

Gospel and Sermon Transcript - 18th Sunday After Pentecost - September 27, 2026

00:01

[Music]

00:15

[Music]

00:34

The Gospel through this Sunday is recorded in the 21st chapter of the book of St. Matthew.

00:42

When he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was

00:48

teaching and said, "By what authority are you doing these things and who gave you this authority?"

00:56

Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one question. If you tell me the answer,

01:00

then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things.

01:05

Did the baptism of John come from heaven,

01:07

or was it from human origin?

01:10

And they argue with one another, if we say from heaven,

01:13

he will say to us why then did you not believe him?

01:16

But if we say of human origin, we

01:19

are afraid of the crowd for all regard John as a prophet.

01:23

So they answered Jesus, we do not know.

01:26

And he said to them, neither will I tell you

01:28

why what authority I'm doing these things.

01:31

What do you think?

01:33

A man had two sons.

01:35

He went to the first and he said, son,

01:37

go and work in the vineyard today.

01:39

He answered, I will not.

01:41

But later, he changed his mind and went.

01:44

The father went to the second and said the same.

01:47

And he answered, I will go, sir.

01:49

He did not.

01:52

Which of these two did the will of the father?

01:55

They said the first.

01:57

And Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going to the kingdom of God ahead of you."

02:04

"For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him."

02:08

"But the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him."

02:12

"And even when you saw it, you did not change your minds and believed them."

02:16

The Gospel of our Lord.

02:20

Please be seated.

The Sermon

02:25

150 years and I know this isn't these walls

02:29

These walls are in a different place. Can you imagine that these walls with the top?

02:34

150 years ago what would they be saying?

02:39

How was life here 150 years ago? I did look up some prices as I always thought that was interest

02:47

How much was a pound of butter?

02:50

15 cents it was more expensive than beef a pound of beef

02:55

How much were we earning a day?

02:59

A dollar, or a dollar fifty?

03:01

How much was a car?

03:03

Did they have cars then?

03:06

(Laughter)

03:07

Just think about those early folks who came here

03:12

And out of faith and faithfulness to God started these congregations in southern areas.

03:19

Imagine what they endured.

03:21

Imagine how life was for them.

03:23

Imagine how different, imagine how it's changed over the years.

03:29

Imagine how it's changed over the years.

03:32

In the building, World Wars, then we had post-World War II,

03:37

we had this huge boom of Northern Europeans come,

03:42

and Joanne, all the congregations here from all the northern countries,

03:47

increased in general in this area of southern Ontario,

03:50

The Lutherans that came post 1947.

03:54

Guess what increase of building churches they did?

04:00

What percentage of increase?

04:03

After 1947 and up to 1973,

04:06

what percentage of buildings were built?

04:11

Guess.

04:15

Hmm.

04:21

373%.

04:23

Then, Jordan leaves European Lutherans, and I'm in Danish, so my grandparents came.

04:29

My great- my grandfather's a carpenter, they came to build churches.

04:35

373% increase in church builds during that close time, because it was the baby boom, right?

04:41

All these European's came.

04:43

Baby boom happened, and now, we're in the last years of the baby boom.

04:48

My birth year was actually the last year of the main move.

04:51

So we're coming into a new era, a time that was different.

04:56

But God, in God's faithfulness, is still with us.

05:00

Sometimes when I travel in Sunday morning,

05:02

especially in locations like this at 100,

05:06

last weekend it was 200 years.

05:09

And a little before that it was 190 years,

05:13

St. Peter's in Cambridge.

05:14

And people go, "Look, we're dying."

05:18

There's no people here anymore. That's not what's happening. We're right-sizing.

05:23

We're back to what we were and what we were called to be as God's people. And God

05:28

is still with us. And this huge bubble of population that came through here, we are

05:34

now moving out of that anomaly, which is a huge bubble. Right? So everything is going

05:42

well. God is still with us and we're moving forward. I'm wondering how many of

05:47

you have read this book, Theo of Golden. Have you heard of it? So you would like to read it. It's just such a good book. So the story, and I'm not going to get away

07:00

And then he gives them the picture.

07:04

It's all wrapped up.

07:05

He helps them unwrap the picture in his round paper.

07:09

And then he tells them what he sees in them.

07:14

And then he listens deeply to their story.

07:20

There's 92 pictures on the wall in the coffee shop.

07:25

And Theo keeps buying them.

07:27

He keeps inviting people to meet him at the fountain.

07:30

He keeps gifting them, and over time something happens.

07:34

The community changes.

07:37

Ellen is one of the women who has a picture on the wall.

07:41

Ellen is the one that everyone laughs at.

07:44

She writes her write.

07:45

She has some mental health problems.

07:47

She writes her write everywhere.

07:49

She collects things.

07:51

And so it was more difficult for Theo to find an address

07:55

to send her the letter.

07:58

But he drags her down and he meets her.

08:01

And he treats her with such respect

08:03

and listens deeply to her story and how she came to be.

08:09

And she tells others the respect he had for her.

08:13

In fact, at 82, he ends up renting a bicycle

08:16

because she wants him to come bike riding with her.

08:20

And he does.

08:23

It's a remarkable story.

08:25

And when I read it, there's parts I read,

08:28

because it reminds me of the kind of faithful God we have.

08:33

The one in our waters of baptism

08:35

who looks deeply at each of us,

08:38

who helps us unwrap the trappings that society puts on us.

08:43

And you know, we have a heart of society.

08:45

It's really difficult on people,

08:48

because society tells us you're not tall enough,

08:51

you're not short enough, you're not big enough,

08:53

you're not smart enough,

08:54

You don't drive a bit of a car.

08:57

You can probably add your own.

08:59

And we keep saying, you're not this, you're not that.

09:02

You should be better.

09:03

You should be.

09:03

You should be.

09:04

You should be.

09:06

It's hard.

09:08

And yet we have God in waters of baptism.

09:14

His water comes down, touches you, and says,

09:18

there is nothing that can separate you from the love of God.

09:23

Nothing.

09:26

The parable of the two sons

09:28

only shows up in the Gospel of Matthew,

09:30

and it's sandwiched between Jesus asking by whose authority?

09:36

Jesus was asked, by whose authority

09:38

are you even here doing this?

09:41

And then it goes on to the wicked tenet,

09:42

which you'll get next week.

09:45

Only in the Gospel of Matthew.

09:47

Let's think for a minute when the Gospel of Matthew

09:49

was written.

09:50

Remember, Jesus was born in the year zero,

09:53

as we come to. Ask the theologians to explain that one out. Jesus was born in the year zero.

10:00

He began his public ministry at age 30. Turning water into wine. He died at age 33. The Gospel

10:09

of Mark was written around 60 of the common era. And Matthew and Luke were written down

10:16

here around 80, 90, somewhere around 80. And then the Gospel of John is way down there.

10:22

really unique, really poetic. And of course, we're waiting on the street in 2026 today.

10:29

So the Gospel of Matthew was written after the destruction of the temple.

10:33

People were in crisis. They had an occupier who was tithing and putting tariffs on them and

10:43

charging them big taxes, their neighbor, and they didn't understand what was happening.

10:48

They were terrified of living in this era.

10:51

And this gospel of two sons and Jesus being asked,

10:54

"By whose authority are you doing this?"

10:56

Because Jesus was doing everything

10:58

that wasn't supposed to be done.

11:01

He talked to women.

11:04

He went to see the marginalized.

11:07

He went to the Samaritans.

11:09

And you know, we today say all the thrift stores

11:12

and things are called the Good Samaritan.

11:13

They were not considered good.

11:16

And Jesus went to them.

11:18

He constantly, constantly challenged authority about what was right and what was wrong,

11:24

because his motivation was love.

11:28

Constantly challenging them all the time.

11:31

So then we have this parable of the two signs.

11:34

Which are you?

11:35

Do you say yes and then not go?

11:37

Or do you say no and then change your mind and go?

11:40

Kevin, I have this question.

11:42

Kevin and I were in seminary together here.

11:45

Someone said, I think it was Paul Hodge.

11:47

Stand up and remember or recall yourself that you are like a billboard for God, that each

11:54

of us is like a billboard walking around.

11:57

That's how much they thought it was.

11:59

Thank you.

12:01

So imagine if you're a billboard for God, it's not what you say.

12:06

It's your actions.

12:08

How do you represent God?

12:11

By what you do, but how you treat people, but how you look at people, by how you unwrap

12:16

people that society has wrapped up and said you're not good enough. How do we do

12:22

this as Christians, as followers of Jesus? In the Gospel, the first son says I'm not going.

12:31

I'm not going. No, I don't want to feed the unhoused. I don't want to help the unhoused. I don't want to deal with the

12:36

2SLGT people. I don't want to look at anti-racism stuff. I don't want to. No. And then they go home

12:45

and it's starting to snow and they think they've caught coffee they go to the

12:51

sleeping bags that they have left over from downstairs and they head out to a

12:55

homelessness encounter and they help feed and warm and feed with people there. They change their mind.

13:03

Metanoia means turning around. We change our mind. One of the things the church has

13:08

changed its mind on right now is orange shirt thing. Sorry my orange shirt is on

13:12

on the desk in Farts office.

13:16

And I sure did, right?

13:18

I remember thinking, where was I when this happened?

13:22

Why did I have three degrees?

13:24

I never once heard about residential schools.

13:28

Not once.

13:29

And I was born and raised in Regina,

13:31

and there are several right along

13:33

that the latest one posted '96.

13:37

How did we not know?

13:40

Now we in the Lutheran church

13:42

were a little exempt because we weren't the ones that were operating the schools, like

13:45

the Catholics, the United, and the Anglicans were. That doesn't mean we are off the hook

13:51

for reconciliation. I hope you read the report for reconciliation, the Truth and Commission.

13:59

It's not an easy read, but there's one place where the Church said, "No, no." And now

14:09

Now we say yes to reconciliation.

14:12

How can we make it right?

14:13

How can we continue to work to undo the vast damage

14:17

was done in this Canadian society

14:20

where little children were taken from their parents?

14:23

Have some of you done the blanket exercise?

14:26

Some of you have.

14:28

The first time I did, probably about 10, 12 years ago,

14:31

I was one of the moms that had a baby.

14:34

Do you remember this part?

14:36

And so a priest came to try to take my baby away.

14:39

And I remember thinking, we're acting out here.

14:43

But no, you are not taking my child.

14:49

And it was very emotional, actually,

14:51

to imagine what happened.

14:54

So we lived into reconciliation.

14:57

Some were in the church in the past.

14:58

It said, no, we now say yes.

15:01

And we continue to live as a community.

15:04

How can we make things right with what's happened,

15:07

the devastating residential schools and land seizures?

15:13

The other son said, "Yes, of course.

15:17

"Yes, we do it all.

15:19

"Yes, we're welcoming.

15:20

"Yes, yes, yes."

15:22

And then didn't do it.

15:24

We also can begin to get that.

15:27

We can begin to get a saying

15:28

of what we think people want us to hear,

15:31

but how we treat people on a day-to-day basis,

15:33

sometimes is insane.

15:37

However, 150 years of God being with you,

15:42

of God's faithfulness with you as you

15:46

work to be God's people through--

15:48

my goodness, think of the ups and the downs

15:52

that this church community has lived through.

15:55

And the one thing that hasn't changed, that won't change,

15:59

is God's faithfulness to you.

16:02

We don't know what's happening.

16:04

We don't know what's happening in the world,

16:06

but the one thing we know is God is with us.

16:10

A grief counselor in my previous world,

16:14

and because I did so much work in grief,

16:17

I often got the very difficult funerals.

16:19

So I was the one doing the funerals for the murders

16:22

and the sudden deaths and the accidental deaths

16:25

and the really, really challenging deaths.

16:27

And it occurred to me that people would come

16:29

And sometimes they would say, don't talk about God.

16:32

Don't you dare talk about God.

16:35

And when I met them before, and I heard this

16:37

from the funeral director usually,

16:39

that they would like a service that don't dare bring up

16:42

God's name, and we don't want any of that church stuff.

16:45

So I would sit with them, and I would say, tell me about that.

16:50

I remember two young men.

16:52

Their dad died very suddenly of an alcoholic-related situation.

16:58

And they said, don't be scared, because people will tell us

17:01

that God caused it, God damned God, our dad.

17:07

And I said, oh, can I tell you where I think God was

17:11

when your dad died?

17:14

Oh, God was holding your dad.

17:16

We pinged that this good man was caught.

17:20

We pinged that this was happening.

17:23

And they said, are you trying to tell me

17:24

that God was with our dad?

17:25

I said, 100%.

17:27

I cannot believe in a God that is not a God of compassion,

17:31

that draws very close when we are most afraid,

17:35

most scared, most uncertain.

17:39

And when I look at 150 years of history,

17:41

what's happened in the world in 150 years?

17:45

You faithful people have walked with God

17:47

in a very faithful way,

17:49

recognizing God in your baptisms,

17:52

in your confirmations, in your funerals,

17:56

And your Christmas Eve services, when everything is packed

17:59

and it's hot and the light is on and we're

18:01

candle-less on and we're sitting silent night.

18:06

And your potlucks, even the jelly and salads.

18:09

(audience laughing)

18:10

Green and the jelly and salads, and you can't.

18:13

Or a tomato aspect, or anything.

18:17

In your budgeting, in your annual reports,

18:20

in your Sunday schools, in your council meetings,

18:24

150 years of God being with you, walking with you,

18:30

loving you, encouraging you and supporting you,

18:33

and that won't stop.

18:36

There's gonna be many more pictures on the wall of people.

18:39

People are gonna come into your door

18:41

and they're going to want to be part of this community.

18:44

Your job is to unwrap whatever society has put on them

18:48

and to welcome them as children of God

18:50

into this wonderful community of faithfulness.

18:54

So I wish you God's richest blessing,

18:56

and I'll be back on time in another 150 years.

19:23

(audience laughing)