

Hope Lutheran Church

Worship Notes for Sunday, September 20th, 2020

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Next Steps Since Resuming In-Person Worship Services

We hope to soon have more information and news about alternative worship options and deliveries (changes to Worship Notes while providing phone-in and video services). Some aspects of this are challenging, involve not only technology but increased licensing, and amateurs trying to figure it all out. Providing safe opportunities for fellowship among us is also being discussed. See previous Worship Notes for more information, or contact the church or a member of Church Council. For now, in-person services (10:30 AM Sundays) and weekly Worship Notes deliveries continue, but please expect a change for October.

Quilting

Hope Lutheran Church Women will resume **Quilting** on **Wednesday, September 30th** in the Parish Hall. If you wish to join us, please bring your mask, own bag lunch and needle/scissors. We will start at the usual time of 9:00 a.m. and go until 3:00 p.m.

We hope to continue to have quilting on the last Wednesday of the month going forward. Future dates will be: October 28, November 25, January 27th, February 24, March 31, April 28.

If you have any questions, please speak with Dorothy Moench 780-466-9119 or Teresa Grynas 780-450-0413.

Hope to see you there!

Submitted by: Teresa Grynas

Card of Thanks

Under the blue sky and in the sunshine, on August 27th, my husband Gordon Hughes was laid to rest. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Pastor Erik for officiating a beautiful burial service. Thank you!

Also, thank you everyone for the many many acts of kindness, sympathy card and donations during this time of loss of our husband, father and grandfather.

God bless you all,

Laura Hughes, Karen + Todd.

Proper 20 – 16th Sunday after Pentecost – Series A

ELW Service of the Word

Created by Pastor Erik Osness

780-466-8502 – pastor-hopelutheran@telus.net – Office Hours: Mon, Tues, Fri, 9:30 am-1:00 pm

PRE-SERVICE INTRODUCTION

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.

INVOCATION

In the name of the Father,
and of the ✠ Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Gracious God,

have mercy on us. We confess that we have turned from you and given ourselves into the power of sin. We are truly sorry and humbly repent. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things we have done and things we have failed to do. Turn us again to you, and uphold us by your Spirit, so that we may live and serve you in newness of life through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

ABSOLUTION

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace we have been saved. In the name of ✠ Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthen us with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in our hearts through faith. **Amen.**

GATHERING SONG - ELW #733 – *Great Is Thy Faithfulness*



1 Great is thy faith - ful - ness, O God my Fa - ther; there is no
2 Sum - mer and win - ter and spring - time and har - vest, sun, moon, and
3 Par - don for sin and a peace that en - dur - eth, thine own dear



shad - ow of turn - ing with thee; thou chang - est not, thy com -
stars in their cours - es a - bove join with all na - ture in
pres - ence to cheer and to guide; strength for to - day and bright



pas - sions they fail not; as thou hast been, thou for - ev - er wilt be.
man - i - fold wit - ness to thy great faith - ful - ness, mer - cy, and love.
hope for to - mor - row, bless - ings all mine, with ten thou - sand be - side!

Refrain



Great is thy faith - ful - ness! Great is thy faith - ful - ness! Morn - ing by



morn - ing new mer - cies I see; all I have need - ed thy



hand hath pro - vid - ed; great is thy faith - ful - ness, Lord, un - to me.

Text: Thomas O. Chisholm, 1866–1960

Music: FAITHFULNESS, William M. Runyan, 1870–1957

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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.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray:

Steadfast God, you are slow to anger, and your mercy endures forever. We stand in your presence as beggars, completely undeserving of your mercy and grace.

Awaken in us such a sense of gratitude that our own lives may reflect your overflowing generosity; through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

FIRST READING: Jonah 3:10-4:11

After Jonah's short sermon in 3:4, the Ninevites all repented and God decided to spare the city. Jonah objected to this and became even more angry when God ordered a worm to destroy a plant that was providing shade. The book ends with a question that challenges any who are not ready to forgive: You, Jonah, are all worked up about a bush, but shouldn't I be concerned about a hundred and twenty thousand Ninevites?

¹⁰When 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.

⁴ ¹But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. ²He 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 God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. ³And now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." ⁴And the Lord said, "Is it right for you to be angry?" ⁵Then 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.

⁶The 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. ⁷But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. ⁸When 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."

⁹But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?" And he said, "Yes, angry enough to die." ¹⁰Then 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. ¹¹And 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?”

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 145:1-8

The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. (Ps. 145:8)

¹I will exalt you, my | God and king,
and bless your name forev- | er and ever.

²**Every day | will I bless you
and praise your name forev- | er and ever.**

³Great is the Lord and greatly | to be praised!
There is no end | to your greatness.

⁴**One generation shall praise your works | to another
and shall de- | clare your power.**

⁵I will speak of the glorious splendor | of your majesty
and all your | marvelous works.

⁶**They shall tell of the might of your | wondrous acts,
and I will re- | count your greatness.**

⁷They shall publish the remembrance of | your great goodness;
they shall sing joyfully | of your righteousness.

⁸**The Lord is gracious and full | of compassion,
slow to anger and abounding in | steadfast love.**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the Beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

SECOND READING: Philippians 1:21-30

Paul writes to the Philippians from prison. Though he is uncertain about the outcome of his imprisonment, he is committed to the ministry of the gospel and calls on the Philippians to live lives that reflect and enhance the gospel mission.

²¹For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. ²²If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. ²³I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; ²⁴but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. ²⁵Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, ²⁶so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

²⁷Only, 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, ²⁸and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. ²⁹For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well—³⁰since 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.

GOSPEL: Matthew 20:1-16

Jesus tells a parable about God's generosity, challenging the common assumption that God rewards people according to what they have earned or deserve.

The holy gospel according to Matthew, the 20th Chapter.

Glory to you, O Lord.

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

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

. . .

“The last will be first, and the first will be the last.”

This phrase not only ends today’s Gospel reading. It’s also what came before it.

Right before our reading, at the end of chapter 19 of Matthew’s Gospel narrative, the last verse of the passage was, “But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first” (Matthew 19:30). The context then was after Jesus said how hard it is for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God (“easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle”), the disciples asking the question, “Then who can be saved?”, and Jesus responding, “For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:23-26).

Next, Peter asked, “Look, we have left everything to follow you. What then will there be for us?” At the conclusion of Jesus’ reply, we hear this: “But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first” (Matthew 19:27-30).

In both places, in Matthew 19 and what we hear from today in chapter 20, Jesus isn’t talking about economics. He isn’t advocating for a flat equality. By saying, “The last will be first, and the first will be last,” he’s pointing to God’s generosity in the context of discipleship. Jesus is talking about the mercy and forgiveness of God that invites sinners and welcomes them into his kingdom. Inviting even and especially the lost and the last.

Welcoming sinners might be a familiar theme of Christ’s ministry to you. The temptation, then, with a text like this, is to just pass it off as the same old story and miss the point.

First, what’s wrong with the same old story, hearing over and over things like, “God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8)?

But more importantly for today, Jesus presents God’s generosity here by *challenging* those of us already invited—those of us already part of the Body of Christ. We’re challenged to consider those that come *after us*.

Do we welcome those that come in the last hours to participate and take responsibility, with us, of the work already being done? Or, do we boast of our own

importance? Our own heritage? Do we consider our legacy before the kingdom of God and the righteousness of Christ? Do we consider, for whatever reason, ourselves more important than others, or neglect to invite others to hear of God's mercy and kindness for fear that we might be knocked down a peg, or that we'll need to embrace a change in ourselves to get there?

These are hard questions, questions I wrestle with myself, and have wrestled with for quite some time while considering not only entering pastoral ministry, but knowing that receiving such a call, here and now, requires more than church maintenance.

Still, the hard truth is that we can't be turned-in ourselves, either as individuals, local congregations, or the church at large. We need, instead, to look out and step out. We need to reorient ourselves towards those who haven't heard the Good News of Jesus Christ. We need more than self-preservation. *We need giving.* We need selfless giving that considers the other and their well-being as even more important than our own. We need love and compassion to fill our homes and our streets. We need, quite simply, more Jesus.

. . .

For the early church, this parable in Matthew 20 was directed most to Jewish disciples of Christ inviting and welcoming Gentiles, welcoming those outside the lineage of God's Chosen People, Israel.

During the Reformation, Luther and others taught against notions of meriting salvation through good works, against misguided allegiances to tradition, and against the ignorance to corrupt church institutions. Luther and others worked against these problems to return the church to the unmerited, free forgiveness of sins through Christ alone. The *pure* Gospel. This parable was read with these things in mind then.

Today, we have a different problem. It's more like the early church problem of welcoming outsiders, but it isn't the same. Our problem today is in looking outside ourselves, in reaching out and inviting in.

It's easy to think that Christianity here in Canada is dying. And maybe the church will continue to grow in Asia and Africa and shrink here. Maybe we'll experience more and more missionaries from those places coming here to tell us of the Good

News and build Christ's church. Maybe we got all too caught up in power and influence in the past and compromised God's mission now.

Maybe, but I don't think any of that speculation is all that helpful. It won't get us back on track and is out of our control. More appropriately, it won't bring us back in-line with what God continues to do throughout the earth, and the Body of Christ will never stop doing, with us, through us, *and* despite us, until Christ returns in glory.

What does God continue to do? And what will bring us back in-line with the mission of God's kingdom?

For starters, seeking the lost will, and welcoming those that come.

What will this look like? Well, we can't know. But we do need to be open to those that seek. *To make space.*

The church can't just be "our place," but the place for them, for others, to find forgiveness and hope, in equal measure. The church is for you, for me, and for *them*—for our neighbours.

There's a tendency, a very common tendency among fallen humanity, to look mostly inward. We become a church of our own preferences, we create phantom hierarchies, and we end up looking less to the fundamentals and faithfulness and more to what we already know, what has already been done, and, quite simply, what we like. We ask ourselves the wrong questions. But we can always get back on track. We can learn anew. I know I still have a lot to learn, but hold on to hope.

The great thing about this is the new is often old, relatively simple (even if mysterious), and set out already for us. Not the sound of the feel, but the content. The principles. The main actor—Christ our Lord.

. . .

I've told this story to a few people at Hope (I think), but while Megan and I were living in Langley, BC, after we got married, and without an obvious church home, we went to a few different congregations for our first year there.

One Sunday, we went to a church plant, the fancy lingo for a new church, that gathered in a rec centre. That Sunday morning, we found a parking spot and walked into a busy place full of kids with stinky hockey gear, and people rushing about.

Tucked to the side were signs for the church, and people greeting and directing others where to go. We ended up in a regular meeting room set apart for worship. The service itself was a traditional Anglican one, with relatively modern music. But the experience was memorable for a different reason. As we gathered, and went through this liturgical service, with many different elements in it, including the Lord's Supper, we had a couple gently help us along to make sure we could follow and participate as well as possible.

This couple didn't sit next to us. They didn't hover. They just swooped in to make sure we knew where in the service booklet to be, or where to go for receiving the body and blood of Christ, or how to get back to our seats, and then swooped away. I barely remember getting a good look at them.

We knew, relatively well, about all these things as Lutherans, about the historic liturgy of the church, but I was still amazed at the hospitality of this couple. They didn't ask, they just did.

After the service, we talked to their pastor, a retired bishop, who upon hearing I was preparation for ministry quickly offered an internship at their little church plant. They were no larger a group than the regular attendance I've seen at Hope Lutheran before Covid-19. But they already had one pastoral-intern, why not have another?

That church knew what it meant to live out, "the last will be first, and the first will be last." They knew what it meant to welcome those that came at any hour, and to guard only the fundamentals while welcoming others to belong and participate.

We didn't end up attending there, but we did get involved in another Anglican church that showed us a similar welcome. Still, I learned a lot from those people that shared the pews with us that one, single Sunday.

. . .

The task of hospitality can seem daunting, but mostly only if we consider ourselves too highly—if we consider ourselves the first instead of the last. Because Christ calls us to *faithfulness*, not results. He calls us to a long obedience in the same direction, not to immediate change or finite goals. Jesus calls us not to create so much as to *anticipate* what he will harvest from whatever our circumstances, even turning what others meant for evil to the good. Christ calls us to ask simple questions. Questions like:

- “Who are we?”
- “What has God called us to do or be?”, and,
- “Who is our neighbour?”

Those are questions from a book recently recommended to me when considering strategic planning for congregations (the book is called, *Holy Conversations*, putting the emphasis on the spiritual aspect of such planning).¹

I hope, as your new pastor, and a new pastor in general, that we’ll journey together to become a place more ready to welcome and receive. Not to judge what we’ve been or what we are, but to “seek first the kingdom of God and all his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). To grow in Christ, and to bring the Good News of God’s generous and abundant mercy and forgiveness.

As we consider this journey to open ourselves to those that come at any hour, knowing the last will be first and the first will be last, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

¹ Rendle, Gil and Alice Mann, *Holy Conversation: Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003).

HYMN OF THE DAY - ELW #358 – *Great God, Your Love Has Called Us*



1 Great God, your love has called us here, as we, by love, for
 2 We come with self - in - flict - ed pains of bro - ken trust and
 3 Great God, in Christ you call our name and then re - ceive us
 4 Then take the towel, and break the bread, and hum - ble us, and
 5 Great God, in Christ you set us free your life to live, your



love were made. Your liv - ing like - ness still we bear,
 cho - sen wrong, half - free, half - bound by in - ner chains,
 as your own, not through some mer - it, right, or claim,
 call us friends. Suf - fer and serve till all are fed,
 joy to share. Give us your Spir - it's lib - er - ty



though marred, dis - hon - ored, dis - o - beyed. We come, with all our
 by so - cial forc - es swept a - long, by pow'rs and sys - tems
 but by your gra - cious love a - lone. We strain to glimpse your
 and show how grand - ly love in - tends to work till all cre -
 to turn from guilt and dull de - spair, and of - fer all that



heart and mind your call to hear, your love to find.
 close con - fined, yet seek - ing hope for hu - man - kind.
 mer - cy seat and find you kneel - ing at our feet.
 a - tion sings, to fill all worlds, to crown all things.
 faith can do while love is mak - ing all things new.

Text: Brian A. Wren, b. 1936
 Music: RYBURN, Norman Cocker, 1889–1953
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 Music © Oxford University Press. Used by permission.

THE APOSTLE'S 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,
 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 again 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

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Let us pray for the church, the world, and all people according to their need.

[A brief silence is kept]

Thank you, Father, for calling us early, midday, and late in life, to be your disciples and workers in your Kingdom's vineyard! Thank you for seeking us to do your work, even when nobody else thinks we're good enough to amount to anything. Give us grace to hear your call, and strength to do your will. Thank you for the wages of everlasting life and salvation, and for your pleasure in us.

*Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.***

We pray for our persecuted sisters and brothers around the world, especially in North Korea, Syria, Iraq, Sudan, and Nigeria. Give them courage to honour Christ in their body; to speak and live the Gospel with boldness and joy; and to know that they are participating in the suffering of Jesus.

*Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.***

Help the people of this congregation to stand firm together, of one spirit, striving to proclaim the Gospel by words and deeds. Make us willing to work at whatever task pleases you and draws others closer to you. Make us glad when latecomers join us in our labours, knowing that your grace has drawn them to serve you, even as it drew us.

*Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.***

Grant wisdom to our earthly leaders. Let them seek you while you may be found; call upon you while you are near; and govern in accordance with your holy will. Graciously grant patience, kindness, and humility to everyone, so that we may lead peaceable lives.

*Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.***

Be the safe shelter and solid rock to everyone in times of trouble, and especially to: Adeline; Karen; Chris; Clarence; Irma; Bob; Gordon; David; Art; Paul; Otto; Betty Jo; Ewald; Joseph; Louise; Mona; Pastor Richard; Debbie; Jim; and all those we

now name in our hearts. . . . Lift them high above the things that assail them; and be the strength of their life. Give patience and compassion to all who care for them, especially those whose work is long, hard, and thankless. Restore them to the joy of fellowship with those who love them.

*Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.***

We thank you, Father, for those we love who have departed this life and are now with Christ, including Ed Bartel, Gordon Hughes, Alan Delorme, and Helen Burkett (aunt to Dorothy Lowry). Though we grieve, we also rejoice; for we know that “to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” Give us strength to labor cheerfully in the vineyards of goodness, kindness, forgiveness, and righteousness. Make us as generous to others with those things as Jesus is to us. Make us rejoice to see how many he has redeemed and welcomed into your blessed Kingdom; and when we see him face to face.

*Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.***

Conform our prayers to the heart of Jesus, hear them through the interceding of your Holy Spirit, and grant them in accordance with your gracious will. Amen.

LORD’S PRAYER

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**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.**

BLESSING

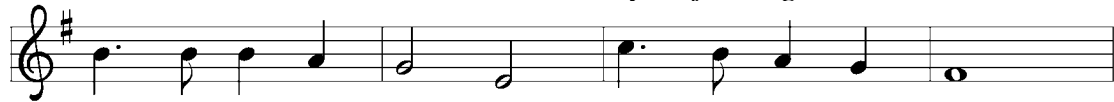
The LORD bless us and keep us.

The LORD make his face to shine upon us, and be gracious to us

The LORD lift up his countenance upon us, and **✝ give us peace.**

Amen.

SENDING SONG - ELW #537 – *On Our Way Rejoicing*



1 On our way re - joic - ing glad - ly let us go.
2 Un - to God the Fa - ther joy - ful songs we sing;



Christ our Lord has con - quered; van - quished is the foe.
un - to God the Sav - ior thank - ful hearts we bring;



Christ with - out, our safe - ty; Christ with - in, our joy;
un - to God the Spir - it bow we and a - dore,



who, if we be faith - ful, can our hope de - stroy?
on our way re - joic - ing now and ev - er - more.

Refrain



On our way re - joic - ing; as we for - ward move,



hear - ken to our prais - es, O blest God of love!

Text: John S. B. Monsell, 1811–1875, alt.
Music: HERMAS, Frances R. Havergal, 1836–1879

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

From sundaysandseasons.com.

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**READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK: Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32; Psalm 25:1-9;
Philippians 2:1-13; Matthew 21:23-32.**
