

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

P. O. Box 267, 201 Veterans Dr., Columbus, TX 78934

PH# (979) 732-2423 Fax (979) 733-0489

E-mail: admin@splctx.org www.splctx.com **Pastor:** pastor.akethan@gmail.com

July 17, 2022 Contemporary 11:05 AM

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Senior Pastor	Alan Kethan	<i>On Sabbatical</i>
Deacon of Word and Service	<u>Phone:</u> (979)-530-8368	Sandye Fletcher
Youth & Family Specialist		Stephanie Polasek
Music Minister		Robert Eaton
Congregational Chair		Donna Maas
St. Paul Christian Learning Academy Director		Briana Bedford
Secretary		Elena Holub
Custodian		Tomasa Rosales
Parish Nurse Program Coordinator		DyAnn Lauzon

MISSION STATEMENT: Love God, Love Neighbor (*Luke 10:27*)

VISION STATEMENT: We will work to strengthen and grow closer in relationship to God and to one another.

- *As we enter into a sacred time and space, a friendly reminder to please set your cell phone to vibrate.*
- *We want to welcome all of our guests today and thank you for worshiping with us. If you have any questions or would like more information regarding our services, programs, day care, or preschool programs at St. Paul, please visit our Welcome Center in the narthex immediately following our service, and an attendant will be more than happy to assist you. If this is your first time at St. Paul, we hope you will take a gift along with you. We also have a gift bag for children.*

* This symbol indicates that the congregation is invited to stand physically or in spirit.

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the church, at its best, is "all ears." God urges the faithful, again and again, to "listen up!" — to heed the word that gives life. So it was with Abraham and Sarah, Mary and Martha, and the early church at Colossae. So it is today as we join the assembly to hear the word of God, the word of life.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SIGNING OF ATTENDANCE PADS

(Ushers will be handing out Attendance Pads during the announcements. Please be sure to sign your name and contact information.)

* **CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

P We believe that the Bible contains instruction for us as followers of Jesus Christ to do what he asked of us. He taught the first disciples to help others to confess their sins and to proclaim to them the promise of forgiveness afterwards. So let us take a few brief moments in silence to open our hearts and minds to Jesus, to confess the things that weigh heavy on our hearts and the things we need help with so we might be more in line with what Jesus commands.

(Silence for private confession.)

P If you are truly sorry and asking God for help, here is the promise he commanded the leaders in his church to proclaim, "You are forgiven." May this forgiveness free you and help you to live; to live in Jesus' name.

C Amen.

GOSPEL SONG: SPIRIT OF THE LIVING GOD

**Spirit of the Living God, Spirit of the Living God
We only want to hear Your voice... we're hanging on ev'ry word.
Spirit of the Living God, Spirit of the Living God
We want to know You more and more... we're hanging on ev'ry word.**

CHORUS:

*'Cuz when You speak, and when You move, when You do what only You can do,
It changes us! It changes what we see... and what we seek.
When You come in the room, when You do what only You can do
It changes us! It changes what we see... and what we seek.*

GOSPEL: Luke 10:38-42

During his visit to the home of Mary and Martha, Jesus reminds Martha that her concern for her many tasks distracts from the one thing that precedes all else: abiding in the presence of God.

A The holy gospel according to St. Luke, chapter 10, verses 38-42.

³⁸Now as [Jesus and his disciples] went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. ³⁹She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. ⁴⁰But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." ⁴¹But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; ⁴²there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

GOSPEL SONG: SPIRIT OF THE LIVING GOD

Spirit of the Living God, Spirit of the Living God
We're leaning into all You are... everything else can wait.
Spirit of the Living God, Spirit of the Living God
Come now and breathe upon our hearts... come now and have Your way.

CHORUS:

*'Cuz when You speak, and when You move, when You do what only You can do,
It changes us! It changes what we see... and what we seek.
When You come in the room, when You do what only You can do
It changes us! It changes what we see... and what we seek.*

BRIDGE:

When You move, You move all our fears. When You move, You move us to tears.
When You move, You move all our fears. When You move, You move us to tears.
When You fall, we fall on our knees. When You fall, we fall at Your feet.
And when You fall, we fall on our knees. And when You fall, we fall at Your feet.

LAST CHORUS:

*'Cuz when You speak, and when You move, when You do what only You can do,
It changes us! It changes what we see... and what we seek.
When You come in the room, when You do what only You can do,
It changes us! It changes what we see... and what we seek.
It changes everything!*

Spirit of the Living God, Spirit of the Living God
We only want to hear Your voice... we're hanging on ev'ry word.

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CHILDREN'S SERMON

SERMON

*** SERMON SONG: TABLE OF GRACE**

Hear the good news... you've been invited!
No matter what others may say. Your darkest sins will be forgiven,
And you will always have a place

CHORUS:

*At the table of grace, the cup's never empty.
The plate's always full, and it's never too late...
to come and be filled with love never-ending.
Everyone's welcome at the table of grace.*

So come, you weak – and heavy laden.
Don't try to hide your earthly scars. In His eyes, we all are equal.
Don't be afraid! Come as you are!

CHORUS:

*At the table of grace, the cup's never empty.
The plate's always full, and it's never too late...
to come and be filled with love never-ending.
Everyone's welcome at the table of grace.*

So let the first – become the last.
Let the poor put kings to shame. Their willing hearts will be their treasure
By the power of Jesus' name. **CHORUS**

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*** APOSTLES' CREED**

- A With the whole church, let us confess our faith.
C **I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

(The congregation may be seated during the prayers.)

PRAYERS

- A United in Christ and guided by the Spirit, we pray for the church, the creation, and all in need.
- A brief silence.*
- A Ever-present God, in Christ you fill all things. As your church gathers to hear your word, share your meal, and receive your blessing, teach us to welcome strangers as we have been welcomed by you.
- A brief silence.*
- A Through Christ you bring peace. Assure all who are worried and distracted by many things of your constant presence. Soothe those suffering in mind, body, or spirit. Sustain all who are afflicted and those who serve as caregivers.

A brief silence.

A In Christ you make your word fully known. Inspire this worshiping community to abide fully in your word as we sit at the feet of Jesus. Bless the ministry of teachers and Bible study leaders.

A brief silence.

A We pray for farmers and ranchers as they continue to work hard to bring us food in this time of drought. Bless them as they sow crops and care for livestock. Send us rain to heal the earth and water to quench Your thirsty land. Let faith be born from our doubts, hope from our despair, and compassion from our troubles.

A brief silence.

A We pray for peace in Ukraine. Help to end this war and the destruction of lives and your creation. Change hearts, bring peace and show the world your existence.

A brief silence.

A We pray for those in need of healing and whose needs are diverse and known to you including:
Eric Vinson; David Kautz; Janet Rydell; Sue Lyle; Candi King; those on our Prayer Team's list; and those we name in our hearts before you.

A brief silence.

A We pray for all those battling cancer that they may know strength and comfort. *(Pause for those we are praying for.)*
Bubba Bencal; Al Gene Canik; Jane Veghaus Taylor; George Wright; Elrose Kollatschny; Sarah Stancik; Shelly Bowden; Larry Poenitzsch; Sandy Mosley; Charlene Tesch; Cynthia Coufal; Jeffrey McDaniel; Karen Bailiff; Julian Divin; Nancy Biers; Angie Beggs; Pam Potter; Charlie Hammock; Brad Bryson; Lynette Frnka; Riana Jamison; Jenna Escamilla; Margaret Ortiz; Keith Korth; Jodi Sebesta; Cathy Siglow; Paul Casinger; Fran Gillett; Tiffany Murley; DeQuincy Lister; Angela Mazoch; Lily Presswood; Denise Lange; Doug Mason; Dr. Tom Hancher; Joe Berry; Joyce Templeton; Gracie Brune; Margaret Rogers; Leonard Kahlden; Curtis Wallin; Megan Burch; Jennifer Aleman; Lisa Grazier; Phyllis Behrend; Jessica Mauchlen; Larry Guthrie; Donna Tiner; Libby Divin; Anthony Baumbach; Diane Brooks; Bob Loy; Stanley King; Monty Gillett; Dawn Foster; Edward Halcolm; Amber Smith Kutach; Louis Camacho; Melvin Schobel; Janet Greene; Sabrina Galindo; Debbie Grimes; Horst Traub; Margie Fisk; Preston Carter; Penny Miller; Carl Hahn; Megan Cain; Amanda Fuchs; Cyndi Wallace; Karen Broussard; Donna Young; Sharon Heimann; and Brenda Baker.

A We pray for all expectant mothers, and especially for:
Stephanie Miles; Brooke Dungen Pawlak; Mallory Dungen Cook; and Madisyn Horndt Neumann that they have healthy terms and deliveries, and if not, may they find comfort and peace.

A brief silence.

A We pray for all those who reside in care facilities and the homebound and especially for:
Adrian Fritsch; Don Morrison; Verna Coufal; Doug Hill; John Zwiengel; Robert Saunders; Coy Dell Schindler; Deanna Lee; Doris Poppe; Barbara McMath; Linda Munos Rodgers; Madeline Menke; Doris Horndt; Helen Perrard; Delores Purcell; Jane Booker; Curtis Berger; Dolores Hoelscher; Jesse Grabow; Beatrice Zikuhr; Robert Eaton; Ronnie Rogers; Fritz Willms; Joyce Dehmer; and Donna Dehmer that they receive your caring and compassion.

A brief silence.

A We pray for all law enforcement officers, fire fighters, first responders, healthcare workers, 9-1-1 dispatchers, and active duty military personnel that they are protected and kept safe. *(Pause for those we are praying for.)*
Law enforcement officers: Todd Jacobs; Troy Neisner; Jacob Gorman; Nancy Gorman; Johnny Kovar; Abigail Weido; Dustin Lattimore; Luke Kanz; Bruno Flores; Zane Weido; Josh Jones; as well as Donnie Templeton and Jason Templeton who are also fire fighters. For all fire fighters, first responders, healthcare workers and 9-1-1 dispatchers, especially Brent Gorman, Sr.; Brent Gorman, Jr.; Reid Brasher; Dusty Dittmar; John Maertz; Ron Luedke; Pastor Alan Kethan; Kristi Weyand; Eric Weyand; Bradley Berger; Jon Berger; James Chollett; Edward Thraen, Jr.; Garrett Flores; Kyle Burris; Dylan Walcik; Randy Wendt; Travis Neuendorff; Brenda Henkes; and Jan Willette, as well as those active duty military members including Brian Anderson; Michael Graham; Bryan Kubena; Brad Bergfeld; Cody Jowers; Kyle Appelt; Montana Appelt; Douglas Neuendorff; Scott Cherniss; Kameron Page; Ryan Neisner; Anthony D'Angelo; Dalton Kapel; Kindra Dawson; William Phillips; and Kevin Gonzalez.

A We pray for the church throughout the world. May we all proclaim the good news of your love effectively. We ask, especially, that you would bless the ministry of our sister congregations Cristo Rey and Iglesia Cristiana Camino de Santidad in Peru, all Missionaries, especially St. Paul's supported missionary, Dina Anton de Espinoza, and our companion synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Central African Republic.

A brief silence.

A In Christ you brought forth the firstborn from the dead. We give thanks for the saints you have gathered at your table. Gather us with them in your eternal glory.

A brief silence.

A God of every time and place, in Jesus' name and filled with your Holy Spirit, we entrust these spoken prayers and those in our hearts into your holy keeping.

C Amen.

*** PEACE**

D As Jesus shared peace, let us also share His peace with one another. *(Share the "Peace of the Lord" with your neighbors.)*

(We will be collecting offerings before and after worship each week. This includes Power of One dollars.)

OFFERING and POWER OF ONE

“Power of One” is a ministry sponsored by your Stewardship Team. We are asking each and every one of our members to give \$1.00 above what your normal giving would be. We are asking each member to place this \$1.00 bill or change in the offering plate each week. The team is also inviting all children to participate to develop the habit of giving as part of their worship experience. Parents, a penny, nickel, dime, quarter, or dollar bill, any of these will do to help your children develop a habit of giving. These “Power of One” dollars will be used to support local ministries and ministries abroad. The purpose of this ministry is to demonstrate that something as small as one dollar can be used to make a difference in the lives of others.

*** OFFERING PRAYER**

D God of abundance: you have set before us a plentiful harvest. As we feast on your goodness, strengthen us to labor in your field, and equip us to bear fruit for the good of all, in the name of Jesus.

C Amen.

*** REMEMBERING JESUS' WORDS, PROMISES, AND COMMANDS**

*** LORD'S PRAYER**

D Lord remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**C 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.**

*** INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

D In Christ's presence there is fullness of joy. Come to the banquet.

C Amen.

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION (Continuous with Individual Cups)

{Distribution will be continuous. All are welcome for communion. Please come down the center aisle starting from the front. Follow directions of the ushers, coming up one side at a time. Please keep 6 feet between those who are not your family members. Pastor will hand you the bread. If you wish to have a gluten-free wafer, please tell Pastor “Gluten-free, please.” Afterward, you will choose either wine or white grape juice from the individual cups in the tray – white grape juice in the center with wine surrounding. Place the empty cups in the baskets located off to the side. Although communion is continuous, you are welcome to kneel at the rail in prayer after receiving communion. Please return to your seat by the side aisles.}

*** PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

D Life-giving God, through this meal you have bandaged our wounds and fed us with your mercy. Now send us forth to live for others, both friend and stranger, that all may come to know your love. This we pray in the name of Jesus.

C Amen.

*** BLESSING**

D The God of peace, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you, comfort you, and show you the path of life this day and always.

C Amen.

*** CLOSING SONG: MY FEET ARE ON THE ROCK!**

Ooh ooh, ooh ooh. . . ooh ooh, ooh ooh

I can see the clouds roll in. I can feel the winds, they try to shake me.

I will not be moved. . . my feet are on the Rock!

I can feel the waters rise.

I can hear the howling lies that haunt me.

Fear won't hold me now. . . my feet are on the Rock!

CHORUS:

When I feel my hope about to break, I will cling to Your unchanging grace.

Let the waters come and the earth give way,

I'll be dancing in the rain. . . my feet are on the Rock!

Ooh ooh, ooh ooh. . . ooh ooh, ooh ooh (2nd TIME TO BRIDGE)

I can see the morning light. I can feel the joy on the horizon,

Here my faith is found. . . I stand on solid ground. CHORUS

BRIDGE [Sing 3 times]

On Christ the solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand,

So stomp your feet and clap your hands, our feet are on the Rock.

LAST CHORUS

When I feel my hope about to break, I will cling to Your unchanging grace.

Let the waters come and the earth give way, I'll be dancing in the rain. . .

When I feel my hope about to break, I will cling to Your unchanging grace.

Let the waters come and the earth give way, I'll be dancing in the rain. . .

My feet are on the Rock! Ooh ooh,

My feet are on the Rock! Ooh ooh,

My feet are on the Rock!

* **DISMISSAL**

D Go in peace. Love your neighbor.

C **Thanks be to God, and we will.**

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USHERS: Kevin & Wendy Page; Ryan Thomas

LAY READER: Heather Thomas

STREAMING: Mike Maas

ALTAR GUILD: Barbara Brisco

ACOLYTE: Elliot Polasek

WELCOME: Welcome to worship! Here may you find rest for your souls, challenge and comfort alike, and inspiration to share Christ's love as you go forth in faith.

ALTAR WALL FLOWERS are placed by Richard & Ruth Poncik in celebration of their 40th wedding anniversary on July 17. Congratulations!

We are pleased to have Deacon Sandye Fletcher sharing her message and presiding at all three worship services this weekend. Thank you Deacon Sandye!! ☺

**** REMINDER!!** Pastor Alan continues to be on sabbatical during the month of July, 2022. In case of an emergency, please contact Deacon Sandye Fletcher at 979-530-8368. ******

COLLECTION OF OFFERING: Offering for the worship services is collected before and after worship. Offering bowls are placed in the back entrance and inside the side sanctuary door for you to place your offering in. This includes "Power of One" dollars.

Amount needed for average weekly budgeted expenses: \$8,405.00

Attendance: July 9 & 10, 2022 – 168

Contributions: July 9 & 10 – \$8,196.72

Power of One: July 9 & 10, 2022 – \$42.00

Building Fund: July 9 & 10 – \$782.10

Thank you to those who contributed to last week's offerings. Loving God/Loving Neighbor.

ATTENTION: Names on the prayer list in the bulletin will be printed for 2 weeks. After 2 weeks, the names will be removed from the bulletin unless the church office has been notified to keep them.

**** NOTICE REGARDING BULLETINS:** Please take your bulletin home after worship. We will **not** be reusing them. Thank you! ******

► **Children's Activity Bags** are available once again for use by our young members and guests! You can find them on the coat hooks in the coat area of the narthex. After worship, **please place the used activity bags and their contents in the receptacle in the narthex.** Thank you! ☺

Register for Vacation Bible School – July 18-22, 2022!! Mark your calendars for this year's Vacation Bible School! Join us as we "Go off-road for a Monumental adventure through the colorful canyons and sunbaked trails of the Southwest. By exploring God's awesomeness, kids form a rock-solid faith for the road ahead!" **VBS dates are July 18-22, 2022 from 6:00-8:30 PM each evening** and is open up to children who have completed 5th grade. Registration is free, however, t-shirts will be available for \$7 each. Parents may register their students online by visiting vbspro.events/p/events/stpaul2022. **Deadline to register is Sunday, July 17, 2022!!**

● **VBS FOOD DONATIONS:** Due to the cost of groceries, we are asking for donations to help with the meals served each evening before Vacation Bible School. We serve about 150 kids and volunteers *each night* of VBS. If you would like to help, you can either give a **monetary donation or** donate **specific food items**. For monetary donations, an envelope will be on the table in the narthex (foyer) that can be placed in the offering bowl. If you wish to donate specific food items, just pull a slip off the board and return it with the donation on the date specified. If you have any questions, please contact Loraine Gast at 979-732-1296. Thank you!

◆ **God's Gals:** God's Gals will meet on **Sunday, July 24, 2022 at 6:00 PM** at *Hound Song Brewing Company*. All women of St. Paul are invited, and guests are always welcome! Hope to see you there for food, fellowship, and laughter! Come check out Hound Song's new kitchen and menu. Questions? Contact Terri Brasher at 979-732-1127. ◆



Worship Schedule Change!! The last weekend of July there will be a change in our worship schedule. Since the **weekend of July 30 & 31, 2022** is a 5th Sunday weekend, our worship services will be services of healing. We will have worship with healing on Saturday, July 30 at 7:00 PM. For **Sunday, July 31**, we will have **only one healing service at 10:00 AM**. Following that service we will have a pot luck meal in The Lighthouse to enjoy good food and good fellowship! **A sign-up sheet for the pot luck is in the narthex (foyer).** **Please sign-up if you are planning to attend!** Be sure to make note of the worship time change for Sunday, July 31 (10:00 AM), and mark your calendar for fellowship and pot luck immediately following the service!

♥ **Grief Support Group:** Are you experiencing grief from the loss of a loved one, loss of a job, loss of friend who has moved? The Grief Support Group is a place to share and discuss these issues with other individuals. The group meets the **third Thursday of each month from 5:30-6:30 PM in the church library.** For questions or more information, contact Peggy Geisler at 979-732-0350.

SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:

Today (July 17) – **Deadline to register for Vacation Bible School!**
Mon., July 18 – 10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
5:30 PM – VBS Meal
6:00 PM – Church Council
6:00-8:30 PM – Vacation Bible School
Tues., July 19 – 12:00 PM – Noon Bible Study (library)
5:30 PM – Prayer Team (library)
5:30 PM – VBS Meal
6:00-8:30 PM – Vacation Bible School
Wed., July 20 – **Newsletter Deadline!!**
9:00 AM – Morning Circle (library)
9:45 AM – CLA Chapel
10:30 AM-12:00 PM – Sewing Camp (Lighthouse)
5:30 PM – VBS Meal
6:00-8:30 PM – Vacation Bible School
Thurs., July 21 – 5:30 PM – Grief Support Group (library)
5:30 PM- VBS Meal
6:00-8:30 PM – Vacation Bible School
Fri., July 22 – 10:30 AM – Adult Bible Study (library)
5:30 PM – VBS Meal
6:00-8:30 PM – Vacation Bible School
Sat., July 23 – 7:00 PM – Holy Communion Worship
Next Sun., July 24 – 9:00 AM – Holy Communion Worship
10:00 AM – Adult Sunday School
11:05 AM – Holy Communion Contemporary Worship
6:00 PM – God's Gals to Hound Song Brewing Co., Columbus

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

Sunday, July 17, 2022 **Bartolomé de Las Casas, missionary to the Indies, died 1566**
A native of Spain, Las Casas first came to the Western hemisphere while serving in the military. Upon arriving in the West, Las Casas was granted a large estate with Indigenous enslaved people whom he freed after he was ordained a priest. He worked in the Caribbean and Central America to improve the lives of the native peoples.

Friday, July 22, 2022 **Mary Magdalene, Apostle**

Sometimes called "the apostle to the apostles" because she told them of her encounter with the risen Lord, Mary was a woman of Galilee who followed Jesus throughout his ministry. She was present at Jesus' crucifixion and his burial.

Saturday, July 23, 2022 **Birgitta of Sweden, renewer of the church, died 1373**

Birgitta married at age thirteen and had four daughters. Widowed at age thirty-eight, she gave all that she owned to the poor, and founded a community of monks and nuns led by a woman. Her work is continued today by the Society of St. Birgitta.

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OTHER READINGS: Genesis 18:1-10a

The LORD visits Abraham and Sarah to tell them that the long-awaited promise of the birth of a child will be fulfilled for them in their old age.

The reading begins:

¹The LORD appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. ²He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. ³He said, "My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. ⁴Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. ⁵Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on — since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said." ⁶And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes." ⁷Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. ⁸Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate. ⁹They said to him, "Where is your wife Sarah?" And he said, "There, in the tent." ^{10a}Then one said, "I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son."

PSALM: Psalm 15

¹LORD, who may dwell in your tabernacle? Who may abide upon your holy hill? ²Those who lead a blameless life and do what is right, who speak the truth from their heart; ³they do not slander with the tongue, they do no evil to their friends; they do not cast discredit upon a neighbor. ⁴In their sight the wicked are rejected, but they honor those who fear the LORD. They have sworn upon their health and do not take back their word. ⁵They do not give their money in hope of gain, nor do they take bribes against the innocent. Those who do these things shall never be overthrown.

OTHER READINGS: Colossians 1:15-28

This letter offers a mystical teaching, that the great mystery of God is "Christ in you." Because Christ is present in the church, Christians share in his life, suffering, and glory.

The reading begins:

¹⁵[Christ Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; ¹⁶for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers — all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross. ²¹And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²²he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him — ²³provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven. I, Paul, became a servant of this gospel. ²⁴I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. ²⁵I became its servant according to God's commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, ²⁶the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. ²⁷To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

SERVICE OVERVIEW: UNEXPECTED AND INTENTIONAL DISTRACTION

Most of us are always busy and on the go, but today's gospel reminds us of a struggle: when are we to set aside our busy calendars, duties, and to-do lists and simply rest in God's presence, listening to what God has to say to us? This tension mounts in our gospel as Jesus addresses Martha's busyness, worry, and distraction, juxtaposed with Mary's contemplation, focus, and desire to sit at the feet of the great teacher. Is "quietly sitting" easy or possible for you? Perhaps we can find helpful advice in our first reading, as Abraham rests in the heat of the day. In that time of rest, he was ready to receive the three guests who came bearing the news that Sarah would have a son, fulfilling God's promise given years earlier. With the heat keeping him from moving on to other things (and us in the middle of a very hot summer), the guests had Abraham's undivided attention. These readings remind us how crucial it is to set aside time to spend with God. We might even wonder what sort of things Jesus was saying to Mary. Were they profound words, akin to the "mystery" the author of Colossians addresses in the epistle? Jesus was the person in whom God was pleased to dwell, that same one who is "the hope of glory."

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:

Today, Jesus attends a dinner party at Martha's home. Think of our church as Martha's home. Every time we worship, we sit at the table with Jesus. Welcome to worship! The mysterious and the mundane mingle in the readings today. In the everyday activities of preparing meals, welcoming guests, and engaging in conversation, the "fullness of God" is revealed.

Martha works while Mary contemplates. Martha's actions demonstrate those who serve, and Mary's actions are of those who listen. We are to do both. *Their* home is *our* table. Jesus does not say Martha's work is not necessary; he simply says that Mary's act of faithful contemplation is better. Many people today are far more comfortable with work than they are with the life of interior prayer and introspection. Contemplation can make many people nervous or uncomfortable. If anything, it is *this* aspect of our spiritual lives - listening closely, deeply, and carefully - that needs development and practice.

Have you ever hosted a dinner party? The Greek verb used in today's story, *perispao*, indicates that there was "simply too much to do" as an objective fact, rather than Martha being stubborn. Even so, setting aside the things that "must be done" in favor of an intimate, contemplative life is often a challenge in Christian spirituality. There is always something that *must* be done, but the "must" is often a matter of perspective in which *WE* decide what *MUST* be done. In the Christian life, the things that *must* be done are simple: gather with the community around word and sacrament, love God, and love neighbor.

In sharing the bread and wine, we are eating with Jesus himself, and in eating with Jesus, we are sharing a meal with the Triune God. Although we cannot see God in this room, God is here, welcoming us to hear the word, for we believe that we see God in each other.

KID STUDY:

Today we hear a story where Martha welcomes Jesus into her home. Have you ever had company at your house? The welcome and caring you provide to your guests is called hospitality. You probably give them a drink and something to eat, provide some fun activities, and even a comfortable place to rest. Preparing for guests in your home can be a lot of work. You may have to clean your room! What about receiving guests in your *church* home? It is also very important to provide guests at church with a comfortable space to restore their bodies and spirits. To love God and love our neighbor means we invite, greet, and share God's love with everyone. How do we learn to do this? We sit at Jesus' feet and listen, just like Mary. Here, week after week, we are fed by Jesus, who is both our host and our guest.

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION:

Jesus rebukes Martha, and we need to rediscover the revolutionary potential of the concept of ministry suggested in this gospel reading. Service is not a code word for a new power trip, nor a sanctimonious way of justifying the servitude of the enslaved. It is a revolution that overthrows all these models of relationship. It means the self-emptying of alienated male power, even alienated divine power. It is God who begins the kenosis, or emptying, of power projected on the throne of heaven. It is God who becomes a servant, pulling out the foundations of all other kings and lords to use the divine as the model of hierarchy. Only by becoming one with the liberation of all the poor and oppressed do all of us, female and male, black and white, poor and rich, discover our own wholeness, in ourselves and with each other. - Rosemary Radford Ruether [Rosemary Radford Ruether, in Women and the Word: Sermons, ed. Helen Gray Crotwell (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 94, 98.]

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Next Week's Theme (July 23 & 24): Jesus teaches the Lord's Prayer

Next Week's Scriptures (July 23 & 24):

First Reading: Genesis 18:20-32

“Abraham bargains with God for the righteous of Sodom and Gomorrah.”

Psalm: Psalm 138

“Your steadfast love endures forever; do not abandon the works of your hands.” (Ps. 138:8)

Second Reading: Colossians 2:6-15 [16-19]

“Buried with Christ in baptism, raised with him through faith.”

Gospel: Luke 11:1-13

“Jesus teaches the disciples to pray.”