

Sermon followed by Service

March 13, 2022

Matthew 7:15-2

“Beware. Watch out for people who wear a cross. Watch out for people who claim to belong to Christ, who claim to speak for Christ.” Sounds like something an atheist might say, doesn’t it? Or if not an atheist, at least someone who has something against Christians. If not an atheist, if not someone with something against Christians, who would say: “Beware. Watch out for people who wear a cross. Watch out for people who claim to belong to Christ, who claim to speak for Christ”? Who would say such a thing? How about Jesus?

In our lesson Jesus says: “Watch out for false prophets.” Watch out for false teachers. If that were all Jesus said here, some could say Jesus is just warning: “Watch out for the prophets of false gods and idols; watch out for the teachers of other religions.” No doubt - Jesus isn’t part of that crowd that says: “It doesn’t matter what religion you have, what god you have.” Jesus isn’t part of that crowd that says: “All roads lead to the same place; all roads lead to heaven.” Jesus isn’t part of that crowd that says: “Allah, Jehovah, God, and Lord, are just different names for the same god.” Jesus very clearly said: **“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”** Without Jesus, without faith in Jesus, there is no access to God, no life with God. That’s not just me talking; that’s Jesus who said: **“whoever does not believe [in him] will be condemned.”** But Jesus isn’t just saying: “Watch out for the prophets of Baal and Zeus and Jupiter, or the prophets of Allah, Buddhism, or Hinduism, is he?”

Some people try to get around what Jesus is saying here by claiming that Jesus is talking about insincere spiritual leaders, insincere

Bible teachers, preachers, pastors who are just in it for the money, and if not for the money, who are in it for whatever they get out of it - in other words, they are in it for themselves. There are spiritual leaders, even Bible teachers who are just in it for the money, or whatever they can get out of it. But is that all that Jesus is saying here: “Watch out for pretend pastors, false teachers who are just going through the motions, false teachers who are just in it for themselves”? Is he just saying: “Watch out for spiritual leaders with insincere motives”? No. Jesus doesn’t tell us to try to figure out what is on the inside of teachers and preachers; he tells us we will recognize false teachers and preachers by what comes out of them - by their teaching and preaching. Does their teaching and preaching line up with what Jesus and the Bible says? Or does their preaching and teaching lead people away from Jesus and the Bible?

*Why do “care and sincerity” fail as tests to determine the identity of false teachers?*

That’s not always easy to tell, is it? Jesus says: “**They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.**” False teachers can come looking and sounding safe and sincere - they might be completely sincere. False teachers can look and sound like they care. They can look and sound like they have the success and blessing of God, doing the works of God with the power of God - at least, that’s what it can look like. The false teachers that Jesus warns us about say nice things about Jesus; false teachers can say some really nice things about Jesus. But instead of speaking the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth about Jesus, they twist and turn who Jesus is and what Jesus does, they lie and deny who Jesus is and what Jesus does. They might say nice things about Jesus, but Jesus says the

day is coming when he will answer them: “I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!”

*Why does “doing works of God” fail as test to identify false teachers?*

*Why is Jesus so deadly serious about false teachers?*

What has Jesus so deadly serious? Jesus knows what we need. Jesus knows what he has for us. And Jesus knows what people wearing crosses and calling themselves Christian preachers, teachers, and churches ... he knows what people claiming to speak for him are saying. He knows there are people calling themselves Christian, claiming to speak for him, who say: “the Bible is just the thoughts of some long-dead white guys, and we know better now.”

*What are some signs that a teacher or church has fallen into that trap?*

*When do we fall into the same trap?*

What has Jesus so deadly serious here? Jesus knows there are people calling themselves Christian, claiming to speak for him, people who say all sorts of nice things about him - they’ll say that he is a great teacher, a great example of peace and love, but they deny who he is - that he is the Son of God, God himself.

*What so-called Christians have fallen for that trap?*

What has Jesus so deadly serious here? Jesus knows there are people calling themselves Christian, people claiming to speak for him, people who say all sorts of nice things about him, but they deny what he has done - they might even say that Jesus died on the cross to pay for our

sin, but they deny what Jesus has done by teaching: “Jesus did his part; now we need to do our part to be right with God.”

*What Christian teachers or churches have fallen for this trap?  
How do we fall into that same trap?*

What has Jesus so deadly serious here? Jesus knows there are people calling themselves Christian, people claiming to speak for him, who take and twist his promises of love - in Baptism and the Lord’s Supper - and they twist and turn Jesus’ promises of love; they suck Jesus’ life and the love out of them, and turn them into commands to be obeyed.

*What teachers or churches have fallen into this trap?  
How might we fall into the same trap?*

What has Jesus so deadly serious here? Jesus knows there are people teaching in his church who say all sorts of nice things about him, but then they say: “it doesn’t matter whether you believe in Jesus or not.”

*What teachers or churches have fallen into this trap?  
How might we fall into the same trap?*

What has Jesus so deadly serious here? Jesus knows there are people teaching and preaching in his church who are leading his sheep and his lambs to destruction and damnation.

Because false teachers can be so dangerous, Jesus says: “Stay away.” But we have a sinful nature that likes to argue. So what do we hear? “But that other church has the music we like; but that other church has the friends we like; but that other church has the feeling we like.” If people like that other church so much, why does Jesus say:

“Stay away”? Why? Because he would rather say “Stay away from them today,” than on the Last Day have to say: “Get away from me forever” because we let some false teacher lead us away.

That’s why Jesus says: “Beware. Watch out for people who wear a cross. Watch out for people who claim to belong to Christ, who claim to speak for Christ.” Jesus knows what we need, and he knows what he has for us. We need and Jesus has for us something better than this world’s changing ideas about right and wrong - Jesus has the timeless truth of God - Word with wisdom and Promise we can count on for time and for eternity.

We need and Jesus has for us something better than a Truth that can fit in here [my brain] and make sense to me - Jesus isn’t bound to the word and wisdom of this world; he has the word and wisdom of heaven.

We need and Jesus has for us something better than a good start toward God, a good start that we need to finish - we need and Jesus has for us a perfect life - finished for God and for you - a perfect life to set us right with God. Think of the cross - Jesus didn’t die for us just to make a down-payment on our guilt - in Jesus, you are forgiven full and free! Now think of what Easter and the empty tomb mean for us - Jesus has for us the power of God to make the dead alive, to make us alive for life with God.

That’s right - Jesus is for us something better than a good guy, a nice guy saying good and nice things; Jesus is and Jesus has for us everything we need for life made right, safe and secure with God today and forever in heaven.

This world would be so content with Jesus as a nice guy, saying nice things, doing nice things for us here and now. This world would be so content to have Jesus without his cross, Jesus without his Bible, Jesus without his judgment. And so what do we find? More and more churches, more and more preachers and teachers content to offer this world's kind of Jesus.

We need more and better; Jesus is more and better. Amen.

# St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church

## *A Family Connecting in Christ*

March 12 & 13, 2022

### THE SERVICE

**IN OUR WORLD TODAY...** which is more dangerous? The enemy we recognize as enemy and avoid? Or the enemy we invite in close and drink of their poison?

**IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY...** we are warned of a sad truth - Satan works through people - who might look and sound good - claiming to be for us and for Jesus, when in fact they are working against Jesus and to poison us.

#### OPENING HYMN

*"Speak, O Savior, I Am Listening"*

**Hymn 631**

Speak, O Savior, I am list'ning, as a servant to his lord.  
Let me show respect and honor to your holy, precious Word,  
that each day, my whole life through, I may serve and follow you.  
Let your Word e'er be my pleasure and my heart's most precious treasure.

Oh, what blessing to be near you and to listen to your voice;  
let me ever love and fear you, let your Word still be my choice!  
Many hardened sinners, Lord, flee in terror at your Word;  
but to all who feel sin's burden you give peace and words of pardon.

Lord, your words are waters living where I quench my thirsty needs.  
Lord, your words are bread life-giving; on your words my spirit feeds.  
Lord, your words will be my light thro' death's cold and dreary night;  
yes, they are my sword prevailing and my cup of joy unfailing.

As I pray, dear Jesus, hear me; let your words in me take root.  
May your Spirit e'er be near me that I bear abundant fruit.

May I daily sing your praise, from my heart glad anthems raise,  
till my highest praise is given in the endless joy of heaven.

#### INVOCATION

In the name of the Father and of the  $\Upsilon$  Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
**Amen.**

#### CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

**If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just  
and will forgive us our sins  
and purify us from all unrighteousness.**

Let us confess our sins to the Lord.

**Holy God, gracious Father,**

**I am sinful by nature**

**and have sinned against you in my thoughts, words, and actions.**

**I have not loved you with my whole heart;**

**I have not loved others as I should.**

**I deserve your punishment both now and forever.**

**But Jesus, my Savior, paid for my sins**

**with his innocent suffering and death.**

**Trusting in him, I pray: God, have mercy on me, a sinner.**

*Silence for meditation and reflection*

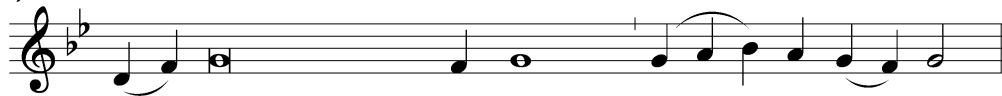
Our gracious Father in heaven has been merciful to us. He sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, who gave his life as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the  $\Upsilon$  Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

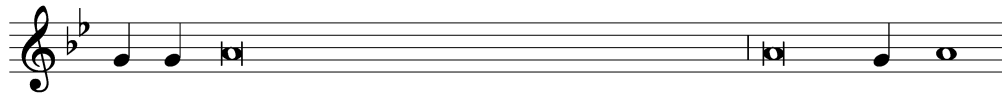


# LORD, HAVE MERCY

CW 174



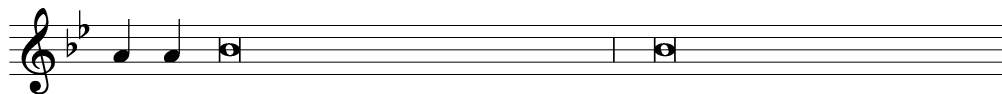
In peace let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mer - cy.**



For the peace from above and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.



**Lord, have mer - cy.**



For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of



God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



**Lord, have mer - cy.**



For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and



praise, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mer - cy.**



Help, save, com - fort, and de - fend us, gra - cious Lord.



**A - men.**

Christopher Roberts  
Enkhmaa "Emma" Roberts  
Aryanna Roberts  
Arlan Roberts  
Abigail Roberts

HYMN (Sunday)

*"God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It"*

**Hymn 679**

God's own child, I gladly say it: I am baptized into Christ!  
He, because I could not pay it, gave my full redemption price.  
Do I need earth's treasures many? I have one worth more than any  
that brought me salvation free, lasting to eternity!

Sin, disturb my soul no longer: I am baptized into Christ!  
I have comfort even stronger: Jesus' cleansing sacrifice.  
Should a guilty conscience seize me since my baptism did release me  
in a dear forgiving flood, sprinkling me with Jesus' blood?

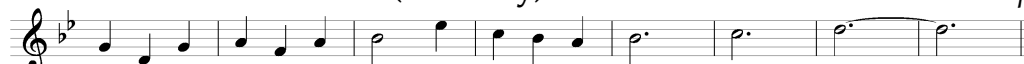
Satan, hear this proclamation: I am baptized into Christ!  
Drop your ugly accusation, I am not so soon enticed.  
Now that to the font I've traveled, all your might has come unraveled,  
and, against your tyranny, God, my Lord, unites with me!

Death, you cannot end my gladness: I am baptized into Christ!  
When I die, I leave all sadness to inherit paradise!  
Though I lie in dust and ashes faith's assurance brightly flashes:  
Baptism has the strength divine to make life immortal mine.

There is nothing worth comparing to this lifelong comfort sure!  
Open-eyed my grave is staring: even there I'll sleep secure.  
Though my flesh awaits its raising, still my soul continues praising:  
I am baptized into Christ; I'm a child of paradise!

# GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST (Saturday)

CW p.176



Glo - ry to God in the high - est, and peace to his



peo - ple on earth. Lord God,



heav - en - ly King, al - might - y God and Fa - ther, we



wor - ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your



glo - ry. Glo - ry to God in the high - est, and



peace to his peo - ple on earth.



Lord Je - sus Christ, on - ly Son of the Fa - ther,



Lord God, Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the



world; have mer - cy on us. You are seat - ed at the



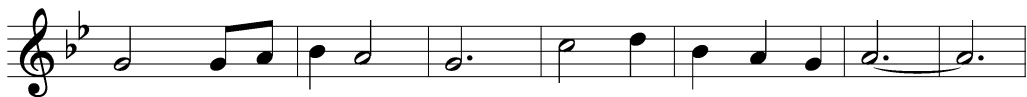
right hand of the Fa - ther; re - ceive our prayer.



Glo - ry to God in the high - est, and peace to his



peo - ple on earth. For you a -



lone are the Ho - ly One, you a - lone are the Lord,



you a - lone are the Most High, Je - sus Christ,



with the Ho - ly Spir - it in the glo - ry of



God the Fa - ther. A - men. A - men.



Glo - ry to God in the high - est, and peace to his



peo - ple on earth.

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

O Lord Jesus Christ, preserve the congregation of believers with your neverfailing 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.**

## FIRST READING

*Romans 16:1–20 (EHV)*

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea. Welcome her in the Lord in a manner that is worthy of saints, and assist her in whatever way she may need your help, for she has certainly been a helper for many people, including me.

Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life. I am not the only one who is thankful to them. All the churches of the Gentiles are as well.

Greet also the church that meets at their house.

Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia.

Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you.

Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives and fellow prisoners, who are highly regarded by the apostles. They were in Christ before I was.

Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord.

Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys.

Greet Apelles, who was tested and approved in Christ.

Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus.

Greet Herodion, my relative.

Greet those from the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.

Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, who worked hard in the Lord.

Greet my dear friend Persis, who has worked very hard for the Lord.

Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who was a mother to me too.

Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers who are with them.

Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.

Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you. But I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the teaching that you learned, and keep away from them. <sup>18</sup> For such people are not serving Christ our Lord but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery, they seduce the hearts of the unsuspecting.

Your obedience has become known to everyone, so I am very joyful about you. But I want you to continue to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

HYMN (CHOIR)

*"Oh, How Good It Is"*

Hymn 731



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  
joyce 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.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

*John 8:31-32*

Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

The Gospel of the Lord.

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



HYMN OF THE DAY

*“Rise, My Soul, to Watch and Pray”*

Hymn 873

Rise, my soul, to watch and pray; from your sleep awaken!  
Be not by the evil day unawares o’ertaken;  
for the foe, well we know,  
is a harvest reaping while the saints are sleeping.

Watch against the devil’s snares lest asleep he find you;  
for indeed no pains he spares to deceive and blind you.  
Satan’s prey oft are they  
who secure are sleeping and no watch are keeping.

Watch! Let not the wicked world with its lies defeat you  
lest with bold deceptions hurled it betray and cheat you.  
Watch and see lest there be  
faithless friends to charm you who but seek to harm you.

Watch against yourself, my soul, lest with grace you trifle;  
let not self your thoughts control nor God’s mercy stifle.  
Pride and sin lurk within,  
all your hopes to shatter; heed not when they flatter.

But while watching also pray to the Lord unceasing.  
God protects you day by day, strength and faith increasing,  
so that still mind and will  
shall unite to serve him and forever love him.

SERMON

## 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.**

## PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

*Brief intercessory prayers may be added at the end of the litany.*

In peace let us pray to the Lord, saying, "Lord, have mercy."

For the holy Church of God, that it may be filled with truth and love and be found without fault at the day of your coming, we pray to you, Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For the president of our synod, for the president of our district, for all pastors and teachers, and for all the holy people of God, we pray to you, Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For all who fear God and believe in you, Lord Christ, that our divisions may cease and that all may be one as you and the Father are one, we pray to you, Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For the mission of the Church, that in faithful witness it may preach the gospel to the ends of the earth, we pray to you, Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For those who do not yet believe and for those who have lost their faith, that they may receive the light of the gospel, we pray to you, Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For the peace of the world, that a spirit of respect and forbearance may grow among nations and peoples, we pray to you, Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For those in positions of public trust, that they may serve justice and promote the dignity and freedom of every person, we pray to you, Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For the poor, the persecuted, the sick, and all who suffer; for refugees, prisoners, and all who are in danger; that they may be relieved and protected, we pray to you, Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For this congregation, for those who are present, and for those who are absent, that we may be delivered from hardness of heart and show forth your glory in all we do, we pray to you, Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For our enemies and those who wish us harm and for all whom we have injured or offended, we pray to you, Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For ourselves, for the forgiveness of our sins, and for the grace of the Holy Spirit to amend our lives, we pray to you, Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For all who have asked that we pray for them: for our families, friends, and neighbors; that being freed from anxiety, they may live in joy, peace, and health, we pray to you, Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

[For... *here name the person and the cause of the petition*, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.]**

Rejoicing in the fellowship of all the saints, let us commend ourselves and one another and all our lives to Christ our God.

**Amen.**

HYMN

*"God of Grace and God of Glory"*

**Hymn 770**

God of grace and God of glory, on your people pour your pow'r;  
crown your ancient Church's story, bring its bud to glorious flow'r.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the facing of this hour,  
for the facing of this hour.

Lo, the hosts of evil round us scorn the Christ, assail his ways.  
From the fears that long have bound us free our hearts to faith and praise.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the living of these days,  
for the living of these days.

Cure your children's warring madness; bend our pride to your control;  
shame our wanton, selfish gladness, rich in things and poor in soul.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage lest we miss your kingdom's goal,  
lest we miss your kingdom's goal.

Save us from weak resignation to the evils we deplore;  
let the gift of your salvation be our glory evermore.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, serving you whom we adore,  
serving you whom we adore.

## PRAYER

Blessed Lord, you have given us your Holy Scriptures for our learning. May we so hear them, read, learn, and take them to heart that, being strengthened and comforted by your holy Word, we may cling to the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and 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.**

## 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.**

## CLOSING HYMN

*"God's Word Is Our Great Heritage"*  
**Hymn 640**

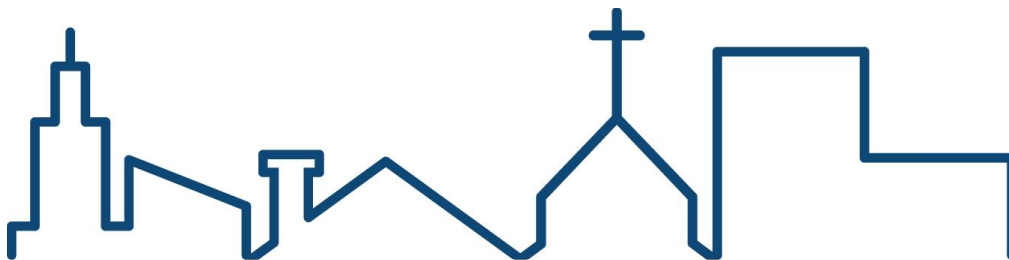
God's Word is our great heritage and shall be ours forever;  
to spread its light from age to age shall be our chief endeavor.  
Through life it guides our way, in death it is our stay.  
Lord, grant, while worlds endure, we keep its teachings pure  
throughout all generations.

## OFFERING

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# EVERYONE OUTREACH

BUILDING A CONGREGATIONAL OUTREACH CULTURE

Imagine a congregation reaching out to strangers - wonderful, right?!  
Imagine hundreds of Jesus-loving people sharing their love of Jesus and ready to reach out to anyone and everyone in their lives - that sounds even more wonderful, doesn't it? We can be - and we are - those people and that congregation. How can we be more natural and more intentional in reaching out? Join us for EveryOne Outreach - a workshop split over two days to help us be a more powerful force sharing the life and the love of Jesus!

For more info, check out the EveryOne Outreach website -  
[EveryOneOutreach.com](http://EveryOneOutreach.com)