

Ninth Sunday After Pentecost

July 26, 2026 10:30 AM

So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.

- Romans 8:1-2 NLT -



Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church



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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 - Thursday 8am to 12pm

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.

* **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, your almighty power is most clearly shown in your mercy and pity. Multiply your grace that we may run to your promises and be made to share in your heavenly joy; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

The congregation may be seated.

FIRST READING: Micah 6: 1-8, 7:18-20

¹Hear what the Lord says: Rise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice.²Hear, you mountains, the case of the Lord, and you enduring foundations of the earth, for the Lord has a case against his people, and he will contend with Israel.³“O my people, what have I done to you? In what have I wearied you? Answer me!⁴For I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.⁵O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised, what Balaam son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the saving acts of the Lord.”⁶“With what shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?⁷Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”⁸He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?

¹⁸Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of his possession? He does not retain his anger forever because he delights in showing steadfast love.¹⁹He will again have compassion upon us; he will tread our iniquities under foot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.²⁰You will show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham, as you have sworn to our ancestors from the days of old.

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

PSALM 125

¹Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever.

²As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people, from this time forth and forevermore.

³For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous, lest the righteous stretch out their hands to do wrong.

⁴Do good, O Lord, to those who are good, and to those who are upright in their hearts!

⁵But those who turn aside to their crooked ways the Lord will lead away with evildoers!
Peace be upon Israel!

SECOND READING: Romans 8: 1-17

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed, it cannot, ⁸and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, then the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you. ¹²So then, brothers and sisters, we are obligated, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— ¹³for if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs: heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if we in fact suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

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: Matthew 13: 44-52**

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

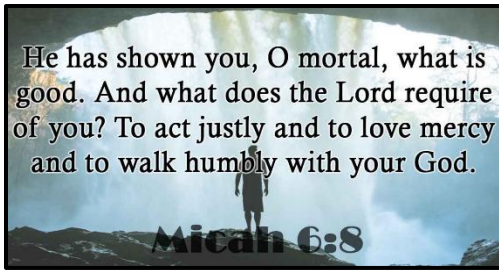
⁴⁴{Jesus said to the disciples,} “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. ⁴⁵Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, ⁴⁶who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it. ⁴⁷Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. ⁴⁸When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. ⁴⁹So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁵¹Have you understood all these things?” They said to him, “Yes.” ⁵²And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”

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

The congregation may be seated.

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE

SERMON



“What Does God Want For Us and From Us?”
Pastor Doug

***HYMN OF THE DAY**

“Just a Closer Walk With Thee”

TCH 564

***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**

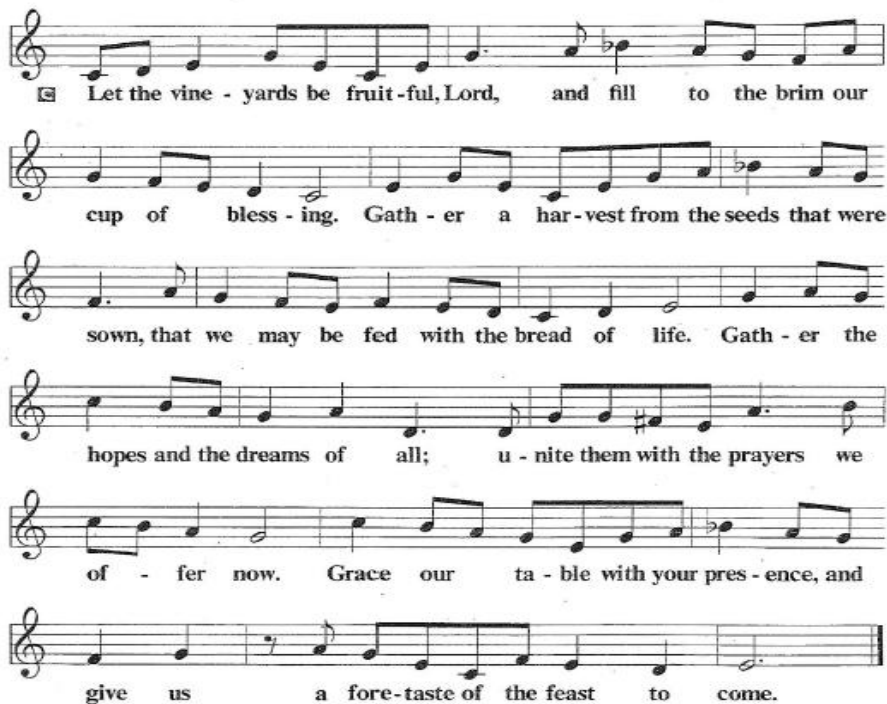
P: The peace of Christ be with you always. **C: And also with you.**

Worshippers 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



* **OFFERTORY PRAYER**

P: Compassionate God, you receive us again into your arms and invite us to be nourished at your table of grace. Receive our offering of thanksgiving and praise. As we receive the body and blood of Christ Jesus, transform and strengthen our lives so that we might shine with the light of Christ as we share ourselves and your gifts with all the world; in the name of Jesus, the Bread of Life. **C: Amen.**

* **DIALOGUE**

P: The Lord be with you. **C: And also with you.**

P: Lift up your hearts. **C: We lift them to the Lord.**

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give him thanks and praise.

* **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 God

The musical score is written on four staves in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The lyrics are: "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." The melody is simple and hymn-like, with a final cadence on the last staff.

The congregation is invited to stand.

* **COMMUNION BLESSING AND PRAYER**

P: Lord Jesus, Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, You have refreshed us again with the heavenly food of your body and blood. As we go now, nourished in faith and love, be present with us today, tomorrow and forever so that we will tell and live out the story of your never-ending love in the precious and powerful name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

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.

***SENDING HYMN**

“Trust and Obey”

TCH 571

***DISMISSAL**

P: There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ! We are set free in the power of the Holy Spirit to be God's beloved children. Therefore, let us do justice, love mercy and kindness, and walk humbly with the Lord as we go in peace to love and serve the Lord and our neighbor!

C: Thanks be to God!

POSTLUDE

ALTAR FLOWERS are given to the Glory of God and in honor of her children on their birthdays by Helen Smith.



In the Grace Church Family:

Jeffrey Bivens, Rick & Cindy Bivens, Pat Dietz, Allen and Kay Hatchett, Lorene Heavner, Larry & Brenda Jarrett, Martha Johnson, Faye Lane, Harvey Leatherman, Phil & Malinda Leatherman, Betty Matheson, Joe Momier, Jane Moss, Christine Norman, Michael Norman, Tricia and Dan Panek, Mike, Debi & Stephen Pisko, Alice Parris, Todd Setzer, Helen Smith, Ethan Starnes, Sandi Tallant, Libby Travis, Shirley Warlick, Ken Welch, Scott & Carolyn Whisnant, and Nancy Willis.

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

Friends and Relatives in our Prayers: Pray for Peace in Israel and the World, New Covenant Lutheran Mission Church, John Barnett, Larry Buff, Ashlee Bumgardner, Clinton Childers, Evelyn Childers, Marilyn Childers, the family of Mike Cline, Ann & Jim Harrelson, the family, the family of Lynette Momier, Dennis Morgan, Randy & Rita Neill, Jolene Heavner Shuford, the family of Richard Ramsey, the family of Jolene Heavner Shuford, and Scott Speagle. Prayers for world peace and for our church, 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.

HAPPY JULY BIRTHDAY TO:

July 13 Lorene Heavner

July 13 Frankie Crouse

July 18 Emily Sipe

July 20 Michael Scronce

July 22 Scott Whisnant

July 22 Nicky Jarrett

July 24 Sherry Biggerstaff

July 27 Jack Wilfong

July 28 Harvey Leatherman

July 30 Shirley Warlick

COMING UP AT GRACE THIS WEEK:

Today: Ninth Sunday After Pentecost

9:15am – Sunday School

10:30am - Worship Celebration

GIVING AND ATTENDANCE FOR LAST SUNDAY

	Offering		Attendance	
Date	Total Receipts	General Fund	Worship	Sunday School
7/19/2026	\$ 1,174	\$ 1,075	33	13

UPCOMING DATES:

Please review these dates and provide feedback or additional dates to Pastor Doug and the Board. Once the dates are finalized, we will share this information with the community in a postcard mailing.

+Sun, Aug. 2: Wilfong Family Reunion – Fellowship Hall – 1:00pm

+Sun, Aug. 16: Leonard Family Reunion – Fellowship Hall – 1:00pm

+Sun., Aug. 23: Back to School Service 10:30am, Blessing of Backpacks, Birthday Luncheon for Betty Wilfong's 80th! The Congregation is invited – bring a dish to share.

+Sun., Sept. 13: Grandparents Sunday, 10:30am – Gift/Prayers/Blessing for Grandparents

+Wed., Sept. 16: Grace Senior Luncheon – 12:00pm

+Sun, Sept 20: Homecoming Worship Service followed by Covered Dish Luncheon in Shelter

+Sat., Oct. 3: Blessing of the Animals Service at Grace Outdoor Shelter 5:00pm

+Sun., Oct. 4: Food for the Poor Sunday 10:30am; Catawba Co. Walk for Hunger 3:00pm

+October Possible Bazaar (Yard sale) with Octoberfest foods as a fundraiser for hunger.

+Wed., Oct. 21: Grace Senior Luncheon – 12:00pm

+Sun, Oct. 25: Reformation Sunday Service at 10:30am

+Sat., Oct. 31: Grace Fall Festival and Trunk or Treat 5pm:7pm

+Sunday, Nov. 1: 10:30am All Saints' Day Service, Worshippers light a candle in remembrance of a loved one in heaven.

+Sun, Nov. 15: Whisnant Family Reunion – Fellowship Hall – 1:00pm

+Wed., Nov. 18: *Grace Senior Luncheon – 12:00pm*
 + Nov. 22 : *Christ the King Sunday 10:30am, Last Sunday in Church Year*
 +Wed, Nov. 25 : *Community Thanksgiving Service 6pm Dinner, 7pm Worship*
 +Sat., Nov. 28: *Hanging of the Greens, 10:00 am*
 + Nov. 29: *Advent Season 11/29:12/24 begins with First Sunday of Advent.*
 +Wed., Dec. 2: *Fred T. Foard Seniors Luncheon – 12:00pm at Grace*
 +Sat., Dec. 6: *Breakfast with Santa, Pancakes with fixings, Crafts, Music, Storytime*
 +Wed., Dec. 16: *Grace Senior Luncheon – 12:00pm*
 +Thur., Dec. 24: *Christmas Eve Candlelight and Holy Communion Service 5pm*
 +Sun., Jan. 3, 2027: *New Year's Sunday Service - 10:30am*

PICTORIAL DIRECTORY

We would like to create a new updated pictorial directory for our congregation. Rather than going to the expense of hiring an outside company to do this we would like to complete this project in-house. But we will need your help. Please email a digital photo of your choosing of you and your family members who worship at Grace. It does not have to be a formal portrait but should clearly show everyone's faces. If you do not have one, we can help you take one. We would like to put this together as soon as possible so please start sending in your photos now. If you would like someone to take a picture for you, please see Todd Childers immediately after worship.

MAINTENANCE TECHNICIAN

Grace is in need of a skilled and reliable maintenance technician or handyman to call upon on an “as needed” basis. Many projects around our campus need attention so it would be very helpful to have such a person readily available. If you know someone who can complete these projects with a high degree of excellence in a reasonable timeframe and at a reasonable cost, please have them contact the church office.

SAFETY UPDATE

In order to maintain a safe environment for all who worship at Grace, the Board has decided that beginning on Sunday, August 2nd, the ushers will lock the front doors at 10:45am. Please share any other ideas you have that might enhance the safety and security of our Congregation by jotting them down and placing them in the suggestion box found in the Narthex.

Ministers of Grace – All the People of Grace
Pastor – Reverend Doug Hefner Board President – Tim Eckard
Lector – Tim Eckard Youth Leader – Stormy Shull
Altar Preparation – Betty Wilfong
Communion Assistants – Sheila Drum & Betty Wilfong
Ushers – Jeff Scronce & Jack Wilfong
Offering Counters – Todd Childers & Jason Yoder

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

“Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people, from this time forth and forevermore. Do good, O Lord, to those who are good, and to those who are upright in their hearts!”

- Psalm 125:1-2, 4 -

Ever taken a cross-country trip where you're in a car for hours on end with family members? Ways in which to help the long hours pass are carefully chosen: interactive travel games, favorite songs, and even a movie or two. All of these activities can become family traditions and be passed down to the next generation. Summer is a popular time when annual trips are taken, people gather, and traditions are formed.

In biblical times, people would also make long journeys or pilgrimages to the mountains, usually centered around the time of a particular festival. Psalm 125 is referred to as a “Song of Ascents” and was used as one of the several traditional songs chanted or sang as the people ascended into the mountains. Psalms 120-134 are all part of a grouping known collectively as the “Songs of Ascents” with a range of themes revealing the peoples’ faith and adoration for God. Much like the hymns we sing in worship today, some we know by heart, ancient Israel also sang psalms which have preserved for us today.

Consider the words of Psalm 125:2, “As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people.” Imagine those people reaching the point on their journey where they were surrounded on all sides by mountains and feeling safe with the natural border. So it is with God, he surrounds us with his love, leaving us feeling safe. Isn't it comforting to know that no matter where we journey, God is right there with us?

In our scripture today, that's precisely the comfort these people had as they made their way up the mountains. This psalm is also a prayer for God's blessing upon his people, and we are his people! The “Song of Ascents” is rich in the tradition of how we are to worship and praise the Lord together and it is passed down from one generation to the next! God is unchanging and always here for us; a truth we can depend on! Amen.