**WORSHIP**

**Tenth Sunday after Pentecost**

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis 9:8-17

**8﻿ Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: ﻿9﻿ “I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you ﻿10﻿ and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth. ﻿11﻿ I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.” ﻿12﻿ And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: ﻿13﻿ I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ﻿14﻿ Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, ﻿15﻿ I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. ﻿16﻿ Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.” ﻿17﻿ So God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.”**

**9:8** AND TO HIS SONS – God included a word of assurance to future generations. (TLSB)

**9:9** *I now establish my covenant.*† God sovereignly promised in this covenant to Noah, the new father of the human race, to Noah’s descendants and to all other living things never again to destroy man and the earth until his purposes for his creation are fully realized (“as long as the earth endures,” 8:22). For similar commitments by God see his covenants with Abram (15:18–20), Phinehas (Nu 25:10–13) and David (2Sa 7). See chart on “Major Covenants in the OT”. (CSB)

God’s covenants are unilateral; He obligates Himself to observe the terms of His own contract (here a reassurance of flood’s survivors after their fearsome experience). (TLSB)

God gave them that assurance in the most solemn and binding form of divine promise – by means of a covenant. Think of it! God actually obligated Himself to observe the terms of a solemn contract. (PBC)

But hadn’t God said that to Noah when he first came out of the ark? (8:21) Why should He repeat His promise? Luther points out that Noah and the members of this family must have loved in great trembling. The sense of the awesomeness of the year-long experience that had just gone through hadn’t left them. All around them was evidence of fearful destruction. God saw that these frail creatures of dust needed all the assurance He could give them. (PBC)

**9:10** EVERY LIVING CREATURE – Animals also benefited from God’s covenant. (TLSB)

**9:11** *Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood.* A summary of the provisions of the Lord’s covenant with Noah—an eternal covenant, as seen in such words and phrases as “never again” (vv. 11,15), “for all generations to come” (v. 12) and “everlasting” (v. 16). (CSB)

Regions may be devastated; people and animals may be swept away by floods. But never again will a flood be universal. (TLSB)

**9:12** *sign.* A covenant sign was a visible seal and reminder of covenant commitments. Circumcision would become the sign of the covenant with Abraham (see 17:11), and the Sabbath would be the sign of the covenant with Israel at Sinai (see Ex 31:16–17). (CSB)

**9:13** *rainbow.* Rain and the rainbow doubtless existed long before the time of Noah’s flood, but after the flood the rainbow took on new meaning as the sign of the Noahic covenant. (CSB)

When the marvelous rainbow appears, believers will recall with joy its God-given significance. Rainbows may not have existed until this time (AE 2:148).

In addition to assuring them with words that He would never send another flood, God gave them a visible sign as a seal of the truthfulness of His promise. (PBC)

**9:14** BRING CLOUDS – Perhaps a new occurrence as a result of atmospheric changes from the flood. (TLSB)

**9:15** REMEMBER COVENANT – God will be faithful to the covenant He has made. (TLSB)

Hebrew is zakar. It means “to recall” or “keep in mind.” God could not forget His covenant with His people. When He “remembers” them, He actively works to keep His promise to protect and save them. (TLSB p. 843)

**9:16** RAINBOW – Natural laws that produce rainbows were already in existence, but now they would work their giant wonders in the sky with particular significance. (TLSB)

 EVERLASTING COVENANT – While this covenant will last only until the end of time, it is also associated with God’s covenant relationship with His chosen people. (TLSB)

**9:17** THIS IS THE SIGN – Sight of a magnificent rainbow may even have accompanied this summary statement. (TLSB)

**8:20–9:17** After the fearsome yearlong experience on the ark, God reassures Noah and his family that He will never again send a universal flood. As time would soon tell and continues to tell, no amount of amazing rescues and rainbow sightings can keep humankind, including God’s own people, from falling into sin. But God is faithful to His covenants, even when people are not. The message of every rainbow tells us He is faithful to His promise to provide a Savior. • O God, for Jesus’ sake, grant that every sighting of a rainbow may bring to mind Your promises of grace and mercy. Amen. (TLSB)

EPISTLE

Ephesians 3:14-21

**14﻿ For this reason I kneel before the Father, ﻿15﻿ from whom his whole family﻿a﻿ in heaven and on earth derives its name. ﻿16﻿ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ﻿17﻿ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ﻿18﻿ may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ﻿19﻿ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. ﻿20﻿ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ﻿21﻿ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.**

**3:14–21** Paul now expresses a prayer that grows out of his awareness of all that God is doing in believers. God’s key gifts are “power” (vv. 16, 18, 20) and “love” (vv. 17–19). (CSB)

Immediately preceding our text, Paul acknowledges that he has been privy to the mystery that Gentiles are fellow heirs of the Gospel. His call as an ambassador to the Gentiles serves as the backdrop to his prayer for the Gentiles in our text. After our text, Paul urges the members of God’s Church to live in such a way that reflects the unity established by God through Christ. The nature of the blessings prayed for in our text (strength, love, and comprehension) all facilitate such ecclesiastical unity. A growth in strength, love, and knowledge is all possible due to God’s gracious promises, ultimately in Christ Jesus. It is the surpassing love of Christ (v 19), the love that reconciled us to God by taking him to the cross, that makes possible God’s doing for us “far more abundantly than all that we ask or think” (v 20). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

**3:14-15** Resumes the thought begun in verse 1. (TLSB)

Paul digressed to explain the mystery that God had revealed to him, that in the Christian Church God is pleased to have Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ stand as equals. (PBC)

**3:14** *For this reason.* Resumes the thought of v. 1. (CSB)

Because you Gentiles have now come nigh and become fellow-citizens with all the saints and members of God’s household, I pray for you; and since I am the apostles to the Gentiles, it is a part of my office to pray for you, so that you may grow and increase in your new, spiritual, divine existence and life. (Stoeckhardt)

The unity of the Church, established by Christ, causes Paul’s prayer for strength among God’s people. Division weakens. Unity strengthens. It is appropriate, then, that Paul introduces this independent variable of unity as a precursor and producer of the dependent variable—strength among God’s people. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

 *I kneel.* Expresses deep emotion and reverence, as people in Paul’s day usually stood to pray. (CSB)

πρὸς τὸν πατέρα—The preposition πρός means “toward,” indicating the orientation of Paul’s bending the knee and the direction in which his prayer is sent. It is often used with verbs of entreaty or prayer. As in 1:3, 17, Christian prayer is normally *to* the Father, *through* the Son, *in* the Spirit (cf. 5:20; 6:18). Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “Our Father” (Mt 6:9; cf. Lk 11:2). The access Christ has opened up is “to the Father” (Eph 2:18; cf. 3:12). (CC)

That Paul can say, “I bend my knees to the Father” (3:14), and expect that his reference to prayer is obvious, invites some consideration. In his own historical context, Luther was understandably concerned about the relationship between external actions and the faith-life of the heart. Preaching on this text, he challenges a legalistic attachment to bodily postures and gestures if they are not accompanied by the inner movement of the soul. Such a warning against mindless ritualism is often necessary. Yet, he continues, faith does not leave the body unmoved. “When the Spirit of prayer is enkindled and burns within the heart, the body will responsively assume the proper attitude; involuntarily, eyes and hands will be upraised and knees bended.” Certainly the outward posture without the attitude of the heart is hypocritical and worse than worthless—even dangerous, as it leads confidence away from Christ. But where faith embraces both body and spirit, either one can move the other. (CC)

While the Bible offers no commentary on the significance of the posture, its continuation in early Christian piety is instructive. Tertullian (like Paul) is able to refer to prayer simply as “our kneelings.” Eusebius reports that the knees of James, half-brother of our Lord, were calloused like a camel’s (cf. Gen 24:11) from his continual prayer. He speaks of such kneeling as “our custom,” in a text where an army prepares for battle.73 These texts indicate that kneeling for prayer was common in the first four centuries leading up to the time when Eusebius wrote. But one might also deduce that kneeling for prayer was considered particularly pious and appropriate to situations of grave, mortal need (like battle). (CC)

The normal Jewish and early Christian posture for prayer was standing (Mt. 6:5; Mark 11:25; Luke 18:11). Kneeling for prayer (Dan. 6:10; Luke 22:41; Acts 9:40) suggests submission and worship (Phil. 2:10) (TLSB)

Bow – Synonymous with worship toward God (Ex. 4:31; 34:8; Ps. 95:6; 1 Sam. 1:28) or respect and service for a human being (Gen. 33:3; 43:26-28; 1 Sam. 20:41; 28:14 Esther 3:2). God expressly forbade bowing to false gods (Ex. 20:4-5). People also bow to (1) greet someone (Gen. 18:2; 19:1), (2) signal humility and repentance (Ezra 9:5; 10:1), and (3) express thanks (Gen. 24:52). Bows were done in a variety of ways (1 Chron. 29:20; 1 Kings 18:42; Neh. 8:6) and likely included tilting the head, tilting the upper body, kneeling with one’s face to the ground, or lying prostrate. The more elaborate the bow, the greater the expression of devotion or emotion (cf. 33:3). (p. 1276 TLSB)

This is an emphatic way of denoting prayers; but not incidental, occasional prayer, inspired by some passing feeling; the attitude denotes deliberate prayer, making a business of it, approaching God reverence. (PC)

**3:15** *family.* The word in Greek is similar to the word for “father” (see NIV text note), so it can be said that the “family” derives its name (and being) from the “father.” God is our Father, and we can commit our prayers to him in confidence. (CSB)

Best renders by “he who is the true Father of all who are children.” The family on earth – Christians – in heaven it includes the angels and saints. (Stoeckhardt)

*pasa patria*, “every family” or “the whole family.” The family here refers to the Church. Not only is God our Father by creation, but he is also our Father by salvation. This soteriological source of family emphasizes again the unity of the Christian Church. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

**3:16-21** This prayer consists essentially of three petitions followed by a doxology, a statement of praise to God. Paul asks God to grant the Ephesians strength, knowledge, and fullness. (PBC)

These, however, are not three isolated or separate things. They all hang together. We could connect and expand them a bit by putting them together into one sentence such as, Paul prays that God would strengthen (16) the new man in the Ephesians, in order that they would come to know (19) the greatness of Christ’s love and so gain a deeper realization of the fullness (19) that is theirs as members of God’s family. (PBC)

**3:16** HIS GLORIOUS RICHES – God’s standard of giving is liberal, bountiful, overflowing. An image of the riches of his glory is seen in the starry heavens, which proclaim at once the vast riches and surpassing glory of God. Or in the beautiful appearance of an autumn sunset, where the whole sky is fleshed with clouds brightened into a sea of glory. (PC)

Christians continually take from this kindness after kindness and all that is good. (Stoeckhardt)

 STRENGTHEND YOU WITH POWER – Paul requests that God would give the Ephesians strength – spiritual strength, which comes only through the Holy Spirit. Causing Christ to dwell in believers’ hearts is the real work of the Holy Spirit. (PBC)

In the knowledge of Christ’s love (vv. 18-19). (TLSB)

In the doctrine of *genus majestaticum*, we claim that the divine nature is communicated to the human nature in the person of Jesus Christ. In Paul’s prayer, he asks that God share his divine characteristics (as much as our finite existence can hold) as a source of blessing and strength to the Church. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

 INNER BEING – This is our mind and our heart. It is our conscience, our will, and our commitments. The actions we take, as Jesus said, flow from the inside out (Luke 6:43-45). (LL)

εἰς τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον—The preposition εἰς, “into,” might simply be interchangeable with ἐν, “in,” as indicating the location of the strengthening; but taken in its natural meaning, it gives the orientation of God’s gift of strength, which is directed “toward” the inner man, “for” his benefit. The expression ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος, “the inner man,” occurs only three times in the Bible, all in Paul’s writings. In Rom 7:22 it is the component of Paul’s makeup that delights in the Law of God. In 2 Cor 4:16 it is that part of man that is being renewed, as opposed to the “outer man,” which is wasting away. These passages suggest a spiritual rather than a psychological interpretation of the phrase. “The inner man” is not the mind or spirit in contrast to the flesh, or the higher functions that control the baser instincts. “The inner man” is the saint, the whole person viewed by God through the lens of Christ, but hidden from mortal eyes.20 We retain “man” in translation (rather than “person” or “being”) to highlight the implied comparison to “the old man” (4:22), Adam. In Rom 5:12–21 (to which Ephesians has alluded extensively), Christ was portrayed as the New Adam who undid the damage done to creation by the first Adam. The language of “inner man” and the inner battle being waged in the Christian in Romans 7 implies an identity between the New Adam (Christ) and the Christian’s inner man. Christ comes to dwell in a person through Holy Baptism, an act of new birth by which “the new man” is created (4:24), who is identical with Christ himself (2:15). (CC)

The Spirit’s work affects the “inner being,” that is, the new man created when the Ephesians were brought to faith. This new man grows as the Spirit continues to work in believers through Word and Sacrament, making them ever more sure and confident of their salvation as Faith in Christ grows. (PBC)

The renewed nature in the Christian that battles against the sinful nature (4:24; 2 Cor. 4:16). (TLSB)

**3:17** *dwell.* Be completely at home. Christ was already present in the Ephesian believers’ lives (cf. Ro 8:9). (CSB)

Since baptized Christians are in Christ (Gal. 3:27), Christ dwells by the Spirit in them (Rom. 8:10; Gal. 2:20). Paul’s prayer is that He would continue to dwell in them, and that they would trust in Him. (TLSB)

This is the blessed and wonderful mystical union. He is in us and we are in Him: this the inner communion between Christ and the Christians. When become believers, when we grasped Christ in faith, Christ in and with His Spirit entered into our heart. But the chief concern in the Christian’s life is that they become strengthened in faith and that Christ through faith ever wins more and more room in their heart. For this should every Christian himself pray to God from day to day. (Stoeckhardt)

It means to make a permanent home. (LL)

If we are to comprehend the full scope of God’s purposes, we need both the inward strengthening of the Holy Spirit and the uninterrupted communion with Christ as he dwells within us.

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 *hearts.* The whole inner being. (CSB)

 THROUGH FAITH – This aspect of faith uses Martin Luther’s favorite word for faith, fiducia. It means a relationship of trust, in which we stake our very lives on Christ. ((LL)

The instrument by which this indwelling is attained. (PC)

 ROOTED AND ESTABLISHED – Both of these verbs are perfect passive, indicating something which has already happened and is continuing as a stable and constant condition.

That of a tree and that of a building, denoting what is both a starting point and the support of the Christian’s love. (PC)

 IN LOVE – This is agape love which is purely unconditional, intentionally sacrificial, expressive in both word and action, and enduring, as in the case of Christ, even to death on the cross. (LL)

It is implied that the Christian life can begin and flourish only in such an atmosphere as warm sunshine needed to start and advance the life of plant, so love is needed to start and carry on the life of the soul. (PC)

**3:18** TO GRASP – The knotty relationship of faith and love is best cut through by the keen discernment that in this passage Paul has in mind Christ’s love for us, not our love for him. The understanding of the immeasurable greatness of this love is what Paul begs God would give his children in Ephesus. There is no need to pit this understanding of 3:18–19 (that it is Christ’s love which is unfathomable) against the unfathomable “mystery” (3:3–4, 9) of the previous pericope or against the inscrutable wisdom and essence of God himself. These are parts of the same mysterious whole. It is beyond man’s ken how the immeasurable God could take up residence in human flesh, how he could reveal the mysteries of salvation to a man who once persecuted the church (3:3–9), how his promises to Israel could be kept while admitting the Gentiles into the kingdom apart from the works of the Law. And most important, it is beyond our comprehension how God could die on a cross: “Can any words adequately describe this mystery, that God is born as a man? That God dies for the human race, the master for his servants, the Creator for his creation, the righteous for the unrighteous?” (CC)

 *with all the saints.* σὺν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις—“With all the saints” reminds the Ephesians of their Baptism, in which holiness and enlightenment was given to them (1:18), and places them into the context of the universal church. Baptism is not simply the rebirth of the individual but also the common bond among all the saints (1:18; 4:4–6). There is no secret knowledge in Christ’s body, nor is knowledge of God to be sought in the mystical experiences of the isolated saint, but each member is to be taught and strengthened until all grow together into the full knowledge of the new man (4:13–16, 20–24). Thus, Paul calls the Ephesians to unity on the basis of common gifts. (CC)

 WIDE...LONG…HIGH AND DEEP –τί τὸ πλάτος καὶ μῆκος καὶ ὕψος καὶ βάθος—The noun πλάτος means “breadth,” the extent from side to side (x-axis); μῆκος is “length,” presumably a measurement straight ahead and behind (z-axis); ὕψος is “height,” the extent of distance upward, with βάθος, “depth,” the distance beneath the surface (y-axis). In modern (and ancient Greek) terms this is a three-dimensional, spatial perspective; no reference to a “fourth dimension” (time) should be sought. Four terms are used either in imitation of the four points of the compass and four corners of the earth or because “height” and “depth” are necessary to include the realms of good and evil spirits (which would appear to be the meaning of “height” and “depth” in Rom 8:38–39; ὕψος, “height, highest place,” is the location of Christ’s heavenly ascent in Eph 4:8). Thus, the four terms embrace the heavens and the earth and all the powers therein. (CC)

What building could this be other than the one concerning which is was said in Ephesians 2:19-22 that the readers with all saints belong to it? In width it stretches east and west far over the nations of the earth. In length it extends through all times unto the end things. In height it reaches into the heights of heaven where Christ lives, embracing the hosts of God’s angels in heaven, who according to Ephesians 1:10 are united with God’s children on earth and who together form the whole family in heaven and on the earth, 3:15. (Stoeckhardt)

**3:19** *surpasses knowledge.* Not unknowable, but so great that it cannot be completely known. (CSB)

The immeasurability of God’s wisdom and Christ’s love (Job 11:5-9; Rom. 11:33). Knowledge of Christ is praised in the Letter, but the human mind cannot fully comprehend Him. (TLSB)

It is impossible to say that “the love of Christ” can merely be grasped with the mind. Even though “knowledge” of God and his mystery in Christ has been Paul’s goal throughout the epistle, in the depths of its mysteriousness it remains beyond human comprehension (cf. Phil 4:7, where “the peace of God” “surpasses all understanding”). This oxymoron, to know what is unknowable, is an essential facet of the Christian faith. We know what God reveals, and yet we cannot know in full because God remains partly hidden. This is not a limitation on revelation (as if the true God cannot make himself fully known), but a warning not to seek God outside what he chooses to reveal (cf. Is 55:8–9). Thus, Paul calls this mysterious love ὑπερβάλλουσαν, “surpassing, extraordinary”—a feminine participle of the verb with whose neuter participle he had earlier used to describe the greatness of God’s power at work in those who believe (ὑπερβάλλον, 1:19) and the richness of his grace (ὑπερβάλλον, 2:7). The love that caused Christ’s incarnation and his sacrificial death on the cross surpasses human comprehension (cf. Jn 15:13; Rom 5:8). That τὴν ἀγάπην τοῦ Χριστοῦ, “the love of Christ,” should be taken as having a subjective genitive (“Christ’s love for us”) is clear from two facts: first, the description of this love as beyond human comprehension; and second, Paul’s later statements about God’s love for us in Christ (5:2, 25; 6:23). (CC)

The Ephesians experienced that marvelous love in their own lives, but they had only begun to learn about it. Paul now prays that God would enable them to grasp or understand the full extent of Christ’s love. Paul suggests that the Ephesians think of how Christ’s loves stretches out in directions to embrace “all saints,” that is, every believer who ever lived. For each believer of all time, in every place, Christ has done exactly the same as He did for the Ephesians, so great is His love for so many people who were so worthless and unworthy of being saved. (PBC)

*gnōnai . . . huperballousan tēs gnōseōs*, “to know . . . surpasses knowledge.” Existence, as well as its accompanying experience, is not contingent upon knowledge. But knowledge can make the experience of being part of God’s Church more profound and profitable. This knowledge can also direct our hearts and minds to the source of this salutatory experience—God our Father. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

 *fullness.* God, who is infinite in all his attributes, allows us to draw on his resources—in this case, his love. (CSB)

“The whole world with all diligence has struggled to figure out what God is, what He has in mind and does. Yet the world has never been able to grasp the knowledge and understanding of any of these things. But here we have everything in richest measure” (LC II 63). (TLSB)

God, of course, is total “fullness.” He created everything; He owns everything; He controls everything. And yet, He allows us, His dear children, to come boldly to Him. In fact, He invites us to pray confidently, assuring us that He will hear. Paul’s prayer is a model of bold prayer. There is nothing bashful about his request. He doesn’t ask for just a few crumbs; he asks for the whole loaf. His request is that the Ephesians “may be filled to the measure of all fullness of God.” We might say that he is asking that the Ephesians be filled to overflowing with all good things that God dispenses through His Church. (PBC)

**3:20-21** The prayer and the first half of the Letter reach their high point in a doxology. (TLSB)

**3:20-21** The prayer and the first half of the Letter reach their high point in a doxology. (TLSB)

**3:20** *immeasurably more.* Has specific reference to the matters presented in this section of Ephesians but is not limited to these. (CSB)

”God’s giving is not limited by our asking. “He is like an eternal, unfailing fountain. The more it pours forth and overflows, the more it continues to give. God desires nothing more seriously from us than that we ask Him for much and great things (LC III 56). (TLSB)

At work in the church today is a low expectation of God. We expect little from God, it seems, and by our lack of prayer and planning, we end up fulfilling our own low expectations. It’s not unlike the man who had a flat tire in the middle of the night. He pulled to the side of the road and saw a farmhouse off in the distance. He decided to walk to the house and ask to borrow the lug wrench he himself did not have. It was late, and he was sure the farmer would not want to help him. So sure was he that all along the way he talked to himself about the farmer. “He’ll probably be angry that I have awakened him…No doubt he’ll complain about how often people come to him for help…He probably never loans tools to strangers…He’ll likely say I should have called for assistance,” he though out loud. By the time he reached the farmhouse he was so worked up that he three a rock through the window of the farmer and exclaimed, “You can keep your lousy lug wrench. I don’t want it anyway! (LL)

*tōi de dunamenōi huper panta poiēsai huperekperissou hōn aitoumetha ē nooumen*, “now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think.” The previous verses strongly point to God’s willingness to have already made us his own. This verse reminds us that he is not only willing but also able. Using the argument from greater to lesser, we can conclude that if God is able to save us despite us, he is certainly able to provide for us more than we’ll ever know. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

 *his power.* See 1:19–21. (CSB)

 AT WORK WITHIN US – If he can do great things with us, imagine what his real power is capable of.

**3:21** *to him be glory.* The ultimate goal of our existence (see 1:6 and note). Paul’s attitude is so different from the man with the flat tire. Paul knew the extravagance of grace, the scope of God’s love, and the power behind that love. The doxology that ends his prayer glorifies God for the power within the church that can do “immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.” His doxology no doubt raised the expectations of Christians then as it does now. (CSB)

Paul gives glory to God, who is able to do exceeding abundantly, whose power is unlimited. Moreover, God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think. We Christian are still rather weak, also in our prayers. We still do not really know what we need and what is beneficial to us, and so our prayers do ever fall short of our wants. (Rom. 8:26) But God can give us, can do unto us super-abundantly more than we desire, and this according to the power that works in us. According to His almighty power, which has quickened us from death in sins and wrought faith in us, He can also very well strengthen and sustain faith in is who are weak, infirm vessels; He can work all good unto Him be glory. (Stoeckhardt)

*hē doxa*, “glory.” Paul prays that the Church be strengthened so that God is glorified. This in no way increases God’s innate glory. It is simply an acknowledgment and recognition on our part. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

 *in the church and in Christ Jesus.* A remarkable parallel. God has called the church to an extraordinary position and vocation (cf. v. 10; 4:1). (CSB)

The only NT doxology to include this phrase (cf. Romans 16:25-27; Jude 24-25), indicating the importance of the Church in this Letter. The phrase suggests public worship. (TLSB)

Yes, in the Church dwells the glory of God, resounds the praise of God, not in the outer-Christian world. The Church thanks God with hearts and hands and voices, with its entire existence for the great things which He has done and daily does unto it. (Stoeckhardt)

**3:14–21** As Paul considers God’s wisdom, grace, and love, he breaks out in prayer and praise. Study of God’s Word naturally combines with prayer and praise in the Divine Service, where Christ’s gifts are given out, and we receive them with thanksgiving. • Lord, let these verses be my prayer for my church today. Amen. (TLSB)

GOSPEL

Mark 6:45-56

*Jesus Walks on the Water*

**45﻿ Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. ﻿46﻿ After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray. ﻿47﻿ When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. ﻿48﻿ He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, ﻿49﻿ but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, ﻿50﻿ because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke to them and said, “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” ﻿51﻿ Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, ﻿52﻿ for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened. ﻿53﻿ When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there. ﻿54﻿ As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus. ﻿55﻿ They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. ﻿56﻿ And wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed.**

**6:14-8:30** The new section introduced by Ch 6:14 and extending to Ch 8:30 focuses upon a period during which Jesus was frequently in retirement beyond the borders of Galilee. During the mission of the Twelve, Mark calls attention to the reaction of Herod Antipas, who has heard of the mighty works of Jesus. Herod’s suspicion that Jesus is John returned from the dead (Ch 6:14-16) introduces the parenthetical account of the imprisonment and execution of the Baptist (Ch 6:17-29). At the return of the Twelve Jesus withdraws to a solitary place, pursued by multitude. In compassion He provides bread in the wilderness, and five thousand are fed (Ch 6:35-44). A second feeding of four thousand is reported in the region of the Decapolis (Ch 8:1-10), and the striking recurrence of the word “bread” throughout this section provides the pervading motif (Chs. 6:52; 7:2, 28; 8:14 ff). The importance of the two feeding miracles is emphasized when the disciples’ own misunderstanding of Jesus are traced to their failure to understand the significance of the abundant provision of bread. While a single instance of the public teaching occurs in Ch 7:1-23, the accent falls on the instruction of the disciples, whose hardness of heart, unbelief and failure to understand is a prominent element in the record. A point of transition is provided by Ch 8:22-26 where the restoring of sight to a man who was blind signals the opening of the eyes of the disciples as well. A climax in Mark’s narrative is achieved in Ch 8:27-29 when Jesus and His company approach Caesarea Philippi where Jesus’ dignity as Messiah is acknowledged for the first time. (Lane)

**6:45-56** First, it is good to note that parallel accounts of this miracle exist in Matthew (14:22–36) and John (6:16–21). Matthew’s is the longest account, the only one that includes the detail of Peter walking on the water, sinking, and then being rescued. John’s is the briefest and without extra detail. All three have the words of Jesus: “It is I. Do not be afraid.” Matthew and Mark also have Jesus first saying, “Take heart,” *tharseite*. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

Mark seems to emphasize how readily the people accept the result of Jesus’ miracles (just prior, five thousand were glad to be fed; the disciples now embrace the calming of the storm; the crowds bring all their sick to Jesus) but don’t have the faith to realize what this means. Jesus is not just a “bread king” for immediate and temporal needs; he is a victorious and eternal King, and faith in him is more significant than the immediate result of a miracle. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

**6:45** IMMEDIATELY JESUS MADE HIS DISCIPLES GET INTO THE BOAT – The tension of messianic excitement was dangerously in the air after the meal in the desert. The hurried dismissal of the disciples prevented them from adding fuel to the fire by revealing to the people the miraculous character of the evening meal. (Lane)

Jesus obliged the disciples to embark for the other shore. This shows that Jesus was responsible for the disciples’ all-night struggle against the wind. Note further that this was the second time in a day that Jesus commanded the disciples to do something difficult or even impossible (cf. v. 37). (TLSB)

*euthus* is notable in Mark to emphasize that this event takes place “immediately, right away,” following the feeding of the five thousand; it is a reaction, an aftermath. Jesus is splitting up the group into those who have seen the miracle of the fish and loaves (the crowd) and those who are yet to see a greater miracle (his disciples). It is clear that Jesus takes charge to have the crowd dispersed and the disciples sent off so that he is left alone to pray. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

He constrained, He urged, He almost forced His disciples to embark into their boat again. They were loath to leave after this glorious exhibition of divine power, and they may have been truly solicitous for His welfare in the face of the unremitting labor which He was performing. But His will prevailed; they must try to cross over the lake to Bethsaida, probably that on the northwest shore of the sea. (Kretzmann)

 *go on ahead of him.* John indicates that the people were ready to take Jesus by force and make him king (Jn 6:14–15), and Jesus therefore sent his disciples across the lake while he slipped away into the hills to pray. (CSB)

 *toward Bethsaida.* πρὸς Βηθσαϊδάν, “toward Bethsaida” (6:45): Bethsaida was in Gentile country (see the first textual note on 6:45). Why does Jesus give that as their destination? Is he about to begin a new stage of ministry to the Gentiles, which, in fact, commences with the Syro-Phoenician woman in 7:24 and continues through 9:30, with a brief detour back to Israelite land in 8:10–21? Perhaps the plan is thrown off by the current episode, which ends with the boat going to Gennesaret (6:53), which is on the north shore of the Lake/Sea of Galilee, but west of the point where the Jordan River flows into that body of water. (CC)

This suggests that perhaps the disciples themselves had been inclined to join the crowd in its efforts to proclaim Jesus king. (PBC)

**6:46-48a** Jesus has chosen a place far away geographically (a mountain), but he still sees their peril: “And he saw . . .” (v 48). It seems the disciples (some former fishermen) should have been able to handle the boat but were not able to make progress against the wind. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

**6:47** IN THE MIDDLE OF THE LAKE – They were completely off course because they were facing a strong head wind. It was so contrary that they had taken down the sail and picked up the oars. And even that had brought them nowhere on the stormy lake. They were in real danger. (PBC)

In the late afternoon the disciples had left the eastern shore, and when night came on, they had not yet crossed the lake, for they were obliged to battle with contrary winds. And He alone was on the land. (Kretzmann)

**6:48b-50a** It seems clear that Jesus had sent them into a difficult situation. Perhaps he was teaching them yet another faith lesson about his presence in their lives or their need for him. Mark alone points out that “He [Jesus] meant to pass by them” (v 48). This peculiar phrase can be understood in Jesus coming close enough for them to see him but waiting for their cry to him for help. Their cry may initially be one of fear—their fear of the storm is compounded by their fear of a ghost—but seems to end up a cry of undeveloped faith. The irony in their seeing something supernatural is that Jesus was supernatural (above nature!) in a more profound way. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

**6:48** HE SAW THE DISCIPLES STRAINING – Jesus though deep in prayer was aware of their situation. He left them struggle for some time in order to show them, as He so often shows us, that He is able to help in the hour of need. (PBC)

He knew their plight; He was with them every inch of the way; but He did nothing to help them. It is often good for the believers to be buffeted by adverse winds of life. It is only by overcoming difficulties and by conquering in the hard places that Christian character is formed. (Kretzmann)

 *fourth watch.* 3:00–6:00 a.m. See 13:35; see also note on Mt 14:25. (CSB)

Until the fourth watch of the night, according to Roman reckoning, between three o'clock in the morning and sunrise, He prayed, although the eye of His omniscience and the reassurance of His omnipresence was with them during all these hours. (Kretzmann)

The disciples had been in the boat for a long time, fighting with the wind for almost the whole night. (TLSB)

 *walking on the lake.* A special display of the majestic presence and power of the transcendent Lord, who rules over the sea (see Ps 89:9; Isa 51:10, 15; Jer 31:35). (CSB)

Jesus comes to reveal Himself as the Lord of all creation. (TLSB)

The wind and the waves did not hinder our Lord as He walked on the water. (PBC)

 HE WAS ABOUT TO PASS BY THEM – This was by design – to get the attention of the disciples and to test them. (PBC)

In the OT, God passed by Moses (Ex. 33:22; 34:6) and Elijah (1 Kings 19:11-13). (TLSB)

But now He came walking on the water as man otherwise steps along on dry land, He, the Master of all creation, that can make all things serve His will. He was about to pass by the boat, when the disciples saw Him. (Kretzmann)

**6:49** *a ghost.* Popular Jewish superstition held that the appearance of spirits during the night brought disaster. The disciples’ terror was prompted by what they may have thought was a water spirit. (CSB)

Greek phantasma. Appears only here and in Matthew 14:26. The disciples are not far from the truth as they assume that one walking on the water is more than a mere mortal, for Jesus’ divinity is clearly visible. (TLSB)

They did the not pass the test. Superstition overwhelmed them. Undoubtedly we would have reacted in much the same way. (PBC)

And then ensued a time of panic. Superstition, the fear of ghosts and specters, was still living in their hearts. And so the unwonted appearance of a human figure striding along over the waves set them to crying and wondering and fearing. (Kretzmann)

**6:50b-51a** Again, Mark moves the story along with *euthus*. Their cry for help is addressed with words of comfort. *tharseite* (“Take heart”) is a word of being cheerful or confident. As Jesus offers help and the Gospel is received, those who embrace it have confidence and courage and are of good cheer, even in the midst of frightening circumstances. Jesus’ identification *egō eimi* (“It is I”) is more than just assurance. He identifies himself with the great I am, God’s revealed name of the Old Testament, Yahweh *YHWH*. Jesus shows that he has power over the wind and the waves (he is their Creator) and then speaks his name as an exclamation point. As Jesus gets into the boat, the wind dies down. Where Jesus is, there is calm in the midst of storms. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

**6:50** *were terrified.* ἐταράχθησαν, “they became terrified”: In Mark’s Gospel, fear is generally a sign of divine activity (see the parallel in 4:41 and further discussion there; see also 5:15, 33; 10:32; and 16:8 [also 11:18]). (CC)

 *Spoke.* ἐλάλησεν, “he spoke openly” (6:50): Here we see a public declaration of Jesus’ identity. (CC)

 TAKE COURAGE! IT IS I DON’T BE AFRAID – This posses the significance as the recognized formula of self-revelation which rests ultimately on the “I am that I am” (Ex. 3:14). The admonitions to “take heart” and to “have no fear” introduce and conclude the “I am He” are an integral part of the divines formula of self-revelation (e.g. Ps. 115:9ff; 118:5f; Is 41:4, 13ff; 43:1ff; 44:2ff; 51:9ff.) (Lane)

This command will be echoed at another important moment of revelation – at the empty tomb. (TLSB)

But His voice stayed the panic and slowly brought confidence into their hearts. (Kretzmann)

**6:51b-52** The disciples’ reaction is complex: there is astonishment (*existanto*) but lack of understanding, which leaves their hearts *pepōrōmenē* (“hardened”). The brief commentary on hard-heartedness in *The Lutheran Study Bible* in the introductory comments on Mark is helpful ([St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 2009], 1653). The disciples’ hearts are still hardened in ch 8, after another miracle of bread but lack of understanding (Mk 8:17). It is more the stubbornness of the sinful flesh to reject what it cannot understand than antagonism toward Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

**6:51** *Wind died down.* He then climbed over the side of the boat into their midst, whereupon the wind immediately stopped. The effect of this double miracle on the disciples, wrought up as they had been by their fear, was such as to bring them almost out of their senses for astonishment. (Kretzmann)

ἀνέβη πρὸς αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ πλοῖον, “he mounted up toward them into the boat”: Note the intimacy of this act. Despite being the Lord of all creation, Jesus comes to his frightened disciples as a shepherd to his frightened sheep (6:34). This is quite unlike the Lord of the OT who passes by his prophets in revelations and does not stoop to human interaction with them. This is another expression of human and humble incarnation. (CC)

 WERE COMPLETELY AMAZED – They were undoubtedly physically drained from their rowing against a strong head-wind and emotionally drained from their experience of terror. They had no categories for understanding Jesus’ presence with them in the boat. They were utterly astonished. (Lane)

**6:52** *they had not understood about the loaves.* Had they understood the feeding of the 5,000, they would not have been amazed at Jesus’ walking on the water or his calming the waves. (CSB)

Despite the unmistakable ways Jesus had just displayed His divine nature and power, the disciples somehow remain in the dark. (TLSB)

 *their hearts were hardened.* They were showing themselves to be similar to Jesus’ opponents, who also exhibited hardness of heart (3:5). See 8:17–21; see also note on Ex 4:21. (CSB)

It is somewhat surprising that Jesus describes the disciples and His opponents in the same way (cf. 10:5; 16:14). The disciples’ lack of comprehension will only worsen in the coming chapters (e.g. 9:32; 10:32). Jesus’ predictions of His death will prove most difficult for them to grasp. (TLSB)

Their hearts were not open to what Jesus was seeking to teach them. Mark is very candid about exposing the spiritual weaknesses of the disciples and very lucid expounding the greatness of Christ. (PBC)

**6:53-55** “recognized him.” There is irony in that they see who he is—Jesus who had fed the five thousand—but they don’t really know what this means or who he is fully. Here, Jesus also might have thought to “pass by them,” but he had compassion and healed those who came to him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

**6:53** *Gennesaret.* See note on Mt 14:34. (Either the narrow plain, about four miles long and less than two miles wide, on the west side of the Sea of Galilee near the north end (north of Magdala), or a town in the plain. The plain was considered a garden spot of Palestine, fertile and well watered.) (CSB)

Town on the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, between Capernaum and Tiberius. (TLSB)

It is from John’s Gospel that we learn when Jesus and His disciples landed in the area of Gennesaret, they set out for nearby Capernuum, where Jesus on the following day gave His discourse on the bread of life (Jesus Himself). After hearing these words, many of His followers began leaving Him. It seems they were ready to settle for earthly bread, but not the spiritual food Christ offered them when He pointed to Himself as the only way to the Father. (PBC)

**6:54** PEOPLE RECONGIZED JESUS – He was well known from His ministry at Capernaum and reports of His healing power had penetrated the entire region (1:28). The healing of a paralyzed man who had been brought to Him (1:32-34), undoubtedly had been the subject of bazaar conversation in many towns and cities and created the climate of expectation which greeted Jesus in Gennesaret. (Lane)

Note how starkly this picture contrasts with the depiction of the disciples in vv. 50-51. The Twelve’s hardened hearts had just failed to see Jesus’ divine nature, even after He had multiplied the loaves and walked on the water. (TLSB)

But no sooner had Jesus stepped to the shore than He was recognized by some of the people living in that neighborhood, and there was a repetition of former experiences. (Kretzmann)

**6:55** THEY RAN THROUGHOUT THAT WHOLE REGION – Those who had recognized Christ as He stepped off the boat at Gennesaret immediately went throughout the region with the news that Jesus was in the area. Crowds welcomed Him in the days that followed as he went through villages, towns and countryside. (PBC)

They ran throughout the region and spread the news of His coming. And now the sick were brought to Him. Also, whether He walked along city streets or country lanes, the relatives of the sick, undiscouraged and unwearied, brought their unfortunate ones. (Kretzmann)

 CARRIED THE SICK – Instead of the usual goods on the market, Jesus found a multitude of desperately ill people, all asking for His touch and healing. The numerous healings here in Gennesaret contrast with the few that were healed in Nazareth (6:5-6). (TLSB)

**6:56** *touch even the edge of his cloak.* See note on 5:28.(CSB)

This confidence echoes that of the woman who touched Jesus’ garment and was healed (5:28-29). (TLSB)

The healing is connected to the faith that touched his garment. This is the same faith shown in the detailed miracle of the woman who had suffered from bleeding (Mk 5:27–29; also in Matthew and Luke). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

 WERE HEALED – Thought Mark does not mention it, Jesus undoubtedly also used these occasions to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom, the spiritual healing His hearers needed even more than the physical healing. (PBC)

Note the use of the imperfect indicative ἐσῴζοντο, “would be saved/healed.” As presented in the commentary on 5:34, the use of this verb seems to indicate that those involved understood that they were being touched by the eschatological reign and rule of God as they were being healed. Still, it is striking that there is no mention of preaching or teaching in this account, either as being done by Jesus or as requested of him by others. This does not bode well for future developments for Jesus in this narrative. (CC)

This short set of verses brings to a close the account of Jesus’ main “public” ministry to the people of Israel. Chapter 7 begins with a specific discussion of what is clean and unclean (7:1–23), followed by Jesus’ deliberate and sustained move to minister to those “without the Law” (see Rom 2:12), those traditionally considered to be unclean, i.e., the Gentiles (7:24–8:9). That section includes, significantly, Jesus’ encounter with the Syro-Phoenician woman and the feeding of the four thousand in the Greco-Roman area of the Decapolis. (CC)

**6:53–56** Not long after Jesus’ disciples failed to recognize an unmistakable display of His divinity, the people of Gennesaret show great faith by receiving Jesus and clamoring for His healing power. Even today, those new to the faith often exhibit more conviction than those who have known Jesus for a long time. It is good news, then, that Jesus remains devoted to us even when our commitment wavers or fails. His resolve to suffer and die for all is ample proof of that. • Lord, give us the zeal of the Gennesaret believers. May we ever press toward You, resolute in our conviction that You can heal and restore us. Amen. (TLSB)