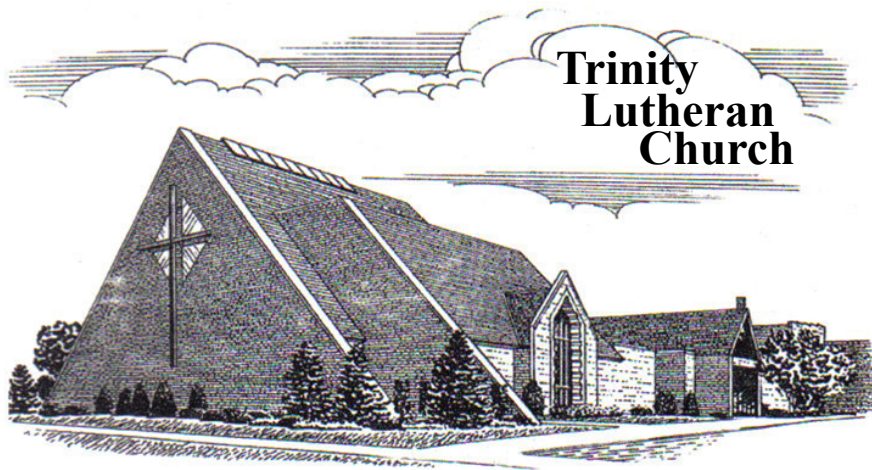


Proper 9



June 29-July 5, 2026

Weekly Outline

Invocation

L: You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you,

C: because he trusts in you.

L: Almighty Father, Lord of heaven and earth, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed. Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us after your great goodness; according to the multitude of your mercies, do away our offenses; wash us thoroughly from our wickedness, and cleanse us from our sins; for Jesus' sake,

C: Amen.

Scripture

June 29: 1 Samuel 2:6-10

July 1 : Romans 13:1-10

July 3 : Mark 12:13-17

Devotion

Closing Prayer

L: I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that you would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please you. For into your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me.

C: Amen.

Monday

250 years ago this week, 56 men signed the Declaration of Independence. But what the founders wrote had to be fought for on the battlefield over seven long years before Britain signed the Treaty of Paris in 1783. It wasn't until 1788, 12 years after those 56 men declared independence on behalf of a nation, that the constitution was ratified and the United States of America was born.

The history of our nation is the story of great men, such as George Washington, and remarkable women, such as Betsy Ross. There is even the story of Peter Muhlenberg, a Lutheran pastor in Virginia who ended a Sunday sermon by declaring that there was "a time to preach and time to fight," who then removed his clerical robe to reveal a military uniform underneath. He endured Valley Forge and went on to attain the rank of brigadier general. But while we should celebrate the heroic men and women of our country, an Israelite woman named Hannah reminds us who stands above history and determines the course of nations. She writes that the Lord, "lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes." He guards "the feet of his faithful ones," but the wicked he destroys. God breaks his adversaries but exalts "the horn of his anointed."

As Christians, we have every reason to rejoice in the freedom and prosperity we have inherited over the last 250 years. And we have every reason to give thanks to God for it. Ours is a noble history, but we have what we have because of God, who alone determines the course of nations. May he forgive our sins, bring us to repentance, and continue to bless our great country. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Wednesday

As we approach America 250, nothing could be more appropriate than to reflect on the role and purpose of government, especially since we live in a divided country. But where the world brings confusion, God's Word brings clarity. Whenever we encounter a problem, we should say, "But what do the Scriptures say?"

The first chapters of Scripture say surprisingly little about government. By the end of Genesis 1, God has created the world and all that is in it. By the end of Genesis 2, the foundational unit of society has been firmly established, the family. But there is no mention of government. In fact, it's not until Genesis 9 that God says, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image." With those words, God gives man the authority to punish sin, up to and including the death penalty. That authority is the basis of government and describes its most essential function: to preserve life by punishing sin. Paul writes in Romans 13, "For he (the ruler) does not bear the sword in vain. For he is a servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer."

Sadly, the real division in our country is not political. Politics are just a symptom. The real problem is spiritual. We no longer agree on what is good and what is evil. But if the government's primary role is to punish the wrongdoer, then we must first agree on what counts as wrongdoing! That is why the most significant political questions are no longer about tax rates, but about what is right and wrong. That question is being settled at the voting booth and in the courts, when it should be settled in the home and in the church. Pray for our country! Pray above all for a return of God's Word, for in learning righteousness from God, we learn to live in peace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Friday

For our Gospel reading this week, we jump ahead to Holy Week because Christ speaks a word concerning government. Jesus' enemies are looking for a reason to kill him, so they ask him, "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar?" Clever question! If Jesus answers yes, he will lose the support of the crowds, all of whom hate Caesar. But if he answers no, the Pharisees could charge him with sedition and seek the death penalty. Jesus avoids the trap by clearly delineating between God and Caesar.

Asking for a coin, he says, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They answer, "Caesar's." Jesus replies, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." At first, it seems as though Caesar has the upper-hand because he receives the tax, but what Jesus really does is set Caesar in his proper place. Government (Caesar in this case) has a role to play in this life, as Paul reminds us in our epistle reading. However, Caesar's claim has its limits. The things that belong to God are far weightier than money. God claims our heart. The apostles boldly stand on this teaching when they tell the Sanhedrin (the same court that put Jesus to death), "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

So long as sin is present in this world, government will be necessary to restrain it. To live without a legitimate, governing authority is to live in poverty and fear. But because the government is infected with sin itself, it will sometimes exceed its authority and lay claim to things that belong to God alone. Then we must be prepared to say, "You may have what belongs to you, O Caesar, but I belong to God." In Jesus' name, Amen.

Evening Prayer

You may pray one or more of the following after dinner or before bed:

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have graciously kept me this day; and I pray you that you would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.



Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray thee, Lord, my soul to keep; if I should die before I wake, I pray thee, Lord, my soul to take; and this I ask for Jesus' sake. Amen.



Visit, O Lord, our home, and drive from it all the snares of the enemy; let your holy angels dwell in it to preserve us in peace, and may your blessing be upon us evermore; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

A Parent's Blessing

You may place your hand on the head of your child before kissing them goodnight and say:

My loved one, rest securely,
for God this night will surely
from peril guard your head.
Sweet slumbers may he send you
and bid his hosts attend you
and through the night watch o'er your bed. Amen.

Memory Verse

MEMORY VERSE

**Continue steadfastly
in prayer, being
watchful in it with
thanksgiving.**

COLOSSIANS 4:2

