

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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October 22, 2023 Contemporary 11:05 AM

Twenty-first Sunday of 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 | | | Tomas 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 today's first reading God uses the Gentile ruler Cyrus to accomplish divine purposes. When the Pharisees try to trap Jesus, he tells them to give the emperor what belongs to him and to God what belongs to God. To gather for worship reminds us that our ultimate allegiance is to God rather than to any earthly authority. Created in the image of God, we offer our entire selves in the service of God and for the sake of the world.

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 As we gather to worship, you know, God, there are things we have done, not done, said, left unsaid, that have harmed not only us but others. We come before you in humility to confess those sins we are aware of and seek your mercy on those sins we do, and those we don't even recognize we do. We also have failed to recognize that all we have in truth, has been provided to us through you, either directly or through others and your creation. Hear our private confessions, lift our spirits, cleanse our hearts, that as we worship you, we know we are forgiven.

(Time of 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: REVELATION SONG

Worthy is the lamb who was slain. Holy, holy is He. Sing a new song to Him who sits on heaven's mercy seat.

CHORUS:

***Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,
Who was and is and is to come.
With all creation I sing praise to the King of Kings!
You are my everything, and I will adore You!***

GOSPEL: Matthew 22:15-22

After Jesus begins teaching in the temple, religious leaders try to trap him with questions. First they ask if God's people should pay taxes to an earthly tyrant like Caesar.

A The holy gospel according to St. Matthew, chapter 22, verses 15-22.

¹⁵Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap [Jesus] in what he said. ¹⁶So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. ¹⁷Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?" ¹⁸But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? ¹⁹Show me the coin used for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" ²¹They answered, "The emperor's." Then he said to them, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to

God the things that are God's." 22When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

GOSPEL SONG: REVELATION SONG

Clothed in rainbows of living color, flashes of lightning, rolls of thunder.
Blessing and honor strength and glory and power be,
To You the only wise King.

CHORUS:

*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,
Who was and is and is to come.
With all creation I sing praise to the King of Kings!
You are my everything, and I will adore You!*

Filled with wonder, awestruck wonder, at the mention of Your name.
Jesus, Your name is power, breath, and living water!
Such a marv'ous mystery! **CHORUS**

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CHILDREN'S SERMON

SERMON

*** SERMON 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!*

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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 Faithful God, your Spirit animates the church throughout the world and binds believers near and far into the body of Christ. Equip us for the work of faith, and enlarge our hearts for the labor of love.

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 the family and friends of August Henry Jones, Sr. who passed away this past week. Be with them and comfort them during this difficult time.

A brief silence.

A We pray for all those in need of healing and whose needs are diverse and known to you including: Maecon Caviness; Jessica Siewert; Sonya Saul; Becky Collins; Ken Braden; 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.
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 Come and receive all that you need, Jesus Christ himself.

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: 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, blessed to be a blessing.

C Thanks be to God, and we will.

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USHERS: John, Terri & Chase Brasher

LAY READER: Gary Schindler

ACOLYTE: Harlie Lewis

STREAMING: Chase Brasher

POWER POINT: Dinah Jacobs

SOUND: Sydney Eaton and Todd Jacobs

ALTAR GUILD: Edna Bergfeld and Ashlyn Pugh

WELCOME: "To the church of St. Paul Lutheran in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace" (see 1 Thessalonians 1:1).

ALTAR WALL FLOWERS are placed by John & Terri Brasher in thanks for God's many blessings and in loving memory of Terri's father Dale Strauss for the anniversary of his birth.

We extend our Christian sympathy to Marian Frand Andy Jones and their families for the loss of Marian's brother and Andy's grandfather August Henry Jones, Sr. who passed away this past week. May God comfort them during their time of loss.

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 14 & 15, 2023 – 167

Contributions: Oct. 14 & 15 – \$6,587.01

Power of One: October 14 & 15, 2023 – \$33.00

Building Fund: Oct. 14 & 15 – \$233.23

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

Wednesday Night Attendance: – Wed., Oct. 18 – **97 Total**
BLAST/Confirmation: 79 **Support Staff:** 18

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! ☺



**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 **today**. The time will be **12:15-3:00 PM**. A light lunch will be served in the Lighthouse

before we begin our work. This is an opportunity for all ages to work together to bring about positive changes in our community.



High School Ski Trip: The high school youth group is going skiing **December 27-31, 2023** at Wolf Creek Ski Area. The plan is to drive to Pagosa Springs, Colorado where we will stay for three days. Two of the days we will ski at Wolf Creek Ski Area, and one of the days will be spent exploring Pagosa Springs and checking out the hot springs. Students will attend a half day of ski school on the first day we ski. We will pack as much food for meals as we can during travel to save on cost and will cook meals together while at the cabin. We will come together daily for devotion and time to spend on our relationship with God. **Cost is \$150 per student.** You will need to let Stephanie know ASAP or by Wednesday, October 25, 2023 if you plan to attend. Be on the look out for a couple of fundraisers to support this trip.

♪♪ 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!!

TRUNK-OR-TREAT!! Kids are invited to wear their costume to church on **Sunday, October 29, 2023** to the 10:00 AM worship service. Following the service, kids will be invited to stay in the sanctuary to get ready 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 Treats are Wanted!*** If you would like to be a part of setting up your trunk and handing out treats to our youth, **please sign up in the narthex (foyer) or contact Stephanie at 979-732-1858**. You will have a parking spot with your name on it on that Sunday, October 29. (Decorated trunks and dressed up members are encouraged but not necessary to participate.)

**** NOTICE – Congregational Meeting!!** There will be a special called congregational meeting on **Sunday, November 5, 2023** between the two worship services at **10:00 AM** in the sanctuary. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss future staffing needs and to give an update on space challenges we now have at the Lighthouse for BLAST. This is a very important meeting, so, be sure to mark your calendars! **



Communion Instruction Class: 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, November 5, 2023 from 12:30-2:30 PM in the Lighthouse**. 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 Thursday, November 2, 2023 (979-732-1858 or stephaniepolasek@yahoo.com).

MEALS TO HEAL: Meals to Heal will have a **cook session on Sunday, November 12, 2023 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.

• **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 **2nd and 4th 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 (Oct. 22) – 12:15-3:00 PM – God's Work Our Hands Day (Lighthouse)
6:00-8:00 PM – The Gathering
6:00-8:00 PM – Marriage Course (Lighthouse)

Mon., Oct. 23 – 9:00 AM – Staff Meeting

Tues., Oct. 24 – 9:00 AM-12:00 PM – Quilters (Lighthouse)
12:00 PM – Noon Bible Study (library)
6:00 PM – CLA Board

Wed., Oct. 25 – 9:00 AM – CLA Chapel
10:00 AM – Nursing Home Team & Pastor to Columbus Oaks
2:00 PM – Nursing Home Team & Pastor to The Oaks
5:00 PM – Meal
5:30 PM – BLAST, Confirmation and HS Youth

Thurs., Oct. 26 – 10:00-11:30 AM – Manna for Moms (Lighthouse)

Fri., Oct. 27 – 10:30 AM – Adult Bible Study (library)

Sat., Oct. 28 – 7:00 PM- Holy Communion Worship and Blessing of the Quilts

Next Sun., Oct. 29 – 9:00 AM – Adult Sunday School and Confirmation
10:00 AM – Oktoberfest Service and Blessing of the Quilts
11:30 PM – Trunk or Treat (church parking lot)
12:00 PM – German Meal (Lighthouse)
6:00-8:00 PM – Marriage Course (Lighthouse)

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

Monday, October 23, 2023 James of Jerusalem, martyr, died around 62

One of three early-church leaders named James, this man is identified in the New Testament and by a historian of the time as a brother of Jesus. Scholars are uncertain whether this means a blood brother. He was a leader of the church in Jerusalem.

Thursday, October 26, 2023 Philipp Nicolai, died 1608; Johann Heermann, died 1647; Paul Gerhardt, died 1676; hymnwriters

These great hymnwriters all worked in seventeenth-century Germany in times of war and plague. Nicolai, a pastor, lost 1,300 parishioners to plague, 170 in one week. He wrote "O Morning Star, how fair and bright" and "Wake, awake, for night is flying." Heermann's hymns, including "Ah, holy Jesus," often express the emotions of faith. Gerhardt, perhaps the greatest Lutheran hymnwriter, was a pastor in Berlin.

Saturday, October 28, 2023 Simon and Jude, Apostles

We know little about these apostles. Simon is listed as "the zealot" or Cananean in New Testament lists. Jude, also called Thaddeus, asked Jesus at the last supper why he had revealed himself to the disciples but not to the world.

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OTHER READINGS: Isaiah 45:1-7

The prophet announces that Cyrus the Persian emperor is the one the LORD has anointed to end Israel's exile. The LORD makes this choice so that the whole world will recognize this LORD as the only God. Persia had a god of light and a god of darkness; the LORD claims sovereignty over both light and darkness.

The reading begins:

¹Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped to subdue nations before him and strip kings of their robes, to open doors before him — and the gates shall not be closed: ²I will go before you and level the mountains, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, ³I will give you the treasures of darkness and riches hidden in secret places, so that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. ⁴For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I surname you, though you do not know me. ⁵I am the Lord, and there is no other; besides me there is no god. I arm you, though you do not know me, ⁶so that they may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is no one besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other. ⁷I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe; I the Lord do all these things.

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

¹Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. ²Sing to the LORD, bless the name of the LORD; proclaim God's salvation from day to day. ³Declare God's glory among the nations and God's wonders among all peoples. ⁴For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised, more to be feared than all gods. ⁵As for all the gods of the nations, they are but idols; but you, O LORD, have made the heavens. ⁶Majesty and magnificence are in your presence; power and splendor are in your sanctuary. ⁷Ascribe to the LORD, you families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD honor and power. ⁸Ascribe to the LORD the honor due the holy name; bring offerings and enter the courts of the LORD. ⁹Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness; tremble before the LORD, all the earth. [¹⁰Tell it out among the nations: "The LORD is king! The one who made the world so firm that it cannot be moved will judge the peoples with equity." ¹¹Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea thunder and all that is in it; let the field be joyful and all that is therein. ¹²Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy at your coming, O LORD, for you come to judge the earth. ¹³You will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with your truth.]

OTHER READINGS: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Most likely this letter is the first written by Paul. Paul gives pastoral encouragement and reassurances to new Christians living in an antagonistic environment. Their commitment of faith, love, and hope makes them a model for other new Christian communities.

The reading begins:

¹Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. ²We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly ³remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sake. ⁶And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, ⁷so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. ⁸For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. ⁹For the people of those regions report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, ¹⁰and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead — Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

SERVICE OVERVIEW: WHAT'S IN YOUR WALLET?

The Pharisees approach Jesus in a thinly veiled attempt to trap him on issues of financial obligations to the Roman government. Their question of Jesus, simplified to the extreme, is “who gets your wallet?” If Jesus answered one way, he would be guilty of treason. If he answered the other way, he would have been considered guilty of heresy in the eyes of the religious leaders. Jesus responds by issuing a challenge of his own - give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and give to God what belongs to God. This statement challenges us to ponder: if God created the world and everything in it, what doesn't belong to God? God wants a whole lot more than just your wallet. We fully commit our lives. That means financial treasures but also our time and our individual special talents with which God has blessed us all.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:

Today all three readings allude to the relationship of believers to their civil government. We contemplate this complex issue as a community of believers. Welcome to worship! Pray for wisdom to be God's people in our time and in our place. Be grateful to God as we gather together at the table for sustenance.

The gospel narrator exposes the motives of the groups that present Jesus with the question about taxes. They believe his answer will force Jesus to reveal whose side he is on, but in reality their question is an either/or trap resulting in Jesus being guilty of either heresy or treason. Each group had their motives for calling Jesus out. The Herodians fortunes were the result of their loyalty to Roman authority. The Zealots were a revolutionary party that sought Jewish independence from Rome. The Pharisees opposed both Roman rule and Jewish revolution, but even more so wanted Jesus to go away because his teachings did not follow the rules they set forth. All parties believed they were acting in the interest of God.

When political movements or insurrections are undergirded by the belief that God is orchestrating them behind the scenes, things can verge into dangerous territory. Consider where your politics and faith overlap. Do you see where real world power and living out your faith intersect?

Jesus tells those who question him - and also tells us - to give to God what is God's and to the emperor what is the emperor's. As children, we learn to share what we have with others. How are you sharing more than just your belongings or money? Your talents, skills, knowledge, and love are also gifts from God. Giving to God what is God's can mean a constant reminder to take a step back, recognize our gifts, and devote our time and energy away from our own desires and toward spreading the gospel message of Jesus in both our words and our actions. Remember that the Holy Spirit works in a way that is still forming and shaping both you and the community of God's people.

KID STUDY:

Get some coins and look closely at them. A penny pictures Abraham Lincoln and the Lincoln Memorial. A nickel, Thomas Jefferson and his home Monticello. A dime, Franklin Roosevelt, along with a torch to signify liberty, an olive branch for peace, and an oak branch for victory. A quarter depicts George Washington and either an eagle or a symbol of one of the fifty states of the union. Each of these images ties us as Americans to something centrally important as citizens of the United States.

In today's story, the religious leaders again try to get Jesus into trouble by asking him a trick question. When they ask him if it is right to pay taxes, Jesus asks whose image is on the coin for the tax. It was the emperor's image. Jesus replied that people should give to the emperor what belongs to the emperor, and give to God what belongs to God. What has God's image on it? We do! Who is made in God's image? We are! So who do we belong to? God! We are made in God's image, so we are connected to something very important as the people of God.

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION:

We are accepted and affirmed by God and so do not need to prove ourselves to him. We have been set free, and our liberation is total and comprehensive - it includes being set free from political, social and economic structures that are oppressive and unjust, since these would enslave us and make us less than God intends us to be. There is little about “pie in the sky when you die” in the gospel of Jesus Christ, for Christianity is the most materialistic of the major religions. There is nowhere that the writ of God does not run, for everything belongs to him. Caesar must be accorded what is appropriate for him, and God must have all - including Caesar's domain; otherwise there would be a part of the universe, of life, that did not fall under God's control. - Desmond Tutu [Desmond Mpilo Tutu, Hope and Suffering, ed. John Webster (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 58-59.]

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Next Week's Theme (Oct. 28 & 29): Reformation Weekend

Next Week's Scriptures (Oct. 28 & 29):

First Reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34

"I will write my law in their hearts, says the LORD."

Psalm: Psalm 46

"The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold." (*Ps. 46:7*)

Second Reading: Romans 3:19-28

"Justified by God's grace as a gift."

Gospel: John 8:31-36

"Jesus says, Continue in my word and you will know the truth."