

First St. John Lutheran Church

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www.firststjohn.com

Rev. Jerald K. Rayl, Pastor

Dr. Anthony Pattin, Church Musician
Jo-Anne Chrysochoos, Director of Music
Cheri Sergent, Bell Choir, Director
Jessica Miller, Office Manager



Called through faith; Gathered in worship; Serving the community

September 20, 2026 - 10:30 am

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17th Sunday After Pentecost

Welcome to First St. John Lutheran Church! We offer two services with Sunday School for youth and adults and catechism. Our regular Sunday schedule is:

8:00 am	Early Worship
9:15 am	JAM Sunday School
9:15 am	Adult Sunday School
10:30 am	Late Worship
2:00 pm	Chapel Communion

(2nd Sunday of the month)

LIVESTREAM AND RECORDED WORSHIP: We livestream the service on our church website at www.firststjohn.com. Also, the service will be recorded and published to the website

SMILE! YOU'RE ON CAMERA: Please remember you may be on camera during the livestream and the recording of the service.

IMPORTANT REMINDER: Please remember to silence your cell phone before church begins. Thanks!

NURSERY You are welcome to sit with your child downstairs as needed. A diaper changing table is available in the ladies restroom in the basement of the church.

RESTROOMS are in the church basement. Go to the Narthex (lobby) and take either set of steps to the basement hallway. The ladies room is at one end, and the men's room is at the other.

FLOWERS: If you would like to sign up for altar flowers, there is a book in the lounge. Or, you can call the church office during the week to check on availability.

MEMORIALS: If you wish to give a memorial in honor or memory of a loved one, you may mail it in or pick up a memorial card in the church office.

ORDER OF WORSHIP—10:30 am

Prelude Dr. Anthony Pattin

Ringin' of the Bell

Opening Hymn "Take My Life, That I May Be" No. 685

Invocation

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

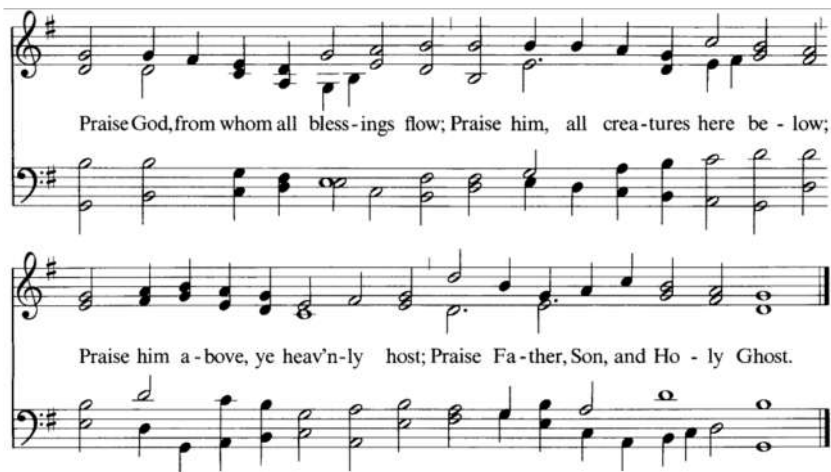
C: **And also with you.**

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

C: **And also with you.**

P: Let us share the peace of the Lord.

(Passing of the Peace which concludes by singing the Doxology:)



Praise God, from whom all bless-ings flow; Praise him, all crea-tures here be - low;
Praise him a - bove, ye heav'n-ly host; Praise Fa-ther, Son, and Ho - ly Ghost.

Prayer of the Day

P: Let us pray. 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.

C: **Amen.**

(Please be seated)

Announcements

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.

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.

^{4:1}But 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?"

Reader: Word of God. Word of Life.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM: Psalm 145:1-8 (congregation responds in **BOLD**)

- ¹ I will extol you, my God and King,
and bless your name forever and ever.
² **Every day I will bless you,
and praise your name forever and ever.**
³ Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
his greatness is unsearchable.
⁴ **One generation shall laud your works to another,
and shall declare your mighty acts.**
⁵ On the glorious splendor of your majesty,
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.
⁶ **The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed,
and I will declare your greatness.**
⁷ They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness,
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.
⁸ **The LORD is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**

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.

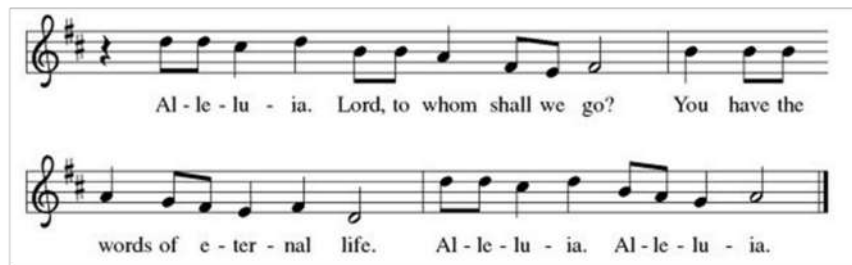
²¹ For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. ²² If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me, yet I cannot say which I will choose. ²³ I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better, ²⁴ but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. ²⁵ 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, ²⁶ so that, by my presence again with you, your boast might abound in Christ Jesus because of me.
²⁷ 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 ²⁸ 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. ²⁹ For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ but of suffering for him as well, ³⁰ since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

Reader: Word of God. Word of Life.

C: Thanks be to God.

(Please stand)

Alleluia Verse - (sung by the congregation)



Gospel Announcement

P: The Gospel according to St. Matthew, Chapter 20.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

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.

[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."

Gospel Response

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

(Please be seated)

Pastor Rayl

Sermon Hymn

"As Saints of Old"

No. 695

(Please stand)

Apostles' Creed

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

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's 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 to the dead.
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.

(Please be seated)

The Offering

Musical Offertory *"Make Me a Channel of Your Peace"*

FSJ Chancel Choir
Jo-Anne Chrysochoos, Director

(Please stand)

Offering Response - *(sung by the congregation, as the offering plates are brought forward to the Altar).*



Offering Prayer

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us pray. Merciful God, as grains of wheat scattered upon the hills were gathered together to become one bread, so let your church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom, for yours is the glory through Jesus Christ, now and forever.

C: Amen.

The Great Thanksgiving

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

P: It is indeed right and salutary that we should at all times and in all places offer thanks and praise to you, O Lord, holy Father, through Christ our Lord; who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. And so, with the Church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



P: In the night in which He was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

P: Again, after supper, He took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me. For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

C: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

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

The Lord's Prayer *(prayed by all)*

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.

Invitation to Communion

P: The risen Christ invites us to this table.

C: Come, eat and be satisfied.

(Please be seated)

The Communion *(distribution will be continuous)*

All baptized Christians, believing that our Lord Jesus Christ is truly present in the bread and wine of Holy Communion, bringing to us the gift of forgiveness and the promise of eternal life, are welcome to gather at the Lord's table. Infants, children and others who have not been baptized are welcome to come to receive a blessing; please make an X with your arms across your chest."

*** Please be certain to fill our a communion record card then put it in the offering plate or hand it to the usher when directed to go up to receive the bread and wine.

If you wish to receive apple juice instead of wine, place your hand over your shoulder as you approach the person distributing the wine.

(After all have received communion, please stand.)

P: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and sustain you in God's grace.

C: Amen.

Post Communion Response *(sung in unison)*

Thankful Hearts and Voices Raise



Text: John W. Arthur, 1922-1980
Music: Richard W. Hillert, b. 1923
Text and music © 1978, 1995 Augsburg Fortress.

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Prayer after Communion

P: We give you thanks, O God, that you welcome us to your table and satisfy our deepest hunger and thirst. By your gifts of word

and holy meal, strengthen us to take up the cross as we go about our callings in this world, following after Jesus Christ, our servant Lord.

C: Amen.

Blessing

P: Like children held in the arms of Jesus, receive the blessing:
The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy. The Lord look upon you with favor and (+) give you peace.

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn

"Rise Up, O Saints of God!"

No. 669

Dismissal

P: Go in peace. The Spirit sends us forth to serve.

C: Thanks be to God.

Postlude

Dr. Anthony Pattin

PARTICIPANTS IN TODAY'S SERVICE

ELDERS

John Roth
Bob Haar

READER

Carol Haar

SOUND BOARD

Beth Hugueley

September 20, 2026

17TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Grace for All

It can be unnerving when someone "crashes the line" and ends up in a place ahead of you, especially when you have been waiting patiently along with everyone else. Human beings have a natural sense of fairness and order, and that means we pay attention to things like "first" and "last." So when Jesus tells this last-will-be-first story in today's gospel, we are likely to find our sensibilities challenged. Of course people who work a full day should make more money than those who come on the job an hour before the shift ends!

God calls each of us to work in the vineyard. Some of us have been in the vineyard longer than we can remember. Others of us are recently arrived. And some who gather in the worshiping community this day may be thinking about responding to the landowner's invitation for the first time.

In this vineyard, seniority does not carry much weight. Grace abounds! Not all the workers are always happy about that. However, what appears as God's disregard for the long-time faithful is actually a challenge for all workers to share in God's radical generosity. The only way to be happy as workers in the vineyard is to realize that none of us has a "right" to be here. All of us enter the Christian community as outsiders, even those baptized as infants brought by faithful Christian parents.

If our tasks in the vineyard seem wearisome chores, or if we find ourselves grumbling about God's lack of fairness, it may be time for us to look again at God's incredible openness to all of us who deserve less than what we receive. The cure to our discontent is God's amazing grace and infinite generosity. Get in line! God's about to hand you a paycheck bigger than anything you could ever imagine!