



The
kingdom
of heaven
is like a
merchant
in search
of fine pearls

FRIEDENS LUTHERAN CHURCH

9th Sunday After Pentecost ✠ July 26, 2026

*Indicates for the congregation to stand if you are able.

Congregation responses are printed in **bold print**.

WELCOME, and ANNOUNCEMENTS

PELUDE "A Sacred Reflection" by David Lasky

SCHOLARSHIP Presentation by Pam Merwine.
Scholarship Recipients, 2026: Gavin Klock, Penn State
University and Blake Schwartz, Lebanon Valley College.

CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, one God, whose compassion endures
forever. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin to God.

Compassionate God, ***we confess to you all our sins. Our
burden is heavy, and we cannot free ourselves. In
your mercy, call us back to you. Your yoke is easy
and your burden is light. Restore us to dwell in your
peace. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.***

Jesus says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying
heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." Rest in God's love.
Amen.

*HYMN "The Church in the Wildwood" P. 37

*PRAYER OF THE DAY (Spoken)
***Faithful God, most merciful judge, you care for your
children with firmness and compassion. By your
Spirit nurture us who live in your kingdom, that we
may be rooted in the way of your Son, Jesus Christ,
our Savior and Lord. Amen***

*HYMN OF PRAISE "Praise to the Father" (Sung)
***Praise to the Father for his loving kindness, Tenderly
caring for his erring children; Praise him, all angels;
praise him in the heaven; Praise to the Father!***

First Reading: 1 Kings 3:5-12

⁵ At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and
God said, "Ask what I should give you." ⁶ And Solomon said, "You have
shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David
because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in
uprightness of heart toward you, and you have kept for him this great
and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne
today. ⁷ And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in
place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not
know how to go out or come in. ⁸ And your servant is in the midst of
the people whom you have chosen, a great people so numerous they
cannot be numbered or counted. ⁹ Give your servant, therefore, an
understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between
good and evil, for who can govern this great people of yours?"

¹⁰ It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. ¹¹ God said to
him, "Because you have asked this and have not asked for yourself
long life or riches or for the life of your enemies but have asked for
yourself understanding to discern what is right, ¹² I now do according
to your word. Indeed, I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one
like you has been before you, and no one like you shall arise after you."
The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM: 119:129-136

¹²⁹ Your decrees are wonderful; therefore I obey them with all
my heart.

¹³⁰ ***When your word is opened it gives light; it gives
understanding to the simple.***

¹³¹ I open my mouth and pant because I long for your
commandments.

¹³² ***Turn to me and be gracious to me, as you always do
to those who love your name.***

¹³³ Order my footsteps in your word; let no iniquity have
dominion over me.

¹³⁴ ***Rescue me from those who oppress me, and I will
keep your commandments.***

¹³⁵ Let your face shine upon your servant and teach me your
statutes.

¹³⁶ ***My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do
not keep your teaching.***

Second Reading: Romans 8:26-39

²⁶ The Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And God, who searches hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. ²⁸ We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. ³¹ What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³² He who did not withhold his own Son but gave him up for all of us, how will he not with him also give us everything else? ³³ Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? It is Christ who died, or rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than victorious through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

***GOSPEL: Ephesians 4: 2-6**

Epistle written by Paul. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: ⁴ there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling,

⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

The Epistle of Paul. ***Praise to You, O Christ.***

CONGREGATIONAL MESSAGE – Jim Erdman.

Title: "What we Have in Common."

HYMN "In the Garden" P. 24

***PRAYERS** God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

***SHARING OF THE PEACE**

The peace of the Lord be with you always. *And also with you.*

OFFERING

OFFERTORY "My Wonderful Lord" by Haldor Lillenas

***DOXOLOGY**

(Sung)

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow, praise him, all creatures here below; Praise him above, ye heavenly host; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

***LORD'S PRAYER**

(Spoken)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

*BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.

*CLOSING HYMN "God Will Take Care of You"

P. 31

*DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

POSTLUDE "Fanfare Postlude on 'St. Thomas'" by Aaron Williams, arranged by Douglas E. Wagner

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The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls.
Matthew 13:45

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Council President: Ed Tietsworth, (570) 292-1061

Calendar

Today – Jim Erdman and Scholarship Awards.

August 2 – Pastor Spatz with Holy Communion.

August 9 – Rachel & Jim Hepler.

August 16 – Pastor Barry Spatz.

Announcements

July 28 – Blood Drive from 1 – 6 PM at St. Andrews UMC.

August 11 – Council Mtg., 6:00 PM.

August 23, Church Picnic. In the Sunday School after the service.

August 25, 2026 – Worship & Music Mtg., 5:30 PM.

September 13, 2026 – Harvest Home Sunday.

September 19, 2026 – Craft Faire, Hegins Park.

Prayer Corner

Rick Herring; Terry Schwartz; Saralinn & Joe Grantz; Linda & Lee Kiefer; Marvin Ruch; Irvin Lenker Sr.; Daniel & Mary Carl; Ken Dinger; Joan Smith; Suzet Spotts; Judy Huntzinger; Melody Schwartz; Lori Heim; Paul Schriener; Pat Oswald; Tim Koppenhaver. Family and friends of Christine Love.

Today's Leaders – 7/26/2026 – Service, Jim Erdman Lector, Ann Miller Counters, Jean & Gary Klinger Head Usher, Mike Deiter Ushers, Christy Leiter, Damaris Merwine, Ed Tietsworth.

Flowers – In memory of Dad by Jess and Dave.

Bulletin – In memory of Dad by Jess and Dave. Happy Heavenly Birthday!

Attendance: 62 (7/19/26) Offering:

July 19, 2026 – Current	\$1594.00
Other	\$100.00
Total	\$1,694.00

Weekly Offering Needed: \$2,362.87

Leaders, 8/2/2026 – Service, Pastor Barry Spatz with Holy Communion Lector, Damaris Merwine Counters, Sue & Mike Deiter Head Usher, Ed Tietsworth Ushers, Rodney Troutman, Ben Wetzell, Jason Wolfgang

It's the Small Things

Children like to collect things: rocks, sticks, and more. Adults tend to pretend-love the items that are brought to them: "Oh, how beautiful!" "Oh, that's a good one." Children, encouraged, continue their collections, finding the smallest of things and displaying them like they are the most valuable items in the world.

Jesus' parables in today's gospel reading teach the disciples about things that are so small they are often overlooked: a mustard seed, a little bit of yeast, a tiny pearl, and even a net that is quite small until it is filled with fish. These little things in his parables are treasures important for understanding the reign of God.

Adults tend to overlook the small things while seeking larger things, heavier things, shinier things. We walk right past the tiny flower in the crack of a sidewalk, which once would have caught our eye. One pearl? A full necklace is better. A shrub that provides creatures a home? It's now in an inconvenient place.

But Jesus teaches that in God's reign all things, large and small, matter. All people matter. It is a wise disciple who recognizes this. Even King Solomon, with all his wealth, prayed for wisdom. Wisdom helps us see more clearly and begin to understand the depth of God's grace.

And that grace Jesus displayed immediately. "Have you understood all this?" he asked. The disciples answered simply, "Yes" (Matthew 13:51). What a bold answer! They were too worried to admit they did not understand. A little yeast, though, goes a long way. Jesus knew this. Each parable would build on another until the disciples understood the entire collection.

For us today, understanding God's grace takes study, prayers for wisdom, and walking the path while looking for the small things that matter. The reign of God is like a rose among a bramble bush? A child's picture of their home? However you visualize it, it is a treasure to cherish and to share.