

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

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October 15, 2023 Contemporary 11:05 AM

Twentieth Sunday of Pentecost

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

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

In Isaiah we are given a vision of the great feast to come, when God will wipe away death forever. In Jesus' parable about a great banquet, those invited do not come, so the invitation is extended to others. In our liturgy God spreads a table before us. Even amid anxiety and hardship we rejoice in the peace of God which surpasses all understanding. With great joy we feast at the table of the Lord, and we go forth to share the wonderful invitation with others hungering and thirsting for the abundant life of God.

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: 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**

GOSPEL: Matthew 22:1-14

Jesus tells a parable indicating that the blessings of God's kingdom are available to all, but the invitation is not to be taken lightly.

A The holy gospel according to St. Matthew, chapter 22, verses 1-14.

¹Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: ²"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. ³He sent his slaves to call those

who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. ⁴Again he sent other slaves, saying, 'Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.' ⁵But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, ⁶while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. ⁷The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. ⁸Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. ⁹Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.' ¹⁰Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests. ¹¹"But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, ¹²and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?' And he was speechless. ¹³Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' ¹⁴For many are called, but few are chosen."

GOSPEL SONG: 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:

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.

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CHILDREN'S SERMON

SERMON

*** SERMON SONG: COME TO THE TABLE**

We all start on the outside... the outside looking in. This is where grace begins.

We were hungry, we were thirsty... with nothing left to give.

Oh, the shape that we were in!

Just when all hope seemed lost, love opened the door for us.

CHORUS:

He said, "Come to the table! Come join the sinners who have been redeemed.

Take your place beside the Savior. Sit down and be set free. Come to the table."

Come meet this motley crew of misfits... these liars and these thieves.

There's no one unwelcome here. That sin and shame that you've brought with you,

You can leave it at the door... and let mercy draw you near! *CHORUS*

BRIDGE:

To the thief and to the doubter, to the hero and the coward.

To the pris'ner and the soldier, to the young and to the older.

All who hunger, all who thirst, all the last and all the first.

All the paupers and the princes, all who've failed, You've been forgiven!

All who dream and all who suffer, all who've loved and lost another.

All the chained and all the free, all who follow, all who lead.

Anyone who's been let down, all the lost, you have been found!

All who've been labeled right or wrong, To everyone who hears this song...

LAST CHORUS:

Come to the table! Come join the sinners who have been redeemed.

Take your place beside the Savior. Sit down and be set free. Sit down and be set free!

Come to the table. Come to the table.

Just sit down and rest a while. Just sit down and rest a while.

Come to the table!

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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 Trusting in the transformative power of God's loving Spirit, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

A For the church of Jesus Christ in this and every land, that all followers of Christ share the mind of Christ and strive to live together in peace, staying firm in the Lord.

A brief silence.

A For green pastures and still waters and all the beauty of the natural world, that creation flourishes and humankind lives in relationship with all you have made.

A brief silence.

A 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 We pray for all those in need of healing and whose needs are diverse and known to you including:
Becky Collins; Ken Braden; Clara Thraen; Sharon Johnson; 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 comfort and strength. *(Pause for those we are praying for.)*
Michael Yancey; Cindi Tanner; 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; Lydia Rojas; Paul Casinger; Dr. Tom Hancher; Leonard Kahlden; and Bob Loy.

A We pray for all expectant mothers and especially for:
Cassidy Zajicek Parks; Courtney Busselman; Nancy Gorman; Camille Stancik; Kyndall Beettner; Jamee Albert; and Kristen O'Leary Bridges 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 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 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 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 Gracious God, into your hands we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your unending love and amazing grace; through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

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 power, God of plenty, all things belong to you. We bring your gifts to the table, that all might be fed. Form us into the body of your Beloved, Jesus Christ, our Savior.

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 Jesus invites all to this banquet table; come.

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.}

* **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

P Blessed be your name, O God, for we have feasted on your Word, Christ Jesus, the joy and delight of our hearts. Strengthened by this food, send us to gather the world to your banquet, where none are left out and all are satisfied. In Jesus' name we pray.

C Amen.

* **BLESSING**

P The God of glory, ☩ Jesus Christ, name above all names, and the Spirit who lives in you, bless you now and forever.

C Amen.

* **CLOSING SONG: NEW CREATION**

Oh, oh oh. . . Oh, oh oh. . .

Oh, oh oh. . . Oh, oh. . .

I thought I knew what I was talkin' about when I testified of Your great love.
Well I was a soul on fire, there was no doubt.
Bible-believin', saved, and washed in the blood.
But it wasn't 'til I stumbled, and made my mistakes
That I could know in my soul how amazing is grace!

CHORUS:

*You brought me blessings out of a tragedy.
You turned my old song into a symphony.
And with Your spirit living inside of me,
I'm a new creation! I'm a new creation!*

And now I know what You were talkin' about.

Went from my head into my heart.

When I was broken at the bottom I found,

You're my Healer and Redeemer, Jesus, that's who You are! **CHORUS**

Oh, oh oh. . . Oh, oh oh. . .

Oh, oh oh. . . Oh, oh. . .

Well it wasn't 'til I stumbled, and made my mistakes
That I could know in my soul how amazing is grace!

LAST CHORUS:

*You brought me blessings out of a tragedy.
You turned my old song into a symphony.
And with Your spirit living inside of me,
I'm a new creation! Oh, oh oh oh. . .*

You brought me blessings out of a tragedy.

You turned my old song into a symphony.

And with Your spirit living inside of me,

I'm a new creation! I'm a new creation!

Oh, oh oh. . . Oh, oh oh. . .

Oh, oh oh. . . Oh, oh. . .

And with Your spirit living inside of me,

I'm a new creation! I'm a new creation!

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* **DISMISSAL**

P Go in peace. Invite others to the banquet.

C Thanks be to God, and we will.

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USHERS: Aaron & Amanda Oppermann; Loraine Gast; Adam Torres
LAY READER: Courtney Bussleman
STREAMING: Mike Maas
SOUND: Sydney Eaton and Todd Jacobs
ALTAR GUILD: Edna Bergfeld and Ashlyn Pugh

ACOLYTE: George Bergfeld III
POWER POINT: Dinah Jacobs

WELCOME: Friends, the King's banquet of life and love is ready! In baptism you have been clothed for the occasion. Welcome to worship.

ALTAR WALL FLOWERS are placed by Carol Lighthill in loving memory of her husband Mahlon Lighthill for what would have been their 58th wedding anniversary on October 16.

Welcome to our New Members! This weekend we received new members into our St. Paul Lutheran Church family at the 9:00 AM Sunday service. Be sure to introduce yourself and give them a big St. Paul welcome! ☺

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 7 & 8, 2023 – 161
Power of One: October 7 & 8, 2023 – \$43.00

Contributions: Oct. 7 & 8 – \$9,980.56
Building Fund: Oct. 7 & 8 – \$553.23

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

Wednesday Night Attendance: – Wed., Oct. 11 – **92 Total**
BLAST/Confirmation: 72
Support Staff: 20

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! ☺



COLUMBUS FOOD PANTRY: It is time for our church to help at the Columbus Food Pantry! The dates are **October 19 & 20, 2023**. The Food Pantry is located at the First United Methodist Church Family Life Center, 419 Washington Street. On **Thursday, October 19** the food delivery truck will arrive and grocery bags will be prepared; **please arrive at 8:30 AM** to help. On **Friday, October 20** the food will be distributed 9:00 AM-1:00 PM. **Please arrive at 8:30 AM** to help with the food distribution. Please mark your calendars to help with this important community service! If you have any questions, please call Kathy Fleming at 979-732-4930 or Tom Fleming at 979-732-4107.

► **God's Gals:** *God's Gals* are going to **Brookwood** on **Saturday, October 21, 2023** for shopping and lunch. We will **leave the church parking lot at 10:15 AM** and will be taking the church bus. We will do some shopping, then have lunch at Brookwood Café at 12:15 PM. There is a sign-up sheet in the narthex (foyer). The deadline to sign up is Wednesday, October 18, 2023. Questions? Please call or text Terri Brasher at 979-732-1127.



**God's work.
Our hands.**

GOD'S WORK OUR HANDS: St. Paul will once again participate in the annual God's Work Our Hands day! This year we will work this event **Sunday, October 22, 2023**. The time will be **12:15-3:00 PM**. This is an opportunity for all ages to work together to bring about positive changes in our community. Please sign up on the sign-up sheet in the narthex (foyer).

♪♪ **SENIOR EXPLORERS:** Senior Explorers are heading to La Grange to "Czech" out the **Czech Heritage Fest and Muziky**. We will **depart St. Paul at 3:30 PM on Friday, October 20, 2023**. We will have time to browse in the Heritage Center before heading out to the main deck for the beginning of the festival. Chicken and dumplings will be served at 5:30 PM with Dujka Brothers playing at 6:00 PM. We plan to return to St. Paul by 7:00 PM – just in time for the Columbus football game. Lawn chairs are welcome, but no coolers. Please sign up by Sunday, October 15, 2023 in the narthex. For more information, please contact Kevin Page at 979-732-0845.

♥ **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**. Our next meeting will be Thursday, October 19, 2023. **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.

♪♪♪ St. Paul will be celebrating Reformation during Reformation Weekend with *regular holy communion worship* on **Saturday, October 28, 2023 at 7:00 PM** and an **"Oktoberfest"** on

Sunday, October 29, 2023 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 be joining us again this year to add that “something extra” to the service. Following the service on Sunday, join the youth in the parking lot for Trunk-or-Treat, either as a youth collecting the treats or as the one with the trunk of treats. There will be a German-style lunch including sausage and sauerkraut in The Lighthouse for all to enjoy after worship and all of the trunk-or-treating! The main course will be provided, and everyone is asked to bring either a side dish or dessert to accompany the main course. ***Please sign the sign-up sheet in the narthex if you plan to attend the meal and indicate what you will bring (side dish and/or dessert).*** Come join us! It will be wunderbar!!

SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:

Today (Oct. 15) – 12:30 PM – New Member Luncheon
6:00-8:00 PM – Marriage Course (Lighthouse)

Mon. Oct. 16 – 9:00 AM – Staff Meeting
1:00 PM – Nursing Home Team & Pastor Alan to TLC
6:00 PM – Church Council

Tues., Oct. 17 – 10:00 AM – Pastor Alan to Columbus Oaks
12:00 PM – Noon Bible Study (library)
1:00 PM – Pastor Alan in Stewardship Class
5:30 PM – Prayer Team (library)

Wed., Oct. 18 – ***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., Oct. 19 – 8:30 AM – Work at Columbus Food Pantry (FUMC Family Life Center)
5:30 PM – Grief Support Group (old choir room)

Fri., Oct. 20 – 8:30 AM – Work at Columbus Food Pantry (FUMC Family Life Center)
10:30 AM – Adult Bible Study (library)
3:30 PM – Senior Explorers to Czech Heritage Fest, La Grange

Sat., Oct. 21 – 10:15 AM – God's Gals to Brookwood in Brookshire
7:00 PM – Holy Communion Worship

Next Sun., Oct. 22 – 9:00 AM – Holy Communion Worship
10:00 AM – Adult Sunday School and Confirmation
11:05 AM – Holy Communion Contemporary Worship
12:15-3:00 PM – God's Work Our Hands Day
6:00-8:00 PM – The Gathering
6:00-8:00 PM – Marriage Course (Lighthouse)

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

Sunday, October 15, 2023 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.

Tuesday, October 17, 2023 Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, martyr, died around 115
Ignatius was the second bishop of Antioch in Syria, the city where the name "Christians" originated. Ignatius is known to us from his letters, which encouraged Christians to live in love, yet stand firm in true doctrine.

Wednesday, October 18, 2023 Luke, Evangelist
Identified as the author of both Luke and Acts, Luke was careful to place the events of Jesus' life in their social and religious contexts. His gospel gives us some of the most beloved parables, as well as the songs of Zechariah, Mary, the angels, and Simeon.
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OTHER READINGS: Isaiah 25:1-9
After a hymn of praise acknowledging God as a shelter for the poor, the prophet portrays a wonderful victory banquet at which death — which in ancient Canaan was depicted as a monster swallowing up everyone — will be swallowed up forever. The prophet urges celebration of this victory of salvation.

The reading begins:
¹O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you, I will praise your name; for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure. ²For you have made the city a heap, the fortified city a ruin; the palace of aliens is a city no more, it will never be rebuilt. ³Therefore strong peoples will glorify you; cities of ruthless nations will fear you. ⁴For you have been a refuge to the poor, a refuge to the needy in their distress, a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from the heat. When the blast of the ruthless was like a winter rainstorm, ⁵the noise of aliens like heat in a dry place, you subdued the heat with the shade of clouds; the song of the ruthless was stilled. ⁶On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. ⁷And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; ⁸he will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken. ⁹It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

PSALM: Psalm 23
¹The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not be in want. ²The LORD makes me lie down in green pastures and leads me beside still waters. ³You restore my soul, O LORD, and guide me along

right pathways for your name’s sake. ⁴Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. ⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil, and my cup is running over. ⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

OTHER READINGS: Philippians 4:1-9

Though writing from prison and facing an uncertain future, Paul calls on the Philippians to rejoice and give thanks to God no matter what the circumstance. God’s peace is with us and binds together our hearts and minds in Jesus Christ, especially when things around us do not seem peaceful.

The reading begins:

¹My brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved. ²I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. ³Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life. ⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

SERVICE OVERVIEW: YOU’VE BEEN INVITED

Jesus tells a story about a wedding invitation, a banquet, and God’s grace. A king ultimately invites all people to a wedding banquet. At first this parable seems to portray a wide open and gracious invitation to a wedding celebration. However, by the end it is hard not to feel sorry for the poor guy who gets a last-minute invitation but ends up getting thrown out.

This story teaches us that receiving God’s grace changes people. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer taught, God’s grace is not cheap, it comes at a great cost upon the cross. Once we receive this costly grace, our lives are never the same. This grace compels us to act – calling us to bear fruit with our very lives. Ultimately we are led to share this grace with others. To continue to live in the same way after receiving this gracious invitation is not an option. So what are we to do? We simply receive the gracious invitation to the banquet and find a changing room—it’s time to live a new life.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:

We normally don’t invite strangers to our wedding banquets... but God does! Readings for the last few weeks have taught us some hard truths, and today is no exception. What a blessing to

go from these lessons to the table of holy communion. Welcome to worship! Join with millions of strangers all around the world who come to be filled with God’s mercy.

In today’s parable, one of the conclusions reached by the king is that the invited who scorn the invitation are not worthy, so he instructs everyone else (the good *and* the bad) to be invited instead. If we, as God’s people, act as the bearers of the invitation to know God, does our inviting reflect the openness God envisions? Do some perceived expectations of worthiness accompany your invitations?

The first round of wedding banquet guests completely ignores the invitation. The second round, however, “makes light” of the invitation. Both responses are equally problematic. By the end of the parable sincere acceptance of the invitation becomes important. It is often difficult for us as individuals to identify what we make light of in our own lives. What should you be taking more seriously when we consider the invitation to live out our faith?

KID STUDY:

Have you ever been to a wedding? Who doesn’t love a big party with lots of great food and drink? In today’s story, a king throws a huge banquet for his son who is getting married, but the guests he invited did not come! In the place of those guests who did not show up, the king decides to invite anyone and everyone. This is like God, who invites anyone and everyone to eat and drink at the banquet table of holy communion. At this table of grace, we celebrate the good things God has done and continues to do in our lives. We will also get what we need to serve as Jesus’s hands and feet.

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION:

One early, cloudy morning when I was forty-six, I walked into a church, ate a piece of bread, took a sip of wine. This was my first communion. It changed everything. The mysterious sacrament turned out to be not a symbolic wafer at all but actual food - indeed, the bread of life. I realized that what I’d been doing with my life all along was what I was meant to do: feed people. And so I did. I took communion, I passed the bread to others, and then I kept going, compelled to find new ways to share what I’d experienced. I started a food pantry and gave away literally tons of fruit and vegetables and cereal around the same altar where I’d first received the body of Christ. I organized new pantries all over my city to provide hundreds and hundreds of hungry families with free groceries each week... Holy communion knocked me upside down and forced me to deal with the impossible reality of God. - Sara Miles [Sara Miles, Take This Bread: A Radical Conversion (NY: Ballantine Books, 2007), xiii-xiv.]

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Next Week's Theme (Oct. 21 & 22): What belongs to Caesar what belongs to God / Give it

Next Week's Scriptures (Oct. 21 & 22):

First Reading: Isaiah 45:1-7

"An earthly ruler as the instrument of God's will."

Psalm: Psalm 96:1-9 [10-13]

"Ascribe to the LORD honor and power." (Ps. 96:7)

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

"Thanksgiving for the church at Thessalonica."

Gospel: Matthew 22:15-22

"A teaching on giving to the emperor and to God."