

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

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September 25, 2022 Contemporary 11:05 AM

Sixteenth 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

Consideration of and care for those in need (especially those “at our gate,” visible to us, of whom we are aware) is an essential component of good stewardship. It is in the sharing of wealth that we avoid the snare of wealth. It is the one whom death could not hold — who comes to us risen from the dead — who can free us from the death grip of greed.

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 gather here together to worship God. We bring with us, however, things that weigh heavy on our hearts and the knowledge that we need help. We are not always patient, caring, understanding, nor helpful to people and in places that God places us as His representatives. We take a few brief moments of private confession asking the one we come to worship to hear us, heal us and help us.

(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: WITH LIFTED HANDS

I have tasted all that this world has to offer.

The here and gone that leaves you wanting more, but can't satisfy.

Father forgive me for taking so long to see that you're all I need.

CHORUS:

With every heartbeat in my chest, Lord I surrender all that I have.

The days yet to come, the days in the past,

I'm giving You all I am, with lifted hands, with lifted hands.

GOSPEL: Luke 16:19-31

Jesus tells a parable in which the poor one is “lifted up” and the rich one is “sent away empty.” Jesus makes it clear that this ethic of merciful reversal is not new but is as old as Moses and the prophets.

A The holy gospel according to St. Luke, chapter 16, verses 19-31.

[Jesus said:] ¹⁹“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. ²⁰And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, ²¹who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man’s table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. ²²The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴He called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.’ ²⁵But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. ²⁶Besides all this, between you and us a great

chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.’ ²⁷He said, ‘Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father’s house —²⁸for I have five brothers — that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.’ ²⁹Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.’ ³⁰He said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ ³¹He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”

GOSPEL SONG: WITH LIFTED HANDS

**You show me mercy when I've done nothing to deserve it.
You see the best in me beneath the dust, 'cuz that's how You love.
That's how You love! You rush through my veins,
I'm wrecked and I'm changed and my soul will sing,**

CHORUS:

***With every heartbeat in my chest, Lord I surrender all that I have.
The days yet to come, the days in the past,
I'm giving You all I am, with lifted hands, with lifted hands.***

BRIDGE:

**Heaven or grave, there is no place I can go to escape Your love.
Heaven or grave, there is no place I can go to escape Your love.**

LAST CHORUS:

**So with every heartbeat in my chest, Lord I surrender all that I have.
The days yet to come, the days in the past,
I'm giving You all. . . all that I am! I'm giving You all. . . all that I am!
With lifted hands, with lifted hands. With lifted hands, with lifted hands.**

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CHILDREN'S SERMON

SERMON

*** SERMON SONG: 10,000 REASONS (BLESS THE LORD)**

CHORUS:

***Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul, worship Your holy name.
Sing like never before, O my soul, I worship Your holy name.***

**The sun comes up, it's a new day dawning. It's time to sing
Your song again! Whatever may pass, and whatever lies before me,
Let me be singing when the evening come. *CHORUS***

**You're rich in love and You're slow to anger. Your name is great,
And Your heart is kind. For all Your goodness, I will keep on singing.
Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find.**

CHORUS:

***Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul, worship Your holy name.
Sing like never before, O my soul, I worship Your holy name.***

**And on that day when my strength is failing, the end draws near and
My time has come; Still my soul sings Your praise unending,
Ten thousand years and then forevermore.**

CHORUS TWICE:

**Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul, worship Your holy name.
Sing like never before, O my soul, I worship Your holy name.**

**Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul, worship Your holy name.
Sing like never before, O my soul, I worship Your holy name.**

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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 O God, rich in mercy, fill your church with righteousness, faith, love, endurance, and
gentleness. Empower the baptized by your Spirit to be rich in good works and ready to
share.**

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 all those in need of healing and whose needs are diverse and known to you including:
Wesley Braden; Nina Barber; Timothy Page; Nancy Stiles; Connie Hermann; 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.)*
Genevieve Batchelor; 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 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 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.)*
John W. Brasher; 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; Donna Dehmer; and Irene Noska.

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 Enfold the saints who have died in the arms of your loving care. Grant that the holy angels accompany us and bring us to eternal life with them in the light of your presence.

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.

PRESENTATION FROM STEWARDSHIP TEAM

* OFFERING PRAYER

P Gracious God, in your great love you richly provide for our needs. Make of these gifts a banquet of blessing, and make us ready to share with all in need.

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 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: A CUP OF COLD WATER

I was hungry and You gave me something to eat,
I was naked and You clothed me.
I was thirsty and You gave me something to drink,
I was sick and You were there for me.
And we say, "When, Lord, did we see You thirsty?
When, Lord, were you sick and cold? When, Lord,
Did we see You hungry? When, Lord? When, Lord?"

CHORUS:

*"What you have done for the least of these, then you have done for Me.
A piece of bread for the lonely pilgrim, and for the thirsty . . .
A cup of cold water! A cup of cold water!
A cup of cold water! A cup of cold water!"*

Well I was lonely and You were a friend to me.
I was lost and You found me.
I was in prison and You came to sit with me.
I was a stranger and You welcomed me.
And we say, "When, Lord, did we see You lonely?
When, Lord, had You lost your way? When, Lord,
were You a prisoner? When, Lord? When, Lord?"

CHORUS

BRIDGE:

**When we love them, we love Jesus. When we hold them, we hold the Lord.
When we touch them, we're touching Jesus.
We've got to reach out and touch the world!
When we love them, we love Jesus. When we hold them, we hold the Lord.
When we touch them, we're touching Jesus.
Reach out and touch someone!**

CHORUS:

*"What you have done for the least of these, then you have done for Me.
A piece of bread for the lonely pilgrim, and for the thirsty . . .
A cup of cold water! A cup of cold water!
A cup of cold water! A cup of cold water!"*

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* DISMISSAL

P Go in peace, with Christ beside you.

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

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USHERS: Loraine Gast; Amanda Oppermann; Fay & Thomas Ulbricht
LAY READER: Courtney Busselman
STREAMING: Chase Brasher
SOUND: Robert & Sydney Eaton
ACOLYTE: Jackson Kuentler
POWER POINT: Kay Wesson
ALTAR GUILD: Ilene Schindler

WELCOME: "Happy are those whose help is the God Jacob. ... Praise the LORD!" (Psalm 146:5, 10, NRSV). We welcome you as we seek God's help and praise him in worship.

ALTAR WALL FLOWERS are placed by Sandy & Randy Neuendorff in honor of son Travis' 26th birthday on September 23.

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. 17 & 18, 2022 – 170
Contributions: Sept. 17 & 18 – \$7,709.98
Power of One: Sept. 17 & 18, 2022 – \$53.00
Building Fund: Sept. 17 & 18 – \$338.23

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

Wednesday Night Attendance: – Wed., Sept. 21 – **91 Total**

BLAST/Confirmation: 71 **Adult Class:** 3 **Support Staff:** 17

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! ☺

God's Gals: God's Gals will meet on **tonight 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. Please register in the church office with cash or check. For those who need babysitting during these meals, please take them down to the old fellowship hall, the last building towards the golf course. Have them fed, or you can bring food for them to eat there. Meals and programs start promptly at 6:30 PM in The Lighthouse. 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*

National Night Out: National Night Out is an effort to get communities to come out and meet, greet and enjoy those we live and work with. **Tuesday, October 4, 2022 from 6:00-7:30 PM** here in the **parking lot of St. Paul**, we will have live music, wagon rides, hot dogs and chips, lemonade-water-tea, and all the different branches of our local law enforcement, fire department, EMS and local Scout Troops. There will be face painting for the kids and maybe balloons. Bring your lawn chair, appetite and excitement to live and work here in our community.

◆ **Wednesday Night Adult Bible Study:** The Wednesday Night Adult Bible Study group that meets with Randy Fletcher will meet Wednesday, October 5, 2022 at their regular time at 5:30 PM in the choir room. **They will then take a brief fall break for the remainder of October. They will resume their class on Wednesday, November 2, 2022.** See you then!



We will be having a CPR and AED training session on **Sunday, October 16, 2022 from 12:30-2:30 PM in the Lighthouse.** Our church has 2 automated external defibrillators (AEDs), and this class is designed to teach you how to use an AED in an emergency. A light lunch will be served. There will be a sign-up sheet in the narthex (foyer). Questions? Call Terri Brasher at 979-732-1127.

► **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. 26 – 9:00 AM – Staff Meeting
6:00 PM – Women of JOY Bible Study (Hackfeld Family Room)

Tues., Sept. 27 – 9:00 AM-12:00 PM – Quilters (Lighthouse)
12:00 PM – Noon Bible Study (library)
6:00 PM – CLA Board

Wed., Sept. 28 – 7:40 AM – High School “See You at The Pole” (CHS Flag Pole)
9:00 AM – CLA Chapel
5:00 PM – Meal
5:30 PM – BLAST, Confirmation & Wed. Night Adult Bible Study
6:00 PM – High School Youth

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

Sat., Oct. 1 – 7:00 AM – Men In Mission
7:00 PM – Holy Communion Worship

Next Sun., Oct. 2 – 9:00 AM – Holy Communion Worship
10:00 AM – Adult Sunday School and Confirmation
11:05 AM – Holy Communion Contemporary Worship
6:30-8:30 PM – The Marriage Course (Lighthouse)

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

Thursday, September 29, 2022 Michael and All Angels

Michael the archangel, captain of the heavenly hosts, is remembered on this day along with the other angels and archangels. The word "angel" means messenger, and in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, these beings have a fully spiritual nature and no physical body.

Friday, September 30, 2022 Jerome, translator, teacher, died 420

Jerome was a biblical scholar and translator, but rather than translating the original Hebrew and Greek scriptures into classical Latin, he worked in the commonly-spoken Latin of the day, creating a version called the Vulgate.

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OTHER READINGS: Amos 6:1a, 4-7

The prophet Amos announces that Israel's great wealth is a cause not for rejoicing but rather sorrow, because God's people have forgotten how to share their wealth with the poor. The wealthy will be the first to go into exile when judgment comes.

The reading begins:

^{1a}Alas for those who are at ease in Zion, and for those who feel secure on Mount Samaria, ⁴Alas for those who lie on beds of ivory, and lounge on their couches, and eat lambs from the flock, and calves from the stall; ⁵who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp, and like David improvise on instruments of music; ⁶who drink wine from bowls, and anoint themselves with the finest oils, but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph! ⁷Therefore they shall now be the first to go into exile, and the revelry of the loungers shall pass away.

PSALM: Psalm 146

¹Hallelujah! Praise the LORD, O my soul! ²I will praise the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being. ³Put not your trust in rulers, in mortals in whom there is no help. ⁴When they breathe their last, they return to earth, and in that day their thoughts perish. ⁵Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their help, whose hope is in the LORD their God; ⁶who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that is in them; who keeps promises forever; ⁷who gives justice to those who are oppressed, and food to those who hunger. The LORD sets the captive free. ⁸The LORD opens the eyes of the blind; the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous. ⁹The LORD cares for the stranger; the LORD sustains the orphan and widow, but frustrates the way of the wicked. ¹⁰The LORD shall reign forever, your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. Hallelujah!

OTHER READINGS: 1 Timothy 6:6-19

Timothy is reminded of the confession he made at his baptism and of its implications for daily life. His priorities will be different from those of people who merely want to be rich.

The reading begins:

⁶Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; ⁷for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; ⁸but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. ⁹But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains. ¹¹But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. ¹²Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³In the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you ¹⁴to keep the commandment without spot or blame until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵which he will bring about at the right time — he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords. ¹⁶It is he alone who has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see; to him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. ¹⁷As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, ¹⁹thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.

SERVICE OVERVIEW: TRADING PLACES

Today’s gospel evokes our sympathy. It opens the possibility - described as an impossibility - of trading or sharing places with each other. It also echoes a common theme: the pursuit of wealth in this world can lead us into idolatry and away from faith in Christ. Instead, as the reading from 1 Timothy reminds us, we should pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness, so that there is no “poor man named Lazarus” dying at our gates. After all, the greatest treasure (our eternal salvation) has already been procured for us through Jesus’ death and resurrection. Knowing this, we can share all we have with our neighbors, even our very place and salvation, confident that God will continue to provide for our needs.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:

Lazarus is lying at the rich man’s gate, hungry and full of sores. Today Jesus reminds us that we are called to have mercy on all who are in need. Welcome to worship! Hear what this story means for us, who are rich in God, and who feast sumptuously on the meal of Christ.

When we consider the rich man in fine linen of today’s parable, it is easy to picture “the rich” according to the language of the day. However, when we truly reflect on this parable, most of us in worship today have far more in common with the rich man than with Lazarus. The economic truths highlighted in all of today’s readings are intertwined with all kinds of other ways that inequality is systematized and maintained in the world. In our rural community, poverty is less visible but still devastating. Do you see? Do you recognize the humanity of the people in our midst who are desperately poor? In our gospel today, Jesus calls us to recognize the humanity of those in need.

What impedes the generosity you might like to express? Consider when, how, and why you feel generous. Then take a step back and seriously consider when, how and why you withhold your generosity. What is the word of grace that needs to be spoken where generosity is blocked? Do you recognize weaknesses in our community that have been revealed due to recent economic crises? Do you see our congregation meeting needs? How do you personally respond to those needs?

Sharing is at the heart of stewardship. We all have talents, time, and treasure given to us by God. It can be difficult to navigate in our busy lives, but being good stewards of our gifts should be a priority. A healthy understanding of stewardship feeds our spiritual lives and helps us grow in our relationship with Christ. It is sometimes challenging and difficult, but God desires for ALL to be fed. When we separate ourselves from the “other,” we divide ourselves and distort God’s intention for creation. And yet, throughout it all, God’s grace is as persistent as rain, calling us to justice and renewing us in hope. Jesus continues to nurture us all into a life of generosity.

KID STUDY:

Jesus reminds us a lot that it’s important to put God first in our hearts. Sometimes we get confused, and we try to rearrange that order. Sometimes we put things like money or possessions first, but Jesus reminds us again today that a life of service and care for our neighbors is the most valuable thing we have.

Our lives are not about the things we own. Our lives are not just all about ourselves. Remember, we are the hands and feet of Jesus! We are called to serve everyone in need. We honor God when we put God first, giving of ourselves by using the different, special talents each of us has. What is your special gift or talent? If you don’t know, talk to your family (or your church family) about it.

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION:

This story isn’t quite so simple. Rather, this story was a direct assault on the kind of theology that blesses wealth even as it exploits through its refusal to share with those who are hungry, starving, and in need. Because in it, Jesus upends the dominant narrative that the elite of the day used not only to justify their extreme wealth but also to isolate themselves from those in need. And this parable upends an entire society’s assumptions and beliefs about who the rich and the poor were in God’s eyes, who was worthy and who was not, who was clean and who was not. It upends the myth that the rich are righteous and their wealth is a blessing from God for their own personal enjoyment. It upends the myth that the rich don’t have a responsibility to the least of these in society. These myths are our myths as well. - David Roberts

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Next Week's Theme (Oct. 1 & 2): Obedience to God = Duty vs. reward

Next Week's Scriptures (Oct. 1 & 2):

First Reading: Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4

"Wicked surround the righteous; wait for the LORD."

Psalm: Psalm 37:1-9

"Commit your way to the LORD; put your trust in the LORD." (Ps. 37:5)

Second Reading: 2 Timothy 1:1-14

"Guard the treasure entrusted to you: faith and love in Christ."

Gospel: Luke 17:5-10

"Faith the size of a mustard seed."