

**Ante Communion Service: September 24, 2023: Proper 20A  
Season of Creation 4**

*Celebrant:* Blessed be the One who creates all things.

*People:* **The Holy One's love is new every morning.**

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*A moment of silence for self-reflection*

Let us confess our sin against God and God's creation.

**Holy and merciful God, we confess that we have failed to honor you  
by rightly claiming our kinship with all your creatures.  
We have walked heavily on your earth, overused and wasted its resources,  
taken for granted its beauty and abundance, and treated its inhabitants unjustly,  
holding future generations hostage to our greed.  
Have mercy on us and forgive us our sin.  
Renew in us the resolve to keep and conserve your earth as you desire and intend,  
with grateful and compassionate hearts, through your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism, we are clothed with God's mercy and forgiveness. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Let us pray together:

**Bountiful God, you call us to labor with you in tending the earth:  
Where we lack love, open our hearts to the world; where we waste, give us discipline to conserve;  
where we neglect, awaken our minds and wills to insight and care.  
May we with all your creatures honor and serve you in all things,  
for you live and reign with Christ, Redeemer of all,  
and with your Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.**

**First Reading**

**Jonah 3:10-4:11**

When God saw what the people of Nineveh did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it. But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. He prayed to the Lord and said, "O Lord! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. And now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." And the Lord said, "Is it right for you to be angry?" Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city.

Then Lord God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush. But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?" And he said, "Yes, angry enough to die." Then the Lord said, "You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?"

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Psalm 145:1-8**

*Exaltabo te, Deus*

1 I will exalt you, O God my King, \*

**and bless your Name for ever and ever.**

2 Every day will I bless you \*

**and praise your Name for ever and ever.**

3 Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; \*

**there is no end to his greatness.**

4 One generation shall praise your works to another \*

**and shall declare your power.**

5 I will ponder the glorious splendor of your majesty \*

**and all your marvelous works.**

6 They shall speak of the might of your wondrous acts, \*

**and I will tell of your greatness.**

7 They shall publish the remembrance of your great goodness; \*

**they shall sing of your righteous deeds.**

8 The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, \*

**slow to anger and of great kindness.**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

**As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. World without end. Amen.**

**Second Reading**

**Philippians 1:21-30**

To me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, and are in no way intimidated by your opponents.

For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing.

For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well-- since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

**Gospel**

**Matthew 20:1-16**

*Celebrant:* The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

*People:* **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.' When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.' When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?' So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

**Sermon**

**Hymn**

**He Gives Us More Grace**

*Acapeldridge*

*He gives us more grace as our burdens grow greater, He sends us more strength as our labors increase;  
To added afflictions He adds His great mercy, to multiplied trials, He multiplies peace.*

*When we have exhausted our store of endurance, when our strength has failed ere the day is half done,  
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources, our Father's full giving has only begun.*

*Fear not that your need shall exceed His provision, our God ever yearns His resources to share;  
Lean hard on the arm everlasting, availing; the Father will bear up both you and your cares.*

*His love has no limits, His grace has no measure, His power no boundary known unto men;  
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus, He blesses, and blesses, and blesses again.*

## Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth;**  
**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.**  
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.  
He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.  
He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again.  
He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.  
**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,**  
**the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins**  
**the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

## Prayers of the People

With the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, let us pray for the church,  
those in need, and all of God's creation. In peace, we pray to you, Lord God. *Silence*

For this community, the nation, and the world;  
**For the victims of hunger, fear, injustice, and oppression.**

For the peace and unity of the world;  
**That a spirit of respect may grow among nations and peoples.**

For all who love and trust in God, that divisions may cease;  
**And that all may be one, as you and the Father are one.**

For the just and proper use of your creation;  
**That we may treat your creation with the love of the Creator.**

We honor and pray for our Indigenous neighbors.  
**That we may dwell together in respectful harmony.**

For all who are in danger, sorrow, or any kind of trouble;  
**For those who minister to the sick, the friendless, and the needy.**

For the special needs and concerns of this congregation.  
*Silence.* Hear us, Lord; **For your mercy is great.**

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this life. *Silence.*  
We will exalt you, O God our King; **And praise your Name for ever and ever.**

We pray for all who have died, that they may have a place in your eternal kingdom. *Silence.*  
Lord, let your loving kindness be upon them. **May they rest in your peace eternally.**

Into your hands, gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we pray together:

**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 sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

We pray together for Christ's presence:

**My Jesus, I believe that you are truly present in the Blessed Sacrament of the bread and wine.  
I love you above all things, and long for you in my soul.  
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come spiritually into my heart.  
I embrace you and unite myself entirely to you; never permit me to be separated from you.  
Amen.**

*Celebrant:* While we long to receive the sacrament of Christ's Body,

*People:* **We become the sacrament of Christ's Body.**

*Celebrant:* Let your lives be manna to feed our hunger for communion.

*People:* **The love we share becomes bread for the world.**

**Blessing** May the God of all creation bless you and keep you.  
May the God of all people bless your dedication to care for the poor.  
May the God whose glory fills the world bless your commitment to serve Earth.  
May the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be in you, among you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**

**Dismissal** Go in peace and hope and joy to love and serve God's creation. Alleluia, Alleluia!  
**Thanks be to God. Alleluia, Alleluia!**

*The Lord Bless You and Keep You [Lutkin]*

*Acapeldridge*