



“God’s Work. Our Hands.” Sunday 2021 Worship Resources

Sunday, September 12, 2021

Lectionary 24, Year B

Isaiah 50:4-9a — *The servant is vindicated by God*

Psalms 116:1-9 — *I will walk in the presence of the Lord. (Ps. 116:9)*

James 3:1-12 — *Dangers of the unbridled tongue*

Mark 8:27-38 — *Peter’s confession of faith*

Considerations for Preaching

Today’s gospel offers several nuanced ways to understand the nature of God’s work. God’s work is the work of bringing to light the true and full nature of reality. It is not concerned with self-preservation. It reveals what is on God’s insides to the outside world. God’s work is the risk of vulnerable, loving self-expression.

All Jesus has to do is authentically and unapologetically be himself and it will cause conflict which will escalate to the point of scapegoating Jesus in order to maintain the status quo. Jesus tells his disciples today about his impending death and resurrection. According to Ched Meyers, this bit of prophesying is not an act of “fate or fatalism, but of political inevitability.”¹ In this way, God’s work through Jesus exposes the truth of things. The nearness of God’s presence among us reveals that we humans are attached to power and have a propensity to silence and scapegoat those who challenge our power. Furthermore, the nature of God is not to be thwarted by our propensities but to live out God’s mission.

To see this dynamic more closely, we look to the reading from Isaiah. The prophet gives an account of suffering and derision and he says, “I did not turn backward. I gave my back to those who struck me...” This is the way God works. God’s face is “set like flint,” ready to be struck and God accepts the inevitable fire that burns as a result.

After Peter rebukes Jesus, Jesus says to Peter, “...you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.” One way to understand what Jesus means by “human things” is to read it as self-preservation. Humans want to survive, as individuals, as communities, as a species. This hard wiring can serve us well when it comes to outrunning a predator, but not when it comes to living out the gospel. The gospel is always going to confront the world as it is in order to usher in the world as it will be under God’s reign (confrontation being the key word). So, when we are caught up in God’s work, to some degree we will have lost our attachment to surviving. God does not call our congregations to *stay* alive but to *be* alive. *Staying* alive is passive and protective. *Being* alive requires us to put ourselves out there where there in the face of risk.

¹ Ched Meyers. *Binding The Strong Man: A Political Readings of Mark’s Story of Jesus*. Orbis Books: Maryknoll, NY 2014. P. 244

Jesus in today's gospel is spelling out what will happen when he exposes what's on his insides to the outside world; he'll be rejected and killed. Jesus would rather express Godself and be killed for it than hide the expression of God that he carries and stay safe. His mission is one of divine expression. Notice, his mission is not to feed every hungry person or to make every sick person well. His expression of Godself is much deeper than this! His work is to live out what God put on his insides in an outward way where it is subject to critique, hatred, and violence.

Here we pause to connect the gospel to the reading from James. James is talking about the consequential power of the tongue. The tongue is the vehicle by which what is inside of us, comes out. Therefore, the power of the tongue is not the tongue itself but the substance of what it delivers.

What is on the insides of your congregation? What is the substance behind your communal tongue? What are the desires, the visions, the struggles, the poignant questions that burn in your belly? God's work meets the neighbor where they are, yes, but God's work is more than just showing up in whatever form the neighbor needs you to show up. That kind of showing up is too safe and all too often keeps our insides hidden. We don't have to figure out who we are and what mission God has given us to share because we are preoccupied with the other, and what's more, we're often applauded for showing up this way so we keep doing it.

The mission of Jesus does not often yield much applause, but hateful jeers from an angry mob because Jesus doesn't simply give people what they want. He risked living out the expression of God that he carried in his being. Likewise, on this "God's Work. Our Hands." Sunday, we join Jesus in living out the expression of God that is unique to our congregation. We risk putting the life of our congregation (the particular passions and expressions of this unique assembly) out in the open. We cast aside our efforts at staying alive and we risk expressing God's divine life by putting what is inside of us out into the world.

Rebekkah Lohrman

Prayers of Intercession

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 under served. God of wisdom, we pray,
hear us when we call.

For your work 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.

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)

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.

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, and 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 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 583 / 685	Take My Life, That I May Be
ELW 722	O Christ, Your Heart, Compassionate
ELW 741	* Your Will Be Done
ELW 748	O God in Heaven
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 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

^ Two versions of the "God's Work. Our Hands." Sunday 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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