

## Sermon followed by Service WITH Explanation

John 13:34; Revelation 7

September 28, 2025

Do you ever have one of those days? One of those days that makes you stop and think about life and your place in this world? Hiking in the Alps, surrounded by snow-covered mountains, high under a bright, blue sky, with green pastures and glistening waterfalls all around - that can give birth to one of those days that makes you stop and think - “Who am I that I should get to experience glory like this? I’m not so broken-bodied I can’t get around; I’m usually not so ill-tempered I’m not able or not willing to see God’s blessing and beauty; I’m not the peasant farmer or servant girl struggling to survive another day. Who am I to be so blessed?”

I don’t remember which mountain we were standing on, which snow-covered mountains we were looking up to. It was one of those sights that makes you stop and wow. But Lisa doesn’t just “wow” like me. She uses words - “Look what an incredibly beautiful world God has given us ... and what God gives us in Jesus is even better and more beautiful.”

After one of those days, we were having supper, a younger couple was celebrating their early retirement, trying to impress the staff, chatting up some even younger world-travelers. It’s not eaves-dropping if they’re talking loud enough for the whole restaurant to hear, is it? We heard about taking vacation from vacation, base-camping at Mt. Everest, climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro, getting bored with island vacations, and on and on. They were so pleased with themselves, so eager to impress each other. Isn’t it great to have a purpose in life greater than self, pleasing your self, impressing your self, sating your self?

Do you ever have one of those days? One of those days that makes you stop and think about life and your place, your purpose, in this world? I had one of those days just before vacation. I was visiting, in the morning ... some daughters of the King, in the afternoon ... some sons of the King. It was one of those days that gets you thinking about your place and your purpose in life.

On my first visit, one of our Father's royal daughters says with a wry smile: "It's true, you know - when your spouse dies, your friends disappear."

On my next visit, to another of our heavenly Father's daughters - I ask: "How are you doing?" She bursts into tears: "My family has abandoned me; I'm just a bother."

That afternoon, a son of the King shows me the Valentine's Day card he's had on display in his living room since Valentine's Day almost seven months ago. With a big smile, he asks: "Do you know who sent me this card?" I guessed, wrong. Do you know who put that big smile on his face? You did. Our St. John Sunshine Card team sent him a card some seven months ago, and it's still putting a welcome smile on his face.

Then I visited another son of the King. Where he lives is no palace or castle; it's more like a dungeon - dank, dark, and dingy. Do you know what he's put up on his wall to add some color, to remind him that someone here might care? An Easter invitation, one of our St. John Easter postcards from years ago when someone shared that card with him. That day of visiting was one of those days. One of those days that makes you stop and think about life and your place, your purpose, in this world.

Jesus said: **“Love one another. This is how people will know that you are my disciples, by the way that you love one another.”**

It was just hours before he would be arrested and then killed. He knew that, but what is on his heart and mind? This is what he wants for his church, for his family - **“Love one another.”** Not just feel love for one another; do love for one another.

That’s one reason why we’re here together. We tear our self away from the world; we tear our self away from our self, so we can live and love with the heart and mind of Jesus, so we can love one another, and encourage one another, and fill each other up with something bigger and better than our selves and our world ... so we can encourage and fill each other up with something even more beautiful and amazing than the Alps ... so we can fill each other up with the love and the life of Jesus.

And what happens here? Some days - when our hearts and minds are off chasing the wows of the world - what happens here might not seem all that impressive. But here - in Word and Sacrament - the Spirit makes hearts and souls alive with the life and the love of God; here - in Word and Sacrament - the Spirit keeps hearts and souls alive with the life and the love of God. Here, the Spirit works a miracle. Here the Spirit connects us and keeps us connected with God himself; here the Spirit keeps us connected with life in heaven.

Here, even after our ugliest, most shame-filled times this past week, we get to hear for ourselves and point each other to Jesus on the cross, on blood-splattered Calvary, and say, “Hear the promise of God: You are forgiven!” Here, after a week of falling short, after a week of distracted priorities, we get to hear for ourselves and point each other to the font and to Jesus: “here the Spirit of God has covered

you with the perfect life of Jesus; in Jesus, the God of all the universe and beyond sees you and calls you right by him!” That’s right; here, after a week that deserves hell, we get to hear and share with each other how God loves and forgives - us, you, me, the lost and lonely and distracted out there.

Here, in this beautiful house of God, we are pointed to an even more beautiful house of God where we get to live with God, not as his slaves, but as his family. And here we are reminded and renewed in our purpose in life - to share a life and a love that are bigger than ourselves, a life and love more glorious than anything this world might offer.

Allow me to share with you a picture of a glory greater than even the Alps-

After this I [John] looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation belongs to our God,  
who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying:

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!”

Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?” I answered, “Sir, you know.” And he said,

“These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, “they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

That is the glory Jesus has for us, a glory we get to look forward to, a glory we get to share with each other. Amen.

September 27 & 28, 2025

## NEW MORNING PRAISE

**IN OUR WORLD TODAY** ... people gather for events they think important, sometimes as spectators sitting back to be entertained, sometimes as fans jumping up and cheering or booing, sometimes as protestors demanding their sense of right.

**IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY** ... we are not spectators or bystanders, fans or demanding protestors. We are both sheep gathered by the Shepherd, eager to listen and follow, and also royal priests eager to share with each other the treasures of our King!

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### **New Morning Praise - A Service Explanation**

Why are we here today? We have gathered here to worship our God -- to praise him, to pray to him, to be fed by him and blessed by him. But our worship isn't just a two way street between us and God; we aren't just here for God - to praise God; or for ourselves - to be blessed by God. We are also here for each other - to encourage each other and pray for each other. The worship service we're using this morning – New Morning Praise – will serve us well to praise and pray, to bless and be blessed with God and with each other.

Our Morning Praise Service is based on morning worship services from over a 1000 years ago. In the old church's monasteries, life each day would start with a service of praise and prayer called Matins. Now even if life in a monastery wasn't a good and godly idea, starting the day with praise and prayer is a good and godly idea. And so we start our day and our week with Morning Praise.

Our first hymn today reminds us how good is it to be here!

## OPENING HYMN

*“God Is Here! As We Your People”*

**Hymn 858**

*Contrary to what some might think, we don't just sing 500-year-old German Lutheran hymns. This treasure was written by a 20<sup>th</sup> century British Methodist, with the tune composed by a British Anglican priest in 1941 (to replace a newly unpopular German hymn tune). **Notice how blessed we are to worship here ... and together!***

God is here! As we your people meet to offer praise and prayer,  
may we find in fuller measure what it is in Christ we share.  
Here, as in the world around us, all our varied skills and arts  
wait the coming of the Spirit into open minds and hearts.

Here are symbols to remind us of our lifelong need of grace.  
Here are table, font, and pulpit; here the cross has central place.  
Here, in honesty of preaching, here, in silence as in speech,  
here, in newness and renewal, God the Spirit comes to each.

Here our children find a welcome in the Shepherd's flock and fold;  
here, as bread and wine are taken, Christ sustains us as of old.  
Here the servants of the Servant seek in worship to explore  
what it means in daily living to believe and to adore.

Lord of all, of Church and kingdom, in an age of change and doubt,  
keep us faithful to the gospel; help us work your purpose out.  
Here, in this day's dedication, all we have to give, receive;  
we who cannot live without you, we adore you! We believe!

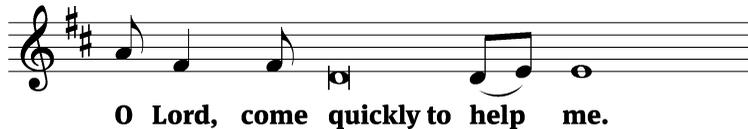
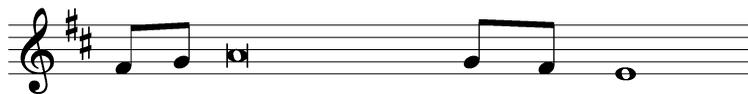
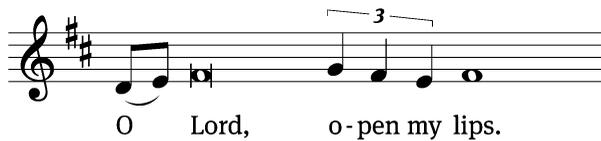
## OPENING SENTENCES

The first words of our liturgy are taken from King David in Psalm 51. David is thinking about how God had forgiven him and saved him from his sin. He's eager for a new heart from God to live a new life for God. Praising God is on his mind and it just has to come out! David is

excited; he wants God to know his joy; he wants everyone to know God's greatness. Just open his lips and praise will come rolling out.

As we start our days, we remember how God has forgiven and saved us; we see God has given us a new day to live for him. And like David, we want God to know our joy; we want everyone to know how great our God is! With David our heart is filled and ready to burst with joy and praise for God - **"O Lord, open my lips. And my mouth shall declare your praise."**

But at the same time that our heart says, "Yes!" our heart groans. When we start a new day, we know trouble is coming - aches and pains, tests and temptations, responsibilities and challenges bigger than we can handle on our own. And worst of all we know that sometime today we will sin against our God. As we start this new day, we know we need help and we need forgiveness. And so in the words of Psalm 70 we call to God - **"Hasten to save me, O God. O Lord, come quickly to help me."** And we ask our God's forgiveness.



#### CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION OF SINS

M: We have come into the presence of God, who created us to love and serve

him as his dear children. But we have disobeyed him and deserve only his wrath and punishment. Therefore, let us confess our sins to him and plead for his mercy.

**C:** Merciful Father in heaven, I am altogether sinful from birth. In countless ways I have sinned against you and do not deserve to be called your child. But trusting in Jesus, my Savior, I pray: Have mercy on me according to your unfailing love. Cleanse me from my sin, and take away my guilt.

**M:** God, our heavenly Father, has forgiven all your sins. By the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, he has removed your guilt forever. You are his own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to his will. **Amen.**

### GIVE GLORY TO GOD!

We've heard God's peace and promise. So what do we do? We use God's prayer and praise book, the Psalms, (here Psalm 95) and we answer God with praise. First, I invite you ... and then we join together and invite each other - **"Come, oh, come, let us sing to the Lord!"** Can you imagine the psalm writer singing those words like this - **"Come, oh come, let us sing to the Lord"**? I know it's still morning; we might be tired; our voices might not be warmed up. But **"Come, oh, come, let us sing to the Lord"** doesn't sound right, does it? It doesn't sound right and it doesn't feel right; our hearts are bursting with praise. We want God to know how much we think of him; we want everyone to know what a great God we have.



Give glory to God, our light and our life.



**Come, O come, let us wor - ship.**

## COME, O COME, LET US SING TO THE LORD



Come, O come, let us sing to the Lord,



let us shout with joy to our sav - ing Rock;



come, en - ter in with our songs of praise,



come, en - ter in with thanks - giv - ing.



1 You are a great and a won - drous God,  
2 Come, let us wor - ship and, bow - ing low,



cup - ping in your hands all the depths of earth.  
kneel be - fore the One who has made us all.



You made the hills and the moun - tains high,  
You are the God whom we call our own,



you made the seas and the dry land.  
we are the flock that you shep - herd.

*Refrain*

When we sang, **“Come, oh, come, let us sing to the Lord,”** to whom were we singing? Wasn’t it the Lord? In a sense that’s right, we were praising the Lord. But go back to the first line again: **“Come, oh, come, let us sing to the Lord.”** To whom were we singing? We were singing to each other.

That takes us back to the first question I asked this morning – **“why are we here?”** We can praise God at home and alone. We can pray to God, at home and alone. We can be fed by God with our Bibles, at home and alone. But God doesn’t want us at home and alone. God gave us this song to bring us together. God wants us together to encourage each other, and to be encouraged.

But that’s not always why we’re here, is it? Some Sundays we’re here because God is great and God is good, and life is great and life is good - and we just have to let it out how great and good our God is. But some weeks we might be thinking that life stinks, and we might wonder how great and good God really is. Sometimes we might be here, not because we think God is great and God is good, but we might be here without thinking, just because of habit, or just because it’s expected. Some days we might be here in body, but our hearts and minds might be wandering off somewhere else.

Because it’s so easy for our hearts and minds to lose sight of God, or even to turn against God, that’s why God brings us together - so we can encourage each other. We just sang, **“Come, oh, come, let us sing to the Lord ... come, enter in with thanksgiving.”** Sometimes I need you to tell me what a great God I have. Sometimes I need you to tell me to stop my whining and thank God. Sometimes I need you to tell me to stand up, to get up, and praise God in my life. That’s why God brings us together.

And at other times I need you to tell me something else. We just sang, **“come, let us worship, and bowing low, kneel before the One who has**

**made us all.”** Sometimes I need you to tell me to get off my high horse and bow down before God.

Sometimes I need you to tell me to rest my tired bones and kneel down at God’s feet, to sit at his feet and let him bless me. When the world blows off God, we need each other to point us back to God. When the world gives us the back-side of its hand, a slap upside the head, we need each other to tell us: “this world might slap you, but God will hold you close to his heart. We are the flock that he shepherds.” We need to hear that. That’s why God brings us together -- so you can encourage me and we can encourage each other.

You encourage me. When you say “Amen” like you believe it, when you sing like you mean it, you encourage me that I can believe it and I can mean it. When you speak up and sing out, you encourage me to speak up and sing out. When you come before the Lord and bow down to him, you encourage me to come to him and bow down. When you sit at Jesus’ feet and listen, you encourage me to sit at Jesus’ feet. Around and around, back and forth. God brought us together today to bless each other, to encourage each other. In our worship services God isn’t just speaking through me, the pastor, but he is speaking through each one of us to build us up as his church.

After we sing our encouragement to each other we continue with the Psalm of the Day. It might seem a bit unusual for us to sing two songs in a row, especially two psalms in a row. But it makes sense. We just sang, “**Let us sing to the Lord.**” Now with the Psalm we do that.

## PSALM

## *Psalm 63A*

*Choir Sings Verses, Congregation Sings Refrains*

*Refrain*



In the morn-ing I will sing, I will

sing glad songs to you, I will sing glad songs of praise to  
 you. I will sing glad songs of praise to you.

*Verse*

1 O God, you are my God; for you I long; for  
 you my soul is thirst - ing. My bod - y pines for you like a  
 dry, wea - ry land with - out wa - ter. So I gaze on you in the

*Refrain*

sanc - tu - ar - y to see your strength and your glo - ry.

In the morn - ing I will sing, I will  
 sing glad songs to you, I will sing glad songs of praise to  
 you. I will sing glad songs of praise to you.

Verse

2 For your love is bet-ter than life, my lips will speak your  
praise. So I will bless you all my life, in your  
name I will lift up my hands. My soul shall be filled as with a *Refrain*  
ban-quet, my mouth shall praise you with joy.  
In the morn-ing I will sing, I will  
sing glad songs to you, I will sing glad songs of praise to  
you. I will sing glad songs of praise to you.

Verse

3 On my bed I re-mem-ber you. On you I  
muse through the night, for you have been my help; in the  
shad-ow of your wings I re-joice. My soul clings to



### PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of majesty, saints and angels delight to worship you in heaven. Accept our earthly sacrifices of praise and grant that our worship may serve to glorify your holy name and to enrich us and our fellowship worshipers with your love and encourage us in our mission and ministry; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

### THE WORD OF THE LORD

With the psalm we came to a new part of the service. In the first part of our service - from the opening hymn through the psalm - we did most of the talking – we praised God, we encouraged each other. Now, the focus is on what God is saying to us – in the Psalm, the lessons, and the sermon.

When we sang: “Come, oh, come,” verse 2 said - **“come, let us worship and bowing low, kneel before the One who has made us all. You are the God whom we call our own, we are the flock that you shepherd.”** After that we sat down. We sat down at the feet of our shepherd to be fed and nourished in the pasture of his word.

In our first lesson this morning, our Good Shepherd Jesus shows us what it means for us that “we are the flock that God shepherds.” John 10:27-29 – “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one.”

As we think about this morning's question -- “Why are we here?” the writer to the Hebrews tells us – Hebrews 10:21-25 – “Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess,

for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another -- and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

#### 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

*"This Is the Threefold Truth"*

Hymn 824 vs. 1, 2, 4, 5



1 This is the three-fold truth on which our faith de - pends;  
2 Long used by saints of old, new - mint - ed for our time,  
4 By this we are up - held when doubt or grief as - sails  
5 This is the three-fold truth which, if we hold it fast,



and with this joy - ful cry — wor - ship be - gins and ends:  
our lit - ur - gies con - fess the hope we — have in him:  
our Chris - tian faith and love, and on - ly — grace a - vails:  
chang - es the world and us and brings us — home at last:



**SERMON**

*Revelation 7:9-17*

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation belongs to our God,  
who sits on the throne,  
and to the Lamb.”

All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying:

“Amen!  
Praise and glory  
and wisdom and thanks and honor  
and power and strength  
be to our God for ever and ever.  
Amen!”

Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?”

I answered, “Sir, you know.”

And he said, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore,

“they are before the throne of God  
and serve him day and night in his temple;  
and he who sits on the throne  
will shelter them with his presence.  
‘Never again will they hunger;  
never again will they thirst.  
The sun will not beat down on them,’

nor any scorching heat.  
 For the Lamb at the center of the throne  
 will be their shepherd;  
 'he will lead them to springs of living water.'

'And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'"

**HYMN (TE DEUM)**

**"God, We Praise You"**

**Hymn 971**

*For over 1500 years, the Christian Church has joined together – on special occasions and for everyday Morning Praise – to praise God and encourage each other with the Te Deum.*



1 God, we praise you! God, we bless you! God, we  
 2 True a - pos - tles, faith - ful proph - ets, saints who  
 3 Je - sus Christ, the King of glo - ry, ev - er -  
 4 Christ, at God's right hand vic - to - rious, you will



name you sov - 'reign Lord! Might - y King whom  
 set their world a - blaze, mar - tyr, once un -  
 last - ing Son of God, hum - ble was your  
 judge the world you made; Lord, in mer - cy



an - gels wor - ship, Fa - ther, by your Church a - dored:  
 known, un - heed - ed, join one grow - ing song of praise,  
 vir - gin moth - er, hard the lone - ly path you trod:  
 help your ser - vants for whose free - dom you have paid:



all cre - a - tion shows your glo - ry; heav'n and  
 while your Church on earth con - fess - es one ma -  
 by your cross is sin de - feat - ed, hell con -  
 raise us up from dust to glo - ry; guard us



earth draw near your throne, sing - ing, "Ho - ly,  
 jes - tic Trin - i - ty: Fa - ther, Son, and  
 front - ed face to face, heav - en o - pened  
 from all sin to - day. King en - throned a -



ho - ly, ho - ly, Lord of hosts and God a - lone!"  
Ho - ly Spir - it, God, our hope e - ter - nal - ly.  
to be - liev - ers, sin - ners jus - ti - fied by grace.  
bove all prais - es, save your peo - ple, God, we pray.

### OFFERING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, Our Savior and Redeemer, we come to you with hearts filled with gratitude for the abundant blessings you give us each day. Help us to see giving not an obligation but as a joyful act of worship, an expression of our deep love for you and our want to further your kingdom here on earth.

**Amen.**

### OFFERING

*If you prefer to give online, the code at the right will take you to our Online Giving page. We invite our online givers to join in our offering with an "I Give Online" card in the pew racks.*



### PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

O almighty, everlasting God, you have joined together all believers into one spiritual temple in Christ. Come and be present by your Word in this place of worship and instruction. Make it a workshop of your Spirit in which your people, both young and old, will be made wise for salvation and trained for willing service in this life to the glory of your name; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### PRAYER AND 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.**

M: O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, you have

brought us safely to this new day. Defend us with your mighty power, and grant that this day we neither fall into sin nor run into any kind of danger; and in all we do, direct us to what is right in your sight, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. **Amen.**

**BLESSING**



The Lord bless and keep you.



**A - men.**



The Lord's face ev - er shine up - on you.



**A - men.**



The Lord grant you peace for all your days.



**A - men.**

**CLOSING HYMN**

*"Go, My Children, with My Blessing"*

**Hymn 930**

Go, my children, with my blessing, never alone.  
Waking, sleeping, I am with you; you are my own.

In my love's baptismal river I have made you mine forever.  
Go, my children, with my blessing, you are my own.

Go, my children, sins forgiven, at peace and pure.  
Here you learned how much I love you, what I can cure.  
Here you heard my dear Son's story; here you touched him, saw his glory.  
Go, my children, sins forgiven, at peace and pure.

Go, my children, fed and nourished, closer to me;  
grow in love and love by serving, joyful and free.  
Here my Spirit's power filled you; here his tender comfort stilled you.  
Go, my children, fed and nourished, joyful and free.

I the Lord will bless and keep you and give you peace;  
I the Lord will smile upon you and give you peace;  
I the Lord will be your Father, Savior, Comforter, and Brother.  
Go, my children; I will keep you and give you peace.

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