

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

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September 18, 2022 Contemporary 11:05 AM

Fifteenth 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

As we are invited today to consider what it means to be managers (rather than owners) of all that we have, it is crucial to recognize that we are bought with a price. "Christ Jesus, himself human, . . . gave himself a ransom for all." Apart from the generosity of God we have nothing — we are nothing. By God's gracious favor we have everything we need.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SIGNING OF ATTENDANCE PADS

(Ushers will be handing out Attendance Pads during the announcements. Please be sure to sign your name and contact information.)

* **CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

P We believe that the Bible contains instruction for us as followers of Jesus Christ to do what he asked of us. He taught the first disciples to help others to confess their sins and to proclaim to them the promise of forgiveness afterwards. So let us take a few brief moments in silence to open our hearts and minds to Jesus, to confess the things that weigh heavy on our hearts and the things we need help with so we might be more in line with what Jesus commands.

(Silence for private confession.)

P If you are truly sorry and asking God for help, here is the promise he commanded the leaders in his church to proclaim, "You are forgiven." May this forgiveness free you and help you to live; to live in Jesus' name.

GOSPEL SONG: FOLLOW YOU

**You live among the least of these, the weary and the weak.
And it would be a tragedy for me to turn away.
All my needs, You have supplied. When I was dead, You gave me life.
How could I not give it away so freely?**

CHORUS:

***And I'll... follow You into the homes of the broken. I'll follow You into the world.
I'll meet the needs for the poor and needy, God. I'll follow you into the world.***

GOSPEL: Luke 16:1-13

Jesus tells the curious story of a dishonest manager who cheats his employer and then is commended by him for having acted so shrewdly. Jesus wonders why his own followers are less creative and diligent in their stewardship given that they are managers of a far more valuable household.

A The holy gospel according to St. Luke, chapter 16, verses 1-13.

¹Then Jesus said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. ²So he summoned him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.' ³Then the manager said to himself, 'What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. ⁴I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.' ⁵So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' ⁶He answered, 'A hundred jugs of olive oil.' He

said to him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.' ⁷Then he asked another, 'And how much do you owe?' He replied, 'A hundred containers of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill and make it eighty.' ⁸And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. ⁹And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes. ¹⁰"Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. ¹¹If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? ¹²And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? ¹³No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

GOSPEL SONG: FOLLOW YOU

Use my hands, use my feet to make Your kingdom come.
To the corners of the earth until Your work is done, yeah!
'Cause faith without works is dead, and on the cross Your blood was shed.
So how could we not give it away so freely?

CHORUS:

*And I'll... follow You into the homes of the broken. I'll follow You into the world.
I'll meet the needs for the poor and needy, God. I'll follow you into the world.*

BRIDGE:

I give all myself. I give all myself. I give all myself... to You.
And I give all myself. Yes, I give all myself.
And I give all myself... to You, yeah.

LAST CHORUS x2:

I'll follow You into the homes of the broken. I'll follow You into the world.
I'll meet the needs for the poor and needy, God. I'll follow you into the world.

CCLI Song #5484544 Words and Music by Leeland Mooring, Jack Mooring
and Ed Cash ©2004 Stream of Praise Music Ministries CCLI Lic #1729377

CHILDREN'S SERMON

SERMON

*** SERMON SONG: I REFUSE**

Sometimes I, I just want to close my eyes
And act like everyone's alright, when I know they're not.
This world needs God, but it's easier to stand and watch.
I could pray a prayer and just move on.. like nothing's wrong.
But I refuse...

CHORUS:

*Cuz' I don't want to live like I don't care.
I don't want to say another empty prayer.
Oh, I refuse to... sit around and wait for someone else
To do what God has called me to do myself.
Oh, I could choose not to move, but I refuse!*

**I can hear the least of these, crying out so desperately
And I know we are the hands and feet of You, oh God.
So if You say move, it's time for me to follow through
And do what I was made to do, and show them who You are.**

CHORUS

... to stand and watch the weary and lost cry out for help
I refuse... to turn my back and try and act like all is well
I refuse... to stay unchanged, to wait another day to die to myself
I refuse... to make one more excuse...

CHORUS + I refuse... I refuse...

Words and Music by Josh Wilson and Ben Glover. CCLI Song #5910135.
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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 Ruler of the nations, you direct those in authority. Give leaders wisdom and compassion so that all may live in peace. Inspire public servants to follow the example of courageous leaders and safeguard the dignity of each person.

A brief silence.

A Helper of the needy, you lift up those who are oppressed. Breathe justice into economic and social systems that perpetuate poverty and hunger. Sustain food ministries, clothing banks, and emergency shelters.

A brief silence.

A Sustainer and giver of life, you bless this congregation with abundance. Instruct us in the proper and faithful use of wealth and resources, that we share generously.

A brief silence.

A God of peace, 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 all those in need of healing and whose needs are diverse and known to you including:
Connie Hermann; John W. Brasher; Edna Bergfeld; Troy Scarbrough; Leon Dreher; Jeanette Guasto; those on our Prayer Team's list; and those we name in our hearts before you.

A brief silence.

A God of strength, we pray for all those battling cancer that they may know comfort and strength. *(Pause for those we are praying for.)*
Hines Harrison; Darryl Stancik; 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 God of life, we pray for all expectant mothers, and especially for:
Mallory Dungen Cook; Jessica Johnson; Ashley Dungen; and Alyse Langford that they have healthy terms and deliveries, and if not, may they find comfort and peace.

A brief silence.

A Loving God, 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 Zwiegel; 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 God of courage, 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 God of mission, 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 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 Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts: our selves, our time, and our possessions. Use us, and what we have gathered, in feeding the world with your love, through the one who gave himself for us, 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 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 and receive.

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: HOLDING NOTHING BACK**

**I am chosen, I am free. I am living for eternity. Free now, forever.
You pick me up, turn me around. You set my feet on solid ground.
Yours, now, forever.**

PRE-CHORUS:

***And nothin's gonna hold me back. Nothin's gonna hold me back.
Nothin's gonna hold me back...***

CHORUS:

***My chains fell off, my heart was free!
I'm alive to live for You! I'm alive to live for You!
Amazing love, how can it be?
You gave everything for me. You gave everything for me – everything.***

**You've washed my sin, and shame away.
The slate is clean, a brand new day. Free now, forever.
Now boldly I approach Your throne,
To claim this crown through Christ my own. Yours now, forever.**

(SING PRE-CHORUS and CHORUS again)

BRIDGE:

**And I'm free to live, free to give. Free to be, I'm free to love You.
Free to live, free to give. Free to be, I'm free to love You.
Free to live, free to give. Free to be, I'm free to love You. Lord...**

CHORUS

Words and Music by Tim Hughes and Martin Smith CCLI Song #4879277
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*** DISMISSAL**

P Go in peace as good stewards.

C Thanks be to God, and we will.

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USHERS: Aaron & Amanda Oppermann; Loraine Gast; Adam Torres

LAY READER: Walter Guthmann, Jr.

STREAMING: Kay Wesson

SOUND: Robert & Sydney Eaton

ACOLYTE: Boden Muir

POWER POINT: Peggy Geisler

ALTAR GUILD: Ilene Schindler

WELCOME: The psalmist tells us: "From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the LORD is to be praised" (Psalm 113:3, NRSV). So we gather to worship him now. Welcome to St. Paul Lutheran Church!

ALTAR WALL FLOWERS are placed by Kenny & JoAnn Venghaus and Larry & Tootsie Venghaus in memory of Kenny & Larry's mother Lucille Venghaus for the anniversary of her birthday September 14.

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. 10 & 11, 2022 – 171

Contributions: Sept. 10 & 11 – \$7,797.73

Power of One: Sept. 10 & 11, 2022 – \$44.22

Building Fund: Sept. 10 & 11 – \$390.02

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

Wednesday Night Attendance: – Wed., Sept. 7 – **94 Total**

BLAST/Confirmation: 75

Adult Class: 3

Support Staff: 16

Wednesday Night Attendance: – Wed., Sept. 14 – **62 Total**

BLAST/Confirmation: 44

Adult Class: 3

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.*

**** 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! ☺

* **Meals to Heal Cook Session:** Our next Meals to Heal cook session will be **Wednesday, September 21, 2022 at 6:00 PM** in our St. Paul Lighthouse kitchen. We will be teaming up with the High School youth! We will be making two main dish casseroles, bagging veggies, bagging cookies, and finally assembling meals to go in the freezer. Questions? Please contact

Terri Brasher at 979-732-1127. *

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.

► **PERU TEAM:** We are planning a return trip to Peru in the summer of 2023!! We are looking for people to join our team, even if you don't plan on traveling to Peru. Pastor Alan and Debbie visited our sister congregations in July – Cristo Rey in Lima and Iglesia Cristiana Camino de Santidad in Cañete. They returned full of enthusiasm and love for these brothers and sisters in Christ and with lots of ideas for ways to strengthen our relationships with them. **If you are interested in learning more about our plans or just want to learn more about our Peru friends, please plan on attending our next Peru Team meeting on Thursday, September 22, 2022 at 6:30 PM in the church library.** Starting in October, we will meet the second Thursday of each month. If you have any questions, please contact Terri Brasher at 979-732-1127 or 4brasher@gmail.com.

+ **COURAGEOUS WOMEN IN THE BIBLE:** All women are invited to a community-wide women's study/brunch called Courageous Women in the Bible. There will be three sessions in the fall from **9:00-11:30 AM** on Saturdays, **September 24**, October 22, and November 12, 2022 hosted by the First United Methodist Church in Columbus. Join us at the FUMC Family Life Center, 419 Washington Street, for Biblical dramatic story telling, fellowship, song, prayer and Scripture. **No registration is needed, but each person is asked to bring a dish to share for the brunch.** Sign-in and self-serve brunch will be 8:15-8:55 AM. +

God's Gals: God's Gals will meet on **Sunday, September 25, 2022 at 6:00 PM at Schobel's Restaurant** in Columbus. All women of St. Paul are invited, and guests are always welcome! Hope to see you there for food, fellowship, and laughter! Questions? Contact Terri Brasher at 979-732-1127.



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. 19 – 10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
6:00 PM – Church Council
6:00 PM – Women of JOY Bible Study (Hackfeld Family Room)

Tues., Sept. 20 – 12:00 PM – Noon Bible Study (library)
5:30 PM – Prayer Team (library)
6:30-8:00 PM – The Gathering

Wed., Sept. 21 – **Newsletter Deadline!!**
9:00 AM – CLA Chapel
9:00 AM – Morning Circle (library)
5:00 PM – Meal
5:30 PM – BLAST, Confirmation & Wed. Night Adult Bible Study
6:00 PM – Meals to Heal Cook Session w/ HS Youth (Lighthouse)

Thurs., Sept. 22 – 10:00-11:30 AM – Manna for Moms (Lighthouse)
6:30 PM – Peru Team Meeting (library)

Fri., Sept. 23 – 10:30 AM – Adult Bible Study (library)

Sat., Sept. 24 – 8:15-11:30 AM – Courageous Women in the Bible (FUMC)
7:00 PM – Holy Communion Worship

Next Sun., Sept. 25 – 9:00 AM – Holy Communion Worship
10:00 AM – Adult Sunday School and Confirmation
11:05 AM – Holy Communion Contemporary Worship

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

Sunday, September 18, 2022 Dag Hammarskjöld, renewer of society, died 1961

A Swedish diplomat, Hammarskjöld served as the second Secretary General of the United Nations until his death in a plane crash while trying to negotiate peace in present-day Zambia. His journal, published as *Markings*, revealed the depth of his Christian faith.

Tuesday, September 20, 2022 Nelson Wesley Trout, bishop, died 1996 (TFF)

A native of Ohio, Trout served parishes in several parts of the United States before being elected bishop of the South Pacific District of the American Lutheran Church, the first African American Lutheran to serve in such a capacity.

Wednesday, September 21, 2022 Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist

Matthew (or Levi) was a tax collector in Capernaum for the Roman government. Tax collectors were frequently despised for dishonesty and for assisting the occupiers. Jesus nevertheless showed love for them, and chose Matthew to be a disciple.

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OTHER READINGS: Amos 8:4-7

Amos was called by God to prophesy in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Peace and prosperity in Israel led to corrupt business practices and oppression of the poor. The prophet declares that God will not tolerate such a situation.

The reading begins:

⁴Hear this, you that trample on the needy, and bring to ruin the poor of the land, ⁵saying, “When will the new moon be over so that we may sell grain; and the sabbath, so that we may offer wheat for sale? We will make the ephah small and the shekel great, and practice deceit with false balances, ⁶buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and selling the sweepings of the wheat.” ⁷The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: Surely I will never forget any of their deeds.

PSALM: Psalm 113

¹Hallelujah! Give praise, you servants of the LORD; praise the name of the LORD. ²Let the name of the LORD be blessed, from this time forth forevermore. ³From the rising of the sun to its going down let the name of the LORD be praised. ⁴The LORD is high above all nations; God’s glory above the heavens. ⁵Who is like the LORD our God, who sits enthroned on high, ⁶but stoops to behold the heavens and the earth? ⁷The LORD takes up the weak out of the dust and lifts up the poor from the ashes, ⁸enthroning them with the rulers, with the rulers of the people. ⁹The LORD makes the woman of a childless house to be a joyful mother of children. Hallelujah!

OTHER READINGS: 1 Timothy 2:1-7

The pastoral epistles offer insight into how early Christians understood many practical matters, such as church administration and worship. The church’s focused prayer for others is an expression of the single-minded passion God has toward us in Jesus.

The reading begins:

¹First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, ²for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. ³This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, ⁶who gave himself a ransom for all — this was attested at the right time. ⁷For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

SERVICE OVERVIEW: LOVE OR MONEY?

A rich landowner tells his unsatisfactory manager he’s going to fire him. We don’t know how long the employee had to clear his desk, but apparently it was long enough to win friends and influence the people who had accounts with his boss. The manager called them in and reduced their debt. When the boss heard about it, for some reason he didn’t call his lawyer but sat back and laughed in admiration.

How could Jesus tell a story where the main character is a crook? Why did the boss commend the bad manager? What is Jesus trying to tell us? This parable can be difficult for us to interpret. The surprise in this parable is not the manager’s self-serving behavior, as we’ve seen for ourselves in some corporate accounting scandals in the news. The surprise is the boss showing mercy.

Does this boss remind you of someone? Maybe the landowner in another parable who pays a full day’s wage to farm workers who spent barely one hour in the vineyard? The father running out to welcome a shamed and destitute, long-lost son? In God’s economy, *people matter more than profits*. The prophet in the first reading, the psalmist, and Jesus all agree on this. The epistle writer adds a prayer for “a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity” for everyone, boss and beggar alike.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:

Today we talk about something that concerns us all: money. Does it make you uncomfortable to be forced to accept the reversals within God’s kingdom? Is it difficult to take on the reality of what the cross of discipleship really means? Welcome to worship! See clearly how to live your lives in Christ. Think about it. Pray about it.

The exhortations in Amos and Psalm 113 remind us that God cares fiercely about how we treat people who are poor. Psalm 113 proclaims that God “takes up the weak out of the dust and lifts up the poor from the ashes,” language that is echoed in Mary’s song that we hear in Advent, only a short time away. God’s favor is given to those who are in need. How can you be encouraged (and challenged) when considering economic inequality?

The readings from 1 Timothy and the gospel center around authority figures: the manager and “all who are in high positions.” There is a great deal of mistrust and alienation around authority figures in our country: from public health officials, elected government leaders at all levels, police officers, even denominational hierarchies. What are the fault lines within our own community? Are some authorities trusted while others are viewed with suspicion? What power do we as worshipers hold in our vocations? Who holds authority over us? The tension between us - who has authority over us and how that authority is exercised - is right beneath the surface. These complicated feelings about authority may shape the way you personally interpret these texts.

Amos is concerned the poor are being cheated out of their share of wheat. Wheat is life - basic provision given from Earth’s bounty so people may live. To rig the scales in the distribution of wheat is a failure to be faithful stewards of the good gifts of creation, resulting in injustice to one’s neighbor. To leave people hungry in a land of plenty is to commit sin not simply against one’s neighbor but against God, who intends enough for all. In the eucharist we get a taste of God’s intention for creation. God gives the growth. We harvest the grain, mill the flour, bake the bread, and share with all who hunger. The eucharist offers economic and ecological wisdom and asks us to consider again Jesus’ stark admonition: “You cannot serve God and wealth.”

KID STUDY:

You’re at the fair and find a wallet with money in it but no name. There is nothing to tell you who the wallet belongs to. Do you turn it in to the lost and found, or do you keep the wallet and money for yourself? You know the honest and trustworthy choice.

Jesus tells a story about a dishonest manager who worked for a rich man. When asked to explain how he’d been using the rich man’s money, it was revealed that he had been taking the

rich man's money for himself. He was fired. Before he got fired, though, he went to all the people who owed his employer money and offered to let them pay a fraction of what they actually owed. He did this so he could make some friends by giving them a discount because he knew he would be out of work.

Today is all about how we behave around money. Jesus said we cannot serve both God and wealth. He says that because he knows that it's easy to make it look on the outside that we are being faithful and honoring God. But a good way to tell how faithful we really are is what we do with the things that are valuable to us – our time and our resources - including our money. What we give and what we keep reveals the true state of our hearts.

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION:

Jesus commends the steward for taking an interest in the future. He foresees his future, and provides for it. Now, it seems that for many Christians, the chief concern has been to get to heaven after death. Too often a preoccupation for that aspect of the future creates an indifference to human values while on earth. But the future about which we are to think does not begin at some distant time after the resurrection of the dead. It begins now. It is the task of the church in every age to look at present practices and policies and to ask, "How will these affect tomorrow and the next day?" If the consequences are grim, then it is the task of the church to call for reassessment and reversal—or to use the biblical word, repentance. When we are baptized, when we receive the eucharist, the future comes into our midst, and we are summoned to care about it earnestly, to protect it fervently. - Laurence Hull Stookey [Laurence Hull Stookey, in Homilies for the Christian People, 522-524.]

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Next Week's Theme (Sept. 24 & 25): Rich man and Lazarus

Next Week's Scriptures (Sept. 24 & 25):

First Reading: Amos 6:1a, 4-7

"Warnings to those who are comfortable or wealthy."

Psalm: Psalm 146

"The LORD gives justice to those who are oppressed." (Ps. 146:7)

Second Reading: 1 Timothy 6:6-19

"Eager to be rich or eager to pursue richness of God's justice?"

Gospel: Luke 16:19-31

"Story of poor Lazarus and the wealthy man."