

JULY 23, 2023
EIGHTH SUNDAY
AFTER PENTECOST



God is merciful and slow to anger.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

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| Sunday | Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 | Parable of the weeds |
| Monday | Isaiah 44:6-8 | The Lord's promise to Israel |
| Tuesday | Romans 8:12-25 | Future glory for God's people |
| Wednesday | Hebrews 4:14-16 | Jesus the high priest |
| Thursday | Psalms 103:1-14 | The Lord is merciful |
| Friday | Nehemiah 9:16-25 | A merciful God ready to forgive |
| Saturday | Psalms 86:11-17 | Save me, Lord |
| Sunday | Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52 | Parables of the kingdom |

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Psalm 86:15 (NRSV)

PRAYERS AND BLESSING

A Prayer for the Week:

Lord God, may your grace and mercy lead me to be humble and care for others through Christ Jesus our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Mealtime Prayer:

Dear God, we thank you for this gift of food, a sign of your kindness and mercy that we receive through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

A Blessing to Give:

May the mercy and loving kindness of God lead you all the days of your life.



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HYMN OF THE WEEK

*Love Divine, All Loves
Excelling*



WEEKLY MILESTONES

Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

CARING CONVERSATIONS

Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- What is something you believe very strongly?
- What makes it hard to listen to someone with different opinions than yours?

DEVOTIONS

Read: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43.

Matthew's Gospel addresses divisions in the church. Who has the right message? Who is being faithful? What actions do not fit the kingdom of God? Matthew's message is clearly a word we need to hear. Today people who claim the Christian faith are much divided over morality and doctrine. Matthew has the strongest note of judgment against false witnesses, but that judgment is tempered. Through the parable of the weeds, it is understood that we are called to be witnesses, not judges. To think we can uproot and expel certain groups of people is dangerous. To believe we have the ability to judge rightly will end up destroying the good and loving work of the church, the body of Christ. We are not the judge. God is the judge. Until Judgment Day comes, we are witnesses to the truth that Jesus teaches and lives. It is enough to point to Jesus and his reign of undeserved kindness and peace.

Discuss: When have you judged others? In what ways can you show undeserved kindness and love to others?

Pray: **Almighty God, give us humility to trust in you more than our own judgments so we may love and serve our neighbor through Christ Jesus, the one who judges the living and the dead. Amen.**

SERVICE

Jesus calls us to serve our neighbor in love. Based on the Daily Bible Readings for this week, how can you help and lovingly serve someone who has been judged unfairly?

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

Faith is formed by the power of the Holy Spirit through personal, trusted relationships. Who has influenced your life of faith? Make a list of Christian rituals and traditions the person you named has taught you, like prayer, loving service, and scripture reading. Think or talk about how you can teach some of these rituals and traditions to someone else.

Pray: **Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart to revere your name. Amen.** (Psalm 86:11)



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