

Worship in the Home: October 11, 2020

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Worship in the Home

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Lectionary 28

October 11, 2020

In this time of world-wide crisis, congregations throughout this church are not able to gather for worship as the body of Christ. While you cannot be together in person, we can hear the word of God and hold each other in prayer. We offer this brief resource as an aid for prayer in the home. As with our prayers in the gathered assembly for worship, you are encouraged to prepare or adapt them locally for your context.

In Isaiah we are given a vision of the great feast to come, when God will wipe away death forever. In Jesus' parable about a great banquet, those invited do not come, so the invitation is extended to others. In our liturgy God spreads a table before us. Even amid anxiety and hardship we rejoice in the peace of God which surpasses all understanding. With great joy we feast at the table of the Lord, and we go forth to share the wonderful invitation with others hungering and thirsting for the abundant life of God.

Find a peaceful place to pray, perhaps a table. You may wish to light a candle near where you pray. One person may lead in this acclamation and then pray the Prayer of the Day.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Amen.

Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

Lord of the feast, you have prepared a table before all peoples and poured out your life with abundance. Call us again to your banquet. Strengthen us by what is honorable, just, and pure, and transform us into a people of righteousness and peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

First Reading: Isaiah 25:1-9

After a hymn of praise acknowledging God as a shelter for the poor, the prophet portrays a wonderful victory banquet at which death—which in ancient Canaan was depicted as a monster swallowing up everyone—will be swallowed up forever. The prophet urges celebration of this victory of salvation.

¹O LORD, you are my God;
I will exalt you, I will praise your name;
for you have done wonderful things,
plans formed of old, faithful and sure.

²For you have made the city a heap,
the fortified city a ruin;

the palace of aliens is a city no more,
it will never be rebuilt.

³Therefore strong peoples will glorify you;
cities of ruthless nations will fear you.

⁴For you have been a refuge to the poor,
a refuge to the needy in their distress,
a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from the heat.
When the blast of the ruthless was like a winter rainstorm,

⁵the noise of aliens like heat in a dry place,
you subdued the heat with the shade of clouds;
the song of the ruthless was stilled.

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.

⁷And the LORD will destroy on this mountain
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,
the sheet that is spread over all nations;

⁸the LORD will swallow up death forever.

Then the LORD GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces,
and the disgrace of the chosen people God will take away from all the earth,
for the LORD has spoken.

⁹It will be said on that day,

Lo, this is our God, for whom we have waited; so that God might save us.

This is the LORD from whom we have waited;

let us be glad and rejoice in the salvation of the LORD.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 23

¹The LORD¹ is my shepherd;

I shall not¹ be in want.

²The LORD makes me lie down¹ in green pastures
and leads me be-¹side still waters.

³You restore my¹ soul, O LORD,
and guide me along right pathways¹ for your name's sake.

⁴Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall¹ fear no evil;
for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they¹ comfort me.

⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence¹ of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil, and my cup is¹ running over.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days¹ of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the¹ LORD forever.

Second Reading: Philippians 4:1-9

Though writing from prison and facing an uncertain future, Paul calls on the Philippians to rejoice and give thanks to God no matter what the circumstance. God's peace is with us and binds together our hearts and minds in Jesus Christ, especially when things around us do not seem peaceful.

¹My brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

²I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. ³Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with

thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel: Matthew 22:1-14

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus tells a parable indicating that the blessings of God's kingdom are available to all, but the invitation is not to be taken lightly.

¹Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: ²"The dominion of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. ³He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. ⁴Again he sent other slaves, saying, 'Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.' ⁵But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, ⁶while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. ⁷The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. ⁸Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. ⁹Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.' ¹⁰Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

¹¹"But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, ¹²and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?' And he was speechless. ¹³Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' ¹⁴"For many are called, but few are chosen."

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Reflection

Having read these readings, think on this:

This is a hard time for us to think about whatever is true, honorable, just, commendable . . . So much violence, [sickness](#), death, and divisiveness surrounds us. The ancient image of the banquet at the end of time, the feast to which all peoples are invited and at which death is finally destroyed, sounds wonderful. But where is it? Most of us cannot even come now to its foretaste, the holy communion in the church. We may rightly feel more like the unprepared guest who has been thrown out. But the promise of God is sure. In his cross and resurrection, Jesus Christ has himself swallowed death and even now he is our shepherd, preparing the table before us, wiping tears away from all faces, being the refuge of the poor. We will come again to the feast in church. And even now we may, in the power of the Spirit, feast on the word, clothed with the garment of God's mercy right now. Then, rejoicing in the Lord and adopting God's own gentleness, we may join in the wiping away of tears on the faces of others.

If you have a hymnal, you may now sing or read "When Cross the Crowded Ways of Life" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 719), "The Peace of the Lord / La paz del Señor" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 646). Links to hymns in the public domain are provided below.

[Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life](#)

Then pray these intercessions:

Joined together in confidence of God's grace, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need, responding to each petition with the words "receive our prayers."

A brief silence.

That even through global sorrows the church can rejoice in your salvation,
that bishops, pastors, deacons, and church leaders be sustained for their ministries,
that churches find strength in ecumenical and interracial collaboration,
that church members resolve their conflicts in peace,
and that all the baptized find ways in this difficult time to uphold what is honorable and just:

A brief silence.

We pray for the church, O God our Shepherd:

receive our prayers.

That the damaged places on earth be restored to fruitfulness,
that animals in the wild be safeguarded,
and that we humans will be dedicated to a commendable use of your creation,

A brief silence.

We pray for the earth, O God our Creator:

receive our prayers.

That national conflicts be resolved without warfare and destruction,
that the work of diplomats and international peace workers be honored,
that leaders of nations attend to the needs of the poor,
that our country be preserved from discord, rancor, and violence,
that the election process will be just,
that prejudice based on ethnicity, skin color, and economic status be ended,
and that justice will prevail in our laws and through our courts,

A brief silence.

We pray for peace and justice, O God our Ruler:

receive our prayers.

That the plague of the coronavirus will subside,
that all who are sick with the virus, from rulers to refugees, be healed,
that people living with fear be comforted,
that medical workers be supported and medical supplies be made everywhere available,
and that a vaccine be developed and fairly distributed,

A brief silence.

We pray during this pandemic, O God our Healer:

receive our prayers.

That those who suffer from want be assisted, that those without work find jobs, that children be educated, that ministries of care be strengthened to feed those who hunger and those without homes, that extremism be lessened and a spirit of cooperation be nurtured, and for all who are sick, whose names we call out here. . . :

A brief silence.

We pray for all in need, O God our Guardian:

receive our prayers.

That in mercy you welcome our personal petitions,

A longer period of silence.

We pray for ourselves, O God our Mother:

receive our prayers.

That you receive our thanks for all those who have died in the faith, that when facing our own death, you give us hope, and that you grant us your peace throughout our days,

A brief silence.

We praise and pray to you, O God our Homeland:

receive our prayers.

Into your hands, merciful God our Father, we offer ourselves and all the world,
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

If you have a hymnal, you might now sing or read; "Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart!" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 873/874); "Thine the Amen" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 826). Links to hymns in the public domain are provided below.

[Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart! \(MARION\)](#)

Then conclude with these prayers:

Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

Glory to you, O God, for your creative Word:

making and mending all things,

evoking the cosmic hymn of praise,

and singing a love-song for your beloved:

your vineyard, your flock, your people.

With all creation we sing, Glory! **Glory!**

Blessed are you for your liberating Word:

speaking through Moses and the prophets,

encountered in the Gospels,

and proclaimed in the assembly:

your freedom, forgiveness, and life for the world.

With the whole world we say, Blessing! **Blessing!**

Holy are you, O God, for your living Word:

among us wherever we gather,

welcoming everyone to your feast,

and, with grace and generosity,

bringing to earth the kingdom of heaven.

With saints and angels, we cry, Holy! **Holy!**

Clothe us in your loving Spirit,

flowing from the Crucified and Risen One,

and keep us awake to your presence

in the people and places you call us to serve.

Glory, praise, and blessing are yours, Holy God,

now and forever. Amen. **Amen.**

Offering

Please remember to mail in your offerings so that Grace can continue to serve you.

Offering Prayer

Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. You have set before us these gifts of your good creation. Prepare us for your heavenly banquet, nourish us with this rich food and drink, and send us forth to set tables in the midst of a suffering world, through the bread of life, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Then speak the Blessing:

Mothering God,

Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit,

bless you and lead you into the way of truth and life.

Amen.

Devotional Music Links: For your individual or group devotion, you may choose to listen to the following choral recordings made available through Augsburg Fortress: "[Filled with His Voice](#);" "[Many and Great O God](#);" "[What a Friend We Have in Jesus](#)."

Readings for the Week:

Monday (Day of Thanksgiving [Canada]) Psalm 34. **Tuesday** Amos 9:5-15. **Wednesday** Song of Solomon 7:10—8:4. **Thursday** (commemoration of Teresa of Avila, teacher, renewer of the church, died 1582) Psalm 96:1-9 [10-13]. **Friday** 1 Peter 5:1-5. **Saturday** (commemoration of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, martyr, died around 115) Isaiah 14:3-11. **Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost** Isaiah 45:1-7; Psalm 96:1-9 [10-13]; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10; Matthew 22:15-22.

Daily Prayer Resources are available, including simple forms of Morning, Evening, and Night Prayer; Responsive Prayer; and prayers for mealtimes and other occasions.

Due to copyright restrictions, we are only able to provide downloadable hymns that are in the public domain. Other suggestions provided above may be found in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.

To purchase a copy of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* for the home, visit the [Augsburg Fortress website](#) or call 1-800-328-4648.

Reflection text: Gordon Lathrop. Intercessory Prayer: Gail Ramshaw

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Sorry – this is October 4th Sermon.

Pastor Bill Sass – Sermon for Sunday, October 4, 2020

REBELLION IN THE VINEYARD

Matthew 21:33-43

There were times when Jesus tried to communicate profound truths to those around Him, and they acted as if He were from Mars. He would say something, and He could watch their eyes glaze over. Particularly, did He have difficulty getting through to religious officials of His day? They wanted nothing to do with Him, or His teachings. They condemned Him without even listening to Him. They were so sure of themselves, and their standing in the community, that they were impervious to everything He did, or said. What would you do in that situation? You are trying to communicate something important, but they just don't get it. You're not getting through. That was the situation Jesus found Himself in. So He did what He often did. He told a story.

A landowner planted a vineyard. It was huge, and completely fenced in. It even had a watch tower to guard against outside attacks, or wild animals. After a while, the landowner could no longer maintain this vast estate, so he leased it to the tenants, and left it in their care. All he asked in return was a share of the produce at harvest time. The tenants gladly agreed.

When harvest time came, the landowner sent some servants to the vineyard to collect his share of the produce. High in the watch tower, the tenants saw the servants approaching. Instead of welcoming them, though, and handing over their rightful payment, the tenants beat one of the servants, killed another, and stoned yet another. Word reached the landowner. He was extremely displeased. He sent some more servants for his share, and again the same thing happened.

Finally, the landowner decided to send his son. "They will respect my son," he thought. When the tenants saw the son approaching, they said among themselves, "This is the heir, come, let us kill him, and get his inheritance." And that's exactly what they did. The tenants killed the landowner's son.

REBELLION IS AN ANCIENT THEME IN THE BIBLE. It is the story of Adam and Eve. It is the story of the tower of Babel. It is the story of the children of Israel during the Exodus. And the result is always the same—alienation, heartbreak and tragedy.

There are times when all of us try to put ourselves in God's seat. There are times when all of us act as if the world is our fiefdom, and we are supreme over all we survey. We forget that everything we have, is on loan from God. We are temporary tenants. We don't own anything, even though we sometimes act, as if we own it all. Everything ultimately belongs to God.

There was a church located next door to a supermarket. Since the church was short on parking spaces, and the supermarket was closed on Sundays, the church leaders asked the owner of the supermarket for permission to park in his lot. The owner's response was "Fine. You are welcome to use it 51 weeks a year." "What about the other week?" the church members asked. "That week," said the owner of the market, "I'll chain off the lot so you will always remember the lot belongs to me, and not the church."

Good point. We act like owners, when we are only tenants. This brings us to the second thing we need to say. HAPPINESS COMES TO THOSE WHO UNDERSTAND THEY OWN NOTHING. These tenants in our lesson were greedy. They wanted everything for themselves, and were unwilling to give the landowner his fair share. The landowner, on the other hand, was generous. He had given them control of his vast estate. They could have all of its abundance. All he asked was a share of the produce. Sounds like you and me, doesn't it? Sounds like every person who has ever walked this earth. God has provided so abundantly. All He asks is a small portion in return. But we are greedy. We want to withhold what is rightfully His. How sad. The happiest people who have ever lived gratefully acknowledge the ownership of God.

William White told of visiting his 98-year-old mother-in-law in a nursing home pre-Covid-19. He remembers her quietly saying, "Think of the lilies, and how they grow." Long ago, this frail, blind woman made the discovery that all of life is a blessing from God. She spent much of her time repeating scripture verses that she learned throughout her life. The scriptures gave her both strength, and comfort, during many lonely hours. She was an active woman right up until she entered the nursing home, walking a mile a day, though her eyesight was gradually worsening. She loved people, and was always helping them. Even in the nursing home, she used a walker to spread her joyful faith.

"Facing each day is not easy for her," White reflected, "but she keeps her spirits up." How? She felt that even at ninety-eight, she had a mission. There in the nursing home, she was able to touch the lives of other residents, as well as some employees. In fact, some former employees who changed jobs still returned to the nursing home to spend time with this remarkable woman. William White was inspired when his mother-in-law told him how thankful she was, to have memorized so many scriptures, before she lost her eyesight. Those scriptures filled her heart with the Lord.

This dear 98-year-old lady did not have much left in this world—but she had the only thing we ever really own—her faith in God. Everything else that we have is on loan. Someday, it will be passed on to someone else. Don't you see? No matter how rich we are, if we are not rich toward God, we don't have anything! The vineyard belongs to Him. Happiness is found in recognizing our place as His tenants—His stewards. But there is one thing more to be said.

WE HAVE ANOTHER IMPORTANT RESPONSIBILITY. Jesus asked the religious officials what the owner of the vineyard would do to the rebellious tenants. They had no difficulty responding, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him the produce at the harvest time." Little did they know, they were condemning themselves with their answer. You see, the parable was about them. They had been entrusted with the spiritual care of God's people. Unfortunately, many of them looked upon it only as a job—a way of earning a good living—a source of prestige and power. They were so set in their ways that they stoned the prophets who threatened their comfortable life, and eventually they crucified God's own Son. That's a warning to every one of us involved in religious work—whether as clergy, or as laity. We have a responsibility. This is not our world, it's God's. This is not our church, it's God's. We are only tenants, stewards. We have a responsibility to return to Him a portion of what is His already, and to use what we have received to His glory. AMEN!