

Eighth Sunday After Pentecost

August 3, 2025 10:30 AM



Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church



4536 Hickory Lincolnton Highway, Newton, North Carolina 28658

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Rev. Doug Hefner cell: (980) 234-8848 email: pastorhefner@aol.com

Sandi Tallant – Organist Todd Childers – Administrative Assistant

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 9am to 1pm

Tuesday and Thursday 12pm to 4pm

WELCOME TO ALL WHO WORSHIP at Grace Church this morning as we gather to worship the Father, + Son and Holy Spirit in truth. As you entered the sanctuary today, you received this bulletin containing the order for worship and announcements. Please also notice the Prayer List where you will find a listing of all the known prayer concerns. You are invited to use this as a guide for your personal prayers throughout the coming week. If you need information about our congregation or if you'd like to update your information, make sure to fill out the yellow Worship Today Form and place it in the offering plate at the time of the offering. If you have a prayer concern, indicate that on your Worship Today Form at the bottom or on the reverse side. If you are seeking a Church Home or would like more information about Grace, please contact Pastor Doug (980) 234-8848.

**Stand* Hymnals in Pew Rack: LBW = Green WOV = Blue TCH = Burgundy

PRELUDE Please observe silence for meditation and prayer.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

*** BRIEF ORDER OF CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

The sign of the cross may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

P In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. C Amen.

P God of all mercy and consolation, come to the aid of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that, attentive to your Word, we may confess our sins, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **C Amen.**

P In the presence of God, who sees our hearts and our minds, who forgives all our sins, whose mercy endures forever, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection and confession of our sins before God and one another.

P Gracious God, **C have mercy on us. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things done and left undone. Uphold us by your Spirit so that we may live and serve you in newness of life, to the honor and glory of your holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

P Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life in the name of the Father, +Son and Holy Spirit. **C Amen.**

* **GATHERING HYMN** "Sweet Hour of Prayer"

TCH 640

* **GREETING**

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **C: And also with you.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: O God, our refuge and strength, since you yourself are the author of our devotion, graciously consider the devout prayers of your Church. May those things which we ask in faith effectively follow by your grace; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **C: Amen.**

The congregation may be seated.

FIRST READING: 2 Chronicles 7:11-18

¹¹ Thus Solomon finished the house of the Lord and the king's house. All that Solomon had planned to do in the house of the Lord and in his own house he successfully accomplished. ¹² Then the Lord appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him: "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice. ¹³ When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, ¹⁴ if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. ¹⁵ Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place. ¹⁶ For now I have chosen and consecrated this house that my name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time. ¹⁷ And as for you, if you will walk before me as David your father walked, doing according to all that I have commanded you and keeping my statutes and my rules, ¹⁸ then I will establish your royal throne, as I covenanted with David your father, saying, 'You shall not lack a man to rule Israel.'

L: The Word of the Lord. **C: Thanks be to God**

PSALM 5: 1-8

Give ear to my words, O Lord; consider my groaning.

**² Give attention to the sound of my cry, my King and my God,
for to you do I pray.**

**³ O Lord, in the morning you hear my voice;
in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch.**

**⁴ For you are not a God who delights in wickedness;
evil may not dwell with you.**

⁵ The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers.

**⁶ You destroy those who speak lies;
the Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.**

**⁷ But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house.
I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you.**

**⁸Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness because of my enemies;
make your way straight before me.**

SECOND READING: Ephesians 3: 7-21

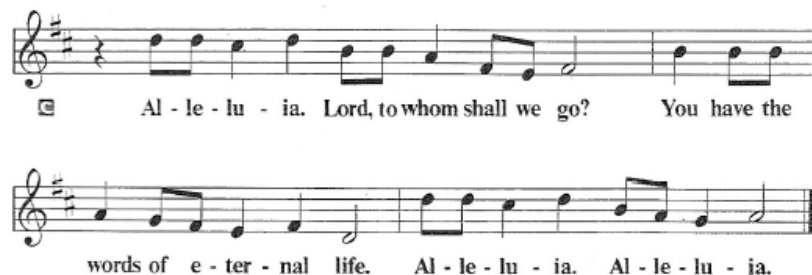
⁷ Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. ⁸ To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, ¹⁰ so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹ This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹² in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. ¹³ So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

L: The Word of the Lord. C: Thanks be to God

The congregation is invited to stand.

*** GOSPEL ACCLAMATION “Alleluia, Lord to Whom Shall We Go”**



***GOSPEL: Luke 18: 1-14**

P: The holy gospel according to St. Luke. C: Glory to you, O Lord.

¹{Jesus} told {his disciples} a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. ²He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. ³And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' ⁴For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, ⁵yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'" ⁶And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. ⁷And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? ⁸I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" ⁹He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: ¹⁰"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' ¹³But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

L: The Gospel of the Lord. **C: Praise to You O Christ!**

The congregation may be seated.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

SERMON



"Always Pray and Do Not Lose Heart: Pray and Go Trusting That Our Connection with God in Prayer is Transformative to Us and to the World We are Sent to Serve in Christ"

Pastor Doug

"Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?" - Corrie ten Boom

"If your day is hemmed in with prayer, it is less likely to come unraveled." - Cynthia Lewis

"To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing." - Martin Luther

***HYMN OF THE DAY "What a Friend We Have in Jesus"**

TCH 630

***THE 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 into hell.

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 INTERCESSION**

Response at the end of each petition. P: Lord in your mercy, C: **Hear our prayer.**

***SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

P: The peace of Christ be with you always. C: **And also with you.**

Worshipers may greet one another with "the Peace of Christ."

The assembly may be seated.

* **OFFERING** In response to God's blessings, we offer our tithes to the Lord

HOLY COMMUNION – MEAL OF GRACE

* **OFFERTORY**

Let the Vineyards

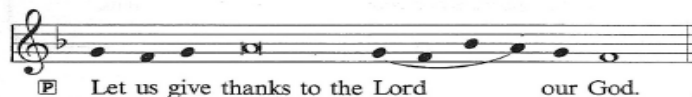
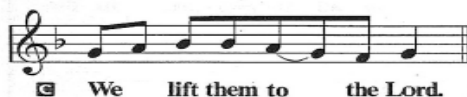
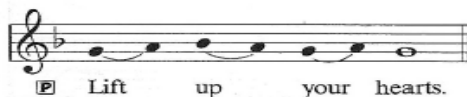
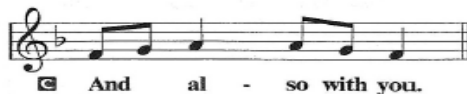
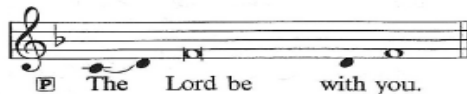


Let the vine - yards be fruit - ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our
cup of bless - ing. Gath - er a har - vest from the seeds that were
sown, that we may be fed with the bread of life. Gath - er the
hopes and the dreams of all; u - nite them with the prayers we
of - fer now. Grace our ta - ble with your pres - ence, and
give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

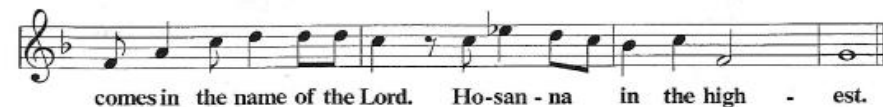
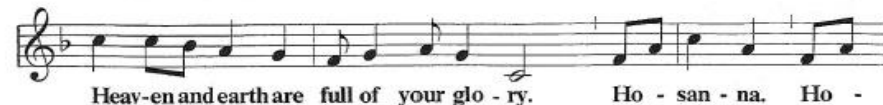
* OFFERTORY PRAYER

P: Merciful Father, C: we offer with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us – ourselves, our time, and our possessions, signs of your gracious love. Receive them for the sake of Him who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

*DIALOGUE AND PREFACE



*HOLY, HOLY, HOLY



* **WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

* **LORD'S PRAYER**

* **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

P: The Gifts of God for the People of God. C: **Thanks be to God!**

The assembly may be seated.

All are invited to receive Holy Communion

COMMUNION SONG

Lamb of

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the
world; have mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; grant us peace.

God

The congregation is invited to stand.

* **COMMUNION BLESSING AND PRAYER**

P: Gracious God, in this meal you have drawn us to your heart, and nourished us at your table with heavenly food and drink, the body and blood of Christ. As your disciples, send us forth to be your people in the world, to pray for one another and to proclaim the Gospel in word and deed through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. C: **Amen.**

* **BLESSING**

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and + give you peace. Amen.

*SENDING HYMN "I Must Tell Jesus"

TCH 636

***DISMISSAL**

P: Let us pray without ceasing and embrace the gift and grace of prayer as our Lord pours into our hearts and lives His love, healing, grace, mercy, and call to serve and as we lift up our praises and worship to the One who is worthy of all praise and glory. Let us go in peace and joy to serve the Lord! **C: Thanks be to God**

POSTLUDE



In the Grace Church Family:

Jeffry Bivens, Rick & Cindy Bivens, Glenda Childers, Pat Dietz, Allen and Kay Hatchett, Larry Heavner, Lorene Heavner, Larry & Brenda Jarrett, Martha Johnson, Faye Lane, Phil & Malinda Leatherman, Tim Leatherman, Betty Matheson, Joe Momier, Jane Moss,

Christine Norman, Michael Norman, Tricia and Dan Panek, Mike, Debi & Stephen Pisko, Helen Smith, Ethan Starnes, Sandi Tallant, Libby Travis, Shirley Warlick, Ken & Tirzah Welch, Scott & Carolyn Whisnant, Nancy Willis, and Jack Wilfong.

Nursing Home: Juanita Haas (Trinity Village), Ted Whisnant (Trinity Village), Dan Panek (Trinity Ridge)

Friends and Relatives in our Prayers: Pray for Peace in Israel and the World, New Covenant Lutheran Mission Church, Bobby Aderholdt, Clinton Childers, Evelyn Childers, Dean Hudson, David King, Thurman McCaslin, Randy & Rita Neill, Anita Sabino, Karlee Speagle, Scott Speagle, flood victims in Western North Carolina and Texas, the United States of America, and especially the families of those who have given their lives in the service of our country and those who continue to protect our freedoms and for all members of our Armed Forces.

COMING UP AT GRACE THIS WEEK

Today: Eighth Sunday After Pentecost

9:30am – Sunday School 10:30am - Worship Celebration

After Worship – Brief Meeting of the Board

1:00pm – Wilfong Family Reunion

Wednesday: 12:00pm Fred T. Foard Seniors Luncheon at Grace

Saturday: 9:00 am Grace Prayer Breakfast at Four Peas in a Pod - Conover

HAPPY AUGUST BIRTHDAY TO:

August 1 – James Hall, Gary Leatherman

August 3 – Sandra Powell

August 7 – Martha Johnson

August 12 – Jane Moss

August 23 – Lynette Momier, Betty Wilfong

August 30 – Pat Dietz

PRAY & GO

Dear Grace Church Family, today we will begin a 30 day prayer and discipleship journey called, **“Pray and Go: Your Invitation to Become a Great Commission Christian – A 30-Day Journey.”** Each home will be given the book **“Pray and Go!”** and invited/challenged to enter into this 30-day journey of Praying and Going to become in Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit, Great Commission Christians, Disciples of



Jesus! August 3 will be Day 1 and on that day you will read the first chapter (very short). Each chapter then invites and challenges you to action (Day 1 is to pray). Once you do that, you will sign the page and date it. If you are doing this with another family member, encourage them to also sign their name. As you go through each day, there will be another chapter to read and an assignment. You can

do this 30-Day Pray and Go Journey individually and/or as a couple and/or as a family. Each chapter is short but as the days pass you will be invited/challenged to be a Great Commission Christian in specific ways. This is quote from the book: ***“Once you have completed the thirty days, you will have taken fifteen days to pray about becoming outwardly mission focused. You will have studied five key Bible passages about reaching beyond yourself to others. You will have prayed in front of sixty homes in your community. You will have sent a note or email to five people who are not part of your church. And you will have specifically invited eight people to visit your church.”*** I believe that this will inspire and impact us as we respond to Jesus’ love and grace and His call to be His disciples. I will be praying for you as we engage in this very important Pray and Go journey together. In Christ’s Love, Pastor Doug

SUNDAY SCHOOL: Please join us for Bible Study on Sunday mornings at 9:30am: We are currently using "The Story" Bible Study which is an overview of the Bible. Having briefly covered the first 6 books of the Bible, this Sunday we will begin the book of Judges. After entering the Promised Land, the people of God continued to face many challenges, most of which were of their own making. God raised up Judges or leaders to help the people during this difficult time. We will look at a few of the judges and the lessons that we can learn from them for our faith journey today.

Summer Sermon Series on the Parables of Jesus:

August 3 – Parables About Prayer: Persistent Widow, Friend in Need at Midnight

August 10 – Guest preacher Reverend Gary Coble

August 17 – Parable of the Great Dinner, Invitation, Luke 14:15-24, Wedding Feast
Matthew 22:2-14

August 24 - Back to School Blessing of the Bookbags, Parables about wise living: The Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids Matthew 25:1-13 and the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30)

August 31 – Parables about the Coming of Christ – Parable of The Faithful and Unfaithful Servants as They Await The Masters Return (Matthew 24:45-51) and the Parable of the Sheep and Goats (Matthew 25:31-46)

NEW DATE FOR HOMECOMING The Board has elected to change the date for Homecoming to September 21st. We will have invitations for you to invite your family and friends and if anyone would like to help with the plans for that day please let us know.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING on August 17th to briefly consider a change in the Carolinas Mission Region constitution having to do with the number of delegates each church can send.

FRED T. FOARD SENIORS LUNCHEON AT GRACE Everyone is invited to attend the luncheon to be hosted by Grace this coming Wednesday August 6th at 12:00 noon. Please bring a covered dish to share.

GRACE PRAYER BREAKFAST will be at Four Peas in a Pod Restaurant in Conover on Saturday, August 9th at 9:00 am. Come share in the fellowship!

Ministers of Grace – All the People of Grace

Pastor – Reverend Doug Hefner Board President – Tim Eckard

Lector – Stormy Shull Youth Leader – Stormy Shull

Altar Preparation – Cindy Bivens

Communion Assistants – Cindy Bivens & Shelly Scronce

Ushers – David Wilfong & Jack Parris

Offering Counters – Todd Childers & Tim Eckard

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

“(Jesus) told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.”

- Luke 18:1 -

Certainly we've all had experiences in which someone is so persistent with us that it begins to drive us nuts, and even makes us angry. Jesus told his followers a parable that helps us to think about that a bit differently. His story also reminds us of God's infinite mercy, which is more abundant and given more freely than that of the unjust judge who ruled a favorable outcome in the widow's long-standing case.

The reality that human beings live in, now and from the beginning of time, is that justice does not always prevail on earth. We are all sinful people who have our own ideas, agendas, and political leanings, which means that there are times when we don't always see things clearly from a point of view of “what is just.” The judge in Jesus' parable had no regard for God and was no lover of people either! It sounds as though he simply did as liked, and everyone else had to “like it or lump it.” This happens to all of us at times, but it seems to occur more often to some than others. Many people in our world have been abused, neglected, marginalized, and held captive to so many things that they have lost the ability to advocate for themselves. Those people tend to fall through the proverbial cracks because there is no one to look out for them, least of all themselves.

That was not the case with the widow. She had no problem looking out for herself. Her courage and perseverance are to be admired. She wasn't asking for something that she didn't deserve, only what was coming to her by law. No one was there to stand in for her and make an argument on her behalf, so she did it herself. And she was relentless!

Jesus calls his followers to be relentless in the pursuit of righteousness: to show mercy, love our neighbors, advocate for those without a voice, protect children, and preach the gospel. When our prayers seem to be falling on deaf ears, he says to us, “Do not be discouraged! Keep at it! Your Father in heaven hears your cries and will answer you because he loves you!”

What confidence we can have in our Lord. By his very nature he is righteous and fair. We can count on him to hear our pleas and answer us when we call on him. In fact, he wants us to do just that.

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