

Pentecost 18A - Comments/questions on the lessons for September 27, 2026

Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

- Ezekiel is writing during the Exile, at a time when the people were asking why this “punishment,” this disaster, has fallen upon the nation of Judah. How would these words speak to those circumstances?
- In our present day, we often seek to understand our behavior by looking at the family system we grew up with. When and how is this useful? When and how is it not useful?

Psalms 25:1-9

- Note how the psalmist recalls and reminds himself of God’s love and mercy. When he calls on God to “remember not the sins of my youth and my transgression” (The Message has, “Forget that I sowed wild oats”), it is a reminder that we are not bound by our past behavior. By God’s grace and mercy, we move forward in God’s paths.

Philippians 2:1-13

- We live in a deeply divided society, country, and world. What then does it mean to “be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord, and of one mind”? How do we live and practice this in the church? How do we live and practice this in our society and country?
- Many biblical scholars think that verses 6-11 could be an early Christian hymn that Paul uses. Paul uses this description about Christ as a way to encourage Christ-like behavior within the church. What would it mean for the church to “empty” itself as Christ “emptied” himself? What would it mean for the church to “be obedient even unto death” as Christ was? What would it mean for you?
- If you began to “empty yourself,” what would be some of the first things that would have to go? What would be the hardest things for you to release?
- We as Lutherans emphasize that we are justified by grace through faith. Given that, what do you think Paul means when he says, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”? Is this in conflict with our understanding of grace?

Matthew 21:23-32

- Though Jesus gives a clever response to the accusatory questions of the religious authorities, how do you see this section connected to the story and question he tells afterward? Who ends up being accused in the end?
- Jesus emphasizes here that faithfulness/obedience is not in the words that we say but in the response and actions that we have. He points to the example of the tax collectors and prostitutes who “get it” when the leaders do not. Where can we see examples outside the church who “get it” often better than we do?
- The story of the two sons in 21:28-31 is often seen as Matthew’s “version” of the Prodigal Son – a story found only in Luke. Thinking about the Prodigal Son, what similarities do you find? What differences are there?