

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

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October 3, 2021 Contemporary 11:05 AM

Nineteenth 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

Today's gospel combines a saying that makes many of us uncomfortable with a story we find comforting. Jesus' saying on divorce is another of his rejections of human legislation in favor of the original intent of God's law. Jesus' rebuke of the disciples who are fending off the children should challenge us as well. What does it mean to receive the kingdom of God as a child does?

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 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: BY YOUR SIDE

**Why are you striving these days? Why are you trying to earn grace?
Why are you crying? Let Me lift up your face - just don't turn away.**

**Why are you looking for love? Why are you still searching as if I'm
Not enough? To where will you go child? Tell Me where will you run?
To where will you run?**

CHORUS 1:

***'Cause I'll be by your side wherever you fall. In the dead of night whenever you call,
And please don't fight these hands that are holding you. My hands are holding you.***

GOSPEL: Mark 10:2-16

Jesus announced and enacted in history the new reality of God's surprising activity. These two stories demonstrate this new reality: Women and children are accepted and valued, not dismissed as inferior to adult men.

A The holy gospel according to St. Mark, chapter 10, verses 2-16.

²Some Pharisees came, and to test [Jesus] they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" ³He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" ⁴They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her." ⁵But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. ⁶But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' ⁷'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother

and be joined to his wife, ⁸and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." ¹⁰Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. ¹¹He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; ¹²and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery." ¹³People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. ¹⁴But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. ¹⁵Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." ¹⁶And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

GOSPEL SONG: BY YOUR SIDE

**Look at these hands - and My side. They swallowed the grave on that night.
When I drank the world's sin, so I could carry you in
And give you life. I want to give you life!**

CHORUS 2:

***'Cause I'll be by your side wherever you fall.
In the dead of night whenever you call,
And please don't fight these hands that are holding you.***

**'Cause I'll be by your side wherever you fall.
In the dead of night whenever you call,
And please don't fight these hands that are holding you.
Yeah, My hands are holding you.**

BRIDGE:

**'Cause I - I love you! I want you to know
That I - I love you! I'll never let you go.**

REPEAT CHORUS 2

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CHILDREN'S SERMON

SERMON

*** SERMON SONG: HOW GREAT**

**How great is the love the father has poured out on us
That we should be called the children of God.
How great is the love the father has poured out on us
That we should be called the children of God.**

CHORUS:

***How great! How great! Is God's amazing grace -
that we should be called the children of God
How great! How great! That we believe by faith,
and we can be called the children of God.***

**How great is the love of the Father, that He sent His only Son
That we should be called the children of God.
We will never perish if we believe in Him,
And we can be called the children of God. CHORUS TO BRIDGE**

BRIDGE:

**That is what we are. . . sons and daughters of God!
Oh, by this we know love - that He laid down His life for us!**

**How great is the love the Father has poured out on us,
That we should be be called the children of God.
How great! How great! Is God's amazing grace -
that we should be called the children of God
How great! How great! That we believe by faith,
and we can be called the children of God.
(x2) YES! We can be called the children of God.**

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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 We pray for the family and friends of Gary Ainsworth. Be with them and comfort them during this difficult time.

A brief silence.

- A We pray for Kameron Page and Jordan Graces who will be united in marriage this weekend. Bless them as they begin a new life together as husband and wife.

A brief silence.

- A We pray for those in need of healing and whose needs are diverse and known to you including:
Kiara Craven; Sandy Cherniss; Walter Guthmann, Jr.; Gallia Honish; Lynette Frnka; Adrian Fritsch; Don Clark; Ruth Pinney; Cami Suchadoll; Julie Kaase; Bobby Hagen; those on our Prayer Team's list; and those we name in our hearts before you.

A brief silence.

- A We pray those battling cancer that they may know strength and comfort. *(Pause for those we are praying for.)*
Charlie Hammock; Brad Bryson; Lynette Franka; Dr. Mazie Leftwich; 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.

- A We pray for all expectant mothers that they have healthy terms and deliveries, and if not, may they find comfort and peace. *(Pause for those we are praying for.)*
Nancy Flores Gorman; Ruth Lattimore; Adrienne Fritsch Hamilton; Mary Faith Pruski; and Kristin Zajicek.

- A We pray for those who reside in care facilities and the homebound that they receive your caring and compassion. *(Pause for those we are praying for.)*
Don Morrison; Verna Coufal; Doug Hill; John Zwiengel; 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; Adrian Fritsch; Ronnie Rogers; Clemons Venghaus; Sandi Dawson; and Fritz Willms.

- 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: 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.

- 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 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 You promise eternal life to all your children. Thank you for the people of faith who have gone before us. Strengthen our trust we have in you.

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 Jesus welcomes all to the table.

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: NOBODY**

**Why You ever chose me has always been a mystery.
All my life I've been told I belong at the end of the line.
With all the other "Not-Quites," With all the "Never-Get-It-Rights."
But it turns out they're the ones You were lookin' for all this time.**

CHORUS:

***'Cause I'm just a nobody, tryin' to tell everybody, all about Somebody
Who saved my soul. Ever since You rescued me, You gave My heart
A song to sing. I'm livin' for the world to see – nobody but Jesus.
I'm livin' for the world to see – nobody but Jesus.***

**Moses had stage fright. And David brought a rock to a sword fight.
You picked twelve outsiders nobody would've chosen and you changed the world.
Well the moral of the story is, ev-erybody's got a purpose.
So when I hear that devil start talkin' to me sayin' "Who DO you think you are?"**

CHORUS:

***I say, "I'm just a nobody, tryin' to tell everybody, all about Somebody
Who saved my soul. Ever since You rescued me, You gave My heart
A song to sing. I'm livin' for the world to see – nobody but Jesus.
I'm livin' for the world to see – nobody but Jesus."***

BRIDGE: (sing twice)

**So let me go down, down, down in history.
As another blood-bought, faithful member of the family.
And if they all forget my name, well, that's fine with me.
I'm livin' for the world to see no-body but Je-sus.**

CHORUS:

***'Cause I'm just a nobody, tryin' to tell everybody, all about Somebody
Who saved my soul. Ever since You rescued me, You gave My heart
A song to sing. I'm livin' for the world to see – nobody but Jesus.
I'm livin' for the world to see – nobody but Jesus.***

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* **DISMISSAL**

P Go in peace. You have been blessed to bless others.

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

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USHERS: Gary & Donna Schindler; Grace Cardenas

LAY READER: Debbie Kethan

ALTAR GUILD: Edna Bergfeld

ACOLYTE: Layla Schindler

WELCOME: Welcome to worship this early October weekend! It's an honor to have you with us today.

ALTAR WALL FLOWERS are placed by Fay & Marv Ulbricht in honor and celebration of their 35th wedding on September 13 and in honor of their family birthdays: Fay on October 2; Timothy on October 11; Marv on October 13; and Thomas on November 1.

Congratulations and best wishes to Kameron Page and Jordan Graves who will be joined in Holy Matrimony in College Station, Texas Sunday, October 3, 2021. May God bless them as they begin a new life together as husband and wife!

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: September 25 & 26, 2021 – 147

Contributions: Sept. 25 & 26 – \$5,725.66

Power of One: September 25 & 26, 2021 – \$36.00

Building Fund: Sept. 25 & 26 – \$2,189.24

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

Wednesday Night Attendance: – Wed., September 29 – 68 **Total**

BLAST/Confirmation: 51

Adult Class: 2

Support Staff: 15

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! ☺

♥ **Women of JOY:** Women of JOY Bible Study will meet **Monday, October 4, 2021** 6:00-7:30 PM in the Gathering Place of Gerri Hackfeld's home, 3234 FM 109, Columbus, to **begin a new study** on Discerning the Voice of God by Priscilla Shirer. You can purchase the bible study book on any christian website or amazon. *Jesus Others Yourself*.

+ **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 will be led by Pastor Alan in the sanctuary on Wednesday October 6, 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 three classes. Not predicting like a prophet, just hopeful. – *Pastor Alan*



ZACH'S HOPE: Zach's Hope CureSearch Run/Walk will be held October 9, 2021 from 8:00-10:00 AM at Columbus Memorial Stadium. All funds raised will be donated to CureSearch, whose mission is to end children's cancer with targeted and innovative research. If you would like to participate and have questions, contact Wendy Page at 979-732-1756.

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.



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. 4 – 9:30 AM – Staff Meeting
6:00 PM – Evangelism Team (library)
6:00-7:30 PM – Women of JOY Bible Study (Hackfeld Family Room)

Tues., Oct. 5 – 12:00 PM – Noon Bible Study (library)
5:30 PM – Prayer Team (library)
6:30-8:00 PM – The Gathering

Wed., Oct. 6 – 9:00 AM – Chapel
12:00 PM – Ministerial Alliance
5:30 PM – BLAST & Confirmation Class
5:30 PM – Pastor Alan's Fall Bible Study (sanctuary)
6:00 PM – High School Youth

Thurs., Oct. 7 – Stephanie to Youth Ministry Network
6:00 PM – Youth & Education Team (library)
6:00 PM – Property Team (choir room)

Fri., Oct. 8 – 11:00 AM – Adult Bible Study (library)
6:00 PM – Wedding Rehearsal

Sat., Oct. 9 – 8:00-10:00 AM – Zach's Hope (Memorial Stadium)
2:00 PM – Wedding
7:00 PM – Holy Communion Worship

Next Sun., Oct. 10 – 9:00 AM – Holy Communion Worship
10:00 AM – Adult Sunday School and Confirmation
11:05 AM – Holy Communion Contemporary Worship

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

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

Monday, October 4, 2021 Francis of Assisi, renewer of the church, died 1226
Born into the family of a wealthy merchant, Francis gave up his inheritance to serve poor people.

He formed the Order of Friars Minor (called Franciscans), who took on poverty and the task of preaching "using words if necessary." Francis had a spirit of gratitude for all of God's creation.

Monday, October 4, 2021 Theodor Fliedner, renewer of society, died 1864

Fliedner helped to bring about a revival of the ministry of deaconesses among Lutherans. He was influenced in this by Moravian deaconesses he had met. The motherhouse he founded in Kaiserswerth, Germany, inspired many around the world to take up this ministry.

Wednesday, October 6, 2021 William Tyndale, translator, martyr, died 1536

Tyndale was ordained a priest in England, and wished to translate the Bible into English. He was opposed in this by King Henry VIII, causing him to flee to Germany. He completed the New Testament in 1525, but before he could finish the Old Testament, he was tried for heresy and burned at the stake.

Thursday, October 7, 2021 Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, pastor in North America, died 1787

Divided Lutherans in America asked leaders in Europe to send someone who could take charge and unite their work. Muhlenberg was sent, and was effective in organizing the American Lutherans. Among other accomplishments, his liturgical principles became the basis for the Common Service of 1888.

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OTHER READINGS Genesis 2:18-24

Genesis 2 stresses that people are not meant to live in isolation but in relationship. Out of love for humanity, God creates them male and female, to provide companionship for each other and to become with each other "one flesh." The Hebrew words used here are ish (man) and ishshah (woman).

The reading begins:

¹⁸The LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." ¹⁹So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. ²¹So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²²And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken." ²⁴Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.

PSALM: Psalm 8

¹O LORD our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! — ²you whose glory is chanted above the heavens out of the mouths of infants and children; you have set up a fortress against your enemies, to silence the foe and avenger. ³When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars you have set in their courses, ⁴what are mere mortals that you should be mindful of them, human beings that you should care for them? ⁵Yet you have made them little less than divine; with glory and honor you crown them. ⁶You have made them rule over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet: ⁷all flocks and cattle, even the wild beasts of the field, ⁸the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, and whatever passes along the paths of the sea. ⁹O LORD our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

OTHER READINGS: Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12

Quoting from the psalms, this passage from Hebrews emphasizes that Jesus, the one through whom God created everything and who sits at God's right hand, is also the one who experienced human suffering and death in order to blaze the path of salvation for us.

The reading begins:

Chapter 1:

¹Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. ³He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Chapter 2:

⁵Now God did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels. ⁶But someone has testified somewhere, "What are human beings that you are mindful of them, or mortals, that you care for them? ⁷You have made them for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned them with glory and honor, ⁸subjecting all things under their feet." Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them, ⁹but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. ¹⁰It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. ¹¹For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, ¹²saying, "I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you."

SERVICE OVERVIEW: WHO WOULD JESUS BLESS TODAY?

Many Bibles call today's service theme "Blessing the Children" or "Jesus Welcomes the Children." In reading such a heading, we might begin to imagine a sentimental scene in which Jesus is surrounded by adorable children. When we think about children being blessed in our churches today, we might imagine children gathering around the altar or at the front of the worship space for a children's time, in which the pastor or worship leader would say a prayer with them and give them a blessing. The parents and others may also be gathered just behind the children, smiling in adoration of these young ones.

However, we cannot view the scene from Mark's gospel with only our modern understanding of the role and place of children in society. The life of many children in North America is one of relative privilege, with carefree days in which they often experience the care and love of grown-ups. Jesus, by bringing the children to him, identifies himself with those who were among the most vulnerable and helpless in society. In ancient times, children often were treated like property. They had few protections from those who would treat them badly. But Jesus came into the world for ones such as these children. Who, in our communities, is in the place of the children of ancient times? As Christ's church, do we provide a place of welcome and care for the most vulnerable and weak in our society?

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:

Most of us are so accustomed to the feel-good passage about little children that we sometimes miss the shock of its counter-cultural assertion that God's kingdom belongs to its weakest members. Welcome to worship! Hear both law and gospel. We who cannot seem to fully obey continue to receive a welcome at the table.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer tells us that we, too, belong to those whom Jesus loved, and loves, and will love. Love is not a private affair but is at the center of the world. It is easy to ruminate on Jesus' judgments and any private shame they may engender, but remember that Jesus' standard for human relationships is a circle that goes beyond words and laws to child-centered actions of faithfulness. In what ways do you see Jesus' love at the center of our faith community? In the biblical world, a child was the least and had no independent status. Jesus takes children seriously, and as his followers we are called into the big work of clearing a path for their spiritual development. One of the most welcoming things we can do for children, indeed for all people, is to call them by name. This assures them that we see them, we remember them, and we connect them in the web of community.

The phrase "exact imprint" referenced in the reading from Hebrews can be translated as "engraving" or "stamp." Its root word in English is "character." What experiences are engraved, or stamped upon, believers? How is God's glory imprinted on Jesus of Nazareth? How is God's glory imprinted on us?

True partnership is our goal, and a goal of many of today's readings, but for many of us it's elusive. It's a hard place to get to because of the way we see the world. Children are open, trusting and receptive to instruction. They have little experience, but their hearts are aimed at

pleasing those who care for them. We must make an effort to approach Jesus, and be careful not to stand in the way of those trying to reach out. Receive the kingdom of God as a child: helpless, without claim, without merit.

KID STUDY:

Someone loves and cares so much for you that they brought you to church today! You have people in your life that want you to learn about Jesus and His love for you, and people who want to help you develop your spiritual gifts so you'll learn how to care for your neighbor. One day Jesus was teaching his disciples, and a large crowd of other people were following Him to hear what He was saying. As Jesus was teaching, people started to bring their children to Him so He could touch them. The disciples didn't like these children interrupting Jesus. They told the people to get their children away. Jesus was very upset. "Let the children come to me, and do not stop them," Jesus said. "The kingdom of heaven belongs to these little ones." Then Jesus took the children in His arms and blessed them. We should love all people just as Jesus loves us. Always remember how Jesus loved the children, took them into His arms, and blessed them. Nobody is more important or less important to Jesus when it comes to loving each other. We're thankful for each of you here today and thankful for the love shown to you that brought you here.

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION:

For the morally conscious, all divorce, particularly divorce in a marriage, is an experience of one's weakness and finitude and death. Particularly when people have striven so hard to find life and strength in their promises, divorce becomes so intensely a painful death, for divorce is the failure of the future. Both partners are cut through; the victims are the whole people involved. The Pharisees were tested in their testing. Faithfulness is suddenly much more than a matter of acceptable times and appropriate rituals. Faithfulness and adulterated partnership intertwine at the creation of one humankind, male and female. But turning aside from the Pharisees, Jesus blesses the children. The powerless, the least, those without means to secure passage, the ones whose lives are sundered from the society, those who stand under the experience of their own brokenness, all these hearts dried up, Jesus takes into and under the waters of death and blesses them. - Jann Esther Boyd [Jann Esther Boyd Fullenwieder, in Homilies for the Christian People, 344.]

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Next Week's Theme (October 9 & 10): The challenge of following Jesus

Next Week's Scriptures (October 9 & 10):

First Reading: Amos 5:6-7, 10-15 *"Turn from injustice to the poor, that you may live."*

Psalm: Psalm 90:12-17

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

Second Reading: Hebrews 4:12-16 *"Approach the throne of grace with boldness."*

Gospel: Mark 10:17-31 *"Teaching on wealth and reward."*