

Worship in the Home: October 25, 2020

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Worship in the Home

Lectionary 30

Reformation Sunday

October 25, 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.

Some worshiping communities choose to celebrate Reformation Sunday on this Sunday preceding Reformation Day on October 31. Others continue with the assigned readings for the Time after Pentecost. Those readings are used in this resource. [Worship in the Home for Reformation Day](#) is also available including resources from The Lutheran World Federation.

Jesus' summary of the law in today's gospel echoes our first reading from Leviticus. We are called not only to love God with heart, soul, and mind, but also to love our neighbor as ourselves. It is out of such deep care that Paul shares the gospel with the Thessalonian community. In the confession of sins, we acknowledge that we have not loved God, neighbor, and self; yet we gather to hear the word of forgiveness and to be strengthened by word and meal to be signs of God's love and mercy in the world.

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.

O Lord God, you are the holy lawgiver, you are the salvation of your people. By your Spirit renew us in your covenant of love, and train us to care tenderly for all our neighbors, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

First Reading: Leviticus 19:1-2, 15-18

The Holiness Code in Leviticus urges people to be holy because God is holy. Holiness is lived out as God's people exercise justice and love in their dealings with one another. We are to love our neighbors as ourselves.

¹The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

²Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.

¹⁵You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor. ¹⁶You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not profit by the blood of your neighbor: I am the LORD.

¹⁷You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbor, or you will incur guilt yourself. ¹⁸You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 1

¹Happy are they who have not walked in the counsel¹ of the wicked, nor lingered in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seats¹ of the scornful!

²Their delight is in the law¹ of the LORD, and they meditate on God's teaching¹ day and night.

³They are like trees planted by streams of water, bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that¹ do not wither;

everything they¹ do shall prosper.

⁴It is not so¹ with the wicked; they are like chaff which the wind¹ blows away.

⁵Therefore the wicked shall not stand upright when¹ judgment comes, nor the sinner in the council¹ of the righteous.

⁶For the LORD knows the way¹ of the righteous, but the way of the wicked shall¹ be destroyed.

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8

Paul uses maternal imagery to depict the caring and nurturing relationship he shares with the Thessalonian Christians. When he first came to their city it was not to benefit himself but to share the gospel with them, which was his responsibility as an apostle of Christ.

¹You yourselves know, brothers and sisters, that our coming to you was not in vain, ²but though we had already suffered and been shamefully mistreated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in spite of great opposition. ³For our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery, ⁴but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts. ⁵As you know and as God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed; ⁶nor did we seek praise from mortals, whether from you or from others, ⁷though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother tenderly caring for her own children. ⁸So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel: Matthew 22:34-46

The holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Put on the spot by the Pharisees, Jesus displays wisdom by summarizing the law of God in just two commandments and by demonstrating the Messiah must be more than the son of David.

³⁴When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, ³⁵and one of them, a lawyer, asked Jesus a question to test him. ³⁶“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” ³⁷He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ ³⁸This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

⁴¹Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: ⁴²“What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?” They said to him, “The son of David.” ⁴³ Jesus said to them, “How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying,

⁴⁴“The Lord said to my Lord,

“Sit at my right hand,

until I put your enemies under your feet”’?

⁴⁵If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?” ⁴⁶No one was able to give Jesus an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Reflection

Having read these readings, think on this:

Two principles mark the Christian way to read the Bible: First, loving God and neighbor is all the law. And second, the crucified Jesus Christ is Lord. But here is the deep truth, a truth we rightly repeat to our shame: “We have not loved our neighbor as ourselves.” What shall we do? Where do we turn? In the crucified and risen Jesus Christ we meet the very Lord who is holy, and here is his holiness: even more than Paul who was his follower, this Jesus shares with us his very own self, doing so in the word and, when we can come to it, in the supper. Forgiven by this gospel of God, we are made free in the Spirit to turn in love to our neighbor again. Such is the heart of any commemoration of the Reformation.

If you have a hymnal, you may now sing or read “When the Poor Ones” (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 725), “Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart” (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 750). Links to hymns in the public domain are provided below.

[Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart](#)

Then pray these intercessions:

Let us offer our prayers to God, responding to each petition with the words “Grant us your tender care.”

A brief silence.

On this day commemorating the Reformation, O God, we pray: that Christian churches around the globe be reformed and renewed; that ecumenical collaboration be widened and deepened; and that Lutherans stand firm in the gift of the gospel. . .

A brief silence.

Hear us, holy God:

Grant us your tender care.

Attending to the natural earth, O God, we pray: that the seas and lands be cleansed of pollution; that both rainstorms and droughts be moderated; and that animals retain their habitat. . .

A brief silence.

Hear us, steadfast God:

Grant us your tender care.

Aware of disorder around the world, O God, we pray: that wars and armed terrorism cease; that violent extremism everywhere be calmed; that governments meet the needs of their poorest residents; that the days before our election be peaceful; and that all prejudice based on gender, color, orientation or ethnicity be rejected. . .

A brief silence.

Hear us, sovereign God:

Grant us your tender care.

Facing the coronavirus, O God, we pray: that the pandemic and its anxieties subside; that medical personnel and services be everywhere supported; that any who are unemployed find work and all who have been evicted finding housing; and that a trustworthy vaccine be developed. . .

A brief silence.

Hear us, compassionate God:

Grant us your tender care.

Moved by the needs of all our neighbors, O God, we pray: for those suffering from discrimination; for those incarcerated or held in immigrant camps; for farmworkers and their children; for all who are hungry; and for those we name here before you. . .

A brief silence.

Hear us, mothering God:

Grant us your tender care.

Thinking lastly of ourselves, O God, we pray: that we be enabled to love our neighbors as ourselves, and that you receive our personal petitions. . .

A brief silence.

Hear us, loving God:

Grant us your tender care.

Grateful for the lives of all who have died in the faith, especially for all the people whose efforts reformed and renewed the church, O God, we pray that at the end we join with them in your glory:

A brief silence.

Hear us, eternal God:

Grant us your tender care.

Enfold in your loving arms all for whom we pray, as we trust in your might and your mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

If you have a hymnal, you may now sing or read "I Love to Tell the Story" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 661), "O Christ, Your Heart, Compassionate" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 722). Links to hymns in the public domain are provided below.

[I Love to Tell the Story](#)

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: "[The Poor and the Refugee](#);" "[Love Your Neighbor](#);" "[A New Commandment](#)."

Readings for the Week:

Monday (commemoration of Philipp Nicolai, died 1608; Johann Heermann, died 1647; Paul Gerhardt, died 1676; hymnwriters) Psalm 119:41-48. **Tuesday** James 2:14-26. **Wednesday** (Simon and Jude, Apostles) John 14:21-27. **Thursday** Psalm 43. **Friday** 2 Peter 2:1-3. **Saturday (Reformation Day)** [John 8:31-36](#). **All Saints Day** Revelation 7:9-17; Psalm 34:1-10, 22; 1 John 3:1-3; Matthew 5:1-12.

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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Thank you to the ones who have helped present this service.

Thank you to those who clean the Church following worship.

Flu Shots will be given here at Grace on October 29, 9:00 – 11:00. They are requesting a sign-up sheet, just to enable us to spread time to enable to keep the 6' distance. Also asking for participants to wear mask. (Has been rescheduled due to the weather.)

Special Information Sessions to be held following worship today and November 1st.

Annual Meeting will be held November 22nd following Worship.

Please keep in your prayers this week: Kevin Johnson, Barbara Metzger, Rob Johnson and Steve Lindberg (Streeter Family Friend's & Kin), Noah Klenken (Fred Fixsen's Nephew), Cal Curtis & Patty Thompson (Carole Holten's Son-in-Law & Sister), Bill Warner, David Warner, Emily (Ben & Casey's Daughter), Terry Newgard, Judy Wingses, Steve Murdock.

Pastor Bill Sass – Sermon for Sunday, October 18, 2020

LIKE PARENT, LIKE CHILD

Matthew 22:15-22

A little boy was in church one Sunday morning with his grandmother. Everything went well until it was time for the offering. The grandmother began to frantically search through her purse, but she couldn't find her offering envelope. Apparently she had left it at home. It was a most embarrassing moment for her as she kept looking through her purse for something to put in the collection plate. Her grandson sensed her dilemma. The little boy had a solution to her problem. "Here, Gramma," he told her, "you take my quarter and put it in, and I'll hide under the seat!"

Children learn from watching adults. That is how they determine what is important in life. Wayne Barrett says that the first time he ever saw a fifty-dollar bill was in a church offering plate. This was years ago when fifty dollars was worth much more than today.

Wayne is a nationally recognized leader in the field of Christian stewardship and author of *The Church Finance Idea Book*. Seeing that fifty dollar bill in the offering plate spoke louder to him than any words. He saw first-hand how important the church was to his parents and the other adults in their congregation by gifts they gave. It wasn't that those folks were wealthy. They were not; they were committed. Seeing fifty-dollar bills and twenty-and-ten dollar bills in the offering plate taught young Wayne a lesson he would remember the rest of his life: the work of the church is important. The church he grew up in didn't use offering envelopes. Wayne says there is teaching value in letting children see what their elders are contributing to the church of Jesus Christ. Or at least we can talk about it. How many of us discuss our gifts to the church with our children? It is much easier to give them a quarter and send them on their way.

The Pharisees were once again plotting against Jesus. They had a question for Him. They were trying to trap Him into saying something that would discredit Him. They wanted to silence Him and make Him look bad in front of the crowd. Being they hypocrites they were, they baited their trap with a compliment.

"Teacher, we know you are sincere," one of them said, "and teach the way of God in accordance with truth."

Say, what? They didn't believe that for a minute, but they wanted people listening to think they were giving Jesus a fair chance.

Then they asked him a loaded question, "Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor or not?" Uh-oh. If Jesus says it's all right to pay taxes to the Roman government, then he will lose face with the majority of His audience. For the pious Jew, it was offensive to pay taxes to the hated Romans. Paying taxes was supporting this detestable occupation.

On the other hand, if Jesus says it's wrong to pay taxes then He will be in trouble with the Romans. He will be siding with revolutionaries who want to overthrow the Roman government. It's a no-win situation.

Jesus knew the Pharisees were trying to trap Him. Fortunately, He was wiser than them. He asks, "Show me the coin used for the tax." Jesus is using a subtle strategy here.

One of the Pharisees produces a Roman coin from his pocket. Little did the Pharisee realize that in even possessing a Roman coin, he already was well on the way to losing the argument. The Jewish people found the inscription on the Roman coins offensive, "Tiberius Caesar, Son of the Divine Augustus." To the pious Jew, the inscription on the Roman coin was a deliberate break with the Ten Commandments which prohibit "graven images." For these and other reasons, the Jewish people did not use Roman coins. They had their own temple currency. In producing a Roman coin, the Pharisee showed which side he was on.

And that's true for us as well. **The use of our money shows which side we are on.** "Where a person's treasure is, there is his heart also." If someone wanted to know what you and I truly value in this world, all they would have to do would be to look at our check book and our calendar. Where we spend our money, and our time, is what we really care about. Many value cars more than God. Many value leisure time more than God. Some value trinkets more than God.

As a pastor greeted persons at the door following a stewardship sermon in which he discussed pledging, a disgruntled member asked accusingly, "Where in the Bible do you find anything about pledging?" This man was uncomfortable being challenged to pledge to his church.

Instead of being defensive about his sermon, the pastor answered good-naturedly, "That's a good question. Let's get together over lunch and talk about it this week." The gentleman agreed; a time and place were set. Later that week, the two of them did get together for lunch. After they had ordered, the pastor brought up the subject.

"You know, your question was a good one." The pastor said the question forced him to do some thinking. "The Bible is full of references to pledging," he told the reluctant church member. But the member remained unconvinced.

The pastor told him that he looked up the word, "pledge" in a Bible dictionary. He had written down some words that pertain to pledging: "Commit, promise, dedicate, devote, covenant and vow" – very familiar Biblical words. That made the man think more about stewardship.

His pastor explained, "Christian stewardship is merely a reflection of our spiritual commitment to Christ. Stewardship is, first of all, our response to God." The man's attitude about pledging changed as a result of their lunch together.

How we use our money shows which side we are really on. Jesus exposed the Pharisees as hypocrites. They said one thing, but their lives said the opposite. Jesus takes the coin and asks, "Whose head is this and whose title?" Without a moment's thought, the Pharisees answer, "the emperor's." Quietly Jesus says, "Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's."

When an emperor came to power, he would immediately have coins minted with his name and portrait on it. That would signify the coins belonged to him. In His answer, Jesus said that since the coins already belong to the emperor, give them back to him. Give back to the emperor what belongs to the emperor, and give to God what belongs to God.

Jesus wanted the Pharisees to consider what was really important—their allegiance to God. The same is true for us today. We get caught up in all kinds of activities, but we need to ask ourselves, "What is most important in my life? What do I really care about?" When we answer those two questions, it will show in our stewardship of all of life—including our material possessions.

The late Danny Thomas lost his life savings of \$600 at a time he was out of work. He and his wife, Rosie, had a baby on the way, and they needed money. Danny worked at part-time jobs so Rosie could buy groceries. He also borrowed money from friends. It was a tough time in his life. A week before the baby was born, Danny had the grand total of seven dollars and eighty-five cents to his name. What would he do? "My despair led me to the powers of faith," Danny would later recall.

On Sunday morning, Danny went to church. When the offering plate was passed, he put in his "usual one dollar." But something unexpected happened that day. A special mission offering was taken. The priest explained where the mission offering would go and Danny felt he had to give something. "I got carried away," Danny said, "and ended up giving my seven dollars." He had given away most all of his money that Sunday. What in the world had he done? He walked up to the altar rail, got on his knees and prayed aloud.

"Look, I've given my last seven bucks," he prayed. "I need it back tenfold because I've got a kid on the way, and I have to pay the hospital bill." He went home with the eighty-five cents in his pocket—all the money he had in the world. "You won't believe this," Danny Thomas later wrote, "but the next morning the phone rang in the rooming house hall." It was a job offer. He was offered a part in a commercial. The job wasn't much, but the pay was good—seventy-five dollars. "I literally dropped the telephone receiver," Danny remembered. "First, I whooped with joy; then an eerie feeling came over me." He remembered what he had prayed at church the day before. "The seventy-five-dollar fee," he said, "unheard of for me at that time, was almost exactly ten times the amount of money I had donated to the church."

The important truth about this story is not that Danny Thomas received a tenfold return on his money. The important thing was Danny Thomas' lifelong allegiance to God. Those who know his story know that St. Jude's Hospital for Children stands today as testimony to that allegiance. Often when God asks us, "What will you give?" we take the bit that we can spare, the part we can easily give, and offer it to God. The question is one of total allegiance. How committed are you to God?

But there's one thing more we need to see. **There is joy in giving.**

Jesus outwitted the Pharisees at their own game. Notice that after He told them, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's, the Pharisees were speechless. They had no more questions for Him. Matthew reports that "they were amazed; and they left Him and went away."

Many people never really discover the joy of giving. Like the Pharisees, they hear the truth, but go away without another word.

Stan Gaede was thirteen years old, and sitting in the driver's seat of his father's pickup truck. He wasn't old enough to be driving. He was barely able to look over the steering wheel. Nonetheless, he was driving right through the middle of town. His father, sitting in the back of the truck, was delivering 100-pound bags of potatoes to friends, relatives, and needy people in their town. He recalls his dad running back and forth from pickup to house, and back again—toting those 100-pound bags on his shoulders. For young Stan it was a lesson in generosity he would never forget. Stan was glad he was too small to be lugging around those 100-pound bags. At first, he was embarrassed by his father's actions. After all, his father was a fairly successful farmer, with land and employees and social standing. Yet there he was, "running around town with sacks of potatoes on his shoulder, making a spectacle of himself." It was an act of love, though. Stan would never forget the joy his father experienced giving away potatoes. There is joy in giving. If you have not discovered that joy, it's not too late.

Children learn what's important in life from watching adults. Jesus said, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." It's a matter of declaring which side you are on. It's a matter of allegiance. But it's also a matter of joy.

AMEN!