



2025 WORSHIP RESOURCES

Sunday, Sept. 7, 2025

Lectionary 23, Year C

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PREACHING

The Revised Common Lectionary readings for Sunday, Sept. 7, describe the joys and challenges of life with God. Ultimately, God's sustaining grace makes possible permits a life of fullness and flourishing — a life of love for God and neighbor.

In Deuteronomy 30:15-20, Moses addresses the people as they prepare to enter the land God promised to their ancestors. Within a larger conversation about covenant and God's faithfulness, Moses urges the people to choose the way of God, which is the way of life and prosperity. This is what God intends for God's people, and it is characterized by love for God (which is intertwined with love for neighbor), obedience to God's laws and connection to God, "holding fast to him" (v. 20).

This text reminds us that God's law is a gift that guides our life together and orients our relationships with God and with one another. Actions have consequences, and a way of life that disregards God's laws — in which we turn away from God and neighbor, devoting ourselves to other gods (v. 17) — cannot bring about the fullness of life and prosperity that God intends.

Consider: What does life and prosperity look like for your people and in your community?

Psalm 1, the response to the first reading, echoes these themes of life and flourishing. The image of trees planted by streams of water, bearing fruit in due season (v. 3) is especially powerful when we see good works as the fruit that grows because of the grace we have received from God. As Christians, we, too, are planted by sources of nourishment: the waters of baptism, the communion meal, the word of God and the gift of community. We bear fruit that is meant to be shared with the world, inviting all people to celebrate the abundance of God's grace and the fullness of life with and in God.

Consider: How is your community bearing fruit in this season? How is it sharing that fruit with others?

The letter to Philemon offers a beautiful greeting and demonstrates the power of noticing, naming and giving thanks for examples of "love for all the saints" (v. 5), which can offer joy, encourage people and refresh their hearts (v. 7). Sharing stories of the time we have spent doing God's work can encourage others to emulate us. It is always a joy to see the many ways in which ELCA congregations interpret the invitation of "God's work. Our hands." Some may even offer inspiration and encouragement for work in future years!



In his letter, Paul distinguishes between a command to do one's duty and an appeal on the basis of love (v. 8-9). How do we invite others into a life of good works? Not by demanding them or by exploiting others' sense of duty, fear of punishment or desire to be made right with God. Instead we appeal to them on the basis of love — the love flowing from God to us, which invites us into life together. By grace, we are freed from sin and death to love God and neighbor.

Consider: How will you share stories of love and service with one another, your synod and the wider community so that they might bring joy, encourage your listeners and refresh their hearts?

The way of discipleship, the way of Jesus, is a way of love, service and sacrifice. In Luke 14:25-33, Jesus tells the crowd that there are costs for following him and that the way is not easy — impossible even. Disciples are called to examine their priorities, allegiances and responsibilities because these can draw us away from God's call (which is illustrated well in the preceding parable of the great banquet). The good news is that in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus we see how he counted the cost of our salvation and offered himself anyway. Strengthened by this gift of grace, we seek to answer God's call to love and service.

Still, we do well to count the costs and clearly consider our work of service. Are we prepared to be challenged and changed? Are we willing to receive as well as give? Are we looking for a one-time opportunity to feel good about helping someone in need, or might we commit to an ongoing way of living and serving, rooted in the baptismal call and nourished by God's presence?

Consider: What are the costs of service? How do we encounter God amid the challenges?

Rev. Kerri Clark

WORSHIP TEXTS

Prayer of the Day

Gracious God, throughout the ages you transform sickness into health and death into life. Open us to the power of your presence, and make us a people ready to proclaim your promises to the whole world, through Jesus Christ, our healer and Lord. Amen. (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, p. 47)

OR

Holy One, you stretch wide your tent that all may be welcomed in, and in Jesus you stretched out your hands in expansive love for a weary and wounded world. Help us to reach out with your own wounded hands of love, that through us your life may be known in the world, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

The prayers are prepared locally. The following sets of intercessions may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Trusting God at work in and among us, we raise our hearts and voices in prayer for the needs of the world.

For your work in the church, we give thanks. Plant and tend relationships among faith communities, both ecumenical and interfaith, that in faithful listening, speech, and action, our hands work to bear fruit for the sake of all in need. God of grace, we pray,



hear us when we call.

For your work in creation, we give thanks. Sustain peoples and places affected by climate change, ecological devastation and natural disasters. Prosper the work of creation-care ministries locally and globally, that with our minds and hearts opened, our hands work to lovingly care for the earth. God of life, we pray,
hear us when we call.

For your work among the nations, we give thanks. Direct leaders in paths of honest service, that both their words and actions are carried out on behalf of those whom they serve. God of righteousness, we pray,
hear us when we call.

For your work in places of need, we give thanks. Sustain all who are wearied by unemployment or lack of adequate food or housing, that we advocate for relief and just policy. Bring healing to all who are sick through the skillful hands and compassionate hearts of physicians, nurses, therapists and caregivers. (*We pray especially for...*) God of restoration, we pray,
hear us when we call.

For your work in our neighborhoods, towns and cities, we give thanks. Guide our common life together so that children, youth and adults of all ages flourish. Teach us to listen attentively to our neighbors, that any new endeavors consider those who may be left out or underserved. God of wisdom, we pray,
hear us when we call.

For your work in this worshiping community, we give thanks. Bless the service project(s) of this day and throughout the year. Foster deeper connections among those who serve and a spirit of accompaniment as we work alongside those in our community. Strengthen our faith, that we trust God moving in and among us. God of love, we pray,
hear us when we call.

Here other intercessions composed for the local community or related to a local service project may be added.

For your work among those who came before us, we give thanks. We remember those who have died and are held forever in your loving hands (especially). Hold us in your presence now and always. God of heaven and earth,
hear us when we call.

Receive these and all our prayers, gracious God. We pray in the name of Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

OR

Prayers of Intercession

Gathered into God's embrace, let us lift our voices on behalf of a weary and wounded world.

God of love, send us out filled with your love and life. Be known in our daily living, that your love may be known through our proclamation. God, we pray,



open our hands in love.

God of creation, remind us to be good stewards of your diverse and beautiful world. God, we pray,
open our hands in love.

God of peace, fill the hearts of those who rule, govern and lead. Give them and us compassion to guide the peoples of this world in the ways of truth, justice, equity and peace. God, we pray,
open our hands in love.

God of healing, visit those who yearn for your wholeness, especially those whose names and needs we lift up now (*names and needs added as desired*). Encourage all those who bear another's burdens. Give wisdom and perseverance to all who work in health care professions. God, we pray,
open our hands in love.

God of service, give us strength and humility. In our service to those near and far, whose needs are visible or invisible, may we find you in the faces of our neighbors. God, we pray,
open our hands in love.

For what else do we pray?

Here other intercessions composed for the local community or related to a local service project may be added.

Everlasting God, support us in this life. As we remember those who have gone before as examples of faithful living and honor those whose faith was known only to you, inspire us to follow their example of baptismal life until we join with them in worship. God, we pray,
open our hands in love.

Into your wounded hands of love, O God, we place all our prayers, trusting in your mercy through the crucified and risen one Jesus.

Amen.

Additional Prayers

In addition to the collects below, you may wish to consider prayers related to your particular service project. For example, if the project relates to creation care, a specific prayer on care for the earth may be fitting. See Evangelical Lutheran Worship pp. 72–87 and All Creation Sings pp. 46–55.

Mighty and merciful God, lover of justice and equity, you call us to support the weak, to help those who suffer, and to honor all people. By the power of your Holy Spirit, make us advocates for your justice and instruments of your peace, so that all may be reconciled in your beloved community; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen. (ACS, p. 47)

By your word, eternal God, your creation sprang forth, and we were given the breath of life. By your word, eternal God, death is overcome, Christ is raised from the tomb, and we are given new life in the power of your Spirit. May we boldly proclaim this good news in our words and our deeds, rejoicing always in



your powerful presence; through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord. Amen. (*ELW* p. 75)
 Draw your church together, O God, into one great company of disciples, together following our teacher Jesus Christ into every walk of life, together serving in Christ's mission to the world, and together witnessing to your love wherever you will send us; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (*ELW* p. 75)

Direct us, O Lord God, in all our doings with your most gracious favor,
 and extend to us your continual help;
 that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in you,
 we may glorify your holy name; and finally, by your mercy, bring us to everlasting life;
 through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (*ELW* p. 86)

Offering Prayer

Holy God, giver of all good things,
 receive the gifts we bring,
 fruit of the earth and the work of human hands,
 that they may be used to your purposes
 for life and love in the world.
Amen.

Thanksgiving at the Table

Honor, praise, glory and thanksgiving
 to you, God, our loving Creator.

In the beginning you reached your hands into the earth
 and formed humanity in your own image.
 You breathed into us your own breath of love
 and gave us hearts and hands and voices
 to live your loving purpose in the world.

Seeing the lonely creature of earth,
 you created a partner that we would know the joy of community.
 Throughout the history of your people, you never abandoned us,
 but brought us into community with one another and with you,
 and guided us through your prophets.
 With endless patience and love,
 you called to us time and again to return to life with you.

In the fulfillment of all things, you came to us in Jesus,
 born into a human family,
 raised in a hometown,
 who gathered around himself a community formed by your love,



and yearned to gather all people under the loving wings of a mother hen.
 Sitting at dinner with friends
 and knowing one among them would break the bonds of love,
 our Lord Jesus took bread and gave thanks,
 broke it, and gave it to his disciples saying:
 Take and eat; this is my body given for you.
 Do this for the remembrance of me.

In the same way after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
 and gave it for all to drink, saying:
 This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
 shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sins.
 Do this for the remembrance of me.

Trusting in his promise to be among us whenever we gather in his name,
 we proclaim the mystery of faith:
Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Gathered as your people,
 meeting in Jesus' name,
 and preparing ourselves to feast upon Jesus' very body and blood,
 we plead with all creation:
Come, Lord Jesus.

Send your Spirit upon this meal,
 the body and blood of Jesus,
 that we overflow with your selfless love.
 Turn us to face our neighbors,
 that by us and through us your love may be known in the world.
 Again, we beg:
Come, Holy Spirit.

All honor and praise and glory to you,
 God of creative, dirty hands,
 God of holy, wounded hands,
 God who strengthens and guides our hands,
 now and forever.
Amen.

Prayer After Communion

Holy Jesus, in this meal you have fed and nourished us to work in your beloved world. Send us now, filled with yourself and strengthened by your Spirit to live your love for others.
Amen.



Blessing

God who sets forth the law of love,
Jesus who fulfills the law for you,
and the Spirit through whom you are called to love,
+ bless you this day,
that you may be God's hands and heart and voice
at work in the world.

Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. You are God's hands at work in the world!
Thanks be to God.

AFFIRMATION OF CHRISTIAN VOCATION

Within the sending rite of the service, this affirmation may be made by individuals or groups, and may be introduced by a description of the area of service to be affirmed.

Or, the affirmation may be made by the whole assembly.

The presiding minister addresses those affirming Christian vocation.

Siblings in Christ, both our work and our rest are in God.
Will you endeavor to pattern your life on the Lord Jesus Christ,
in gratitude to God and in service to others, at morning and evening,
at work and at play, all the days of your life?

I will, and I ask God to help me.

Almighty God, by the power of the Spirit you have knit us your servants into the one body of your Son, Jesus Christ. Look with favor upon us in our commitment to serve in Christ's name. Give us courage, patience, and vision; and strengthen us all in our Christian vocation of witness to the world and of service to others; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

OR

CELEBRATION OF VOCATION AND BLESSING OF HANDS FOR MINISTRY

Following the hymn of the day, or before the blessing at the sending, the assembly may share a brief rite of celebrating our vocations and blessing hands for ministry. Oil may or may not be used for the blessing of hands.

We are called to proclaim the good news:

God is at work!

This good news is not left in some history long ago or a place far away:

God is at work in the world still today!



In us and through us, God is glorified in our work.
 When we offer a helping hand, God is praised.
 When we share of our abundance, God is known in the world.

God is at work in us!

In our service today and in our daily lives,
 let us live out what God has called us to in baptism.

God is at work through our hands!

Here the assembly may be seated while an appropriate hymn or song is sung. Individuals may come forward and receive a blessing on the backs and palms of their hands.

Signing a cross on the backs of the hands:

God bless your hands and your work,

Signing a cross on the palms of the hands:

that through you God's love may be known.

Amen.

BLESSING AND SENDING FOR MISSION

This order is intended for use when material resources or people are being sent forth from the assembly as a tangible expression of the baptismal call to share in Christ's mission to all the world.

This order may precede the blessing and the dismissal in a congregation's primary service, or it may be adapted to be used independently.

The leader addresses the assembly, adapting these words to the occasion.

Friends in Christ: Today we give thanks to God and seek God's blessing as we send these
 _____ to description of destination and purpose.

Let us pray.

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe.

You made the whole earth for your glory; all creation praises you.

We lift our voices to join the songs of heaven and earth
 in thanksgiving for the many blessings you have given us.

Renew in us the commitment to use our gifts in the service of others, especially of those in need.

Let us be your hands to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless,
 clothe the naked, comfort the weary and outcast,
 welcome the stranger, care for creation,
 and be loving neighbors to all people.

The leader continues with one or more of the following petitions, adapting as appropriate.

Sending of people

Bless those who go out from here to labor in/at _____.



Prosper the work of their hands.
 Bless those who receive [them and] the fruits of their labor,
 and may those who are sent receive blessing in return.
 May the gifts they use and share be signs of your love to all people.

Food, sustenance

Bless these _____.
 May those who receive them be nourished and strengthened,
 and may these gifts be a sign of your love to all people.

Medical and personal-care supplies

Bless these _____.
 May those who receive them be cared for and healed,
 and may these gifts be a sign of your love to all people.

Clothing, quilts

Bless these _____.
 May those who receive them find dignity in their use and comfort in their warmth,
 and may these gifts be a sign of your love to all people.

The prayer concludes:

To you, O God, be glory and honor through your Son, Jesus Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, in your church and in the world, now and forever.

Amen.

HYMNS AND SONGS

The following suggestions may be especially suitable for this day. For additional suggestions, explore the topical indexes in Evangelical Lutheran Worship, All Creation Sings or This Far by Faith. Singing on this day may take place in settings outside the worship space such as a service project worksite. While any song can be sung unaccompanied, hymns marked with an () lend themselves more readily to singing without the aid of instruments or printed materials.*

ELW 486	God Extends an Invitation / Nuestro Padre nos invita
ELW 497	Strengthen for Service, Lord
ELW 513	* Listen, God Is Calling
ELW 538	Enviado soy de Dios / The Lord Now Sends Us Forth
ELW 546	To Be Your Presence
ELW 548	Rise, O Church, like Christ Arisen
ELW 549	* Thuma mina, Nkosi yam / Send Me, Jesus
ELW 580	How Clear Is Our Vocation, Lord
ELW 583 / 685	Take My Life, That I May Be
ELW 676	Lord, Speak to Us, That We May Speak



ELW 712	Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service
ELW 722	O Christ, Your Heart, Compassionate
ELW 741	* Your Will Be Done
ELW 748	O God in Heaven
ELW 790	Day by Day
ELW 798	Will You Come and Follow Me
ELW 808	Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song
ACS 939	Touch That Soothes and Heals
ACS 984	May the God of Hope Go with Us
ACS 985	Let Us Enter In
ACS 987	* Guide My Feet
ACS 991	Go to the World
ACS 1000	God's Work, Our Hands ^
ACS 1003	* For Such a Time as This
ACS 1022	God, Bless the Hands
ACS 1036	Commonwealth Is God's Commandment
ACS 1042	May This Church Be like a Tree / Que esta iglesia sea un árbol
ACS 1043	Spirit, Open My Heart
ACS 1045	Come, Share the Spirit
ACS 1047	What Is the World Like
ACS 1048	Founded on Faith
ACS 1056	God Bless to Us Our Bread
ACS 1056	Come Now, You Blessed
ACS 1061	Caminemos con Jesús
TFF 130	* Listen, God is Calling
TFF 134	O Lord, Open My Eyes
TFF 243	* Your Will Be Done
TFF 244 / 245	* Send Me, Jesus / Thuma mina

Richard Bruxvoort Colligan Like a Tree

^ Two versions of the "God's Work. Our Hands." hymn are available at [ELCA.org/dayofservice](https://www.elca.org/dayofservice) set to a familiar tune (as presented at ACS 1000) and a new tune, with permissions to reproduce for local, non-sale use in synods, congregations and other ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

A setting of the newly composed tune for SATB choir and optional assembly [is available for purchase from Augsburg Fortress](#).

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