

Welcome to Worship at  
Trinity Lutheran Church, Osceola, WI  
Pentecost 16 - September 12, 2021

P: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer. Amen.

**Hymn #569 - "O Christ, Our True and Only Light"**

**O Christ, our true and only light,  
Enlighten those who sit in night;  
Let those afar now hear your voice  
And in your fold with us rejoice.**

**Fill with the radiance of your grace  
The souls now lost in error's maze  
And all whom in their secret minds  
Some dark delusion haunts and blinds.**

**Oh, gently call those gone astray  
That they may find the saving way!  
Let ev'ry conscience sore oppressed  
In you find peace and heav'nly rest.**

**Shine on the darkened and the cold;  
Recall the wand'ers to your fold.  
Unite all those who walk apart;  
Confirm the weak and doubting heart**

**That they with us may evermore  
Such grace with wond'ring thanks adore  
And endless praise to you be giv'n  
By all your Church in earth and heav'n.**

**Confession of Sins:**

P: Beloved in the Lord, let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins to God our Father, asking Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

**C: Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we poor sinners confess to You that we are by nature sinful and unclean and that we have sinned against You in our thoughts, words, and actions. Therefore we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy, seeking and imploring Your grace and forgiveness for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. O Lord, have mercy on us!**

**P: Upon this your confession, I as a called servant of Christ and His Word announce to you the grace of God, and in the place of and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.**

**C: Amen.**

### **First Lesson: Isaiah 35:4-7a**

Tell those who have a fearful heart: Be strong. Do not be afraid. Look! Your God will come with vengeance. With God's own retribution, he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will be unplugged. The crippled will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will sing for joy. Waters will flow in the wilderness, and streams in the wasteland. The burning sand will become a pool, and in the thirsty ground there will be springs of water. (EHV)

### **Psalm 146**

**Refrain: I will praise your name forever, my King and my God.**

**Praise the LORD, 'O my soul,  
I will sing praise to my God as long 'as I live.**

**Do not put your trust in 'princes,  
In mortal men, who 'cannot save.**

**Blessed is he whose hope is in the 'LORD his God,  
The maker of heav'en and earth.**

**Refrain: I will praise your name forever, my King and my God.**

**The LORD gives food to the 'hungry,  
The LORD sets 'prisoners free.**

**The LORD gives sight 'to the blind,  
The LORD lifts up those who are 'bowed down.**

**The LORD watches over the 'outcast  
And sustains the fatherless and the 'widow.**

**The LORD remains faithful for'ever,  
He upholds the cause of 'the oppressed.**

**Glory be to the Father and 'to the Son  
And to the Holy 'Spirit,  
As it was in the be'ginning,  
Is now, and will be forever. 'Amen.**

**Refrain: I will praise your name forever, my King and my God.**

**Second Lesson: James 1:17-27**

Every good act of giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the lights, who does not change or shift like a shadow. Just as he planned, he gave us birth by the word of truth so that we would be a kind of firstfruits of his creations. Remember this, my dear brothers: Let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry. Certainly, a man's anger does not bring about what is right before God. So after getting rid of all moral filthiness and overflowing wickedness, receive with humility the word planted in you. It is able to save your souls. Be people who do what the word says, not people who only hear it. Such people are deceiving themselves. In fact, if anyone hears the word and does not do what it says, he is like a man who carefully looks at his own natural face in a mirror. Indeed, he carefully looks at himself; then, he goes away and immediately forgets what he looked like. But the one who looks carefully into the perfect law, the law of freedom, and continues to do so - since he does not hear and forget but actually does what it says - that person will be blessed in what he does. If anyone considers himself to be religious but deceives his own heart because he does not bridle his tongue, this person's religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled in the sight of God the Father is this: to take care of orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the world. (EHV)

**Verse of the Day:** Alleluia. Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Alleluia.

### **Gospel: Mark 7:31-37**

Jesus left the region of Tyre again and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of the Decapolis. They brought a man to him who was deaf and had a speech impediment. They pleaded with Jesus to place his hand on him. Jesus took him aside in private, away from the crowd. He put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. After he looked up to heaven, he sighed and said, "Ephphatha!" (which means "Be opened!") Immediately the man's ears were opened, his tongue was set free, and he began to speak plainly. Jesus gave the people strict orders to tell no one, but the more he did so, the more they kept proclaiming it. They were amazed beyond measure and said, "He has done everything well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak!" (EHV)

### **The 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.**

### **Hymn #447 - *"Who Trusts in God, a Strong Abode"***

**Who trusts in God, a strong abode  
In heav'n and earth possesses;  
Who looks in love to Christ above -  
No fear his heart oppresses.  
In you alone, dear Lord, we own  
Sweet hope and consolation,  
Our shield from foes, our balm for woes,  
Our great and sure salvation.**

**Though Satan's wrath beset our path  
And worldly scorn assail us,**

**While you are near, we will not fear;  
Your strength will never fail us.  
Your rod and staff will keep us safe  
And guide our steps forever;  
Nor shades of death nor hell beneath  
Our souls from you will sever.**

**In all the strife of mortal life  
Our feet will stand securely.  
Temptation's hour will lose its pow'r,  
For you will guard us surely.  
O God, renew with heav'nly dew  
Our body, soul, and spirit  
Until we stand at your right hand  
Through Jesus' saving merit.**

**The Sermon: James 1:17-27  
"Aim For The Best"**

Whenever we're **looking** for something, we always want it to be the **best**. Why is that? It's because we don't want to **settle** for **mediocrity** - whether it's in our **elected officials**, our **economy**, our **military**, or even in our **laundry soap**. We **Aim For The Best** - for **wise and godly leaders**, for **high productivity**, for **military strength**, and for **clean, bright clothes**. And why **not** go for the **best**? If America really is the **greatest** nation on earth, with an abundance of **resources**, high **ideals**, and **educated** citizens, then certainly the **best** shouldn't be out of our reach.

That's true for our **worship life** as well. Why should we **settle** for attending **worship** services just once a month? Why should we **pray** only when there's a **problem** in our life? Why should we settle for **getting by** with doing as little as possible, when we could **stretch** ourselves into doing **more** for the Lord and His kingdom? Why not be the **best** Christians that we can be? We have a **wonderful** Savior - a Savior who has conquered **sin** and **death** for us - a Savior who **rose** from the dead, and ascended into **heaven** to prepare a **place** for us - a Savior who **rules** over the entire **universe** for the good of His **Church**. And best of all, Jesus has given us the gift of the **Holy Spirit** - the Spirit who dwells in our **hearts** - the Spirit to whom we **pray** - and the Spirit who promises to **answer** all of our prayers. Certainly all of these **blessings** deserve **our best** response.

**James** - a **brother** of the Lord Jesus Himself, and also the **leader** of the Christian church in **Jerusalem**, wrote the words of our sermon text for today - words which take a look at our **superficial** way of living, and which **challenge** us to **Aim For The Best**. Right off the bat that means, don't merely **hear** God's Word, but **do** what it says.

One of the problems that plagues us as Christians is that we don't go **far enough** with God's Word. We **hear** the Word of God on a regular basis, but all too often it just gets **stuck** there - or **worse** than that, it just comes **in one ear**, and goes **out the other**. What we really **need** is to have that Word driven from our **ears** into our **hearts** and **lives**. James writes, "*Be people who **do** what the word says, not people who only **hear** it.*"

When we only **hear** the Word of God and fail to **live** it, we **deceive** ourselves into thinking that we're **honoring** God and His Word. In our text, James says that we're like the man who "*carefully looks at his own natural face in a **mirror**. Indeed, he carefully **looks** at himself; then, he goes away and immediately **forgets** what he looked like.*" That's just a **waste of time**, isn't it? Why wouldn't we **wash** our face, or **comb** our hair, or **fix** whatever it is that needs fixing. After we've **seen** where the **problems** are, the next logical step would be to **do something** about them. James uses that same picture for people who only **hear** God's Word. God's Word shows them the **problems** which exist in their lives, but they don't bother to **change** anything. They **hear** the Word tell them to give **thanks** to the Lord, but days and weeks and even months go by, **without** them offering any prayers of **thanks** to God. They **hear** the Word tell them to **forgive** those who have sinned against them, but they continue to hold **grudges**, and **refuse** to offer forgiveness. They **hear** the Word pointing out their **sins** and the **condemnation** they deserve **because** of them, but they aren't willing to **give up** any of those sins. They don't **repent** - they don't make **amends** - and in reality they're no different than the self-righteous **Pharisees** to whom John the Baptist said, "*Already the **axe** is ready to strike the **root** of the trees. So every tree that does not produce **good fruit** is **cut down** and thrown into the **fire**.*"

Could that be **us too**? Let's take a look at **our** hearing of God's Word. Do we only hear it as a mere **formality**, because we're **supposed** to hear God's Word? Or do we let it **penetrate** our hearts to produce **repentance**, and to guide our **conduct**? Do we quickly **forget** what we've heard as soon as the worship service is over? Or do we take what we've heard **home** with us and **apply** it to our daily **lives**, so that we will not only be **hearers**, but also **doers** of the Word?

James gives us some wonderful **encouragement** in our text. He writes, *“The man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but **doing** it - he will be **blessed** in what he does.”* James says that the Law of God gives **freedom**. It points out our **sins** - sins which have the potential to **crush** us, and to bring us **eternal death**. In this way God’s Law **kills** our pride, along with any hope of saving **ourselves** through **our** good works. We need to see how **desperate** we are, so we will also see our need for the **Gospel**, and God’s promise of a **Savior**. **Jesus** was the one who **chose** to be **crushed** for **our** iniquities. On the **cross** He suffered the punishment of **hell** in **our** place. His **resurrection** from the dead on the third day, assures us that His sacrifice **cancelled** the debt we owed because of our sins. God’s Word - the combination of **Law** and **Gospel** - gives **freedom**. It announces, *“There is now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus”* - freeing us **from** the weight of **sin** and the fear of **death**; and freeing us to **love God**, to live in **peace** with Him, and to see His commandments as **blessings**, instead of **burdens**. God’s Word **also** frees us to approach God boldly in **prayer** as His dear children.

These **freedoms** are the **blessings** which God’s Word promises to give to those who **look intently** into the Word, and are **doers** of it. These are freedoms which we **all** want to receive as we **Aim For The Best** in our lives. When we believe the **Good News** that Jesus is our **Savior**, and put His Word into **practice**; we can have a quiet **conscience**, the **certainty** of God’s **love** for us, constant reminders of our **redemption**, and the **joy** of living **for** and serving **Jesus** with our lives. We can have genuine **love** for one another, and we can live in **harmony** with the people around us. **Aim For The Best**. Don’t just be **hearers** of God’s Word, be **doers** of it, and we will be **blessed**.

The **next** words of our text urge us to make sure that the way we live our lives is **pure** and **faultless**. James writes, *“If anyone considers himself to be **religious** but **deceives** his own heart because he does not bridle his **tongue**, this person’s religion is **worthless**.”* James uses the terms **religious** and **religion** to refer to the way we **live** our lives and **show** our faith. When people aren’t **willing** or **able** to bridle their **tongue**, and end up - speaking words in **anger**, or **recklessly** voicing their opinion, or running down the reputation of others with **gossip**, or salting their speech with **vulgarity**, or talking **disrespectfully** to parents and others in authority - those people are **deceiving** themselves, and their religion is **worthless**.

We always want to **Aim For The Best** in the way we speak. Jesus gave us the gift of the **Holy Spirit** so we can use our tongues to give **glory to God**.

Through the Spirit we can get **rid** of all those forms of **evil** speech. Instead, we can call God our **Father**, and we can tell others about His kind and forgiving **heart**.

But there's still **more**. James **continues** his words on Christian living by saying, "*Religion that is **pure and undefiled** in the sight of God the Father is **this**: to take care of **orphans and widows** in their affliction and to keep oneself **unstained** by the world.*" On the sixth day of creation God created the **family** when He created **Eve** and brought her to Adam. Husband and wife joined together in **marriage** was the **foundation** for all society. The gift of **children** would come through marriage, and the needs of those children would be **provided** in the **family**. But what would **happen** to a woman and her children when her husband **died**? In those days there were very few opportunities for women to **work** outside the home to **provide** for themselves and their children. There was no government **welfare system** - no **Aid for Dependent Children**. So, God called on **His** people - the **Church** - to look after orphans and widows. There is still **much work** for us to do on that front even **today**. Recent statistics put the number of children in foster care in the United States alone at 443,000, with over 123,000 of them waiting to be adopted.

When Jesus left this earth and ascended into heaven, He didn't leave **us** as **orphans**. He gave us His **Holy Spirit** to **comfort** us in all our troubles. Jesus has made us into a family of **believers** - brothers and sisters who will **look after** each other. And as we **do** that Jesus says, "*Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for **me**.*" Let's **Aim For The Best** as we reach out with the love of Jesus to **all people** who need **love** and **protection** - helping to provide for their **physical needs**, but most important of all, sharing with them the Good News of **salvation** through **Jesus**.

And let's not forget what James added at the very **end** of today's text, "*Keep oneself **unstained** by the world.*" The **world** is filled with **evil**. It's populated with people who don't follow **Jesus**, and who don't **care** about His **Word**. But we know that the blood which Jesus shed on the cross has **cleansed** us from **all** of our sins. The Apostle Paul wrote in his letter to **Titus**, "*(Christ) gave **himself** for us, to **redeem** us from all lawlessness and to **purify** for himself a people who are his own **chosen** people, eager to do **good works**.*" We live **in** this world, but are not **of** this world. We belong to **Jesus**. So, may we always set our hearts and minds on things **above** - on our dear Lord **Jesus** - so that we keep ourselves from being **unstained** by the world.



Let's never settle for **mediocrity** in our Christianity, but instead, **Aim For The Best**. We've already **received** the best in Jesus Christ our **Savior**, who offered His **perfect life** to pay for our sins, who rose from the dead to assure us of His **victory** over death and the Devil, and who ascended into heaven to prepare a **place** for **each** of us. May we **gladly** and **willingly** hear the Word of God, and **do** what it says, as we **Aim For The Best** in the way we live our lives as Christians. Amen.

### **Prayers:**

O holy God in heaven, today we humbly come before You with contrite hearts, solemnly confessing our sins. Our lives seem to be an unending succession of sins in thought, word, and deed. Frequently, we have been **slow** to listen, **quick** to speak, and quick to get **angry**. The **gentle** words of love and forgiveness which we **should** have spoken, have all too often been replaced with **sharp** and **hurtful** words of **bitterness** and **scorn**. At times we have opted for superficial **earthly** pleasures, instead of the **heavenly** treasures which we can discover by reading and hearing Your **Word**. Greed, envy, and covetousness have displaced the **contentment** and **satisfaction** that belong to those who put their complete trust in **You**. We're not blaming **You**, and we're not making **excuses**. We have been **weak** - we have been **sinful** - and we are coming to You for **forgiveness**.

We ask You to **comfort** us, and give us the true **peace** which comes from Your promise that all our sins have been **canceled out**, never again to bar the way to everlasting life. **Forgive** us for Jesus' sake, and restore to us the **joy** of Your salvation. Lead us to realize that our bodies are the dwelling place of the **Holy Spirit**, so that with great **zeal**, we may present ourselves to You **daily**, ready to do every good work which You have **prepared** for us to do. Amen.

### **The 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.**

**Hymn #388 - "Redeemed, Restored, Forgiven"**

**Redeemed, restored, forgiven  
Through Jesus' precious blood,  
Heirs of his home in heaven -  
Oh, praise our pard'ning God!  
Praise him in tuneful measures  
Who gave his Son to die;  
Praise him whose sev'nfold treasures  
Enrich and sanctify.**

**Once on the dreary mountain  
We wandered far and wide,  
Far from the cleansing fountain,  
Far from the pierced side.  
But Jesus sought and found us;  
Our many sins he bore.  
With cords of love he bound us  
To him forevermore.**

**Dear Master, yours the glory  
Of each recovered soul.  
Ah, who can tell the story  
Of love that made us whole?  
Not ours, not ours the merit;  
To you alone the praise!  
Give us a thankful spirit  
To serve you all our days.**

**Now keep us, holy Savior,  
In your true love and fear,  
And grant us by your favor  
The grace to persevere  
Till, in your new creation,  
Our earthly troubles o'er,  
Heirs of your free salvation,  
We praise you evermore.**

P: Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared before the face of

all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Your people Israel.  
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.

**The Blessing:**

P: 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.

C: **Amen.**

**Hymn #782 - “Lord, Support Us All Day Long”**

**Lord, support us all day long,  
Guide and strengthen.  
Evening comes, the world is hushed,  
Shadows lengthen,  
Work is done, life’s fevered pace  
Now has ended;  
Christ, to you our final rest  
Is commended.**

**Be our light in darkness, Lord,  
Our defender;  
In your presence perils all  
Must surrender.  
Drive all dark satanic snares  
From each dwelling;  
Then, at peace, our hearts your praise  
Will be telling.**

**With your presence, Lord, draw near  
Those who labor  
Through the nighttime on behalf  
Of their neighbor.  
Grant them courage for each fear,  
Faithful caring;  
Your compassion and your love  
Truly sharing.**

**Gracious Lord, we give you thanks,  
Praise and bless you,  
As the giver of all good  
We confess you.  
This past day we now commit  
To your keeping  
And entrust to you the hours  
Of our sleeping.**