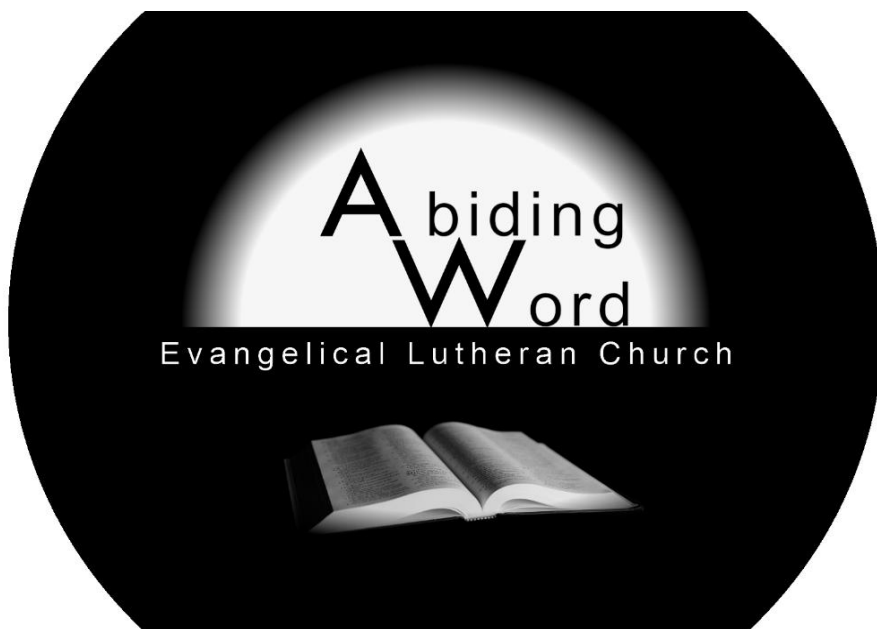


September 13, 2026
Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost



8470 Landen Drive Maineville, Ohio

*At Abiding Word
We gather around the Word (worship)
We grow in the Word (education)
And we share the Word with the world (outreach).*



Abiding Word Evangelical Lutheran Church
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Welcome!

To all who have gathered here this morning we welcome you in the name of Christ our Lord. Through him we have access to God in boldness and confidence. (Ephesians 3:12) Join us after the service for our picnic and enjoy some good food and fellowship. Everyone is welcome.

UNEXPECTED TRUTHS

The opening lines of the United States Declaration of Independence boldly assert that certain truths are “self-evident”—truths accessible to human reason and widely recognized by observation of the world.. The founders appealed to principles they believed reasonable people could recognize simply by reflecting on human nature and justice. These truths were meant to be obvious, clear to the mind, and persuasive in the public square.

Lutherans, however, note that the most important truths revealed in the Bible are not self-evident at all. In fact, they frequently appear surprising or even contrary to human expectations. Scripture teaches that humanity is not naturally good but deeply sinful. It declares that salvation cannot be achieved through human effort but comes entirely by God’s grace. Most unexpected of all is the message that God brings forgiveness and eternal life through the suffering and death of Jesus Christ.

Biblical truth is revealed by God rather than discovered by reason alone. While some truths may seem obvious, the truths of the Bible are often unexpected.

CROSS COMES BEFORE CROWN

Some churches teach that if a person follows God, God responds by granting prosperity and peace, as would only be expected. Today we see how that is nonsense. The Bible explains that if we are part of the Church of God, we will have to bear crosses. Believers suffer in this world, sometimes just because they are believers.

Why bother? We carry our crosses in gratitude for Jesus carrying his cross, one too heavy for us because it was weighted down with our sin. We carry our crosses because we know that in those moments of struggle, we are forced to turn to Christ and rely on his strength. This is the unexpected path, the one Jesus himself walked: the cross comes before the crown.



1 Praise to the Lord, the Al - might - y, the King of cre -
2 Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things is won - drous - ly
3 Praise to the Lord, who has fear - ful - ly, won - drous - ly,
4 Praise to the Lord, who will pros - per your work and de -
5 Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me a -



a - tion! O my soul, praise him, for he is your
reign - ing and, as on wings of an ea - gle, up -
made you, health has be - stowed and, when heed - less - ly
fend you; sure - ly his good - ness and mer - cy shall
dore him! All that has life and breath, come now with



health and sal - va - tion! Let all who hear now to his
lift - ing, sus - tain - ing. Have you not seen how all that's
fall - ing, has stayed you. What need or grief ev - er has
dai - ly at - tend you. Pon - der a - new what the Al -
prais - es be - fore him! Let the a - men sound from his



tem - ple draw near, join - ing in glad ad - o - ra - tion!
need - ful has been sent by his gra - cious or - dain - ing?
failed of re - lief? Wings of his mer - cy did shade you.
might - y can do as with his love he be - friends you.
peo - ple a - gain; glad - ly for - ev - er a - dore him!

Text: Joachim Neander, 1650–1680; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–1878, alt.

Tune: Ander Theil Des Erneuernten Gesang-Buchs, Stralsund, 1665, alt

Text and tune: Public domain

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

CONFESSION OF SINS

We have come into the presence of God, who created us to love and serve him as his dear children. But we have disobeyed him and deserve only his wrath and punishment.

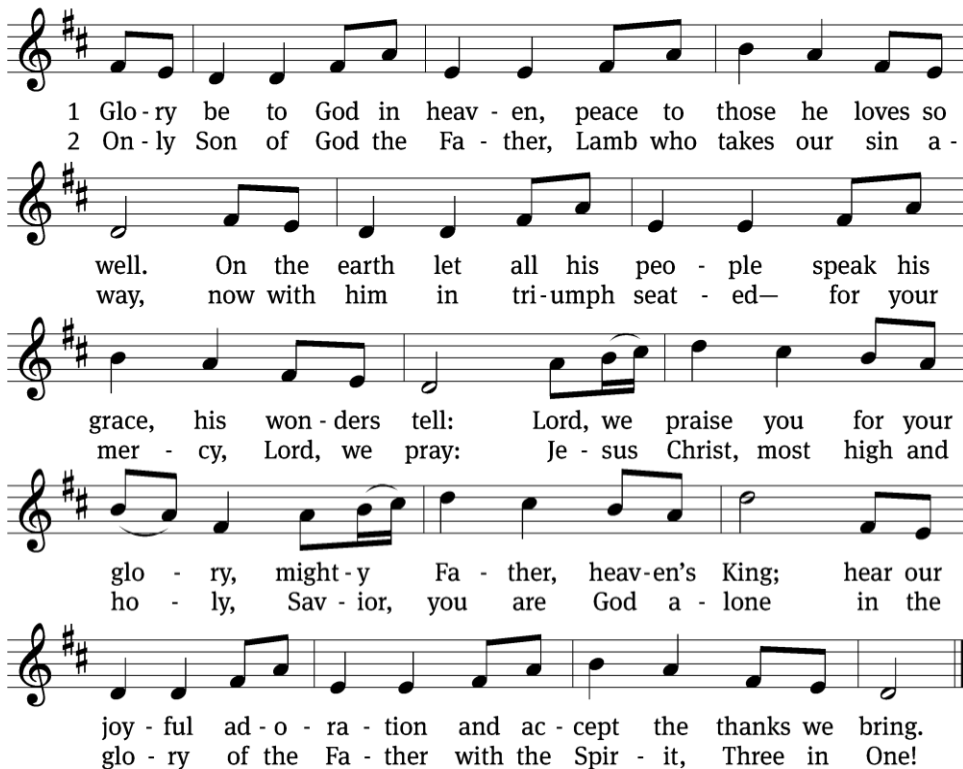
Therefore, let us confess our sins to him and plead for his mercy.

Merciful Father in heaven, I am altogether sinful from birth. In countless ways I have sinned against you and do not deserve to be called your child. But trusting in Jesus, my Savior, I pray: Have mercy on me according to your unfailing love. Cleanse me from my sin, and take away my guilt.

God, our heavenly Father, has forgiven all your sins. By the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, he has removed your guilt forever. You are his own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to his will.

Amen.

Tune: NETTLETON



1 Glo - ry be to God in heav - en, peace to those he loves so
2 On - ly Son of God the Fa - ther, Lamb who takes our sin a -
well. On the earth let all his peo - ple speak his
way, now with him in tri - umph seat - ed— for your
grace, his won - ders tell: Lord, we praise you for your
mer - cy, Lord, we pray: Je - sus Christ, most high and
glo - ry, might - y Fa - ther, heav - en's King; hear our
ho - ly, Sav - ior, you are God a - lone in the
joy - ful ad - o - ra - tion and ac - cept the thanks we bring.
glo - ry of the Fa - ther with the Spir - it, Three in One!

THE WORD

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord God, heavenly Father, you graciously forgive us all our sins and abundantly provide for all our needs of body and soul. Give us confidence in your mercy, and teach us also to be merciful to our neighbor, that we willingly forgive all people, and judging only ourselves, lead blessed lives to your glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

FIRST READING

GENESIS 50:15–21

¹⁵When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?" ¹⁶So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: ¹⁷'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept.

¹⁸His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said.

¹⁹But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? ²⁰You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. ²¹So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM 103

Of David.

¹ Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. ² Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits— ³ who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, ⁴ who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, ⁵ who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

⁶ The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed.

⁷ He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel: ⁸ The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. ⁹ He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; ¹⁰ he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. ¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; ¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. ¹³ As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; ¹⁴ for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. ¹⁵ As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; ¹⁶ the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. ¹⁷ But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children— ¹⁸ with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts. ¹⁹ The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.

²⁰ Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. ²¹ Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will.

²² Praise the Lord, all his works everywhere in his dominion.

Praise the Lord, O my soul.

SECOND READING

EPHESIANS 4:29—5:2

²⁹Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³²Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

¹Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children ²and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL

MATTHEW 18:21–35

²¹Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?"

²²Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

²³"Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. ²⁵Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

²⁶"At this the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' ²⁷The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

²⁸"But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.

²⁹"His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.'

³⁰"But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. ³¹When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

³²"Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. ³³Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' ³⁴In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

³⁵"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ!

1 Oh, how good it is when the fam - 'ly of God dwells to -
 2 Oh, how good it is on this jour - ney we share to re -
 3 Oh, how good it is to em-brace his com-mand to pre -

geth - er in spir-it, in faith and u - ni - ty. Where the
 joice with the hap-py and weep with those who mourn. For the
 fer one an - oth - er, for - give as he for - gives. When we

bonds of peace, of ac - cept - ance and love are the
 weak find strength, the af - flict - ed find grace when we
 live as one we all share in the love of the

fruits of his pres-ence here a - mong us.
 of - fer the bless-ing of be - long - ing.
 Son with the Fa - ther and the Spir - it.

Refrain

So with one voice we'll sing to the Lord,
 and with one heart we'll live out his word,
 till the whole earth sees the Re - deem - er has come,
 for he dwells in the pres-ence of his peo - ple.

Text: Keith Getty, b. 1974; Kristyn Getty, b. 1980; Ross Holmes, b. 1984; Stuart Townend, b. 1963; Keith Getty, Kristyn Getty, Ross Holmes, Stuart Townend
 Tune: Keith Getty, b. 1974; Ross Holmes, b. 1984; Stuart Townend, b. 1963; Kristyn Getty, b. 1980 Text: © 2012 Getty Music Publishing (BMI), Parakeet Boots Music (ASCAP), Townend songs,
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SERMON on MATTHEW 18:21–35

APOSTLES' CREED

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

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

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.**

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Lord Jesus Christ, Peter once asked you how many times he must forgive his brother, and you answered not with a limit but with a number too large to count. Forgive us, Lord, for the times we have kept count against others — for grudges nursed quietly, for wrongs we have replayed in our minds long after they should have been let go, for the ways we measure out mercy in small, careful portions when you have called us to forgive without limit.

We confess that we are like the servant in your parable — forgiven a debt we could never have repaid. You have canceled every sin, every failure, every debt we owe to your Father, not because we earned it, but because you paid it in full on the cross. Fix that truth in our hearts: that our sin against you was beyond measure, and yet you wiped it away completely.

And so we ask you, Lord, to make us servants who forgive as we have been forgiven. Where we have grabbed a brother or sister by the throat over some small offense — holding on to bitterness, withholding kindness, refusing to let go — soften our hearts. Break the pattern of our unforgiving anger before it hardens into the judgment your parable warns us against. Teach us that mercy received is meant to be mercy given, not mercy hoarded.

We pray for those in this congregation who carry old wounds and unresolved conflict — family members estranged from one another, friends who have stopped speaking, hurts that have never been brought into the light and released. Give them the grace to forgive from the heart, as you have commanded, not with clenched teeth but with the same freedom you have given us.

We pray also for those who feel they cannot be forgiven — who believe their sin has placed them beyond your mercy. Remind them, Lord, that your patience is not like ours; that your compassion for the debtor who cannot pay is exactly the compassion you have shown us; and that no sin is greater than the cross.

Lord, keep this church a place where forgiveness is not just taught but practiced — where debts are canceled as ours have been canceled, where mercy runs freely from heart to heart, and where your patience with us becomes the pattern for our patience with one another. Hear us for the sake of Jesus, who forgave us at infinite cost and calls us to do the same.

Amen.



1 What love could re - mem - ber no wrongs we have done?
2 What pa - tience would wait as we con - stant - ly roam,
3 What rich - es of kind - ness he lav - ished on us;



Om - ni - scient, all - know - ing, he counts not their sum;
what Fa - ther so ten - der is call - ing us home!
his blood was the pay - ment, his life was the cost.



thrown in - to a sea with - out bot - tom or shore,
He wel - comes the weak - est, the vil - est, the poor;
We stood 'neath a debt we could nev - er af - ford;



our sins they are man - y, his mer - cy is more.
our sins they are man - y, his mer - cy is more.
our sins they are man - y, his mer - cy is more.



Praise the Lord! His mer - cy is more!



Strong - er than dark - ness, new ev - 'ry morn; our



sins they are man - y, his mer - cy is more!

The refrain for stanza 3 is sung three times (twice, with no break between, then a final time).

Text: Matt Boswell, b. 1979; Matt Papa, b. 1983

Tune: Matt Boswell, b. 1979; Matt Papa, b. 1983

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Almighty God, we thank you for teaching us the things you want us to believe and do.
 Help us by your Holy Spirit to keep your Word in pure hearts that we may be
 strengthened in faith, guided in holiness, and comforted in life and in death, through
 Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now
 and forever.

Amen.

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and T give you peace.

Amen.



1 God loves me dear - ly, grants me sal -
 2 I was in slav - 'ry, sin, death, and
 3 He sent forth Je - sus, my dear Re -
 4 Je - sus, my Sav - ior, him - self did
 5 Now I will praise you, O Love e -



va - tion, God loves me dear - ly, loves e - ven me.
 dark - ness; God's love was work - ing to make me free.
 deem - er, he sent forth Je - sus and set me free.
 of - fer; Je - sus, my Sav - ior, paid all I owed.
 ter - nal; now I will praise you all my life long.



There - fore I'll say a - gain: God loves me



dear - ly, God loves me dear - ly, loves e - ven me.

Text: August Rische, 1819–1906; tr. composite

Tune: German

Text and tune: Public domain