

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

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October 10, 2021 Contemporary 11:05 AM

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

Senior Pastor	Alan Kethan	<u>Home:</u> (979)-942-9060	<u>Cell:</u> (830)-708-1200
Deacon of Word and Service			Sandye Fletcher
Youth & Family Specialist			Stephanie Polasek
Music Minister			Robert Eaton
Congregational Chair			David Johnson
St. Paul Christian Learning Academy Director			Briana Bedford
Secretary			Elena Holub
Custodian			O. C. S.
Parish Nurse Program Coordinator			DyAnn Lauzon

MISSION STATEMENT: Love God, Love Neighbor

VISION STATEMENT: Showing our love of God and neighbor, we will work to double the number of members that are serving as well as those that are being served from 2018 to 2021.

- *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

The rich man who comes to ask Jesus what he should do to inherit eternal life is a good man, sincere in his asking. Mark's gospel is alone in saying that Jesus looked on him and loved him. Out of love, not as judgment, Jesus offers him an open door to life: sell all you own and give it to the poor. Our culture bombards us with the message that we will find life by consuming.

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.)

*P Jesus taught many lessons about the challenge of following "The Way". We want to be good disciples, but the way of the world is hard to fight against. Our possessions make life easier and more fulfilling at times. However, like a lot of things in our life, things become out of balance and we put more faith in ourselves and our possessions than in the relationship Jesus Christ offers in His Way. So let us confess privately from our hearts of our shortcomings and pray for forgiveness.

(Brief moment of silence for confession.)

P Jesus said it is impossible for humans to be saved by their doing, but that with God, all things are possible. It is possible, because of freedom and forgiveness to see and receive the help of God to follow and come to the understanding of what gives life. What God did, does, and will do through Jesus Christ and his birth, life, death, resurrection and return, will not disappoint. His promise. So with God's forgiveness, live life anew.

C Amen.

GOSPEL SONG: YOU ARE MY TREASURE

**Faithful Lord, fill my cup with Your grace and love,
Your grace and love. The pleasures that this world's sure of,
They will never be enough can never be enough. (CHORUS 2 2nd time)**

CHORUS 1:

***'Cause I'm created for You alone. Bought with a price, I'm not my own.
Seated in the heavenlies, there's no place I'd rather be
Than with You – forever, Lord. You are my treasure!***

REPEAT FROM BEGINNING

CHORUS 2:

***'Cause I'm created for You alone. Bought with a price, I'm not my own.
Seated in the heavenlies, there's no place I'd rather be
Than with You – forever, Lord. Than with You – forever, Lord.
Than with You – forever, Lord.
You are my treasure! You are my treasure!
You are my treasure! You are my treasure!***

Words and Music by Chris Tomlin CCLI Song #1847175 ©1995 Maranatha! Music CCLI Lic #1729377

GOSPEL: Mark 10:17-31

Jesus has been teaching his disciples about what is most valued in God's eyes. Now, a conversation with a rich man brings his message home to the disciples in a way that is surprising but unforgettable.

A The holy gospel according to St. Mark, chapter 10, verses 17-31.

17As [Jesus] was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 18Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. 19You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.'" 20He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." 21Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." 22When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions. 23Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" 24And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." 26They were greatly astounded and said to one another, "Then who can be saved?" 27Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible." 28Peter began to say to him, "Look, we have left everything and followed you." 29Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, 30who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age — houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions — and in the age to come eternal life. 31But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first."

GOSPEL SONG: YOU ARE MY TREASURE

Faithful Lord, fill my cup with Your grace and love,
Your grace and love. The pleasures that this world's sure of,
They will never be enough can never be enough. (**CHORUS 2** 2nd time)

CHORUS 1:

*'Cause I'm created for You alone. Bought with a price, I'm not my own.
Seated in the heavenlies, there's no place I'd rather be
Than with You – forever, Lord. You are my treasure!*

REPEAT FROM BEGINNING

CHORUS 2:

*'Cause I'm created for You alone. Bought with a price, I'm not my own.
Seated in the heavenlies, there's no place I'd rather be
Than with You – forever, Lord. Than with You – forever, Lord.
Than with You – forever, Lord.
You are my treasure! You are my treasure!
You are my treasure! You are my treasure!*

Words and Music by Chris Tomlin CCLI Song #1847175 ©1995 Maranatha! Music CCLI Lic #1729377

CHILDREN'S SERMON

SERMON

* **SERMON SONG: WASH ME AWAY**
I've grown tired... tired of the person I've become,
The choices I've made, the selfish things I've done.

CHORUS:

*Oh, oh, I'm goin' down to wade in the water.
Far too long, been a wayward daughter.
Father, won't You change what needs to change?
Wash me away... 'til only You remain.*

I've got a little faith. A little faith and a whole lot of fear.
Farewell to who I've been! It's time to disappear. **CHORUS**

I'm carrying my arrogance, leaving all my pride on the riverside.
I can hardly wait to see who I'm gonna be when I rise!

Oh, oh, I'm goin' down to wade in the water.
Far too long, been a wayward daughter.
Father, won't You change what needs to change?
I'm goin' down to wade in the water.
Feel Your mercy pull me under.
Father, I refuse to leave this place

'Til You wash me away... Wash me away...
Just wash me away... Wash me away... 'Til only You remain.

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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 Made children and heirs of God's promise, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

A Healing God, we pray for those in need of healing and whose needs are diverse and known to you including:

Sharon Stevens; Kiara Craven; Walter Guthmann, Jr.; Gallia Honish; Julie Kaase; Bobby Hagen; those on our Prayer Team's list; and those we name in our hearts before you.

A brief silence.

A Strengthening God, we pray for those battling cancer including:

Charlie Hammock; Brad Bryson; Lynette Franka; Riana Jamison; Jenna Escamilla; Margaret Ortiz; Kenny Neuendorff; Victor Bedford; Keith Korth; Cathy Siglow; Susie Lilly; Paul Casinger; Fran Gillett; Tiffany Murley; DeQuincy Lister; Angela Mazoch; Rusty Neuendorff; 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; Bill Stolle; Jessica Mauchlen; Larry Guthrie; Donna Tiner; Libby Divin; Tina Barten; Anthony Baumbach; Cindy Masek; Diane Brooks; Bob Loy; Joe Hluchanek; Devon Tiffin; 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; Bob Rutta; Amanda Fuchs; Cyndi Wallace; Karen Broussard; Donna Young; Sharon Heimann; and Brenda Baker that they may know strength and comfort.

A brief silence.

A Loving God, we pray for all expectant mothers and especially for:

Nancy Flores Gorman; Ruth Lattimore; Adrienne Fritsch Hamilton; Mary Faith Pruski; and Kristin Zajicek that they have healthy terms and deliveries, and if not, may they find comfort and peace.

A brief silence.

A Compassionate God, we pray for those who reside in care facilities and the homebound including:

Adrian Fritsch; Don Morrison; Verna Coufal; Doug Hill; John Zwiegel; Robert Saunders; Mary Bedford; Coy Dell Schindler; Deanna Lee; Dolores Wessels; Doris Poppe; Bill Rodgers; Barbara McMath; Linda Munos Rodgers; Judy Brisco; Barbara Prause; Madeline Menke; Doris Horndt; Helen Perrard; Delores Purcell; Curtis Berger; Marjorie Brune; Dolores Hoelscher; Jesse Grabow; Beatrice Zikuhr; Robert Eaton; James Booker; Ronnie Rogers; Sandi Dawson; and Fritz Willms that they receive your caring and compassion.

A brief silence.

A Courageous God, we pray for all law enforcement officers, including Troy Neisner; Jacob Gorman; Nancy Gorman; Marley Mayo; Johnny Kovar; Abigail Weido; Dustin Lattimore; Andrew Lattimore; Luke Kanz; Bruno Flores; Jessica Dimas; 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; Randy Neuendorff; 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 Arturo Mares; Keven Rios; 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; and William Phillips that they are protected and kept safe.

A brief silence.

A Loving 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 congregation 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 Receive these prayers, O God, and those in our hearts known only to you; through Jesus Christ our 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 abundance, you cause streams to break forth in the desert and manna to rain from the heavens. Accept the gifts you have first given us. Unite them with the offering of our lives to nourish the world you love so dearly; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C Amen.

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

* **LORD'S PRAYER**

P Lord remember us in your kingdom and teach us to sing.

**C Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

* **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

P All who hunger and thirst, come. The table is ready.

C Amen.

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION (Continuous with Individual Cups)

{Distribution will be continuous. 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**

P Lord of life, in the gift of your body and blood you turn the crumbs of our faith into a feast of salvation. Send us forth into the world with shouts of joy, bearing witness to the abundance of your love in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C Amen.

* **BLESSING**

P People of God, you are Christ's body, bringing new life to a suffering world. The holy Trinity, † one God, bless you now and forever.

C Amen.

* **CLOSING SONG: ONLY JESUS**

**Make it count, leave a mark, make a name for yourself. Dream your dreams,
Chase your heart, above all else. Make a name the world remembers.
But all an empty world can sell is empty dreams. I got lost in the light
When it was up to me, to make a name the world remembers.
But Jesus is the only name to remember. . .**

CHORUS:

**And I – I – I, I don't want to leave a legacy. I don't care if they remember me, only Jesus.
And I – I – I, I've only got one life to live. I'll let every second point to Him, only Jesus.**

(SECOND TIME TO BRIDGE)

**All the kingdoms built – all the trophies won – will crumble into dust
When it is said and done. 'Cuz all that really matters: Did I live the
Truth to the ones I love? Was my life the proof that there is only one
Whose name will last forever? **CHORUS****

BRIDGE:

**Jesus is the only name. Jesus is the only name. Jesus is the only name to remember.
Oh, Jesus is the only name. Jesus is the only name. Jesus is the only name to remember.**

LAST CHORUS:

**And I – I – I, I don't want to leave a legacy. I don't care if they remember me, only Jesus.
And I – I – I, I've only got one life to live. I'll let every second point to Him, only Jesus.
And I – I – I, I don't want to leave a legacy. I don't care if they remember me, only Jesus.**

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* **DISMISSAL**

P Go in peace. The living Word dwells in you.

C Thanks be to God, and we will.

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USHERS: Mike & Gerri Hackfeld; Sandi & Kaldon Roensch
LAY READER: Shana Neisner
ALTAAR GUILD: Edna Bergfeld
ACOLYTE: Brook David

WELCOME: “Seek the LORD and live,” declares the prophet Amos (5:6). So we gather now to hear from God and to be nourished with abundant life. Welcome to St. Paul Lutheran Church!

ALTAAR WALL FLOWERS are placed by John & Terri Brasher in thanksgiving for God's many blessings and in loving memory of Terri's dad W. D. Strauss, whose birthday is October 21.

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: October 2 & 3, 2021 – 135
Power of One: October 2 & 3, 2021 – \$49.00
Contributions: Oct. 2 & 3 – \$8,549.15
Building Fund: Oct. 2 & 3 – \$1,012.24

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

Wednesday Night Attendance: – Wed., October 6 – **85 Total**
BLAST/Confirmation: 44 **Adult Class:** 30 **Support Staff:** 11

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.*

♦ **GLUTEN-FREE WAFERS:** For those who are allergic to gluten, we will have a few gluten-free wafers available at communion. Please tell Pastor when coming forward, “Gluten-free, please.”

** **NOTICE REGARDING BULLETINS:** Please take your bulletin home after worship. If you do not wish to take your bulletin home, please place it in the recycling container 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! ☺

+ **FALL BIBLE STUDY:** Are these really the end of times? Are we witnessing the biblical times leading up to the Apocalypse? How do we interpret The Revelation of John? What is the difference between Apocalyptic and Prophetic Literature in the Bible? **This year's mid-week Fall Bible Study series led by Pastor Alan in the sanctuary will continue on Wednesday October 13 and 20 from 5:30-6:30 PM.** It is my prayer and encouragement for at least 100 of our members to attend these classes. Not predicting like a prophet, just hopeful. – *Pastor Alan*

Communion Instruction: Youth in the 5th grade are invited to attend the next milestone in their Christian education. Communion Instruction is a formal teaching on the Sacraments of the Altar and will begin the process of getting students ready for confirmation ministry. Students will meet on **Sunday, October 17, 2021 from 12:15-2:00 PM** in the fellowship hall. Lunch will be served. Whether you are already taking communion or have waited for this class, all 5th graders are encouraged to attend. Parents are invited to attend with their child as well so they may continue the conversations at home. Please let Stephanie Polasek know if you plan to attend by contacting her at 979-732-1858 or stephaniepolasek@yahoo.com.



St. Paul will be celebrating Reformation during Reformation Weekend with *regular holy communion worship on Saturday, October 30, 2021 at 7:00 PM* and an **“Oktoberfest” on Sunday, October 31, 2021 at 10:00 AM.** Be sure to wear red for Reformation at each service! On **Sunday** for the “Oktoberfest”, participate in singing hymns to the tunes of Polkas. Guest musicians will also be joining us again this year to add that “something extra” to the service. Come join us! It will be wunderbar!!



Kids are invited to wear their costume to church on **Sunday, October 31, 2021** to the 10:00 AM worship service. Following worship (around 11:20 AM), kids will be invited down to the fellowship hall to get read for Trunk or Treating while our trunks get ready. St. Paul members will have their cars lined up in the church parking lot for kids to come by and collect goodies. ****Congregation members with trunks and candy are wanted!**** If you would like to be a part of setting up your trunk and handing out candy to our youth, please sign up in the narthex or contact Stephanie at 979-732-1858. *Decorated trunks and dressed up members are encouraged but not necessary to participate.*



Church Robo-Calls: Our church uses a Robo-Call system occasionally when we have to get a message out to the congregation on very short notice (like canceling worship because of icy weather) or as a reminder about important congregational meetings. The **phone number associated with the service we use is 888-996-3623.** When you see that number, it is a call from St. Paul Lutheran Church. Please answer/listen to the message. It

would be a good idea to list this number as one of your contacts in your phone or write it down and keep it close to your landline phone so that you know it is a call from one of the church staff or council members of St. Paul. Thank you!

SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:

Mon., Oct. 11 – Office Closed! (Columbus Day)
6:00-7:30 PM – Women of JOY Bible Study (Hackfeld Family Room)

Tue., Oct. 12 –
9:00 AM – Staff Meeting
9:00 AM-12:00 PM – Quilters (fellowship hall)
12:00 PM – Noon Bible Study (library)
5:30 PM – Stewardship Team (library)

Wed., Oct. 13 –
9:00 AM – Chapel
5:30 PM – BLAST & Confirmation Class
5:30 PM – Pastor Alan's Fall Bible Study (sanctuary)
6:00 PM – High School Youth

Thurs., Oct. 14 –
5:00 PM – Worship Team (library)

Oct. 15-17
Fall Family Retreat at Lutherhill, La Grange

Fri., Oct. 15 –
11:00 AM – Adult Bible Study (library)

Sat., Oct. 16 –
7:00 PM – Holy Communion Worship

Next Sun., Oct. 17 –
9:00 AM – Holy Communion Worship
10:00 AM – Adult Sunday School & Confirmation Class
11:05 AM – Holy Communion Contemporary Worship
12:15-2:00 PM – Communion Instruction for 5th Grade (fellowship hall)
4:00 PM – Memorial Service for Mahlon Lighthill

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

Sunday, October 10, 2021 Massie L. Kennard, renewer of the church, died 1996 (TFF)

A native of Chicago, Kennard was a major figure in supporting and working toward ethnic and racial inclusiveness in the former Lutheran Church in America. Ordained in 1958, he served in positions including Director for Minority Concerns of the Division for Mission in North America.

Friday, October 15, 2021 Teresa of Avila, teacher, renewer of the church, died 1582

A mystical writer and reformer of the monastic order (Carmelites) to which she belonged, Teresa may also be commemorated with John of the Cross on December 14. Latino Christians traditionally remember her on this date.

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OTHER READINGS: Amos 5:6-7, 10-15

Amos was a herdsman by profession and a prophet by God's call. During a time of great prosperity in the northern kingdom of Israel, the prophet speaks to the wealthy upper class. He warns his listeners that fulfilling God's demand for justice brings blessing, while corruption and oppression incur God's wrath.

The reading begins:

⁶Seek the LORD and live, or he will break out against the house of Joseph like fire, and it will devour Bethel, with no one to quench it. ⁷Ah, you that turn justice to wormwood, and bring righteousness to the ground! ¹⁰They hate the one who reproves in the gate, and they abhor the one who speaks the truth. ¹¹Therefore because you trample on the poor and take from them levies of grain, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not live in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine. ¹²For I know how many are your transgressions, and how great are your sins — you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and push aside the needy in the gate. ¹³Therefore the prudent will keep silent in such a time; for it is an evil time. ¹⁴Seek good and not evil, that you may live; and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you, just as you have said. ¹⁵Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the Lord, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

PSALM: Psalm 90:12-17

¹²So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom. ¹³Return, O LORD; how long will you tarry? Be gracious to your servants. ¹⁴Satisfy us by your steadfast love in the morning; so shall we rejoice and be glad all our days. ¹⁵Make us glad as many days as you afflicted us and as many years as we suffered adversity. ¹⁶Show your servants your works, and your splendor to their children. ¹⁷May the graciousness of the Lord our God be upon us; prosper the work of our hands; prosper our handiwork.

OTHER READINGS: Hebrews 4:12-16

We cannot hide our thoughts, desires, and actions from God, to whom we are completely accountable. Nevertheless, Jesus understands our human weakness and temptations, because he also experienced them. Therefore we can approach the throne of grace to receive divine mercy from Christ.

The reading begins:

¹²Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account. ¹⁴Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

SERVICE OVERVIEW: THE CHALLENGE OF FOLLOWING JESUS

A rich man approaches Jesus and asks how to inherit eternal life. Jesus tells him to sell what he owns, give the money to the poor, and follow. Jesus will accept nothing less than our very selves. Like the rich man, we too are left defenseless and grieving by Jesus' radical call to leave behind and give away what we count on for our own security. He wants us, and therefore also

wants the things that keep us from him; he gazes upon us in love, even as he calls us to leave behind the things of this world that give us a sense of security. How hard it is for us camels to pass through the eye of the needle! We too grieve at the impossibility. It is in fact impossible for us, yet more than possible for God to make it so. For we have a “great high priest who has passed through the heavens, the Son of God,” who is both able to sympathize with our great weakness but also to provide mercy and help. While eternal life on the other side of the needle is a free gift that only God can give, it is a gift that claims the entirety of our lives and therefore reshapes our stewardship of whatever earthly goods we do have. For first and foremost we are called to follow the Christ who gazes upon us in love. Since we are his, following him we will enter through the eye of the needle, leaving behind what cannot fit through with us. In doing so we are promised that we will gain everything: a hundredfold more in this life in a new community under the Cross, “and in the age to come eternal life.”

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:

Jesus looks with love on a questioner seeking his guidance, and instructs him to sell what he owns and give the money to the poor. Jesus radically alters cultural values, which makes a lot of us very uncomfortable. With the Spirit’s help, together we become a new family and follow Christ. Welcome to worship! Hear the word. Receive grace from God.

The wealthy man, the disciples, and many of us today still hold onto the idea that money equals blessing. Jesus gives us all a shock when he gives the two-edged gospel: wealth and possessions keep one bound, and that to inherit eternal life we must sell them all and give the money to poor people. Jesus’ invitation to the man to relinquish what he has and give to the poor was offered in love but refused out of fear. He could not see beyond the immediate pain of the loss of his possessions. He did not consider the possibility of liberation from that which, in fact, possessed him.

Organic food, higher education, health and fitness, credit scores, internet speed. How can these modern-day observations and routines create a sense of moral superiority over the working classes and the poor, who are too busy surviving to engage in “enlightened” activities? The irony is that in Jesus’ eyes the poor are likely more righteous than the privileged because their lives are marked by want and sacrifice, not social practices meant to demonstrate moral and ethical uplift. Luther even had an expression for feeling such superiority from one’s deeds: *works righteousness*.

Jesus uses absurdity and humor to make his point. We all know that it is impossible for a camel to fit through the eye of a needle. There are many things in this world that also seem impossible. How do we eradicate hunger? How can Jesus be present in the bread and wine and people of God? How do we keep from letting guarded self-interest get the best of us when we are asked to share? Jesus reminds us that “for God all things are possible.” God is all we need. May we come to desire what God desires! May our imaginations be shaped by God’s imagination! What dreams from God might your imagination be holding? Can you make it a reality?

KID STUDY:

A rich young man came running up to Jesus one day. "Good teacher," the man said, "what must I do to have eternal life?" Jesus gave him the list of commandments, to which the man replied, "I have obeyed all of those commandments since I was a child." Then Jesus looked and the young man and loved him. Then Jesus said to him, "You lack only one thing. Sell all you have and give the money to the poor so that you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." When the young man heard those words, he was crushed. He turned sadly and walked away because he had many possessions and was not willing to give them up. Jesus looked at his disciples and said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!" The disciples were shocked. They asked, "Then who in the world can be saved?" And Jesus said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God." It was not because he was rich that the young man could not enter the Kingdom. It was because his love for money and for his possessions was greater than his love for God. We have to put God first – above all our possessions – if we want to be in God’s kingdom.

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION:

If you have a mind to enter into life, keep the commandments. If you have a mind to know the truth, believe in me. If you have a mind to be perfect, sell all you have. If you have a mind to become my follower, renounce yourself. If you have a mind to be exalted in heaven, make yourself humble on earth. I ask nothing more of you except that you should want to surrender yourself entirely to me. I do not care what you give me besides yourself, because I do not want your gifts, but you. Give yourself to me. I gave my whole body and my blood to feed you, so that I should be entirely yours, and you should be kept mine. - Thomas á Kempis [Thomas á Kempis, The Imitation of Christ, ed. Betty I. Knott (London: Collins, 1963), 203-204, 230.]

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Next Week's Theme (October 16 & 17): Arrogance, Jealously, don't look to be served, serve.

Next Week's Scriptures (October 16 & 17):

First Reading: Isaiah 53:4-12

"The suffering servant."

Psalm: Psalm 91:9-16

"You have made the LORD your refuge, and the Most High your habitation." (Ps. 91:9)

Second Reading: Hebrews 5:1-10

"Through suffering Christ becomes the source of salvation."

Gospel: Mark 10:35-45

"Warnings to ambitious disciples."