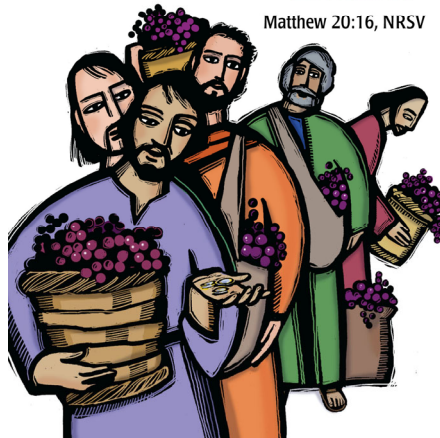


St. John's Lutheran Church  
Biggerstaff Christian Retreat Center  
9 am Worship Service  
Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost  
September 20, 2026

So the **last**  
will be **FIRST**,  
and the **first**  
will be **LAST**.

Matthew 20:16, NRSV



Welcome!

Matthew narrates one of Jesus' controversial parables in which Jesus says that the reign of God is like that of a landowner who pays his workers the same wage no matter what time of day they began to work. When God changes God's mind about punishing Nineveh for their evil ways, Jonah is angry. Yet God is gracious and merciful, abounding in steadfast love. In baptism we receive the grace of God that is freely given to all. As Martin Luther wrote, in the presence of God's mercy we are all beggars.

## *Welcome to Worship!*

PRE-GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME

GATHERING SONG            *"Great is the Lord"*

Great is the Lord, he is holy and just,  
By his power we trust in his love.  
Great is the Lord, he is faithful and true,  
By his mercy he proves he is love.

Great is the Lord, and worthy of glory.  
Great is the Lord, and worthy of praise.  
Great is the Lord, now lift up your voice, now lift up your voice:  
Great is the Lord! Great is the Lord!

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, who pours love into our hearts and healing upon the earth. **Amen.**

Confident that God justifies us by grace through faith, let us confess our sin.  
Compassionate God,

**we confess that we struggle to embody your goodness in the world and in our own hearts. Creation groans from overuse. Jealousy and bitterness strain our relationships. Indifference keeps us from seeking justice. Divisions disrupt your call to show genuine love to others. Turn our hearts back to you. Restore our world and reconcile us to one another. Renew us to live as your holy people, following the way of Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Hear this good news: We have peace with God through ☩ Jesus Christ, in whom there is no condemnation, but only forgiveness and the promise of eternal life. Receive freely this healing gift of grace. **Amen.**



## OPENING SONG

*“For the Fruit of All Creation”*

For the fruit of all creation, thanks be to God.  
For these gifts to ev'ry nation, thanks be to God.  
For the plowing, sowing, reaping, silent growth while we are sleeping,  
future needs in earth's safekeeping, thanks be to God.

In the just reward of labor, God's will is done.  
In the help we give our neighbor, God's will is done.  
In our worldwide task of caring for the hungry and despairing,  
in the harvests we are sharing, God's will is done.

For the harvests of the Spirit, thanks be to God.  
For the good we all inherit, thanks be to God.  
For the wonders that astound us, for the truths that still confound us,  
most of all, that love has found us, thanks be to God.

## THE APOSTOLIC 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.**

## THE PRAYER OF THE DAY

Pastor: Almighty and eternal God, you show perpetual lovingkindness to us your servants. Because we cannot rely on our own abilities, grant us your merciful judgment, and train us to embody the generosity of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

## YOUTH MESSAGE

*Adriana McMurphy*



### THE FIRST READING

### Jonah 3:10-4:11

<sup>10</sup> When God saw what [the people of Ninevah] did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them, and he did not do it. <sup>4:1</sup> But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. <sup>2</sup> He prayed to the Lord and said, “O Lord! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning, for I knew that you are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from punishment. <sup>3</sup> And now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.” <sup>4</sup> And the Lord said, “Is it right for you to be angry?” <sup>5</sup> Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city. <sup>6</sup> The Lord God appointed a bush and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort, so Jonah was very happy about the bush. <sup>7</sup> But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. <sup>8</sup> When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, “It is better for me to die than to live.” <sup>9</sup> But God said to Jonah, “Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?” And he said, “Yes, angry enough to die.” <sup>10</sup> Then the Lord said, “You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. <sup>11</sup> And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left and also many animals?”

### Psalm 145:1-8— *Read Responsively*

<sup>1</sup> I will exalt you, my God and king, and bless your name forever and ever.

<sup>2</sup> **Every day will I bless you and praise your name forever and ever.**

<sup>3</sup> Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised! There is no end to your greatness.

<sup>4</sup> **One generation shall praise your works to another and shall declare your power.**

<sup>5</sup> I will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty and all your marvelous works.

<sup>6</sup> **They shall tell of the might of your wondrous acts, and I will recount your greatness.**

<sup>7</sup> They shall publish the remembrance of your great goodness;  
they shall sing joyfully of your righteousness.

<sup>8</sup> **The Lord is gracious and full of compassion,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**

### THE SECOND READING

### Philippians 1:21-30

<sup>21</sup> For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. <sup>22</sup> If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me, yet I cannot say which I will choose. <sup>23</sup> I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better, <sup>24</sup> but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you.

<sup>25</sup> Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, <sup>26</sup> so that, by my presence again with you, your boast might abound in Christ Jesus because of me. <sup>27</sup> Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel <sup>28</sup> and in no way frightened by those opposing you. For them, this is evidence of their destruction but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. <sup>29</sup> For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ but of suffering for him as well, <sup>30</sup> since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

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

*Please stand for the reading of the Gospel.*

THE GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

*"Thy Word" (2x)*

*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.*

THE GOSPEL

**Matthew 20:1-16**

[Jesus said to the disciples:] <sup>1</sup> "The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. <sup>2</sup> After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard. <sup>3</sup> When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, <sup>4</sup> and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. <sup>5</sup> When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. <sup>6</sup> And 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?' <sup>7</sup> They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.' <sup>8</sup> When 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.' <sup>9</sup> When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received a denarius. <sup>10</sup> Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. <sup>11</sup> And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, <sup>12</sup> saying, '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.' <sup>13</sup> But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? <sup>14</sup> Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. <sup>15</sup> Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?' <sup>16</sup> So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

THE MESSAGE

*Pastor Rachel Connelly*

SONG OF RESPONSE

*“If We Live, We Live to the Lord”*

*Refrain*

*If we live, we live to the Lord.*

*If we die, we die to the Lord.*

*So then, whether we live or whether we die,  
we are the Lord's.*

Mortal days are like the grass.  
They flourish like a flower in the field.  
Wind passes over; they are gone,  
never to be seen again. *Refrain*

Everlasting to everlasting is your love, O Lord;  
your righteousness for the children's children,  
for your faithful ones. *Refrain*

Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
and all that is within me.  
Bless the Lord, O my soul.  
Bless God's holy name. *Refrain*

THE APOSTLES' CREED

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate and was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. 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.**

THE PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

*After each prayer petition—* Hear us, O God, **Your mercy is great.**

THE SHARING OF CHRIST'S PEACE

Pastor: The peace of Christ be with you always. **Congregation: And also with you.**

#### THE OFFERING

*Our gifts and offerings are gathered for the mission of the church.  
Plates are passed by the ushers.*

#### THE OFFERTORY SONG

*“As the Grains of Wheat”*

*Refrain*

*As the grains of wheat once scattered on the hill  
were gathered into one to become our bread;  
so may all your people from all the ends of earth  
be gathered into one in you.*

As this cup of blessing is shared within our midst,  
may we share the presence of your love. *Refrain*

Let this be a foretaste of all that is to come  
when all creation shares this feast with you. *Refrain*

#### OFFERTORY PRAYER

Assisting: God of creation, you send rain and the earth springs forth abundantly. All blessings are from you; make us generous with what we have. Use our gifts, our abilities, and our hearts in service to you and in love to our neighbors, today and always. **Amen.**

#### THE MEAL

*All are welcome at the table of communion*

#### THE WORDS OF INSTITUTION

##### THE LORD’S PRAYER

**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.**

#### THE DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

## COMMUNION SONGS

*“Sanctuary/I Exalt Thee Medley”*

Lord prepare me, to be a sanctuary  
Pure and Holy, tried and true.  
With thanksgiving, I'll be a living  
Sanctuary for You.

I exalt Thee, I exalt Thee, I exalt Thee O Lord  
I exalt Thee, I exalt Thee, I exalt Thee O Lord

Holy Spirit, fill this vessel  
Make my heart to, burn within  
Purify me, make my life be  
A sanctuary for You.

## THE PASTORAL BLESSING

### THE PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Assisting: Sustaining God, with this bread and cup, you nourish us with mercy and abundant life. By your Spirit, send us from this table to serve a needy world. Make us living signs of your liberation, healing, and love, following the way of Jesus, in whose name we pray. **Amen.**

### THE BLESSING AND BENEDICTION

The God of love draw you into full accord and one mind, in the body of Christ Jesus.  
**Amen.**

The God of hope grant you strength and joy in all circumstances through the interceding of the Spirit. **Amen.**

The God of grace ☩ bless you now and forever. **Amen.**



## SENDING SONG

*“Take My Life That I May Be”*

### *Refrain*

*Take my life, that I may be  
consecrated, Lord, to thee;  
take my moments and my days;  
let them flow in ceaseless praise.*

Take my hands and let them move  
at the impulse of thy love;  
take my feet and let them be  
swift and beautiful for thee. *Refrain*

Take my silver and my gold,  
not a mite would I withhold;  
take my intellect and use  
ev'ry pow'r as thou shalt choose. *Refrain*

Take my voice and let me sing  
always, only for my King;  
take my lips and let them be  
filled with messages from thee. *Refrain*

Take my will and make it thine;  
it shall be no longer mine;  
take my heart, it is thine own;  
it shall be thy royal throne. *Refrain*

## THE DISMISSAL

Go out in joy. Be led forth in peace. **Thanks be to God.**

### Serving Today



in Worship

Pastor:

Lay Assistant:

Lector:

Greeters:

Musicians:

Videographer:

### Serving Today

The Rev. Dr. Rachel Connelly

Jan Long

Torrie Landon

Jeff & Torrie Landon

Tom Ward, Ray Burroughs and Dave Devoe

Jason Dickard

### **Our Church Family**

Sandy Yuda, healing (Patrick Square)  
Libby McLean, healing  
Wilma Cobb, healing  
Gary Cabbage, healing  
Michael Pode, healing  
Deb Blackmore, healing  
Chris Radford, healing  
Tina Barrett, healing  
Tiffany Chapman, healing  
Charlie (health) & Debbie (lung cancer) Busch

### **Those Grieving**

The family of Betty Mantell  
The family of George Rogers (brother of Micky Ward)

### **Our Elders at Home or Assisted Living**

Andera Stroud, Foothills  
Thelma Miller, The Residences (Wells Highway)  
Brenda Cantrell, home  
Linda Humphries, home  
Frances Carter, home/hospice  
Marie Palmatier, home  
Lynne Williams (Pawleys Island)

### **Other Prayer Concerns**

For those affected by the fire in Walhalla.  
For those affected by the flooding in Nepal & China and in the Grand Canyon.  
For those affected by earthquakes in Japan & Columbia.  
For those affected by military actions in the Middle East..  
For our country amidst on-going nationwide violence.  
For wisdom for military leaders involved in the events unfolding in the Middle East.  
For those dealing with loss from recent natural disasters and severe weather.  
For all those who have lost their jobs due to recent government changes.  
For peace for our country and protection for our government officials.  
For colleges & universities across our country.  
For those dealing with loss and fear from gun violence.  
For peace in the Middle East, and comfort to those impacted by violence.  
For Bishop Wade Roof and Synod staff  
All military Personnel



### **Our Extended Family and Friends**

Archie Yusef, tests (great nephew of Sandra Pruitt)  
Kyle Hollandsworth, job search (grandson of Millie)  
Charlotte Eaker, breast cancer (sister-in-law of Ann Brackett)  
Valarie Bentley (infant) hole in heart (Tina Barrett)  
Mary Jane Rees, healing (mother of Rod Rees)  
Bobbie Williams, hospice (aunt of Jan Day)  
Susan Ward, cancer (daughter of Joan Lewis)  
Barbara Williams, hospice (mother of Cathy Plowden)  
Jon Fowler, brain cancer (cousin of Wilson's)  
Jean Deal, healing (sister-in-law of McLean's)  
Joan Kramer, successful treatment (friend of Williams')  
Riley Medlin, cancer diagnosis (WHS student)  
Kathy Quickel, healing (mother of Mike Goynes)  
Doug Scanlon, healing (friend of Grace Schmeelcke)  
Maggie Ormes, healing (friend of Mary Sprouse)  
Barbara Cary, comfort (sister of Dave Devoe)  
Buffy McCarthy, healing (daughter-in-law Kathy Scherter)  
Stephanie Williams, cancer/chemo (cousin/ Pastor Rachel)  
Kathy Smith, liver cancer (cousin of Cathy Plowden)  
Isabel Fogel, healing (granddaughter of Fogel's)  
Dwight Amick, hospice (Stephanie Champion, step dad)  
Danny Childress, comfort (nephew of Safrin's)  
Larry Smith, (friend of Jane Harris)  
Bonnie Blanchett, healing (mother of Ryan Raab)  
E. Christian Gauderer, hospitalized in Lisbon, Portugal (brother of Michael)  
Janelle Gibson, healing (aunt of Jan Day)  
Erica McKee Skinner, healing (friend of Tina Barrett)  
Ben Harding, healing (brother of Allen Harding)  
Chad Cobb (son of Wilma)  
Kay Davis, recovery (mother of Stephanie Champion)  
Kelsey Bowman, healing (daughter-in-law of Bowmans)  
Lauren Bowman, Lyme disease (daughter of Gary and Barb Bowman)  
Jacquelyn Moore, (niece of Kathy Scherter)  
Bennie Smith, health (nephew of Wards)  
Dohnvan (grandson of Kathy Scherter)  
Dolorico Perez (father of Josie Perez)  
Gina Daly, health (daughter of Bob Johnson)

*Please let the church office know of  
any updates to our prayer list.*



# The Bell Tower— Ministry News

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## PICTORIAL DIRECTORIES

Pictorial Directories are now available. They will be distributed at both worship services **TODAY**. See Joan Lewis for your copy.

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## MONDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

Monday Evening Bible study is at 6pm. We are studying the book of Proverbs. Contact Adriana with any questions.

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## TUESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

**Tuesday Bible Study on EZRA at 11am in the Sanctuary** - Come share in a discovery of the Book of Ezra, which tells a story of rebuilding and renewal for God's people. This powerful Old Testament text speaks directly to what it means to rebuild community, restore faith, and navigate major life transitions after a period of exile and disruption. Whether you are a lifelong Bible reader or picking up the Scriptures for the very first time, your voice and perspective are welcome at the table.

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## WEDNESDAY LUNCH

This week Wednesday Lunch will be on **September 23**. We know that means **DELICIOUS!** All are welcome to join us at 11:30am on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month for tasty food, fun and fellowship. We ask for a \$5 donation towards the meal (you can't eat anywhere for \$5 anymore). Sign-up on Information Alley so we can estimate attendance.

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## JESUS BY THE LAKE

On **Sunday, September 27**, we are hosting our first "*Jesus by the Lake*" at Biggerstaff from 4-6pm. This is a new, "holy experiment," collaborating with the youth and families from University Lutheran, to be every fourth Sunday of the month. The theme of the day will be "*Who is my Neighbor?*" and the parable of the Good Samaritan. This is an exciting opportunity for the entire family (children, teens, AND adults) to come together, see old and new faces, and make new friendships in a new way of doing faith formation. Games, music, small group discussions, and food are all included. Contact Adriana to learn more about this exciting new event.



## CHURCH OFFICE STAFF

**St. John's Lutheran Church, ELCA**  
**301 W. Main Street, Walhalla, SC**  
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(864) 638-6363 or Email: [stjohnsluther@gmail.com](mailto:stjohnsluther@gmail.com)  
Office Hours: Monday—Friday 8:30am to 1:00pm

**Additional St. John's Staff**  
Ray Burroughs, Facilities Manager  
Joan Lewis, Spiritual Gifts Coordinator  
Cathy Plowden, Congregational President

### Ways to Help with the Disaster in Nepal

Below are three options if you wish to help those affected by the flooding in Nepal.

**Lutheran World Relief:** <https://give.lwr.org/page/199466/donate/1>

**Water Mission:** <https://watermission.org/nepal-flooding-disaster-response>

**Lutheran Disaster Response:** <https://give.elca.org/page/88370/donate/1>

**Our tithes and offerings** are an important part of our faith journey.

- Electronic offerings may be given through the GIVELIFY app.
- You may also go to our website: [www.stjohnswalhalla.org](http://www.stjohnswalhalla.org) and click on the "Give Now With Givelify" button
- Another option is to scan this QR code to go directly to our Givelify page.

