

Grace Episcopal Church

Grace is a Christ-centered Community devoted to Servant Ministry and Spiritual Growth.



The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

July 26, 2026

9:30 AM

Holy Eucharist

Parable of the Mustard Seed

By Kelly Latimore

Interpreting This Week's Prayer



GRACE
EPISCOPAL CHURCH + SHEFFIELD, ALABAMA

Collect of the Day: *O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: Increase and multiply upon us your mercy; that, with you as our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Dear God: Nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate me from your protection and love. Nothing is strong apart from your strength; nothing is holy apart from your sacred touch. Keep showing me your goodness, God, so that it will be like a beacon leading me through the fleeting shadows around me into the permanence of your light – which I long to experience, both in this life and in the next. In Jesus' Holy Name I offer this prayer. Amen.

Prelude

Processional Hymn 372 Praise to the living God

THE WORD OF GOD

Celebrant Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

People *And blessed be his kingdom, now and forever. Amen.*

The Celebrant and People say

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Song of Praise S 280 *Gloria in excelsis*

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth
Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father
We worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father
Lord God, Lamb of God
You take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us
You are seated at the right hand of the Father
Receive our prayer
For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord
You alone are the Most High
Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit
In the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Collect of the Day

O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: Increase and multiply upon us your mercy; that, with you as our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The First Lesson

Genesis 29:15-28

Stories like this one remind us of the phrase, “The past is a foreign country, they do things differently there.” Last week, Rachel sent her son, Jacob, to marry one of the daughters of her brother, Laban. Her real intent was to get Jacob away from his own brother, Esau, who was planning to kill Jacob as revenge for deceiving him. You could say that Laban unknowingly balances the scales of justice here by tricking Jacob into marrying both of his daughters, and also extracting fourteen years of servitude out of him. (Too bad Leah and Rachel had to be caught up in all of it!)

Laban said to Jacob, “Because you are my kinsman, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?” Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah’s eyes were lovely, and Rachel was graceful and beautiful. Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, “I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.” Laban said, “It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to any other man; stay with me.” So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her.

Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife that I may go in to her, for my time is completed.” So Laban gathered together all the people of the place, and made a feast. But in the evening he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her. (Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah to be her maid.) When morning came, it was Leah! And Jacob said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?” Laban said, “This is not done in our country—giving the younger before the firstborn. Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also in return for serving me another seven years.” Jacob did so, and completed her week; then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as a wife.

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

Psalm 105:1-11, 45b *Confitemini Domino*

The psalmist is celebrating how God remained faithful to his promise to Abraham, all the way through subsequent generations: Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's sons. Many years later, Paul will write that Jesus is the fulfillment of God's original promise.

- 1 Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his Name; *
 make known his deeds among the peoples.
 - 2 Sing to him, sing praises to him, *
 and speak of all his marvelous works.
 - 3 Glory in his holy Name; *
 let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.
 - 4 Search for the Lord and his strength; *
 continually seek his face.
 - 5 Remember the marvels he has done, *
 his wonders and the judgments of his mouth,
 - 6 O offspring of Abraham his servant, *
 O children of Jacob his chosen.
 - 7 He is the Lord our God; *
 his judgments prevail in all the world.
 - 8 He has always been mindful of his covenant, *
 the promise he made for a thousand generations:
 - 9 The covenant he made with Abraham, *
 the oath that he swore to Isaac,
 - 10 Which he established as a statute for Jacob, *
 an everlasting covenant for Israel,
 - 11 Saying, "To you will I give the land of Canaan *
 to be your allotted inheritance."
- 45b Hallelujah!

The Second Lesson

Romans 8:26-39

Our Romans 8 adventure continues! There are too many gems in this passage – and too many head-scratchers – to include in a small note. So, here’s just a little bit of a road map: first, Paul describes how the Holy Spirit translates our prayers to the Father. Then, Paul shifts gears and starts talking about “predestination.”

Is he laying out a complete Calvinist doctrine of how God chooses who will be saved and who will be condemned? No! It helps to read on through the paragraphs that follow, in which Paul goes out of his way to describe the power, effectiveness, and extravagance of God’s love for us. What Paul is really trying to tell us, in all of these verses, is that God’s love is in control.

The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. 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. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all day long;
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 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.
People Thanks be to God.

Gospel Hymn

Seek ye first

Please sing vss 1 & 2 before the Gospel.

Seek ye first the kingdom of God

And His righteousness

And all these things shall be added unto you

Allelu, Alleluia

Refrain: Alleluia, alleluia

Alleluia, allelu, alleluia

Ask and it shall be given unto you

Seek and ye shall find

Knock and it shall be opened unto you

Allelu, Alleluia

Refrain

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

People Glory to you, Lord Christ.

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Together, these are called “kingdom parables” or “kingdom sayings of Jesus.”

Matthew uses the phrase “kingdom of heaven,” while other Gospel writers use “kingdom of God.” The two titles mean the same thing. However, whereas “kingdom of God” sounds to us, in English, like the kingdom that belongs to God (which, of course, it is), “kingdom of heaven” carries an additional meaning: the place where God is, or where God dwells. This helps us understand Jesus’ words about himself earlier in this Gospel, “The kingdom of heaven has come near.”

Jesus put before the crowds another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.”

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

“Have you understood all this?” They answered, “Yes.” And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

People Praise to you, Lord Christ.

Gospel Hymn

Seek ye first
Please sing vs 3 after the Gospel.

We shall not live by bread alone
But by ev'ry word
That proceeds from the mouth of God
Allelu, alleluia
Refrain

The Sermon

The Reverend Josh Vacik

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Prayers of the People

The Leader and People pray responsively.

In peace, we pray to you, Lord God.

Silence

For all people in their daily life and work;

For our families, friends, and neighbors, and for those who are alone.

For this community, the nation, and the world. We pray for Donald, our president; Kay, our governor; and for the mayors, city councils, and county commissions of the Shoals;

For all who work for justice, freedom, and peace.

For the just and proper use of your creation;

For the victims of hunger, fear, injustice, and oppression.

For all who are in danger, sorrow, or any kind of trouble;

For those who minister to the sick, the friendless, and the needy.

For the peace and unity of the Church of God;

For all who proclaim the Gospel, and all who seek the Truth.

For Sean, our Presiding Bishop; Richard, our Bishop; Danielle, our Priest; Josh, our Deacon; and for all bishops, priests, and deacons;

For all who serve God in his Church.

For the special needs and concerns of this congregation.

Silence

The People may add their own petitions.

We pray for those on our intercessory prayer list, saying together

Ryan, Carole, Sam, MJ, Martin, Bennie, Robin, Wayne, Tommy B, LaVera, Peter, Doug, Courtney, Bruce, Frances, Betty, Dan, Ro, Heather, Gail, Deborah, Jessica, George, Jacquelyn, & Pamela.

We pray for all whose work puts them in harm's way and for those on active duty in the military, saying together

Joshua, Drake, Carter, Ethan, Jacobi, Kahleel, Henry, Jacob, Kadin, Dustin, Rebekah, Bryan, & William.

Hear us, Lord;

For your mercy is great.

We pray for those celebrating birthdays or anniversaries:
Beth Scott, Bryan Alley, Cornelia & Tom Heflin, Nell Pendleton, Robin Lakey,
Ninon & Richard Parker, Pam Davis, & Ava Desselle.

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this life.
Silence

We will exalt you, O God our King;
And praise your Name for ever and ever.

We pray for all who have died, that they may have a place in your eternal kingdom.
Silence

Lord, let your loving-kindness be upon them;
Who put their trust in you.

Concluding Collect

Almighty and eternal God, ruler of all things in heaven and earth: Mercifully accept the prayers of your people, and strengthen us to do your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Confession of Sins

The Deacon says
Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

Silence may be kept

Minister and People
Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

The priest stands and says

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. *Amen.*

The Peace

The Celebrant says to the People

Celebrant The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People *And also with you.*

THE HOLY COMMUNION

The Offertory

Offertory Anthem

O Love

O Love, O Love, O Love that will not let me go
O Love, I rest my weary soul in Thee
I give Thee back the life I owe
That in Thy ocean depths its flow may richer fuller be

O Joy, O Joy, O Joy that seeks me through the pain
O Joy, I cannot close my heart to Thee
I trace the rainbow through the rain
And feel the promise is not vain that morn shall tearless be

Doxology Hymn 380

Old 100th

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

Instructions for receiving Communion are found at the end of this prayer.

The Great Thanksgiving *Eucharistic Prayer A*

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Celebrant: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them to the Lord.

Celebrant: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give him thanks and praise.

Then, facing the Holy Table, the Celebrant proceeds

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

For you are the source of light and life, you made us in your image, and called us to new life in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

Sanctus S-129

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might

Heaven and earth are full of your glory

Hosanna in the highest

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord

Hosanna in the highest

Then the Celebrant continues

Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself, and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all.

He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself, in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith,

Celebrant and People

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

The Celebrant continues.

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ: By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. *AMEN.*

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

People and Celebrant

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, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Breaking of the Bread

Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;
Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.

Facing the People, the Celebrant says the following Invitation:
The Gifts of God for the People of God.

The Communion

*Please come to the altar rail to receive Communion. You may kneel or stand.
Receive a wafer from the Priest by holding out your hands. To receive the wine,
please dip the wafer in the chalice or drink from the chalice. If you do not wish to
receive Communion, cross your arms over your chest and the Priest will offer you
a Blessing.*

Communion Hymn 93, All. III In Christ Alone

In Christ alone my hope is found; He is my light, my strength, my song
This cornerstone, this solid ground, firm through the fiercest drought and storm
What heights of love, what depths of peace, when fears are stilled, when strivings cease
My comforter, my all in all here in the love of Christ I stand

In Christ alone, Who took on flesh, fullness of God in helpless babe
This gift of love and righteousness, scorned by the ones He came to save
Til on that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied
For ev'ry sin on Him was laid here in the death of Christ I live

There in the ground His body lay, light of the world by darkness slain
Then bursting forth in glorious day, up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory, sin's curse has lost its grip on me
For I am His and He is mine bought with the precious blood of Christ

No guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the pow'r of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny
No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man, can ever pluck me from His hand
Til He returns or calls me home here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand

Postcommunion Prayer

The Celebrant and People continue

Eternal God, heavenly Father,
you have graciously accepted us as living members of your Son our Savior Jesus
Christ, and you have fed us with spiritual food
in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.
Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage
to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Blessing

Recessional Hymn

O the deep, deep love of Jesus

O the deep, deep love of Jesus
Vast, unmeasured, boundless, free
Rolling as a mighty ocean
In its fullness over me
Underneath me, all around me
Is the current of Thy love
Leading onward, leading homeward
To my glorious rest above

O the deep, deep love of Jesus
Spread His praise from shore to shore
How He loveth, ever loveth
Changeth never, nevermore
How He watches o'er His loved ones
Died to call them all His own
How for them He intercedeth
Watcheth o'er them from the throne

O the deep, deep love of Jesus
Love of every love the best
'Tis an ocean vast of blessing
'Tis a haven sweet of rest
O the deep, deep love of Jesus
'Tis a heav'n of heav'ns to me
And it lifts me up to glory
For it lifts me up to Thee

Dismissal

Let us go forth in the name of Christ. Alleluia, alleluia.
Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia.

Servants Today – July 26

VOD Kris Walls	Safety Graham Fox	Greeter Mary Ann & Bob Allan	Usher Steve Cummings	Reader Lisa Gardner
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Acolytes

Bob Allan
& Morgan
Robinson

Chalice

Bob Allan
& Fred Joly

Server

Bob Allan

Cross

Fred Joly

Altar Guild

Mary Holland Black, Jan Bennett, Annie Laurie Gray, Rita Kelly, & Jessie Wilson

Fellowship

Danielle Thompson, Jan Bennett, & Mary Ann Allan

The flowers on the altar are given by the Davises to the glory of God and in thanksgiving for Christy Lett, Rachel Graves, and Reese Shirey for their commitment to coaching and caring for a new generation of Shoals swimmers.

**Danielle, our priest, and Josh, our deacon, would love to hear from you!
Please do not hesitate to contact either or both of them!**

Danielle Thompson:	931-636-4888	THOMDL80@gmail.com
Josh Vacik:	256-740-1255	JVACIK@comcast.net

Grace Church Vestry 2026

Lisa Gardner
Annie Laurie Gray
Jerry Shea – Senior Warden

Dennis Cole
David McKinley – Junior Warden
Janet Port – Treasurer
Darrell Todd – Clerk

Chris Earl
Kris Walls
Troy Youngblood

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The Reverend Danielle Thompson, **Rector**

The Reverend Josh Vacik, **Deacon**

Parish Musician: Christa Belue Byrd

Organist: Nancy Hughes Bolte

Bookkeeper: Gayle Ozblm

Parish Administrator: Lane Hardison Ennis

THIS WEEK AT GRACE:

MEN'S BIBLE STUDY – MONDAY AT 8 AM (PARISH HALL)

LEARN TO PLAY BRIDGE – TUESDAY AT 10 AM (PARISH HALL)

GRACE GROUPS – WEDNESDAY AT 4 PM & 6 PM

GRACE NOTES OPEN JAM SESSION – THURSDAY AT 3:45 PM (PARISH HALL)

CENTERING PRAYER – THURSDAY AT 5:15 PM (PARISH HOUSE)

ALL GROUPS ARE "ROLLING ADMISSION" AND CAN BE JOINED AT ANY TIME! CONTACT LANE OR DANIELLE AND WE WILL PUT YOU IN TOUCH WITH A GROUP LEADER!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

POT LUCK FELLOWSHIP: BRING A SNACK TO SHARE!

A bag of M&M's a box of cookies, or a jug of lemonade - let's all pitch in to make fellowship fun on **August 16**.

SHOALS SHELTER SUMMER COOL-DOWN DAYS

We are hosting 10-15 guest from Shoals Shelter from 12p - 4p in the Parish Hall on the following Thursdays:

August 13, August 27, September 10, September 24

Can you help with snacks, lunch, or on-site presence? Let Danielle know!

GRACE NIGHT RETURNS!

An easy-breezy monthly dinner with friends.

Bring a dish to share: whatever you want to eat or whatever you like to make – no need to sign up.

Dinner starts at 5:30 on Sunday, August 16.

FALL PREVIEW

Saturday, Sept 19: **Centering Prayer Workshop at Grace**, facilitated by Contemplative Outreach, Birmingham. Open to the public! 9 AM - 12 PM

Sunday, October 4: **The Great Episcopal Picnic**, hosted by St. Bart's. 10:30 AM

Sunday, October 18: **Pet Blessing AND Grace Night**. A combo platter of fun in our pavilion!

Friday, Nov 6 - Sunday, Nov 8: **Shoals Parish Retreat at Camp McDowell!** A weekend of fun with our friends from Trinity and St. Bart's. *Sign ups begin August 1!!!*

SCAN ME



Save our church website QR code!

Our church website is easily found using this QR code! Please save a picture of the QR code so you can share it with others.