

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

July 11, 2021

A "Word Out" audio transcript



Prelude

Voluntary on the trumpet stop
Henry Heron (1738–1795)

Welcome

P: Welcome, this Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, to Queen Anne Lutheran Church. Wherever you are listening, whatever challenges you might be facing, 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.

We are delighted to welcome back our guest preacher for the month of July, Pastor Terry Kylo, Executive Director of Paths to Understanding. In today's Gospel reading, we learn about the death of John the Baptist. Like many of the great Hebrew prophets, especially Amos, John speaks truth to power, and Herod has killed him. In Herod's fear that Jesus is John returned from the dead, we may hear hope for the oppressed. All the prophets killed through the ages are alive in Jesus. We are called to witness to justice in company with them, and to proclaim God's saving love.

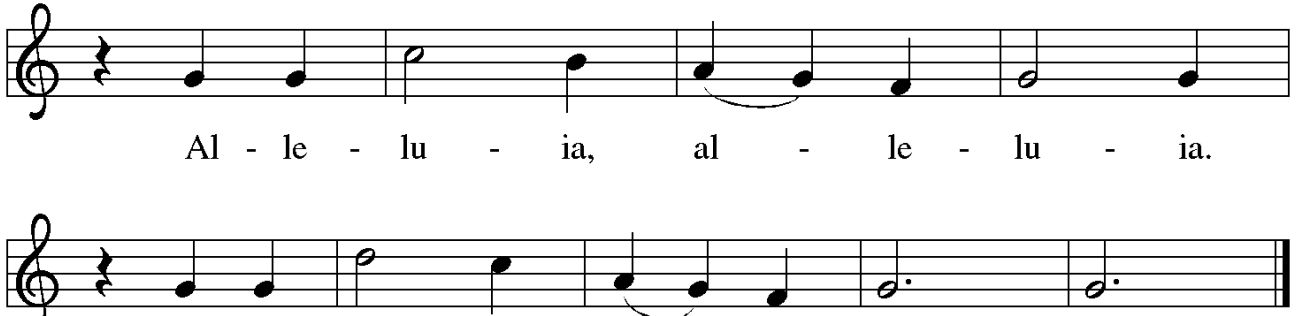
Greeting

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.


G: And also with you.

Gospel Acclamation

Ephesians 1:17-18

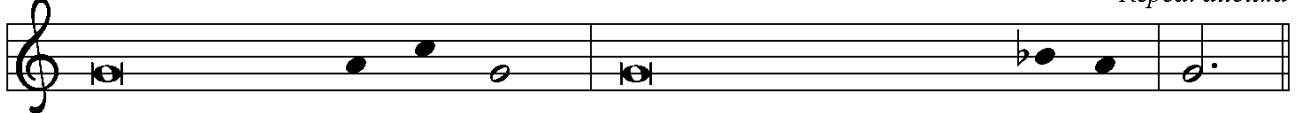
G: 

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

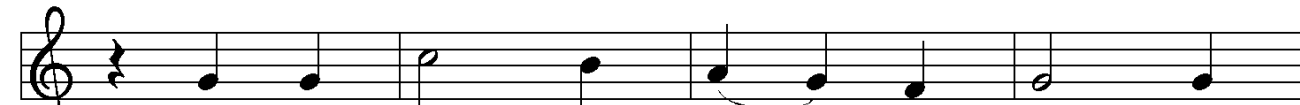


Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.


Repeat alleluia



P: May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ
enlighten the eyes of our hearts,
that we may know the hope to which God has called us.

G: 

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



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

Scripture Reading:

Mark 6:14-29

A: The Holy Gospel according to Mark.

G: Glory to you, O Lord.

A: ¹⁴King Herod heard of [the disciples' preaching,] for Jesus' name had become known. Some were saying, "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him." ¹⁵But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." ¹⁶But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised."

¹⁷For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod had married her. ¹⁸For John had been telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." ¹⁹And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, ²⁰for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him. ²¹But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. ²²When his daughter Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it." ²³And he solemnly swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom." ²⁴She went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" She replied, "The head of John the baptizer." ²⁵Immediately she rushed back to the king and requested, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." ²⁶The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her. ²⁷Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, ²⁸brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. ²⁹When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.

A: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

Pastor Terry Kyлло

John the Baptizer criticized King Herod. His reward was to find his head on a platter. The Gospel's not always rated PG.

King Herod was a despot, a client king appointed by Caesar, who was to do the dirty work of Caesar, to maintain order and to keep the money flowing to Rome. The best metaphor for the Roman Empire I've found is "the Mafia with a standing army." John the Baptizer didn't just criticize Herod because he married

his brother's wife. That was a good argument, it was effective political messaging, but really, John opposed Herod because Herod was an idolater.

Most of us think that idolatry is claiming that a statue or an image is a god. But as the People of Israel coming out of Egypt knew, it was more than that. They had seen the graven images in Egypt used to visualize the claim that Pharaoh was the son of the god Ra – the sun god.

This was a powerful claim. It meant that the social, political, environmental and economic order in Egypt was ordained by the gods. It should not be questioned. It should not be resisted. It was inevitable. Any critique of the system was heresy. Any movement to create a more just world was to be a traitor both to city hall, and the gods themselves – punishable by death and then hell.

If you were born enslaved your only purpose in life was to be a good slave. If you obeyed, you would be judged a worthy soul for the delights of heaven. If not, you went to the bad place.

In the Egyptian Book of the Dead, one of the spells one would memorize was “I was not known to the supervisor of slaves.” Keeping your place, knowing your station in life was a key to being recognized as a good person, as having meaning.

And human beings need meaning. “We do not live by bread alone,” Jesus quotes, “but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” We live by meaning and community and without it we feel lost. This last year, where we have been separated from one another, well, this year's shown us the power of meaning and community and our desperate need for both.

So, idolatry happens when those in power use our need for meaning and community against human beings to promote an unjust social, political, environmental and economic order. Idolaters claim that they speak the words of the mouth of God, and that God blesses the current order. To question it is to question God. It's heresy.

In a first, Moses claimed that the Creator of the world moved to challenge an unjust social order. God was not backing up the system, but was rather moving to tear it down. God was moving to free those who had been enslaved. God was moving to transform the pyramid of Egyptian society and turn it into a circle. To

move people from a society of pecking order and competition to one of mutual respect and cooperation.

In Jesus' and John the Baptizer's day, Egypt had come to Israel. Idolatry, the claim that the gods blessed and ordained an unjust social, political, environmental, and economic system, was once again in full force. It was expressed in two ways:

Augustus Caesar himself was claimed to be the son of the god Apollo. This was idolatry. This was again a claim that the gods had ordained an unjust Roman system which conquered and exploited other peoples. And the gods approved.

Secondly, Herod rebuilt the Temple in Jerusalem. By doing so he was positioning himself as the restorer of the Jewish tradition, the Hebrew faith. If Herod, with Caesar's blessing, could restore the Temple, then even the God who called Moses to lead the People of Israel out of slavery, now seemed to benefit from colonization, exploitation, and death.

As both Caesar's client king and the restorer of the Temple, Herod and the order he imposed should not be questioned. Further, as people found meaning within that system, they became entrapped in it.

Herod, you see, was an idolater – he used god-language to create and maintain an unjust system. He arrested and imprisoned John because John was calling him out on his idolatry.

This means several things for us.

First, we must recognize that John and Jesus are concerned with the real condition of human beings. Our real, daily condition is powerfully impacted by the social, political, environmental and economic order. Jesus and John care about the kind of order that human beings create. They each risked their lives to bring about a more just order. The story of John's death is known to Jesus as he begins his own public ministry. Jesus knows what happens to people who, in the tradition of Moses, call for justice in an idolatrous order.

Jesus' own public messaging itself makes this clear: The Kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the Good News, he said. The Kingdom of God

would replace the Roman Kingdom. God's will would be done on earth as it is in heaven. Perhaps you recall having prayed that a time or two.

Jesus was so captivated by this vision that he was willing to risk death for it.

Second, we are invited to see the outlines of the idolatry of our own times so we can join Moses, John and Jesus in countering it.

We saw a rather ham-handed attempt at old-style idolatry last summer when then-President Trump lifted up a Bible in front of St. John's Episcopal Church, in an area where peaceful protestors had been forcibly removed. This was an attempt to claim with a visual image, that God was supporting the order of the United States *as it is*, and that to question it was to question God and the Bible. Further, it was an attempt to claim that one political leader was the faithful representative and upholder of God's will. This is problematic, no matter how you see the policies of the Trump administration.

However, such brazen attempts at idolatry don't work as well as they used to – at least this one didn't, for most Americans. But for another set of Americans, it was very powerful. Approximately 45% of Americans desire a more authoritarian government, according to social scientists at Berkeley. These Americans have created a powerful connection between their version of Christian theology, their notions of the end-times, and their belief that the United States, and especially white Christian Americans, are now God's chosen ones – who are ordained by God to rule the world. And if democracy no longer supports their goals, then they are ready to tear it down. Even more disturbing is that about 40% of Republicans believe that political violence may be necessary for them to have their way.

For most people, however, the idolatry of the ancient world does not really work as it did. We just have too many religions, too many ways of seeing the world, for that old approach. This is not all bad, by the way!

Yet, as Jesus said, it is easy to see the speck in another's eye, and not notice the log in our own.

Religion as we often think of it, it seems to me, is not the operative worldview of our time. And for this we can go to Luther for a little help. Luther said that our god, is what we "fear, love and trust."

What fits this definition in our own time?

Well, it's our vision of the economy. This vision is that human beings are producers and consumers in a free market, winner take almost everything economy. If you talk about social justice you have to make an economic argument. If you talk about the environment, you have to talk about the economic consequences of climate change. How's a president doing? Well, look at the stock market! Everything revolves around this economic vision.

And of course we know that 85% of stock is owned by 10% of the people. We also know that 0.1% of the population have more net worth than 90% of the population.

We even judge pastors, and the faithfulness of churches, don't you know, by whether or not the contributions are rising or not. This view of this economic religion is often claimed to be inevitable, an outgrowth of a survival-of-the-fittest world, in which the "unseen market" arranges all according to its wisdom. Sounds like a religion to me.

If John the Baptizer were to risk his head in our day, he might take all of us to task for our idolatry of a certain economic vision that puts greed over God, money over mission, profits over people, short-term stock value over the long-term value of the ecosystem.

It's always easy to see the idolatry in other places. It's easy to see the idolatry of Egypt, Babylon and Rome. It's easy to see the idolatry of Herod and his use of the Temple to claim that he had God's blessing to rule as he would. We remember these examples, however, in our tradition so that we can learn to see similar patterns in our own day, in our own society, and indeed, in our own lives.

John and Jesus were both living out in their day the story of God's liberation of the People of Israel from Egypt. They saw that story as an example, not just of what God did, but of how God moves in the world. God values human beings, animals, plants and the whole earth. God sees the pain of the creation and the human beings in unjust systems that benefit a few and use those made in God's image as instruments, as tools for greed. God calls people to leave their place in

society and remind their fellow human beings that we don't have to live this way.

We Lutherans teach justification by grace through faith not just because it's a handy-dandy theological argument, but rather so that we can recognize God's powerful gift of affirmation of our existence, so that we don't need to be stuck in the worldview of our society, especially when it's unjust. We teach justification by grace through faith so that we have the freedom to hear God's call and call one another to live differently. We teach justification by grace so that we can realize that we are so loved and accepted that we can change, so that we can learn, so that we can grow –so that we can recognize God's forgiveness for all the gods we've worshiped, and switch our allegiance to the one Creator of all.

You know, I'm thinking about John, and John the Baptizer was bound, he was taken from his cell, and he was killed. But of all the people in Herod's palace, including Herodius and Herod's daughter, John alone was free. He was freed by the grace, love, mercy, and vision of the Creator of all, to reveal the man-behind-the-curtain idolatry that was being used by Herod and Caesar to enslave his people.

Jesus Christ knew John, and he knew the likely consequences of his own freedom. He trusted God so much that he was willing to risk his life for God's vision of a society, politics, economics and the environment of mutuality and justice. He was so enthralled by that vision that he just had to pursue it. And because we are deeply affirmed by God's love, we are free to take on our own idolatries and to call our siblings to our common and liberating identity as God's beloved children.

So now after Moses and John and Jesus, now it's our turn. How is God calling you to work for the real condition of your neighbor? What is God calling you to risk for the creation that is groaning in travail? The good news is not only that your head is not likely to end up on a platter, but that the God who raised Jesus from the dead has your back, too. And mine. And that the Biblical vision is that one day, the world, its people, all of us, will be made whole. That our small actions of freedom, our small actions of risk and love will be woven into a world of peace, justice, and love. God is calling, beckoning, pleading, encouraging us to

be true to our true identity, to be “little Christs,” as Luther said, to become ourselves, to be free for one another and the beautiful creation that needs us so desperately.

What are you called to do?

May the Spirit enable both our hearing and our following.

May it be so.

Hymn of the Day

Let Justice Flow Like Streams

ELW 717

The musical score is written for a soprano and bass voice part. It consists of two systems of music. The first system has three verses of lyrics. The second system has two lines of lyrics. The music is in a 4/4 time signature with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is primarily composed of quarter and eighth notes, with some rests. The bass line provides harmonic support with chords and single notes.

1 Let jus - tice flow like streams of spar - kling wa - ter, pure,
2 Let righ - teous - ness roll on as oth - ers' cares we heed,
3 So may God's plumb line, straight, de - fine our mea - sure true,

en - a - bling growth, re - fresh - ing life, a - bun - dant, cleans - ing, sure.
an ev - er - flow - ing stream of faith trans - lat - ed in - to deed.
and jus - tice, right, and peace per - vade this world our whole life through.

A: Let us come before the triune God in prayer.

A brief silence.

A: Holy parent, you welcome your people into one family and gather all things to yourself. Bestow your grace upon your beloved church, lavish your wisdom upon us, and redeem us from our faults, that by our witness all might praise your glory. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: Awesome creator, you steadfastly tend to the smallest of seeds and the mightiest of sycamore trees. Spring up green growth from the earth, nourish the growth of fruit, grain, and other crops, and bless the work of farmers and laborers. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: God of the oppressed, turn the ears of those who are in power to the voices of prophets in our own day. Protect those who speak difficult truths when it is risky to do so. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: God of strength, you are near to those who endure difficulty. Comfort all who are survivors of violence, guard the refugee and the immigrant, and protect all those who are victims of prejudice and discrimination. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: God of love, we pray for this holy house and all those who worship here. We pray especially for those whose efforts behind the scenes often go unnoticed; for our sexton, custodians, and all who maintain our building and grounds, for our office staff, and for all of our volunteers.

Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: For whom or what else do the people of God pray?

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

A: Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: We thank you, God, for the saints, martyrs, and prophets who have died in the faith. We remember those in this community who have recently

died. United with them as God's children, assure us that we are yours forever. Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

A: We lift our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your abiding grace.

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
and 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.

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

Processional of Joy
Lawrence J. Meyer (1928–1996)

About today's music

Today's prelude and postlude hearken to a common genre, but are separated by centuries. English composer Henry Heron (1738–1795) was a dance and music teacher in London (as well as organist) and his sprightly piece for the trumpet stop has a dance-like character. The "trumpet voluntary" (either for a brass instrument and organ or for the trumpet stop) is as popular today as it was in 18th-century England. The "Processional of Joy" by Lawrence J. Meyer (1928–1996) carries the genre forward and includes harmonies inspired by jazz. Meyer's piece is often associated with commencement exercises at Pacific Lutheran University, but it has gained a life of its own outside PLU through its publication by Augsburg Fortress. — Cantor Kyle



Queen Anne
LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

✠ *In Worship Today* ✠

Pastor	The Rev. Dr. Dan Peterson
Guest Preacher	The Rev. Terry Kylo
Cantor	Kyle Haugen
Lector and Intercessor	Magdalena Phillips
Soloist (Gospel Acclamation)	Meg Shaw

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