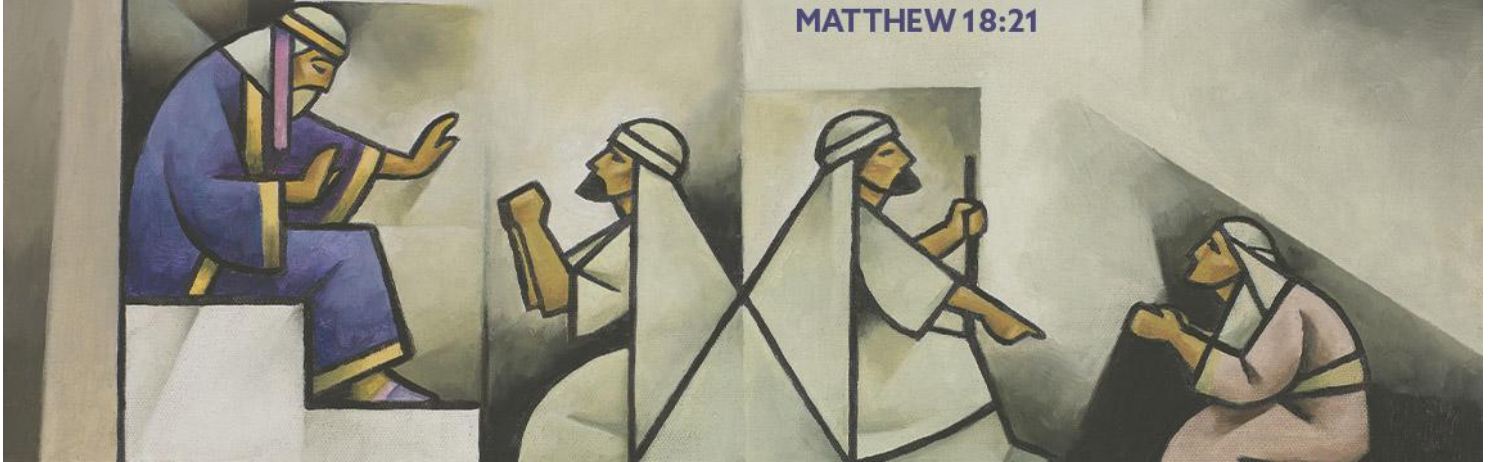


Lord, how often should I forgive?

MATTHEW 18:21



September 13, 2026

“God’s work. Our hands.”

16th Sunday after Pentecost

Bethany Lutheran Church (ELCA)

Introduction to the day

In today’s second reading Paul questions why we judge one another, since we all stand before the judgment of God. Yet we do sin against one another, and Jesus’ challenge that we forgive seventy-seven times reveals God’s boundless mercy. When we hear the words of forgiveness in worship and sign ourselves with the cross, we are renewed in baptism to be signs of reconciliation in the world.

This worship is being streamed live via Facebook and posted to our YouTube channel.
The camera captures anyone in the first few pews of our worship space and beyond extending to the altar.

PRELUDE
LIGHTING OF CANDLES
RINGING OF BELL
WELCOME

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

The assembly stands and responds with the words printed in bold.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✙ one God,
who forgives all our sin,
whose mercy endures forever.

Amen.

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.

Silence is kept for reflection.

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.

Amen.

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

Amen.

GATHERING HYMN *God's Work, Our Hands* (ACS 1000) See next page.



1 God's work, our hands: work - ing to - geth - er,
 2 God's work, our feet: trav - 'ling to - geth - er,
 3 God's work, our voice: sing - ing to - geth - er,
 4 God is at work in and a - round us:

build - ing a fu - ture, re - pair - ing the world,
 fol - low - ing Je - sus to plac - es un - known,
 prais - ing, pro - claim - ing to all who will hear,
 seed - lings are sprout - ing and bread's on the rise!

rais - ing up homes, plant - ing new gar - dens,
 walk - ing as friends, march - ing for free - dom,
 pray - ing for peace, shout - ing for jus - tice,
 Washed and set free, hum - bled and hon - ored,

feed - ing the hun - gry and shelt - 'ring the cold.
 run - ning the race with God's fu - ture the goal.
 claim - ing God's love for the lost and the least.
 gift - ed by grace, we re - spond in God's love.

Bless, God, our hands as we work in your name,
 Bless, God, our feet as we fol - low your way,
 Bless, God, our voice as we speak in your name,
 Bless, God, our lives as we an - swer your call,

shar - ing the good news of your gos - pel.
 shar - ing the good news of your gos - pel.
 shar - ing the good news of your gos - pel.
 shar - ing the good news of your gos - pel.

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.
 O Lord God, merciful judge, you are the inexhaustible fountain of forgiveness. Replace our hearts of stone with hearts that love and adore you, that we may delight in doing your will, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.

The assembly is seated.

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

FIRST READING: Genesis 50:15-21

After Jacob's death the brothers of Joseph begged for forgiveness for the crime they had done against him. You intended to do me harm, Joseph said, but God used this as an opportunity to do good and save many lives.

A reading from Genesis.

¹⁵ Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said, "What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?" ¹⁶ So they approached Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this instruction before he died, ¹⁷ 'Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.' Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. ¹⁸ Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said, "We are here as your slaves." ¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? ²⁰ Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. ²¹ So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones." In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM 103:1-13

- ¹ Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and all that is within me, bless God's holy name.
- ² **Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not all God's benefits—**
- ³ who forgives all your sins
and heals all your diseases;
- ⁴ **who redeems your life from the grave
and crowns you with steadfast love and mercy;**
- ⁵ who satisfies your desires with good things
so that your youth is renewed like an eagle's.
- ⁶ **O LORD, you provide vindication
and justice for all who are oppressed.**
- ⁷ You made known your ways to Moses
and your works to the children of Israel.
- ⁸ **LORD, you are full of compassion and mercy,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love;**
- ⁹ you will not always accuse us,
nor will you keep your anger forever.
- ¹⁰ **You have not dealt with us according to our sins,
nor repaid us according to our iniquities.**
- ¹¹ For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so great is your steadfast love for those who fear you.
- ¹² **As far as the east is from the west,
so far have you removed our transgressions from us.**
- ¹³ As a father has compassion for his children,
so you have compassion for those who fear you, O LORD.

SECOND READING: Romans 14:1-12

This Christian community has significant struggles with diversity. Here Paul helps us understand that despite different practices in worship and personal piety, we do not judge one another. All Christians belong to the Lord Jesus Christ who died for all of us and will judge each of us.

A reading from Romans.

¹ Welcome those who are weak in faith but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. ² Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. ³ Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat, for God has welcomed them. ⁴ Who are you to pass judgment on slaves of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

⁵ Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. ⁶ Those who observe the day, observe it for the Lord. Also those who eat, eat for the Lord, since they give thanks to God, while those who abstain, abstain for the Lord and give thanks to God.

⁷ For we do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. ⁸ If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

¹⁰ Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹¹ For it is written,

“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,
and every tongue shall give praise to God.”

¹² So then, each one of us will be held accountable.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

The assembly stands to welcome the gospel.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Celtic Alleluia (ELW 174)



GOSPEL READING: Matthew 18:21-35

When Peter asks about the limits of forgiveness, Jesus responds with a parable that suggests human forgiveness should mirror the unlimited mercy of God.

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

²¹ Peter came and said to [Jesus,] “Lord, if my brother or sister sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” ²² Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

²³ “For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴ When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him, ²⁵ and, as he could not pay, the lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions and payment to be made. ²⁶ So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ ²⁷ And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him by the throat he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’ ²⁹ Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ ³⁰ But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. ³¹ When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³² Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’ ³⁴ And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. ³⁵ So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

The assembly is seated.

SERMON

The assembly stands.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Trusting God at work in and among us, we raise our hearts and voices in prayer for the needs of the world.

*Each petition will conclude with, "God of grace, we pray." The assembly responds with, "**hear us when we call.**"*

Receive these and all our prayers, gracious God. We pray in the name of Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

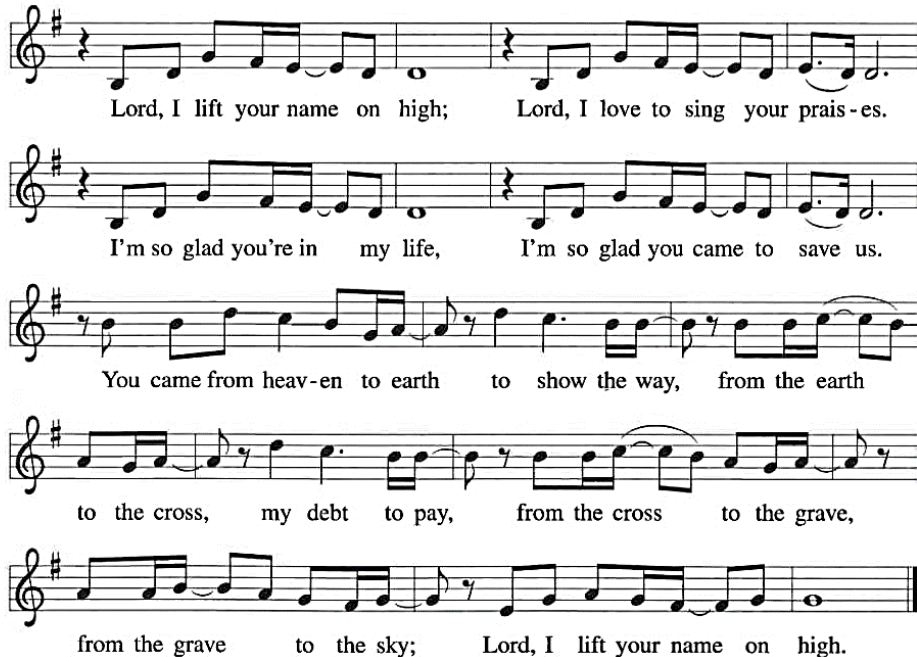
And also with you.

The assembly is seated.

OFFERING

We are grateful for your gifts, and they are needed to continue the work of the church. For those worshipping online, options on ways to give are found on our website (www.wbbethany.org). Thank you! After the offering is gathered, the people of God stand and sing the hymn below, as the gifts are brought forward.

OFFERTORY HYMN *Lord, I Lift Your Name on High* (ELW 857)



OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray.

Holy God, giver of all good things, receive the gifts we bring, fruit of the earth and the work of human hands, that they may be used to your purposes for life and love in the world. Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**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.**

CELEBRATION OF VOCATION AND BLESSING OF HANDS FOR MINISTRY

We are called to proclaim the good news:

God is at work!

This good news is not left in some history long ago or a place far away:

God is at work in the world still today!

In us and through us, God is glorified in our work.

When we offer a helping hand, God is praised.

When we share of our abundance, God is known in the world.

God is at work in us!

In our service today and in our daily lives,

let us live out what God has called us to in baptism.

God is at work through our hands!

Following the blessing below and during the hymn, “God, Bless the Hands”, you are invited to come forward to receive a blessing of your hands.

BLESSING

God who sets forth the law of love,

Jesus who fulfills the law for you,

and the Spirit through whom you are called to love,

✝ bless you this day,

that you may be God’s hands and heart and voice at work in the world.

Amen.

SENDING HYMN *God Bless the Hands* (ELW 1022)



1 God, bless the hands stretched out in love through floods be - low and
2 Bring com - fort to the hearts that mourn, left bro - ken, emp - tied
3 O God, our strength and ref - uge sure, our hope while storms of



storms a - bove; they search and res - cue, com - fort, calm, give
by the storm. Give hope to those in deep - est grief; em -
life en - dure: teach us to live in har - mo - ny with



shel - ter, of - fer heal - ing balm. Oh, guard them by your
pow - er us to bring re - lief. To you, O God, we
earth and riv - er, sky and sea, pre - serv - ing wa - ters,



stead - fast hand; reach out in love to help us stand.
raise our hands. Save us, we pray, from sink - ing sands.
air, and lands as ho - ly work for hu - man hands.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. You are God’s hands at work in the world!

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE



Thank you for worshipping with us today. Just as Jesus welcomed the stranger, we believe all are welcome here. Please join us again next week. For more information about our life together in Christ, visit: www.wbbethany.org

OUR MINISTRY ASSISTANTS		
Ministers of:	Today	Sep 20th
Music	Jill Barnhart	Jill Barnhart
Proclamation (Lector)	Beth Kaufman	Alan Beyer
Hospitality (Greeter)	Nancy Bruns	Jon & Laura Twing
Technology	Darla & Kevin Crosthwaite	Kent Kaufman
Worship (Altar Care)	Kent & Beth Kaufman	Kent & Beth Kaufman
Food & Fellowship	GWOH	Potluck

Outdoor Worship

SEPTEMBER 20

9:30 AM

Please bring a chair.

POTLUCK AFTER WORSHIP

Sign up online:

<https://tinyurl.com/58wa54hw>




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Choir Practice Resumes

September 16

6:00 PM

New choir members are welcome!

See Jill with any questions.