people doing



many different things with many different skills, and sometimes we've been afraid to engage our skill.

Now, I think in the Lutheran Church, our greatest danger is this: that one of our theological foci, from Martin Luther, was that we're justified by grace through faith, apart from works of law.

But what I think has happened sometimes in our churches is that we've misunderstood this. Because what God is justifying is *our lives*. What God is saying is that we're not justified in our existence by the fact that we do certain nice things. Because whoever decides what the nice things are, then is controlling us. But if God chooses to love us as we are, then we have freedom, because we're grounded, we're rooted to the ground, to the ground of God's love, to the ground of Being. Because God is saying "yes" to our existence and to our life, *as we are right now*.

And that means that we have the freedom, then, to be able to love our neighbor, even when it doesn't really help us maintain our status in the community, even when it is politically uncomfortable.

And by the way, I'm not talking about partisan, I'm talking about "politics," the old meaning of politics, which is "the way we order the city to benefit all of its citizens." And so sometimes we get so confused about this, we begin to think that anything – any response to God's love, in terms of love and works and actions, in terms of doing work in the vineyard, in terms of living out the mission of God as expressed in the Abrahamic tradition of *being a blessing to all the nations of the world* – is actually somehow wrong; is actually somehow almost evil.

And of course, the reason we say that, is because we want an excuse. Having said that we will go in our songs, in our confessions, in our prayers, in our preaching; but *oh, we better not do anything*, we better not enter into the difficult nature of this complex world in which we exist, because we might offend somebody and lose status; because we might offend somebody and lose a church member.

And so often we, like the chief priests, are more focused on our status and the continuance of our community than we are on the mission of the Abrahamic

tradition, a mission for which Jesus, and John were both willing to die. They were willing to die because they felt that that mission was so important that they could not help but be enthralled by the beauty of a vineyard that was intended for the benefit of every human being. And that the meaning of our life is to work in that vineyard, to do the work of benefiting every human being — and plants, and animals, and the ecosystem, by the way, too. That that's the meaning of our life that we're given.

And that we're given a freedom by God, because of God's love, to love our neighbors, to work in the vineyard — even when other people tell us that we can't, or that it's stupid, or that it's useless, or that it's too complicated, or too difficult, or that we can't fix all the problems, we can't solve everything, and so therefore, why work?

Well, we don't have to worry about that anymore, because God's love for us has so captivated us that we're free to love our neighbor.

And so what I want to say to us is, that, despite the fact that often in the church we have been passive and waiting, looking at our status, trying to keep things the same, keep stuff running, instead of being focused on the reign of God, the kingdom of God that Jesus taught about — that it's not too late. Jesus's entire movement began with these three phrases:

“The kingdom of God has come near”

“Repent,” (which is its own phrase in this case), and

“Believe in the good news.”

So, God's way of love, in which every nation, every person, every giftedness, every gender, every religion is blessed by what we do, and by what God is doing through us.

And that because we haven't lived that way, it's time to repent and change our ways.

And that it's time to believe in the good news, and the word “believe” here, as I'm sure Dan preaches all the time, isn't about some intellectual belief or some creed, it's about *the trust to act*. The trust to risk ourselves and our reputations, so that we can work in a vineyard for the benefit of all.

And so our tradition is based in the idea that we are actually faithful when we are willing to change; that being wrong yesterday does not condemn us to continue to walk a wrong path today.

Because there is good news for us. Because there is a promise that God's love for us is so great that we can say, "Hey, I've got work to do. I have changes to make. I'm an unprofitable servant, and I did some silly things, or wasted my energies, but I'm going to try to focus my energies more today on loving my neighbor, and being willing to risk my reputation and my security, to work in the beautiful vineyard that God is creating, so that God's vision of a world in which all the people of the earth are blessed, and that it's our deepest meaning and joy and gift to be able to be a part of that – that's worth some change, that's worth some joy, that's worth some action, that's worth some risk."

Jesus is calling out religious leaders in his first century context, and I think he's probably calling us out today. But having been called out by Jesus, having been made aware of our passivity and our excuses for it, well, then we can hear the words of Jesus. Even though we're the ones who said we would go and didn't, we can now change our ways, by the grace and power of God, and with the guidance of the Spirit, and go out into the vineyard, and find ourselves not only to be the beginning of a blessing to others, but to find the blessing that they have to share with us.

May the grace and power of God bless you and keep you, and change you, for your blessing, and for the blessing of others.

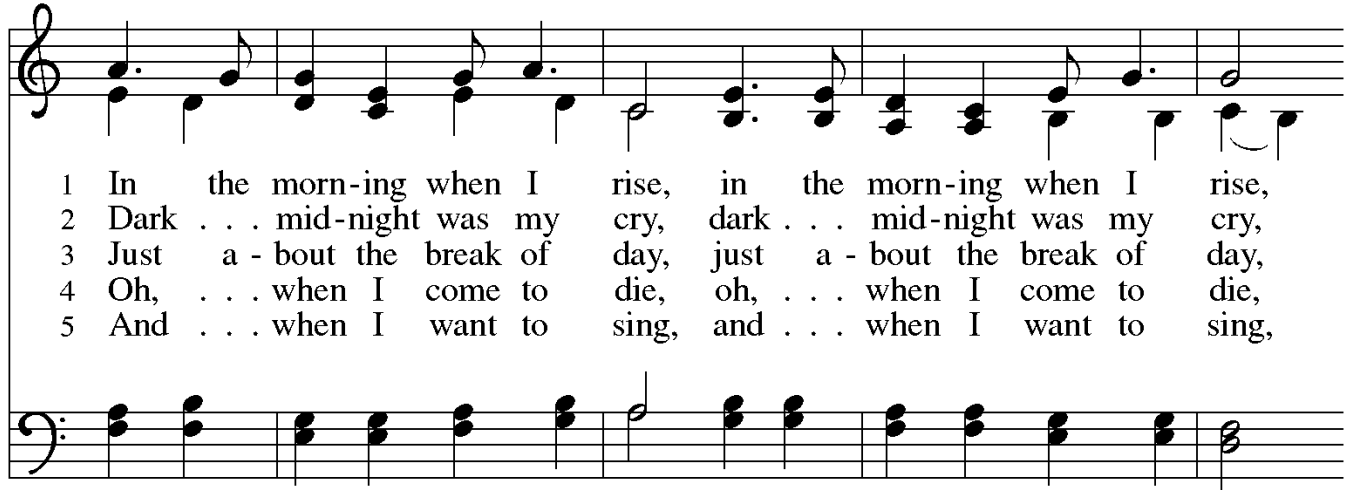
Amen.

# Hymn of the Day

# Give Me Jesus

*A very short interlude follows Stanza 3.*

ELW 770

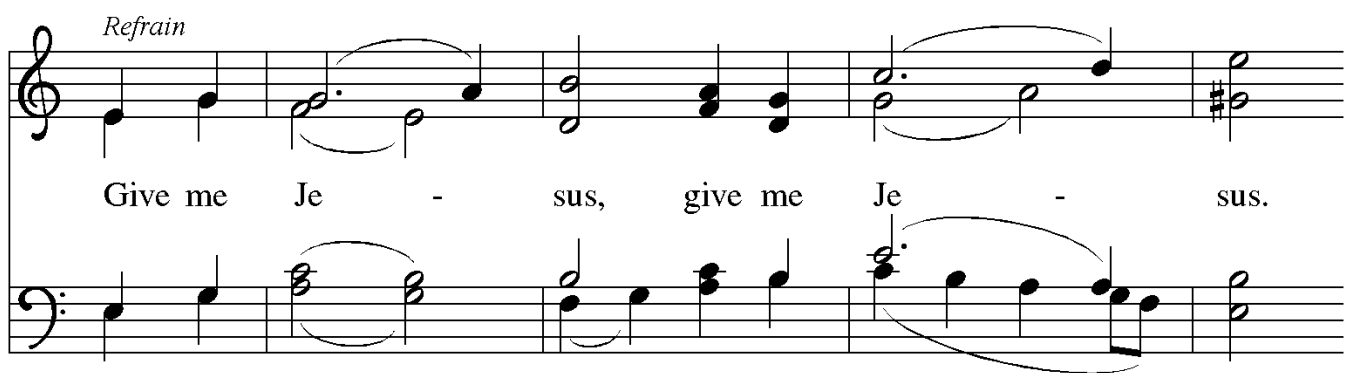


1 In the morn-ing when I rise, in the morn-ing when I rise,  
2 Dark . . . mid-night was my cry, dark . . . mid-night was my cry,  
3 Just a - bout the break of day, just a - bout the break of day,  
4 Oh, . . . when I come to die, oh, . . . when I come to die,  
5 And . . . when I want to sing, and . . . when I want to sing,



in the morn-ing when I rise, give me Je - sus.  
dark . . . mid - night was my cry, give me Je - sus.  
just a - bout the break of day, give me Je - sus.  
oh, . . . when I come to die, give me Je - sus.  
and . . . when I want to sing, give me Je - sus.

*Refrain*



Give me Je - sus, give me Je - sus.



You may have all the rest, give me Je - sus.

## Prayers of the Church

**P:** Drawn together in the compassion of God, we pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

*A brief silence.*

**P:** Holy God, in all the world, give your church unity. Inspire all the baptized with the mind of Christ. Where the church is powerful and where it struggles, shape us with humility and obedience so that your love may be at work in us. Lord, in your mercy,

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

**P:** Your Son took on all of bodily life in our world, even to death. Preserve and keep your creation, O God. Inspire us to mend and redeem places that are polluted and damaged, so that all of creation confesses you as Lord. Lord, in your mercy,

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

**P:** Turn the nations toward life. Where our ways are unfair, give us new hearts and new spirits. Where sin permeates our cultures and institutions, change our minds and teach us to heed your call to justice. Lord, in your mercy,

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

**P:** Our lives are yours, O God. Relieve the suffering of those who are ill in body, mind, or spirit. Defend the lives and welfare of children who are abused or neglected, hungry or exploited, bullied or lonely.

Lord, in your mercy,

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

**P:** Turn this congregation away from our own interests toward the interests of others. Fill us with your compassion and sympathy. Bless ministries of care in our community; make us into signs of your mercy and justice for our neighbors. Lord, in your mercy,

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

**P:** For whom 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:** Thank you for those who have gone into the kingdom ahead of us – tax collectors and prostitutes, likely and unlikely, obedient and slow to learn. By their witness, teach us to confess Jesus Christ as Lord in life and in death. Lord, in your mercy,

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

**P:** All these things and whatever else you see that we need, we entrust to your mercy; through 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).

**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

*Give Me Jesus*  
Richard Billingham (b. 1934)

## About Today's Music

Annika Lundsgaard joins us for this week's piano prelude with a poignant invitation for reflection – the second “Promenade” from *Pictures at an Exhibition* – seemingly ending in midair. To coincide with our forum series, “Race and Religion: Lutheran Responses to a Social Pandemic,” this week's Hymn of the Day is the beloved spiritual, “Give Me Jesus.” African American spirituals, and the vocal, choral, and instrumental music inspired by them, are often presented on the concert stage. With the classical music heritage of the spiritual in mind, this week the hymn recording features a more soloistic vocal sound. As always, you're invited and encouraged to join your voice and sing along. The service concludes with an organ postlude on “Give Me Jesus” published in the ELCA's Augsburg Organ Library. This piece draws from another African American art form – jazz – for a different soundscape than we usually year from the Wech organ. Perhaps the dissonant jazz chords illustrate the perseverance of will and the persistence of prayer depicted in the spiritual's text.