

# THE CHURCH *God* ~~WE~~ WANT*s*

**A CHURCH WILLING TO SAY HARD THINGS**

The Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

# **BETHEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH** | York, Nebraska

*September 10, 2023*

## **SERIES THEME: THE CHURCH GOD WANTS**

"I want a church that..." How would you complete that statement? Would you focus on size—big or small? Would you think more about style—formal versus laid back? Is it certain desired church programs that come to mind? What exactly do you want in a church? In this worship series, we see that that is not the right question. Scripture says Jesus bought the Church with his blood. So, the right question then becomes: what does God want in a church? You might find a church that runs all the youth programs you want or has a vibe that you enjoy or is in your ideal location. But if that church is not doing what Christ wants it do, then it really is not a spiritually healthy place to be. So, let us think about the church God wants. What does it look like? What are its priorities? What does it all do?

## **THEME OF THE DAY: A CHURCH WILLING TO SAY HARD THINGS**

Imagine, late one night, you notice the house across the street is on fire. You see no activity inside. You say to yourself, "Pounding on the door in the middle of the night might scare the family. I'm sure they'll realize what's going on eventually." Ridiculous! You would never do that! To let a family sleep while flames surround them would be cruel. Your inaction would make you a killer. The truth is you would pound on their door at 3:00 AM, screaming. You would throw a brick through their front window if that was what it took to warn them. You would not care if it startled the family. This is a matter of life and death! Love compels you to do whatever it takes. God wants the people of his church to be willing to say hard things to people when that is what is necessary to save them from an even worse type of fire. Warning against sin is not easy. It upsets people, even offends them. But saying hard things is the loving thing to do when it is a matter of eternal life and death.

**Worship Leader**  
**Organist/Pianist**

Pastor Justin Wilkens  
Timothy Richert

## **Acknowledgments**

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## **The Service, Setting Three (page 188 in Christian Worship 21)**

### **Hymn: 839 Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me**

*Stand*

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

**Amen.**

### **Confession**

*CW 189*

Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

**Blessed are they whose sin the Lord does not count against them.**

Let us confess our sins to the Lord.

**Almighty and merciful Father,**

**we have strayed from your ways like lost sheep.**

**We have followed what we have devised and desired in our hearts.**

**We have offended you and sinned against your holy law.**

**We have done those things that we should not have done,**

**and we have not done those things that we should have done.**

**Have mercy on us, Lord!**

**Spare us, forgive us, and restore us,**

**according to your promises in Christ Jesus.**

*Silence for meditation and reflection*

God, our merciful Father, has forgiven all our sins. He sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Redeemer and Savior. Jesus paid the penalty for our guilt by his death on the cross and freed us from death by his resurrection from the grave. We have peace with God now and forever.

**Amen.**

### **Lord, Have Mercy**

*CW 213*

Hear my voice when I call, O Lord; be merciful and answer me.

**Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.**

# Glory Be to God on High

CW 157



Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good will toward men.



We praise you, we bless you, we wor - ship you, we glorify you,



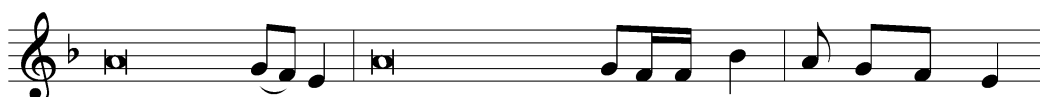
we give thanks to you, for your great glory, O Lord God, heav'n-ly King,



God the Fa-ther Al - mighty. O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Je-sus Christ;



O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sin of the world;



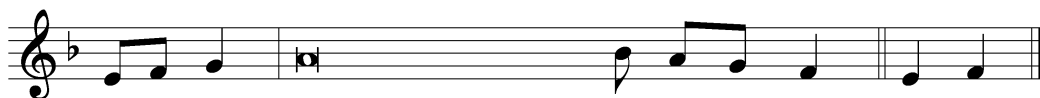
have mercy on us. You take away the sin of the world; re-ceive our prayer.



You sit at the right hand of God the Father; have mercy on us.



For you on-ly are holy; you on-ly are the Lord. You only, O Christ, with the



Ho - ly Spirit, are most high in the glory of God the Father. A - men.

## THE WORD

The Lord be with you.  
**And also with you.**

### Prayer of the Day

Let us pray.

O Lord Jesus Christ, preserve the congregation of believers with your never-failing mercy. Help us avoid whatever is wicked and harmful, and guide us in the way that leads to our salvation; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

*Be seated*

### First Reading

*Ezekiel 33:7–11*

*The Lord told the prophet Ezekiel if he didn't warn the Israelites about their sin, he was going to hold Ezekiel accountable for their blood.*

<sup>7</sup> But I have appointed you, son of man, to be a watchman for the house of Israel. So whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you are to warn them from me. <sup>8</sup> When I say to a wicked man, "Wicked man, you shall surely die," if you do not speak to warn the wicked man against his way, that wicked man will die because of his guilt, but I will also hold you responsible for his blood. <sup>9</sup> But if you do warn the wicked man to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he will die because of his guilt, but you will have saved your life.

<sup>10</sup> So you, son of man, say the following to the house of Israel.

This is what you people are saying: "Certainly our rebellion and our sins weigh us down, and because of them we are rotting away. How then can we live?" <sup>11</sup> Say to them, "As I live, declares the Lord God, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from their way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why should you die, O house of Israel?"

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

## Second Reading

Galatians 2:11–16

*Paul is put in the uncomfortable position of having to comfort Cephas (known as Peter). In doing so, Paul wins Peter over to the truth of the gospel.*

### Paul Opposes Cephas

<sup>11</sup> But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly wrong. <sup>12</sup> For before some people came from James, he ate with the Gentiles. But when those people came, he drew back and separated himself, because he feared those from the circumcision group. <sup>13</sup> And the rest of the Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. <sup>14</sup> But when I saw that they were not acting according to the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of all of them, "If you, a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, why do you compel the Gentiles to live like the Jews?" <sup>15</sup> "We are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners. <sup>16</sup> We know that a person is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. So we also believed in Christ Jesus that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law.

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*Stand*

### Gospel Acclamation

1 Timothy 2:4



*Refrain*



*Tone*



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## **Gospel**

*Matthew 18:15–20*

*Jesus teaches us how to lovingly practice Christian discipline as we seek to win our straying brother or sister over.*

### **Dealing With Sin in the Church**

<sup>15</sup> “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his sin just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have regained your brother. <sup>16</sup> But if he will not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ <sup>17</sup> If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And, if he refuses to listen even to the church, then treat him as an unbeliever or a tax collector. <sup>18</sup> Amen I tell you: Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. <sup>19</sup> Amen I tell you again: If two of you on earth agree to ask for anything, it will be done for them by my Father who is in heaven. <sup>20</sup> In fact where two or three have gathered together in my name, there I am among them.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise be to you, O Christ!**

*Be seated*

### **Hymn of the Day: 654 Jesus Sinners Does Receive**

**Sermon:** Galatians 2:11-16

*Stand*

### **Nicene Creed**

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is,  
seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,**

**of one being with the Father.  
Through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,  
and became truly human.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate.  
He suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures.  
He ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who in unity with the Father and the Son  
is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.  
We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

*Be seated*

## **Prayer of the Church**

*Brief intercessory prayers may be added in a fitting place.*

Loving God and Lord, you created the universe that surrounds us and the globe on which we live. You control all things through your Son, who sits at your right hand in glory.

**Comfort us with the promise of your eternal presence.**

Give your Word power as it works in our hearts and minds. Clear away our confusion, and demolish our doubts. Send your Spirit to strengthen both our confidence in your promises and our desire to live according to your will.

**Take away our love of sinning, and restore us each day by your grace.**



The signs of the times warn us that the end of time is near. Protect us from scoffers who sneer at your truth. Spare us and Christians around the world from all forms of hate and persecution.

**Give us courage to carry the cross with patience and joy.**

Instill in the hearts of our children a desire to follow you as they prepare for future days. Help them distinguish between what is passing and what is eternal, between instant thrills and lasting joy. Encourage more young people to prepare for service in the public ministry of the gospel.

**Mold us and move us to be good examples for our youth.**

Hold in your care, Lord, those who are experiencing physical or emotional pain and all who are afflicted by disease or facing death. [Especially bless . . . *here name the person and the cause of the petition.*] Pour out your compassion on the grieving, and comfort the mourners who miss someone they loved.

**Move us to pray for these brothers and sisters and to help when we can.**

Hear us, Lord, as we pray in silence.

*Silent prayer*

Whether we pray together or alone, you have promised to hear and answer us. Give us patience to accept your blessings in whatever way you send them. In your love and wisdom, prepare us for the day when you will take us to be with you forever.

**Hear us for Jesus' sake. Amen.**

## **Offering**

**Offering Hymn: 559 If Your Beloved Son, O God**

*sts. 1–2*

## **THE SACRAMENT**

*Stand*

**Preface**

*CW 199*

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who promised that wherever two or three come together in his name, there he is with them to shepherd his flock until he comes again in glory. Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

### Holy, Holy, Holy

CW 200

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). It consists of six staves of music. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff is a short melodic phrase. The second staff begins the main text: 'Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of hosts,'. The third staff continues: 'heav - en and earth are full, full of your glo - ry.' The fourth staff: 'Ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.' The fifth staff: 'Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.' The sixth staff: 'Ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.'

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of hosts,  
heav - en and earth are full, full of your glo - ry.  
Ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.  
Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.



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### Prayer of Thanksgiving

Blessed are you, Lord God, eternal King and gracious Father. In love you made us the crown of your creation. In mercy you planned our salvation. In grace you sent your Son to redeem us from sin.

We remember and give you thanks that your eternal Son, Jesus Christ, became flesh and made his dwelling among us, that he willingly placed himself under law to redeem those under law, that he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death on a cross, that he has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Bless us as we receive your Son's body and blood in this Sacrament. Forgive our sins, increase our faith, strengthen our fellowship, and deepen our longing for the day when Christ will welcome us to his eternal feast. Praise and thanks and honor and glory be to you, O God our Father, and to your Son and to the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**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.**

### **Words of Institution**

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my + body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my + blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The peace of the Lord be with you always.  
**Amen.**

### **Lamb of God**

*CW 202*

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the  
world; have mer - cy on us.

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the  
world; have mer - cy on us.

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the  
world; grant us, grant us peace.

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*Be seated*

## Distribution

**Close Communion** *We ask that only those who have previously spoken to our pastor or are members in good standing of this or another WELS or ELS congregation come to Holy Communion today. Our practice of Close Communion (which has been the practice of the Christian Church throughout the ages) is in no way trying to judge anyone's faith. What we are trying to do is follow the Bible's clear teaching (1 Corinthians 11) to first study God's Word together. As we do so, we can share with/review with you what the Lord's Supper is all about. You, then, also have an opportunity to examine what we believe and teach before you come to the Lord's Supper and make a public profession that you agree with what we teach.*

## Distribution Hymn: 661 Draw Near and Take the Body of Your Lord

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;  
**his mercy endures forever.**

Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup,  
**we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.**

O God the Father, source of all goodness, in your loving-kindness you sent your Son to share our humanity. We thank you that through him you have given us pardon and peace in this Sacrament. We also pray that you will not forsake us but will rule our hearts and minds by your Holy Spirit so that we willingly serve you day after day; 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 + give you peace.

**Amen.**

## **Hymn: 926 Lead Me, Lord**



## **NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Today:** 9:30 AM Bible Study and Sunday School, 10:30 AM Worship and Communion

**Sunday:** 9:30 AM Bible Study and Sunday School, 10:30 AM Worship

**CONNECTION CARDS:** Visitors or members with changes in contact information, please fill out a connection card online at [www.bethelyork.com](http://www.bethelyork.com) on the member connect tab or scan this code.



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Personal assisted listening devices are available.

**Given to the Lord:** Attendance: Worship 54, Offerings: Operating: Needed 2,920.37, Given \$2,115.25. **To God be the glory!**

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