

**September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021 Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost – Email Missal**

The ZOOM link for today's service, which opens at 9.30 am on September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021, can be found here:  
 Sunday Worship September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021 09:30 am ZOOM room opens; service begins at 10:00 am.

Click here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87943072549?pwd=RUI5UDlucjdGK3kxTmYvWHBmeXAvQT09>

Meeting ID: 879 4307 2549

Passcode: 768271

You don't have to have a computer or internet to connect to any of our church Zoom services; you can also just call in on one of these numbers (long distance charges may apply): (All Canadian numbers). You can also access the ZOOM from your telephone by using the "One tap mobile" option:

+17789072071,,87943072549#,,,,\*768271# Canada

+12042727920,,87943072549#,,,,\*768271# Canada

**Dial by your location:**

+1 778 907 2071 Canada

+1 204 272 7920 Canada

+1 438 809 7799 Canada

+1 587 328 1099 Canada

+1 647 374 4685 Canada

+1 647 558 0588 Canada

Meeting ID: 879 4307 2549

Passcode: 768271

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87943072549>

**PASTORAL VISITS:** Please know that our Interim Pastor Chun Zhang is available for safe visits with social distancing requirements in place, and also for telephone visits. Please reach out to him by calling the church office at 519-653-4721 to arrange a visit.

**Thanksgiving for Our Presence on This Land:**

Click Here: <https://youtu.be/SqEZLBrAu4c>

*Pastor Barry Boeckner is our guest pastor today – welcome!*

**Gathering Hymn:** ELW # 848 'Give to Our God Immortal Praise!' (*Bradley Moggach – organ*)

Click here: <https://youtu.be/eXUrDWbvG5I>

(Title: Give to Our God Immortal Praise! Text: Isaac Watts, 1674-1748, alt.; Public Domain

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**Greeting:**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all, in your home and in mine.

**Prayer of the Day:**

Generous God, your Son gave his life that we might come to peace with you. Give us a share of your Spirit, and in all we do empower us to bear the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. *Amen*

**The First Reading: Esther 7:1-6, 9-10; 9:20-22**

So the king and Haman went in to feast with Queen Esther. On the second day, as they were drinking wine, the king again said to Esther, "What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled." Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have won your favor, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me — that is my petition — and the lives of my people — that is my request. For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. If we had been sold merely as slaves, men and women, I would have held my peace; but

no enemy can compensate for this damage to the king." Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, who has presumed to do this?" Esther said, "A foe and enemy, this wicked Haman!" Then Haman was terrified before the king and the queen. Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs in attendance on the king, said, "Look, the very gallows that Haman has prepared for Mordecai, whose word saved the king, stands at Haman's house, fifty cubits high." And the king said, "Hang him on that." So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the anger of the king abated.

Mordecai recorded these things, and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far, enjoining them that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar and also the fifteenth day of the same month, year by year, as the days on which the Jews gained relief from their enemies, and as the month that had been turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, days for sending gifts of food to one another and presents to the poor. (NRSV)

Word of God, Word of Life. **C: Thanks be to God.\***

### **Psalm: 19:7-14**

The teaching of the LORD is perfect and revives the soul;  
the testimony of the LORD is sure and gives wisdom to the simple.

***The statutes of the LORD are just and rejoice the heart;  
the commandment of the LORD is clear and gives light to the eyes.***

The fear of the LORD is clean and endures forever;  
the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

***More to be desired are they than gold, more than much fine gold,  
sweeter far than honey, than honey in the comb.***

By them also is your servant enlightened,  
and in keeping them there is great reward.

***Who can detect one's own offenses?***

***Cleanse me from my secret faults.***

Above all, keep your servant from presumptuous sins; let them not get dominion over me;  
then shall I be whole and sound, and innocent of a great offense.

***Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight,  
O LORD, my strength and my redeemer.\****

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### **The Second Reading: James 5:13-20**

Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth yielded its harvest.

My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and is brought back by another, you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins. (NRSV)

Word of God, Word of Life. **C: Thanks be to God.\***

**Gospel Acclamation:** 'Listen, Listen to the Gospel Message....' (Bradley Moggach – piano)

Click here: # <https://youtu.be/X2jHYEsLg8A>

### **The Holy Gospel according to Mark 9:38-50**

#### ***C: Glory to you, O Lord.***

John said to Jesus, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us." But Jesus said, "Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. Whoever is not against us is for us. For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward.

"If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell, where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched.

"For everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another." (NRSV)

The Gospel of the Lord. ***C: Praise to you, O Christ.\****

### **Sermon (Imagine Supply Pastor Barry Boeckner's voice here)**

#### **"Our Hero Wears Prada", (P. Barry Boeckner)**

As I begin the sermon this morning I want to be open about my choice of Esther as both the alternate Old Testament reading and the subject of the sermon this morning. It's still Covid. After almost 2 whole years with normal still a moving target, it seemed to me that we need some inspiration, an uplifting passage, something, or better still, someone to look up to, as a model and an example. We've been doing this with lawn signs, I'm sure you've all seen on a lawn or on TV the sign, "Our heroes wear scrubs", in praise of the nurses and orderlies with baggy uniforms that care for our sick and dying. So, this morning I want to present the story of our own hero, Esther.

But, a strange, or not so strange thing happened on the way to this sermon. As is the case when one sits with the Word of God in scriptures, we open the book, but then the Word in the book opens us. And after we have run out of questions to ask the text, the text starts asking questions of us. So much so that by the time we think we are done with the text, the text is not done with us. For you see, I would have to say, after reading the whole story of Esther, and sitting with it, I will have to say that our hero, Queen Esther wears Prada, dresses in Christian Dior outfits and bathes in Chanel #5. No scrubs on her.

But I'm getting ahead of myself, so I would urge you to read the whole thing. Only 10 chapters but she gets a whole book to herself, bearing her own name. You will find, if you read it all, that Esther is an unlikely religious hero. She is a young woman of rare beauty, a real looker, a stunner. She is Prom Queen material. And as well as her natural endowments she gets special treatment as a young woman. Her promise of picturesque beauty is immediately rewarded with 7 maids, that's right, 7 attendants, to brush her hair, do her nails, draw her baths. And then, to make sure she makes the most of her natural endowments she gets spa treatment, But not a week in the beauty spa, not even a month but a whole year of spa treatments, first 6 months bathing with oil of myrrh, and then another 6 months of spices and perfume and ointments for milady. And she wins. King Ahasuerus sees her amidst a bevy of beauties and the Prom Queen becomes the real queen, Queen over all of Persia and Media, standing at the King's side as his chosen wife. You see, there had to be a beauty contest because the first wife of the King had refused to be a chattel, a piece of property and asked to have her own voice. So she had to be replaced, and Esther replaces her.

But as you could perhaps have guessed, the life of a beauty queen is not her own life. She is eye candy for the King. Would it be too mean to say she is a toy, a sex toy for the King. I don't want to be crude here, so let me leave it with a question. When the King summons his gorgeous wife, do you think it is to talk about politics and the power balance in Katmadu or maybe the price of oil shares in the mid-East? I think you get the drift here. She serves at the King's pleasure, she is an ornament, an object, incredibly, stunningly beautiful but she has no voice of her own. She will speak when she is spoken to. Like the King's favorite chariot, or favorite sword or favorite horse, she waits to be summoned.

This is what reminded me so much of our own times of Covid. Covid reigns. It determines where we go, who we go with and how long we stay. Our life is scarcely our own. What we want counts for little. It's what the pandemic rules and precautions dictate. Things are getting better and we will get back to normal but we're not there yet and it will likely be a new normal. In some ways, like Esther we don't have much of a say in how things will go. And Covid for now is the mandate we must serve. In many ways our voices don't count. We are much like Esther. For many of us, most of us, we are safe in our more-than-adequate homes but like Esther we live in a gilded cage.

But that's not the end of the story for here the story turns. Meanwhile, back at the palace. Back at the palace, there is a secret plot being hatched by a bad guy. Mordecai is Esther's adopted father, and he has offended Haman, one of the King's advisers. On a trumped up accusation, nasty Haman gets the King to give him power of life and death over Mordecai and his Jewish citizens. Oh, and by the way, did you know Queen Esther had a secret. The Prom Queen is a liar; she did not disclose to the King that she is a Jewess. Well, Haman succeeds in getting the King to give him permission to choke off the fake threat to the crown, which means Haman is free to execute Mordecai and all the people of God as well.

In despair, Mordecai turns for help to his daughter, the Prom Queen, now the Kingdom Queen. And he lays the dilemma before her in plain words. Remember, the queen cannot go to the king and speak, she can only speak when he asks her to. So Mordecai says, "if you keep silence at such a time as this you and your father's house will perish...." (First half of verse 14, c. 4). And there is no plea from Mordecai to his daughter, "You've got to...." And no request, "Will you..." There is just an open ended thought, a tentative few words, but they hang in the air heavy as the queen's precious perfume, "And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" In other words, maybe this is your golden hour, but it's up to you. "And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

What next? We're not told a lot about Esther's inner thoughts, what's going on in her mind, the words she forms, the pictures and images that torment her. Much like Jesus praying in the garden of Gethsemane. All we hear is "if this cup cannot pass from me... nevertheless, not my will but yours be done"

What we do know is that like Jesus Esther chooses to fast. In her case it is 3 days, in Jesus case it was 40 days in the wilderness. This is the way of discernment. Of turning away from one's own needs to ask what God wants, to seek the will, the way of God. And Esther finds her voice by seeking God's voice. This is Samuel saying, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening." This is Mary saying to the angel, "I am the Lord's handmaid, let it be to me as you have said." Esther finds the power of surrendering to God's voice, God's will, God's way. And she obediently seeks out the King, unbidden, to ask for him to let her people go.

This discerning God's will is not easy and I hope I'm not making it sound like that.

Discerning God's will is even tricky. Let me give you an example, from a Zoom I took part in this week. There were over a dozen of us, and as we checked in during Covid I heard people saying things like, "It's been a good week. My family is good, my health is good, it's good to see you all, the church is going good' And no one but one person reported in with the words, God is good. Only one, and by the way this Zoom was pastors only. So often when we in the church seek to discern our future, we consult our own dreams, what

we want. Rather than saying those key words, God, what would you have me do? If that's all you carry away from the sermon, that would be it for me. To ask, frequently and faithfully, Look God, W W Y H M D, What Would You Have Me Do?

In the end Queen Esther wins by surrendering to what God wants for her to do. I know, surrender to us means defeat, being on the losing side. But for her and for all people of faith, surrender to God is a turning point. Surrender conveys the joyful power of freedom from fear, in order to serve God. And there can be nothing more precious than surrendered souls in the Kingdom.

I have seen it written in a novel that for anyone to rise to the occasion and to make a special accomplishment of their life, they must first find something special within themselves. For the longest time Esther found within herself only beauty skin deep and it looked as if that would be the secret to her great accomplishment. But then she looked deeper within herself and found surrender to God as her special quality and that led to an even greater victory over hatred and darkness and death.

We may none of us ever be as good looking or as highly favoured as Esther but we can all lay claim to her power of surrendering to our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and likewise know the wild and wonderful freedom of the Kingdom come. Amen.

**Hymn of the Day:** ELW # 885 'Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow' (*Bradley Moggach – organ*)

**Click here:** <https://youtu.be/qTzPCCw2h6M>

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### **Prayers of Intercession:**

Made children and heirs of God's promise, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

*A brief silence.*

We pray for the church and its ministry. Bless the newly baptized and encourage them in their journey of faith. Sustain all members of the body of Christ in lives of prayer, service, and worship. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for natural wonders of your creation of the waterways, forests and natural areas. Restore damaged forests, waterways and natural habitats and lead us to be good stewards of what you have provided. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those in authority. Give them wise minds and compassionate hearts. Strengthen in them a desire to protect the vulnerable and care for those underserved. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who are struggling with cancer, dementia, or any other disease. We especially pray for Bill, Don, Tammy, Alice, Don, Lynn, Sharon, Bryan and Sherrie. Provide them with peace and resilience for the days ahead. Sustain caregivers with energy and patience. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the worship leaders of this congregation: musicians, readers, acolytes, and ushers. Bless us through their ministry and grant them the passion to continue in their service. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

We give thanks for all your saints, those we have loved and known and those from every time and place. Continue to guide us by their example and reassure us of your promised salvation. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Receive these prayers, O God, and those in our hearts known only to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

**Share the Peace of Christ:**

The Peace of Christ be with you always, in your home and in mine, and throughout God's creation.

**Offering Prayer:**

God of abundance,  
you cause streams to break forth in the desert  
and manna to rain from the heavens.  
Accept the gifts you have first given us.  
Unite them with the offering of our lives  
to nourish the world you love so dearly;  
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.  
Amen

**You are invited to prepare your table with bread and wine, or crackers and juice, whatever is available to you, so that you may participate in the meal.**

**Meal:** Click here for the communion liturgy from worship on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/-RnRfJoYmjs>

**Prayer after Communion:**

Lord of life,  
in the gift of your body and blood  
you turn the crumbs of our faith into a feast of salvation.  
Send us forth into the world with shouts of joy,  
bearing witness to the abundance of your love  
in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.  
Amen

**Blessing:**

People of God,  
you are Christ's body,  
bringing new life to a suffering world.  
The holy Trinity, ✠ one God,  
bless you now and forever.  
Amen

**Sending Hymn:** ELW # 712 'Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service' (*Bradley Moggach – organ*)

**Click here:** <https://youtu.be/kt5vfXUwA8M>

*(Title: Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service; Text: Albert F. Bayly, 1901-1984 Text © 1961 Oxford University Press All rights reserved.  
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**Dismissal:**

Go in peace. The living Word dwells in you.

**Thanks be to God.**

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