

**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](mailto:admin@splctx.org) [www.splctx.com](http://www.splctx.com) **Pastor:** [pastor.akethan@gmail.com](mailto:pastor.akethan@gmail.com)

November 12, 2023 Contemporary 11:05 AM

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost

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Senior Pastor	Alan Kethan	<u>Home:</u> (979)-942-9060	<u>Cell:</u> (830)-708-1200
Youth & Family Specialist			Stephanie Polasek
Congregational Chair			Donna Maas
St. Paul Christian Learning Academy Director			Briana Bedford
Secretary			Elena Holub
Custodian			Tomasa Rosales
Parish Nurse Program Coordinator			DyAnn Lauzon

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**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 worshipping 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.*
- *Hearing Assist devices are available for those who need assistance in hearing worship service better. Please see a person in the Sound Room (Usher Room) to request the use of a device during worship.*

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

**INTRODUCTION**

*Today the prophet Amos calls for justice to roll down like waters. Paul urges us to encourage one another with the promised coming of the Lord. Jesus tells the parable of the wise and foolish bridesmaids. Surrounded by the faithful of every time and place, we celebrate Christ's coming in our midst in the word of life and the feast of victory — the marriage feast of the lamb.*

**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.**

**GOSPLE SONG: SALT AND LIGHT**

**Oh the beauty of the King, You make righteous those who seek.  
You have written and redeemed my story.**

**CHORUS:**

*Let my eyes see Your kingdom shine all around.  
Let my heart overflow with passion for Your name.  
Let my life be a song revealing who You are,  
For You are salt and light.*

**GOSPEL:** Matthew 25:1-13

*Jesus tells a parable about his own second coming, emphasizing the need for readiness at all times.*

A The holy gospel according to St. Matthew, chapter 25, verses 1-13.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] <sup>1</sup>"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup>Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. <sup>3</sup>When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; <sup>4</sup>but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. <sup>5</sup>As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. <sup>6</sup>But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' <sup>7</sup>Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup>The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' <sup>9</sup>But the wise replied, 'No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' <sup>10</sup>And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the

wedding banquet; and the door was shut. <sup>11</sup>Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' <sup>12</sup>But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I do not know you.' <sup>13</sup>Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

#### **GOSPLE SONG: SALT AND LIGHT**

**Oh the love that set me free, You bring hope to those in need.  
You have written and redeemed my story.**

#### **CHORUS to BRIDGE:**

**Let my eyes see Your kingdom shine all around.  
Let my heart overflow with passion for Your name.  
Let my life be a song revealing who You are,  
For You are salt and light. You are love's great height.  
You are deep and wide, a consuming fire.  
For You are salt and light. You are love's great height.  
You are deep and wide, a consuming fire.**

#### **LAST CHORUS:**

**Let my eyes see Your kingdom shine all around.  
Let my heart overflow with passion for Your name.  
Let my life be a song revealing who You are,  
For You are salt and light. You are salt and light.  
For You are salt and light. For You are salt and light.**

CCLI Song #7023285 Words and Music by Lauren Daigle, Paul Mabury, and Leslie Jordan.  
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#### **CHILDREN'S SERMON**

#### **SERMON**

#### **\* SERMON SONG: SHINE, JESUS, SHINE!**

**Lord, the light of Your love is shining. In the midst of the darkness  
Shining. Jesus, light of the world, shine upon us.  
Set us free from the truth You now bring us. Shine on me, shine on me.**

#### **CHORUS:**

**Shine, Jesus, shine! Fill this land with the Father's glory.  
Blaze, Spirit, blaze! Set our hearts on fire.  
Flow, river, flow! Flood the nations with grace and mercy.  
Send forth Your word, Lord, and let there be light.**

**Lord, I come to Your awesome presence. From the shadows into Your  
Radiance. By the blood I may enter Your brightness.  
Search me, try me, consume all my darkness. Shine on me, shine on me. CHORUS**

**As we gaze on Your kingly brightness, so our faces display Your  
Likeness. Ever changing from glory to glory,  
Mirror'd here, may our lives tell Your story. Shine on me, shine on me.**

#### **CHORUS:**

**Shine, Jesus, shine! Fill this land with the Father's glory.  
Blaze, Spirit, blaze! Set our hearts on fire.  
Flow, river, flow! Flood the nations with grace and mercy.  
Send forth Your word, Lord, and let there be light.**

Words and Music by Graham Kendrick. CCLI Song #30426 © 1987 Make Way Music CCLI Lic #1729377

#### **BAPTISM OF Everleigh Grace Renee Torres**

**See Insert**

*(The congregation may be seated during the prayers.)*

#### **PRAYERS**

A Let us turn our hearts to God, our breath and life, as we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

*A brief silence.*

A O God for whom we watch, we glimpse your power in rushing water and your beauty in the darkening night. Restore this creation, and provide clean water to all people and animals. Save us from foolish, wasteful living.

*A brief silence.*

A O God for whom we long, let justice roll down like waters on all nations. Bless citizens with wise leaders; save your children from war. We pray for the veterans of this community, that they are supported and loved.

*A brief silence.*

A O God for whom we listen, inspire the music ministry of our congregation. Fill our worship with songs to proclaim your greatness. Help us to sing and dance with joy and tell boldly of your salvation.

*A brief silence.*

A O God, we pray for peace in all the world, especially in war-torn areas of Ukraine, Sudan, Niger and Israel. Bring an end to wars and the destruction of lives and your creation.

*A brief silence.*

A O God, we pray for all those in need of healing and whose needs are diverse and known to you including:  
Nita Renik; Kristen Downing; Morris Kethan; Cecil Marburger; Robert Hudec; Glen Schmucker; those on our Prayer Team's list; and those we name in our hearts before you.

*A brief silence.*

A O God, we pray for all those battling cancer that they may know comfort and strength.  
*(Pause for those we are praying for.)*

Ashley Roberts; Traci Edman; Michael Yancey; Amanda Aramijo; Zachary Schulke; Herbie Kollatschny; Darrell Pagel; Sylvia McLelland Teykl; Tom Russell, Jr.; Melda Coleman; Al Gene Canik; Larry Bookout; Mike Wostarek; Elizabeth Frisby; Virginia Fritsch; Kristina Acevedo; George Krenek; Anne Dimas; Carl Geisler; Laura Walla; Randy Wendt; Heather Deviney; Paul Casinger; Dr. Tom Hancher; Leonard Kahlden; and Bob Loy.

A O God, we pray for all expectant mothers and especially for:  
Nancy Gorman; Camille Stancik; Kyndall Beettner; Jamee Albert; Kristen O'Leary Bridges; Abegail Gatzke; and Chelsea Gilstrap that they have healthy terms and deliveries, and if not, may they find comfort and peace.

*A brief silence.*

A O God, we pray for all those who reside in care facilities and the homebound that they receive your caring and compassion. *(Pause for those we are praying for.)*

Joey Denby; Paul Minar, Sr.; Adrian Fritsch; Coy Dell Schindler; Madeline Menke; Doris Horndt; Helen Perrard; Jane Booker; Pat Brasher; Walter Glaeser, Jr.; Dolores Hoelscher; Jesse Grabow; Joyce Dehmer; Donna Dehmer; Cherie Moore; Lauren Lamb; and Lydia Rojas.

A O God, 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: Charles Jobb; Joseph Smith; Todd Jacobs; Troy Neisner; Jacob Gorman; Nancy Gorman; Johnny Kovar; Abigail Weido; Dustin Lattimore; 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.; Kyle Burris; Dylan Walcik; Travis Neuendorff; Nathan Bookout; Brenda Henkes; Jan Willette; and Terri Neunendorff, as well as those active duty military members including Kyle Appelt; Montana Appelt; Douglas Neuendorff; Scott Cherniss; Kameron Page; Dalton Kapel; Kevin Gonzalez; Evelyn Rojas; and Nelson Beettner.

A O God, 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 their Pastor Armando Capcha and Iglesia Cristiana Camino de Santidad and their leaders Pastors Gumer and Naomi Anton 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 O God, in whom we remain, we remember our loved ones who have died and now live in you. Bring comfort and the assurance of new life to all who grieve.

*A brief silence.*

A We offer our spoken prayers and those held in our hearts trusting in your mercy; through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.

**C Amen.**

**\* PEACE**

P 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**

P God of all goodness, generations have turned to you, gathered around your table, and shared your abundant blessings. Number us among them that, as we gather these gifts from your abundance, and give thanks for your rich blessings, we may feast upon your very self and care for all that you have made, through Jesus Christ, our Sovereign and Servant.

**C Amen.**

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

**\* LORD'S PRAYER**

P 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**

P There is a place for you at the banquet. Come and feast from Jesus' table.

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. 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.}*

**FIRST COMMUNION RECOGNITION**

**\* PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

P Lord Jesus, in this simple meal you have set a banquet. Sustain us on the journey, strengthen us to care for the least of your beloved children, and give us glad and generous hearts as we meet you on the way.

C Amen.

**\* BLESSING**

P May the God of all creation, in whose image we are made, who claims us and calls us beloved, who strengthens us for service, give you reason to rejoice and be glad! The blessing of God, Sovereign, ☩ Savior, and Spirit, be with you today and always.

C Amen.

**\* CLOSING SONG: REMIND ME WHO I AM**

**When I lose my way and I forget my name, remind me who I am.  
In the mirror all I see is who I don't wanna be, remind me who I am.  
In the loneliest places, when I can't remember what grace is. . .**

**CHORUS:**

***Tell me once again who I am to You. . . who I am to You (whoa)  
Tell me lest I forget who I am to You – that I belong to You. . . to You!***

**When my heart is like a stone and I'm running far from home, remind me who I am.  
When I can't receive Your love – afraid I'll never be enough, remind me who I am.  
If I'm Your beloved, can You help me believe it?**

**CHORUS:**

***Tell me once again who I am to You. . . who I am to You (whoa)  
Tell me lest I forget who I am to You – that I belong to You. . . to You!***

**BRIDGE:**

**I'm the one You love. I'm the one You love,  
That will be enough, I'm the one You love!**

**LAST CHORUS:**

**Tell me once again who I am to You. . . who I am to You (whoa)  
Tell me lest I forget who I am to You – that I belong to You.  
Tell me once again who I am to You. . . who I am to You (whoa)  
Tell me lest I forget who I am to You – that I belong to You... to You... to You!**

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**\* DISMISSAL**

P Beloved of God, go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

C Thanks be to God, and we will.

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**USHERS:** Mike & Gerri Hackfeld; Sandi Roensch

**LAY READER:** Mia Post

**STREAMING:** Chase Brasher

**SOUND:** Sydney Eaton and Todd Jacobs

**ACOLYTE:** Micah Polasek

**POWER POINT:** Kay Wesson

**ALTAR GUILD:** Amanda Oppermann

**WELCOME:** Welcome to St. Paul Lutheran Church! It is a gift to come together in worship of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**ALTAR WALL FLOWERS** are placed by Eddie & Debbie Hernandez in celebration of their 20<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on November 15.

**ADDITIONAL FLOWERS** are placed by Joe & Arlene Trojacek in thanks for God's many blessings and in celebration of their 68<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on November 13.

**Congratulations** to Adam Torres and Lezlie Grace Parvin on the baptism of their daughter Everleigh Grace Renee Torres. Everleigh is being baptized today at the 11:05 AM service. Sponsors for Everleigh are Cathy Rojas and Daemone Reed.

**Congratulations** to the following students who have completed communion instruction: Camdin Barten; Addison Bookout; Mitchell Bookout; Mattie Clem; Beau Kuentler; Harlie Lewis; and Paisley Stancik. They are receiving communion for the first time as a class and celebrating this milestone in their faith journey.

**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:** November 4 & 5, 2023 – 171

**Contributions:** Nov. 4 & 5 – \$7,414.56

**Power of One:** November 4 & 5, 2023 – \$51.10

**Building Fund:** Nov. 4 & 5 – \$558.23

*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.

► **Children's Activity Bags** are available 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! ☺

**MEALS TO HEAL:** Meals to Heal will have a **cook session on today at 1:00 PM** in the Lighthouse kitchen. We will be making two main dish casseroles, bagging vegetables, and assembling meals to go in the freezer. Join us if you can! If you have any questions, please contact Terri Brasher at 979-732-1127.



**High School Ski Trip Fundraiser:** The youth will be hosting a **drive-thru Pulled Pork Baked Potato fundraiser on Tuesday, November 14, 2023 from 4:30-6:30 PM** at the Lighthouse. **Tickets are \$10 each** and can be purchased from a youth before or after worship or from the church office. Deadline to purchase tickets is today. The youth will be going skiing December 27-31, 2023. Thank you for your support!

◆ **Senior Explorers to Alpaca Farm!** Senior Explorers are going to an Aplaca Ranch in advance of next summer's trip to Peru. On **Thursday, November 16, 2023** we will **depart** St. Paul Lutheran Church at **9:30 AM**. We will arrive at the Peeka Alpaca Ranch near Burton, Texas for a full tour, petting and shopping. We will stop for lunch on our way home and should make it **back by 2:00 PM**. Please sign up by today in the narthex. Call Kevin Page at 979-732-0845 with any questions.



**Community Thanksgiving Worship Service** will be held **here at St. Paul Lutheran Church at 6:00 PM on Sunday, November 19, 2023**. We don't have a lot of opportunities to join in worship of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with other churches

in Columbus, however, this event encourages us to show the community that we Christians can worship together.

**THANKSGIVING EVE & PIE FEST:** It is that time of year again. Yahoo! Thanksgiving Eve Worship and the awesome Pie Fest that follows! Our festive **worship** will begin at **7:00 PM on Wednesday, November 22, 2023**. We will then move to the Lighthouse afterwards to enjoy fellowship around a variety of pies. Join us in fellowship and thanksgiving of our many blessings and appreciate the creativity of our members and their baking skills as we begin our Thanksgiving weekend.



**Mark your calendars!** God's Gals will **decorate the church for Christmas after the 11:05 AM service on Sunday, November 26, 2023**. We need muscles, too, so guys are invited to come help us! Thanks in advance for your help! Questions? Contact Terri Brasher at 979-732-1127.

**ST. PAUL QUILTERS:** The St. Paul Quilters will be taking a brief fall & winter break as a group to relax and rejuvenate for next year. **They will be taking off all of November and December and resume quilting as a group Tuesday, January 9, 2024.** The quilters meet the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month in the Lighthouse. If anyone is interested in getting fabric to cut blocks at home or to sew quilt tops at home during that time, please contact Carol Lighthill at 832-371-3308. She will be happy to meet you and get you the fabric you need.

● **Women of JOY Bible Study:** The Women of JOY Bible Study group meets on Mondays to cook and have interesting Bible study and discussions. The **first Monday** of the month we **meet in the Lighthouse to cook** for BLAST. The **2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays** of the month we meet in the **high school room (old choir room) for Bible Study**. We are currently reading The Story. If you are interested or would like more information, please contact Gerri Hackfeld at 979-732-4711.

♥ **Grief Support Group:** The Grief Support Group is for anyone who has lost a loved one, either recently or a few years ago. We share and support each other. Come join us and get support from others walking this journey. We meet at **5:30 PM** in the youth room (formerly the choir room) the **third Thursday of the month**. **NOTE:** You do not have to share or talk until you are ready! If you have questions, please contact Peggy Geisler at 979-732-0350.

#### **SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:**

**Today (Nov. 12) –** 1:00 PM – Meals to Heal Cook Session (Lighthouse)  
6:00-8:00 PM – The Gathering

**Mon., Nov. 13 –** 9:00 AM – Staff Meeting  
1:00 PM – Pastor Alan in Stewardship Class  
6:00 PM – Women of JOY Bible Study (old choir room)

**Tues., Nov. 14 –** 8:00 AM – Pastor in Meeting  
 10:30 AM – Pastor Alan to TLC  
 12:00 PM – Noon Bible Study (library)  
 4:30-6:30 PM – Youth Drive-thru Fundraiser (Lighthouse)  
 5:30 PM – Stewardship Team (library)

**Wed., Nov. 15 –** **Newsletter Deadline!!**  
 9:00 AM – CLA Chapel  
 9:00 AM – Morning Circle (library)  
 10:00 AM-1:00 PM – Senior Connections (Lighthouse)  
 5:00 PM – Meal  
 5:30 PM – BLAST, Confirmation and HS Youth

**Thurs., Nov. 16 –** 9:30 AM-2:00 PM – Senior Explorers to Alpaca Ranch, Burton  
 5:30 PM – Grief Support Group (old choir room)

**Fri., Nov. 17 –** 12:00 PM – CLA Preschool Thanksgiving Program (sanctuary)

**Sat., Nov. 18 –** 7:00 PM – Holy Communion Worship

**Next Sun., Nov. 19 –** 9:00 AM – Holy Communion Worship  
 10:00 AM – Adult Sunday School and Confirmation  
 11:05 AM – Holy Communion Contemporary Worship  
 6:00 PM – Community Thanksgiving Worship (sanctuary)

#### UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

##### **Friday, November 17, 2023 Elizabeth of Hungary, renewer of society, died 1231**

Born in Hungary, Elizabeth was betrothed to the son of the Landgrave of Thuringia, and at age four was taken to be raised with him at the Wartburg Castle. Ten years later they were married. She was very generous to the poor, and after her husband's death she lived in cruel hardship until her own death at age twenty-four.

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#### **SERVICE OVERVIEW: TRUSTING IN GOD; TRUSTING WITH GOD**

Human beings are created to be in relationship with one another and with God. No one functions completely outside the context of relationships. From the moment we are born we are thrust into relationship with people around us - the people who delivered us, our family, and God. When we enter this world we do so forming relationships right from the start.

Healthy relationships require a lot of work and care. In particular, relationships require trust to grow and become mature. Relationships rooted in trust can bring out the best in us. Relationships rooted in anything else can bring out the worst.

Today's readings give us the chance to consider the trust required in the relationship between God and God's people. Give thought to the consequences of replacing trust with something else like your identity, your work, or trusting only yourself for sustenance rather than God. Paul reminds us that our relationship with God is cause for joy, even in the midst of sorrow, since we believe (trust) God's promise of eternal life through the living Lord Jesus.

#### **THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:**

The readings in November deal with the end: the conclusion of the liturgical year, one's own death, the end of the earth as we know it, and even the "dying" of vegetation as the seasons change. At the end of everything is God, and in the readings we encounter God arriving for us, the promised feast begun in our meal of bread and wine. Welcome to worship! Wake! Awake! Join the bridesmaids at the table of the wedding feast Christ provides. Explore and wonder about what it means to live together in community.

The wedding feast is a biblical image of our lives with God. Modern times are far removed from the cultural aspect of bridal parties greeting the groom and lighting the way for the traditional days-long celebration we encounter in today's gospel. How might we hear this parable in a more contemporary way? Have you ever been in a situation where you thought you were prepared but really you were not? In our corner of the world, we anticipate and plan for bad weather. Like a hurricane blowing through, our lives are disrupted by things that are outside of our control. Do not immediately fall into the wisdom/foolishness or prepared/unprepared dichotomies that are obvious in this text, though. Look beyond that to the relationship the bridesmaids have with one another. How might this story encourage us to help each other anticipate challenges, watch out for one another, and light the way for one another? Jesus shares that there will be unexpected aspects, chaos, and adjustments to be made. If we understand that those things are part of God's plan, is fear, frustration, and lack of attention to God's in-breaking reign lessened or removed altogether?

We can all identify with surprises that happen in life when we are caught unprepared. Yet so much of life is about having new experiences that lead to growth, change, and deeper understanding. Connecting the concept of preparation with the story of the bridesmaids, we are reminded that Jesus' breaking into our lives can come when we least expect it. With Advent approaching and our culture already preparing for Christmas, all these preparations point to our need to rely on God to be a constant source of peace and love, despite the swirling responsibilities of life.

#### **KID STUDY:**

Today's story is about a wedding! In Jesus's time, bridesmaids didn't stay with the bride like they do today. Instead, they traveled to the wedding with the groom, carrying oil lamps to light his way. The bridesmaids in today's story are not prepared – their lamps ran out of oil so they had no light! Some bridesmaids brought extra oil to keep their lights shining. Jesus tells this story to help us see that how we live and shine God's light matters for showing others about Jesus' love. What are ways that we can help each other have enough oil in our lamps to shine God's light? When we remember that we are children of God, we can share God's light with other people by being Jesus's hands and feet.

#### **INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION:**

*The foolish maidens were foolish because they expected everything to be on schedule. No delays. The foolish didn't anticipate a sudden change of plan. They didn't prepare for every possible contingency so as to insure their presence at the feast. They didn't realize that this*

*feast was everything, that to be there called for investment of one's total being and every resource - surplus included. The foolish didn't know the importance of the meal. What now are the expectations of your heart? How do you rank this feast? Are you here for a taste, or are you here to be dazzled by a foretaste? Foolish are you, or are you wise? Expecting a delay, we are all tempted to look here, there and everywhere for a taste of something, of something - how should we day - divine. Foolish ones, we seek here a morsel which will supply relief from the complexities of schedule and vocation. A taste among many. But the wise were wise because they brought a flask of extra oil. Large quantities of oil in single flasks. It didn't matter that there might be other feasts, other seeming purposes to life. These had no value. There was nothing else for which to save the oil. This feast was everything. This bridegroom was worth feasting with. To be wise today is to receive the power of the signs. - Mark P. Bangert [Mark P. Bangert, Homilies for the Christian People, ed. Gail Ramshaw (New York: Pueblo, 1989), 167-69.]*

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**Next Week's Theme (Nov. 18 & 19):** Parable of the Talents

**Next Week's Scriptures (Nov. 18 & 19):**

**First Reading:** Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18

*"The day of the LORD."*

**Psalm:** Psalm 90:1-8 [9-11] 12

*"So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom." (Ps. 90:12)*

**Second Reading:** 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

*"Be alert for the day of the Lord."*

**Gospel:** Matthew 25:14-30

*"The story of the slaves entrusted with talents."*