

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

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September 11, 2022 Contemporary 11:05 AM

Fourteenth 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			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 worshiping with us. If you have any questions or would like more information regarding our services, programs, day care, or preschool programs at St. Paul, please visit our Welcome Center in the narthex immediately following our service, and an attendant will be more than happy to assist you. If this is your first time at St. Paul, we hope you will take a gift along with you. We also have a gift bag for children.*

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

INTRODUCTION

The grumbling of the religious leaders in today's gospel is actually our holy hope: This Jesus welcomes sinners and eats with them. That our God seeks and saves the lost is not only a holy hope, it is our only hope. As the writer of 1 Timothy reminds us, "The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Thanks be to 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 don't always realize how much God loves us and goes to great lengths to search for us. We, by our sins, have left the place we belong, looking for greener pastures. God reminds us today, he is calling, looking, and wanting to pick us up and bring us home. Release those things that separate you from God. Ask for forgiveness and believe that what he offers you is freedom, life, and purpose.

(A brief 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.

GOSPEL SONG: RECKLESS LOVE

Before I spoke a word, You were singing over me.

You have been so, so good to me.

Before I took a breath, You breathed Your life in me.

You have been so, so kind to me.

CHORUS:

Oh, the overwhelming, never ending, reckless love of God!

Oh, it chases me down, fights 'til I'm found, leaves the ninety-nine.

I couldn't earn it; I don't deserve it, still You give yourself away.

Oh, the overwhelming, never ending, reckless love of God!

GOSPEL: Luke 15:1-10

Jesus tells two stories that suggest a curious connection between the lost being found and sinners repenting. God takes the initiative to find sinners, each of whom is so precious to God that their recovery brings joy in heaven.

A The holy gospel according to St. Luke, chapter 15, verses 1-10.

¹Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to [Jesus.] ²And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

³So he told them this parable: ⁴"Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? ⁵When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. ⁶And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' ⁷Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one

sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. ⁸“Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ ¹⁰Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

GOSPEL SONG: RECKLESS LOVE

When I was Your foe, still Your love fought for me.

You have been so, so good to me.

When I felt no worth, You paid it all for me.

You have been so, so kind to me.

CHORUS:

Oh, the overwhelming, never ending, reckless love of God!

Oh, it chases me down, fights ‘til I’m found, leaves the ninety-nine.

I couldn’t earn it; I don’t deserve it, still You give yourself away.

Oh, the overwhelming, never ending, reckless love of God!

BRIDGE: x2

There’s no shadow You won’t light up,

Mountain You won’t climb up, comin’ after me.

There’s no wall you won’t kick down,

Lie You won’t tear down, coming after me.

CHORUS

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CHILDREN'S SERMON

SERMON

*** SERMON SONG: KING OF LOVE**

With the hands that formed the world you washed our feet.

Kneeling down you laid aside your majesty.

And you said for us to go and do the same.

So we serve for the glory of our King.

You left heaven’s throne to rescue what was lost.

Stretching out your mighty arms to bear the cross.

Then you rolled away the stone the vic’try won.

And you said, “Go and tell the world what love has done.”

CHORUS:

King of love, let your kingdom come! Reign in us, your daughters and your sons;

Fill us up, let us overflow... with your love, until the whole world knows

You are the King of Love!

Give us hearts that long to see your justice done.

And let the river of Your mercy flow through us.

And let compassion be the loudest song we sing.

‘Til the day when every tongue declares you King. **CHORUS**

~BRIDGE~

Hallelujah to the King of Love. All praise and glory to the King of Love.

Hallelujah to the King of Love. All praise and glory to the King of Love.

Hallelujah to the King of Love! All praise and glory to the King of Love!

Hallelujah to the King of Love! All praise and glory to the King of Love!

LAST CHORUS:

King of love, let your kingdom come! Reign in us, your daughters and your sons;

Fill us up, let us overflow... with your love, until the whole world knows

You are the King of Love!

Hallelujah to the King of Love! All praise and glory to the King of Love!

Hallelujah to the King of Love! All praise and glory to the King of Love!

CCLI Song #7052881 Words and Music by Steven Curtis Chapman
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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 As scattered grains of wheat are gathered together into one bread, so let us gather our prayers for the church, those in need, and all of God’s good creation.

A brief silence.

A Your people receive mercy and your grace overflows in our lives. Fill your church with faith and love, and give understanding hearts to those who work to strengthen our ecumenical and interreligious commitments.

A brief silence.

A Your work is done in this congregation with our hands, feet, voices, minds, and hearts. Build up the ministries of this community, that we serve our neighbors and welcome the stranger in your name.

A brief silence.

A We pray for peace in Ukraine. Help to end this war and the destruction of lives and your creation. Change hearts, bring peace and show the world your existence.

A brief silence.

A We pray for the families and friends of Larry Poenitzsch and Heather Felty Hobbs 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:
Jenette Guasto; Aiden Wicke; Jerry Brown; 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.)*
Jerry Ordner; Michael Yancey; Bubba Bencal; Al Gene Canik; Jane Veghaus Taylor; George Wright; Elrose Kollatschny; Sarah Stancik; Sandy Mosley; Charlene Tesch; Cynthia Coufal; Jeffrey McDaniel; Karen Bailiff; Julian Divin; Nancy Biers; Angie Beggs; Pam Potter; Charlie Hammock; Brad Bryson; Lynette Frnka; Riana Jamison; Jenna Escamilla; Margaret Ortiz; Keith Korth; Jodi Sebesta; Cathy Siglow; Paul Casinger; Fran Gillett; Tiffany Murley; DeQuincy Lister; Angela Mazoch; Lily Presswood; Denise Lange; Doug Mason; Dr. Tom Hancher; Joe Berry; Gracie Brune; Margaret Rogers; Leonard Kahlden; Curtis Wallin; Megan Burch; Jennifer Aleman; Lisa Grazier; Phyllis Behrend; Jessica Mauchlen; Donna Tiner; Libby Divin; Diane Brooks; Bob Loy; 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; Amanda Fuchs; Cyndi Wallace; Karen Broussard; Donna Young; Sharon Heimann; and Brenda Baker.

A We pray for all expectant mothers, and especially for:
Mallory Dungen Cook; Jessica Johnson; and Ashley Dungen 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.)*
Lydia Rojas; Adrian Fritsch; Don Morrison; Verna Coufal; Doug Hill; John Zwiengel; Robert Saunders; Coy Dell Schindler; Deanna Lee; Barbara McMath; Linda Munos Rodgers; Madeline Menke; Doris Horndt; Helen Perrard; Delores Purcell; Jane Booker; Curtis Berger; Dolores Hoelscher; Jesse Grabow; Robert Eaton; Ronnie Rogers; Joyce Dehmer; and Donna Dehmer.

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: Todd Jacobs; Troy Neisner; Jacob Gorman; Nancy Gorman; Johnny Kovar; Abigail Weido; Dustin Lattimore; Luke Kanz; Bruno Flores; 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.; Garrett Flores; Kyle Burris; Dylan Walcik; Randy Wendt; Travis Neuendorff; Brenda Henkes; and Jan Willette, as well as those active duty military members including 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; William Phillips; and Kevin Gonzalez.

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 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 Your blessed saints who have died now rest in your presence. Give us thankful hearts for those who have been examples of faith in our lives, and receive us with joy when we come to share eternal life with you.

A brief silence.

A Gathered together in the sweet communion of the Holy Spirit, gracious God, we offer these and all our prayers to you; 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 Gracious God, in your great love you richly provide for our needs. Make of these gifts, our offerings, a banquet of blessing, and make us ready to share with all in need; through Jesus Christ, who sets a table for all.

C Amen.

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

*** LORD'S PRAYER**

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

**C Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

*** INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

P Christ invites you to this table. Come, taste and see.

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 God of the abundant table, you have refreshed our hearts in this meal with bread for the journey. Give us your grace on the road that we might serve our neighbors with joy; for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C Amen.

*** BLESSING**

P God, who gives life to all things and frees us from despair, bless you with truth and peace. And may the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, guide you always in faith, hope, and love.

C Amen.

*** CLOSING SONG: THIS IS AMAZING GRACE**

**Who breaks the power of sin and darkness? Whose love is mighty
And so much stronger? The King of Glory, the King above all kings.**

**Who shakes the whole earth with holy thunder? Who leaves us breathless
In awe and wonder? The King of Glory, the King above all kings.**

CHORUS:

***This is amazing grace. This is unfailing love. That You would take my place,
That You would bear my cross. You laid down Your life that I would be set free.
Oh, Jesus I sing for all that You've done for me.***

**Who brings our chaos back into order? Who makes the orphan
A son and daughter? The King of Glory! The King of Glory!
Who rules the nations with truth and justice? Shines like the sun in
All of its brilliance. The King of Glory, the King above all things.**

CHORUS:

***This is amazing grace. This is unfailing love. That You would take my place,
That You would bear my cross. You laid down Your life that I would be set free.
Oh, Jesus I sing for all that You've done for me.***

BRIDGE:

**Worthy is the Lamb who was slain. Worthy is the King who conquered the grave.
Worthy is the Lamb who was slain. Worthy is the King who conquered the grave.
Worthy is the Lamb who was slain. Worthy is the King who conquered the grave.
Worthy is the Lamb who was slain. Worthy, worthy, worthy. . . oh**

**This is amazing grace. This is unfailing love. That You would take my place,
That You would bear my cross. You laid down Your life that I would be set free.
Oh, Jesus I sing for all that You've done for me.
Jesus I sing for all that You've done for me.**

* **DISMISSAL**

P Go in peace. You're never lost because of Jesus. **C Thanks be to God, and we will.**

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USHERS: John, Terri & Chase Brasher

LAY READER: Terri Brasher

STREAMING: Mike Maas

SOUND: Robert & Sydney Eaton

ALTAR GUILD: Ilene Schindler

ACOLYTE: Hattie Post

POWER POINT: Kay Wesson

WELCOME: We welcome everyone to St. Paul Lutheran Church, where all my share in worshipping God and growing in faith.

ALTAR WALL FLOWERS are placed by the Lighthill Family in loving memory of Mahlon Lighthill who passed away September 14, 2021.

We extend our Christian sympathy to Lawrence Dungen and family for the loss of his niece Heather Felty Hobbs. 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: Sept. 3 & 4, 2022 – 190

Contributions: Sept. 3 & 4 – \$8,562.28

Power of One: Sept. 3 & 4, 2022 – \$51.00

Building Fund: Sept. 3 & 4 – \$1,827.12

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

ATTENTION: Names on the prayer list in the bulletin will be printed for 2 weeks. After 2 weeks, the names will be removed from the bulletin unless the church office has been notified to keep them.

**** NOTICE REGARDING BULLETINS:** Please take your bulletin home 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! ☺



Senior Explorers to the Astros!! Hey, Sr. Explorers! Let's go cheer on our Houston Astros at their last home game before playoffs. We'll depart from St. Paul on **Wednesday, October 5, 2022** at 11:00 AM for a 3:10 PM game against the Phillies. **Tickets should be \$25-\$40.** We will stop for lunch or pie along the way. We plan to take our new bus with great A/C. Drop off and pick up will be as close to Minute Maid as possible. Please sign up by Sunday, September 11, 2022 so we can lock in and purchase tickets. Sign-up sheet is in the narthex. Please call Kevin Page at 979-732-0845 with any questions.

Women of JOY: The Women of JOY Bible study group will start back **Monday, September 12, 2022.** We will meet every Monday at **6:00 PM in the Hackfeld Gathering Room.** Our topic will be "Living a Chocolate Life", and it is a 6-8 week study. Only the book by Deb Burma is needed for the group and can be purchased from Christianbook.com or Amazon. A daily devotional is optional to purchase for your personal use. **Wait!! Don't start reading yet!** We will meet the first week with a light-hearted discussion and a chocolate surprise provided by the host – that's me! Looking forward to our weekly studies. – Gerri (979-732-4711)



The **Noon Bible Study group** that meets on Tuesdays will resume meeting Tuesday, September 13, 2022 at noon in the church library. Hope to see you there!

Manna for Moms: Every mom experiences a myriad of emotions – joy, love, the frightening, yet terrific reality that you are responsible for a little dependent. This new small group is for moms to come together for devotion and support. *Every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month,* moms are invited to meet in the **Lighthouse from 10:00-11:30 AM.** **The next meeting will be Thursday, September 22, 2022.** Child care for non-school aged children will be provided by our "Church Moms/Grandmas". For more information or to RSVP, please contact Courtney Busselman at 361-894-4050.



THE MARRIAGE COURSE: We realize that strong marriages make strong families and strong families make strong communities. The Marriage Course is relevant for any couple wanting to invest in their relationship and make it stronger. Whether you have been married 4 months, 40 years or cohabitating and not married, you feel your marriage is fine, good, great, struggling or stuck; this course is for you. The course is more like a date night. There will be dinner and dessert mixed in with video presentations and discussion questions for you and your partner. You will not be asked to share anything about your relationship with anyone but your partner. **The Course will run seven Sundays in a row, beginning October 2, 2022 and concluding November 13, 2022. It runs from 6:30-8:30 PM.** Cost for materials, workbook and seven meals is \$150 a couple. Scholarships are available. In order to offer this course to our community, I am in need of Team members to help in the

following areas: Advertising; Course Hosts; Administrator; Room Stylist; Technical Team; Caterer – Meals; Additional hosts – Servers; Set Up and Take Down; Registration; and Child Care. See the sign-up sheet in the narthex hallway. Thank you! – *Pastor Alan*

► **Thrivent Choice Dollars:** A friendly Lutheran reminder and request. If you are a Thrivent member and are eligible to have Choice Dollars, you have the ability to designate those funds to your choice of organizations. **Please make St. Paul Lutheran Church your choice.** We actually use these funds for very meaningful church endeavors. But, *you* must call or mail in this choice **every year between January and March 31** or they will send your dollars to the charity of *their* choice. Please call them at 800-847-4836 each year and ask them to direct your Choice Dollars to St. Paul. Thank you!

**** Volunteers, please step forward!** We need volunteers to comprise the reestablished **St. Paul Lutheran Financial Review Team.** We need at least three congregational members to make this happen. The term is for three years, but we will start up again with a 1-year term member, a 2-year term member and a 3-year term member. You do not have to have a background in finances, but a sincere desire to serve the best interests of the congregation of St. Paul is highly recommended. If you have any questions, please contact Donna Maas at 713-775-6408 or any council member. To submit your interest to serve, please contact Donna Maas, any council member or Elena in the church office. God bless all of our many volunteers, and thank you! **

♥ **Grief Support Group:** Are you experiencing grief from the loss of a loved one, loss of a job, loss of friend who has moved? The Grief Support Group is a place to share and discuss these issues with other individuals. The group meets the **third Thursday of each month from 5:30-6:30 PM in the church library.** For questions or more information, contact Peggy Geisler at 979-732-0350.

SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:

Mon., Sept. 12 – 10:30 AM – Staff Meeting
6:00 PM – Women of JOY Bible Study (Hackfeld Family Room)

Tues., Sept. 13 – 9:00 AM-12:00 PM – Quilters (Lighthouse)
12:00 PM – Noon Bible Study (library)
5:30 PM – Stewardship Team (library)

Wed., Sept. 14 – 9:00 AM – CLA Chapel
1:30 PM – Neighbor-to-Neighbor Quarterly Meeting (library)
5:00 PM – Meal
5:30 PM – BLAST, Confirmation, & Wed. Night Adult Bible Study

Thurs., Sept. 15 – 5:30 PM – Grief Support Group (library)

Fri., Sept. 16 – 10:30 AM – Adult Bible Study

Sat., Sept. 17 – 7:00 PM – Holy Communion Worship

Next Sun., Sept. 18 – 9:00 AM – Holy Communion Worship
10:00 AM – Adult Sunday School & Confirmation
11:05 AM – Holy Communion Contemporary Worship

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

Tuesday, September 13, 2022 John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople, died 407
John was a priest in Antioch and an outstanding preacher. His eloquence earned him the nickname "Chrysostom" ("golden mouth"). Appointed bishop of Constantinople, seat of the empire, he criticized corruption in the court. As a result, he was exiled by the empress.

Wednesday, September 14, 2022 Holy Cross Day

Helena, mother of Constantine, made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and found what may be the actual site of Jesus' crucifixion. Her son built two churches there, and the dedication of one of them gave rise to this celebration of our Lord's victory on the cross.

Friday, September 16, 2022 Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, martyr, died around 258

Cyprian served as a bishop during a time of great persecution of Christians. He insisted on receiving back those who had left the faith under duress. He also provided medical care during a severe epidemic.

Saturday, September 17, 2022 Hildegard, Abbess of Bingen, died 1179

A mystic who was widely influential within the church, Hildegard advised and reprovved kings and popes, wrote poems and hymns, and produced treatises in medicine, theology, and natural history. She was also a musician and artist.

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OTHER READINGS: Exodus 32:7-14

While Moses is on Mount Sinai, the people grow restless and make a golden calf to worship. Today's reading shows Moses as the mediator between an angry God and a sinful people. Moses reminds God that the Israelites are God's own people, and boldly asks for mercy for them.

The reading begins:

⁷The LORD said to Moses, "Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely; ⁸they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf, and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!' " ⁹The LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. ¹⁰Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make a great nation." ¹¹But Moses implored the LORD his God, and said, "O LORD, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? ¹²Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'?"

Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people.

¹³Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.’” ¹⁴And the LORD changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.

PSALM: Psalm 51:1-10

¹Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; in your great compassion blot out my offenses. ²Wash me through and through from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin. ³For I know my offenses, and my sin is ever before me. ⁴Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are justified when you speak and right in your judgment. ⁵Indeed, I was born steeped in wickedness, a sinner from my mother’s womb. ⁶Indeed, you delight in truth deep within me, and would have me know wisdom deep within. ⁷Remove my sins with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be purer than snow. ⁸Let me hear joy and gladness; that the body you have broken may rejoice. ⁹Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my wickedness. ¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

OTHER READINGS: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

The letters to Timothy and Titus are called the pastoral epistles because they contain advice especially intended for leaders in the church. Here the mercy shown to Paul, who once persecuted the church, is cited as evidence that even the most unworthy may become witnesses to the grace of God.

The reading begins:

¹²I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because he judged me faithful and appointed me to his service, ¹³even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, ¹⁴and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — of whom I am the foremost. ¹⁶But for that very reason I received mercy, so that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display the utmost patience, making me an example to those who would come to believe in him for eternal life. ¹⁷To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

SERVICE OVERVIEW: LOST AND FOUND

Today’s readings give witness that God has a heart for losers. God reconciles with the idol-worshiping people of Israel. The risen Lord calls the violent, blasphemous persecutor, Paul. The faithful shepherd rescues the wandering sheep and carries it home. The woman who lost one of her ten silver coins searches for it until she finds it. Similarly, God doesn’t abandon people even when people abandon God. The cross and resurrection testify to God’s faithfulness in that regard. God rescues strays one by one, making the first move to find the lost and create new hearts in them. In the first reading, when Moses holds God to promises already made in the

covenant, the breathtaking picture emerges of a God so committed to relationship that God is influenced (changed) by what people need and ask. This faithfulness of God, shared with overflowing grace in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus, is patient, forgiving, energetic, and ready to celebrate. Take the bread and cup! Jesus hosts the worshiping assembly again this week to welcome sinners and eat with them! Suddenly, “sinner” is no longer the best name for us. Try “guest,” “graced,” “gifted,” “loved,” and “empowered.” Then it’s time to follow Jesus out of the gathered assembly and into the world as apprentices for the work of finding missing persons. We find the lost and the broken and give them an invitation to come home.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:

Today we hear about things that receive God’s merciful attention: the ancient Israelites, St. Paul, a lost sheep, and a lost coin. Welcome to worship! We are the lost sheep and the lost coin. We celebrate as a gathered community that we have been found in Christ. Ask for forgiveness and receive it. All are welcome at the table.

Sheep are a familiar image for Christians, but comparing ourselves to a lost coin and that Christ is the woman sweeping is a far less common metaphor making us consider (possibly with discomfort) the image of God as female. The religious leaders in today’s gospel are concerned about purity, division, and appearance. Jesus responds to the religious leaders’ condemnation of who he keeps company with by asking them to see through the eyes of a shepherd and a woman, helping them to break free from their place of condemnation to a place of empathy.

Do *you* grumble at God’s welcome of the outsider? All people have value, even people you may describe as “lost.” Our culture of individual freedom and our individual attitudes of what constitutes piety or worthiness makes it uncomfortable for many in the church to “sweep” with great care and perseverance for those who are lost. Are *you* also concerned about purity and appearance? Why? How can *you* break free from a place of condemnation to a place of empathy?

Jesus shows us through his life on earth what it means to be the kind of shepherd portrayed in today’s parable. Jesus seeks the sinner, the sick, the oppressed, and those on the margins of society. His life is an invitation for us to have this same disposition toward the world. We should be constantly working to identify our own biases so we can see the world as others see it without judgment. We should be constantly trying to understand another person’s feelings based on their experiences, not our own opinions.

As usual, Jesus’s parables turn our conventional way of thinking on its head. If we were financial managers, it would hardly make sense to throw a party for finding a lost coin that likely exceeds the value of the coin itself. But the coin is not lost just anywhere – it is lost *within the house!* Without that one lost sheep, our community is incomplete. The sheep’s return means restoration for the whole community. It does not make sense to devote such effort for such a small ratio of return until you understand that *wholeness is part of holiness*. In the seeking and finding, wholeness is restored. Holiness is manifest.

KID STUDY:

Today, Jesus tells two stories about people who have lost something very important to them. The first story Jesus told was about a man who had a hundred sheep. One of his sheep strayed away from the flock and became lost. Every single one of the man's sheep was important to him, so he left the ninety-nine others and went to search for the one lost sheep. When he found it, he was so happy that he called all of his friends together and said, "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep." Next, Jesus told a story about a woman who had ten silver coins. Each of the coins was worth a day's wages. The woman counted her coins, "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine. Oh no! I have lost one of my coins," she cried. Do you know what she did? She turned on every light in the house, swept the floor, and searched until she found the one lost coin. When she found the lost coin, she called all of her friends and neighbors together and said, "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin."

Jesus told these two stories to demonstrate God's love for us. We are God's children, but sometimes we get lost. When that happens, God doesn't give up on us. God searches for us and won't stop until we are found. In fact, the Bible tells us that God sent his son, Jesus, to seek and save the lost. Do you feel lost sometimes? Ask for help from your family or your church family. Do you know anyone who feels lost? Reach out to that person and be their friend. Let them know that Jesus loves them.

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION:

Loving God, finder of lost sheep, Friend to sinners and rejects; We look to your son, Jesus, the embodiment of perfect Love. We confess that we have been so preoccupied with the ninety-nine that we have overlooked the one. We confess that we have judged and marginalized, pushed to the fringes those beloveds whom society has rejected. If we have been the one rejected or lost, Help us to forgive the ninety-nine. If we have rejected our own selves, or deemed ourselves unworthy of your attention, let your love find us. If we, in our pain, have been resistant to your love, blaming you for our rejection, open our eyes to the truth of your welcome. Grant us now hearts of compassionate mercy, full of lovingkindness. May we go out into the world, offering hope, offering mercy, offering love, offering an invitation to a joyful feast: The Kingdom of God, open to all. - "Litany For Lost And Found" by Fran Pratt

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Next Week's Theme (Sept. 17 & 18): The dishonest steward

Next Week's Scriptures (Sept. 17 & 18):

First Reading: Amos 8:4-7

"Warnings to those who trample on the needy and poor."

Psalm: Psalm 113

"The LORD lifts up the poor from the ashes." (Ps. 113:7)

Second Reading: 1 Timothy 2:1-7

"One God, one mediator – Christ Jesus – who gave himself for all people."

Gospel: Luke 16:1-13

"A shrewd manager: faithful in little, faithful in much; serving God/wealth."