

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—PROPER 24

October 18, 2020 – 9:30 a.m.

PRELUDE “We Praise You, O God” -Donald Busarow

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

Pastor: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

Pastor: Our help is in the name of the Lord,

People: who made heaven and earth.

Pastor: If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?

People: But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared.

Pastor: Since we are gathered to hear God’s Word, call upon Him in prayer and praise, and receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in the fellowship of this altar, let us first consider our unworthiness and confess before God and one another that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and that we cannot free ourselves from our sinful condition. Together as His people let us take refuge in the infinite mercy of God, our heavenly Father, seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, and saying: God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

People: Almighty God, have mercy upon us, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

Pastor: Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

SALUTATION AND COLLECT OF THE DAY

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: O God, the protector of all who trust in You, have mercy on us that with You as our ruler and guide we may so pass through things temporal that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen.

FIRST READING *Isaiah 45:1–7*

Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed: “I will go before you and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I name you, though you do not know me. I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the Lord, who does all these things.”

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

EPISTLE *1 Thessalonians 1:1–10*

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came

to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

HOLY GOSPEL *Matthew 22:15–22*

Pastor: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the twenty-second chapter.

People: Glory to You, O Lord.

Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle [Jesus] in his talk. And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone’s opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, “Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin for the tax.” And they brought him a denarius. And Jesus said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” They said, “Caesar’s.” Then he said to them, “Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away.

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to You, O Christ.

APOSTLES’ CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His 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 into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

SERMON (*The text of Pastor Kooi’s sermon, to match the YouTube video, is found at the end.*)

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

MUSIC DURING PREPARATION “The Gospel Shows the Father’s Grace” (*LSB 580*) -Paul Manz

PREFACE

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them to the Lord.

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

Pastor: It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, for the countless blessings You so freely bestow on us and all

creation. Above all, we give thanks for Your boundless love shown to us when You sent Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, into our flesh and laid on Him our sin, giving Him into death that we might not die eternally. Because He is now risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity, all who believe in Him will overcome sin and death and will rise again to new life. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:

SANCTUS

**People: Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth adored;
Heav'n and earth with full acclaim shout the glory of Your name.
Sing hosanna in the highest, sing hosanna to the Lord;
Truly blest is He who comes in the name of the Lord!**

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Pastor: Blessed are You, O Lord our God, king of all creation, for You have had mercy on us and given Your only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

In Your righteous judgment You condemned the sin of Adam and Eve, who ate the forbidden fruit, and You justly barred them and all their children from the tree of life. Yet, in Your great mercy, You promised salvation by a second Adam, Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, and made His cross a life-giving tree for all who trust in Him.

We give You thanks for the redemption You have prepared for us through Jesus Christ. Grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may faithfully eat and drink of the fruits of His cross and receive the blessings of forgiveness, life, and salvation that come to us in His body and blood.

Hear us as we pray in His name and as He has taught us:

LORD'S PRAYER

People: 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.

THE WORDS OF OUR LORD

Pastor: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me."

In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

PAX DOMINI

Pastor: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

People: Amen.

DISTRIBUTION

You are invited to receive the Lord's Supper if you believe and confess that Jesus Christ is your Savior from sin, you are a baptized child of the Triune God, and you believe that He gives you His body and blood in the bread and wine you receive. White grape juice can be found in the center of each tray for those who cannot receive alcohol. Children are welcome to come forward for a blessing.

POST-COMMUNION COLLECT

Pastor: Let us pray. We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen.

BENEDICAMUS

Pastor: Let us bless the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

BENEDICTION

Pastor: The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.

People: Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

POSTLUDE "O God, Our Help in Ages Past" *LSB* 733

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| 1 | O God, our help in ages past, Our hope for years to come, Our shelter from the stormy blast, And our eternal home: | 4 | A thousand ages in Thy sight Are like an evening gone, Short as the watch that ends the night Before the rising sun. |
| 2 | Under the shadow of Thy throne Thy saints have dwelt secure; Sufficient is Thine arm alone, And our defense is sure. | 5 | Time, like an ever-rolling stream, Soon bears us all away; We fly forgotten as a dream Dies at the op'ning day. |
| 3 | Before the hills in order stood Or earth received her frame, From everlasting Thou art God, To endless years the same. | 6 | O God, our help in ages past, Our hope for years to come, Be Thou our guard while troubles last And our eternal home! Text: Public domain |

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

GENEROSITY THOUGHTS: *Matt. 22:21 – “... Then he said to them, ‘Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.’ ”* So what is Jesus saying? Doesn’t everything belong to God? Yes, and God has a place for everything. Some of what He gives us goes to Caesar. Some must come back to the work of His Church. And some goes to support the families He has given us. All belongs to God, and He has work for us to do with what He has given us in the home, in the Church, and in society.

THANK YOU: On behalf of Oromo Evangelical Church of Minnesota, I would like to thank you for your unreserved support in opening your door for us to use the church building for our services. Your respect for our services, your love for our members, and your care for our entire ministries were well noted and was presented to our members during our Church Annual Meeting on September 13, 2020. The members expressed their gratitude and decided to write a thank you letter for your church. Accordingly, it is my pleasure to say thank you on behalf of the members of our church for what you have done and still are doing to strengthen our church service. It would not have been easy to be where we are today if you hadn’t opened your door for us. May God bless you abundantly. Sincerely, Yemane Aleku

YOUR HELP is needed again this year for the Mission’s annual Thanksgiving food distribution. The past few years the Social Ministries Committee has been able to collect food and create meal bags for the Union Gospel Mission. For over 60 years, Union Gospel Mission Twin Cities has provided thousands of meals during Thanksgiving to our community, while offering volunteer opportunities and building connection with local churches. Due to the realities of COVID-19 and the impact it has on how they serve the community, we know that the need for their services and access to meals will be more vital than ever this Thanksgiving season. To maintain safety for our community members, their volunteers, and staff, they are changing the format of our Thanksgiving Food Drive this year, while still serving our community with compassion and hospitality. Union Gospel Mission is accepting **financial donations only**. Due to COVID-19 and its spread, we are asking individuals to donate money only to our Thanksgiving Food Bag event. They will purchase Thanksgiving food items in bulk, stretching your dollars even further. A donation of \$25 will purchase everything for a complete Thanksgiving Meal, however, any amount is welcome. Please use the following link to donate if you are able: <https://app.mobilecause.com/vf/TGBags/team/EmmausLutheranChurch> or you can donate via text: Text TGBags10 to 71777 (Msg & data rates may apply). Even though this event will look different this year, the gospel and how we live out our faith hasn’t changed.

MITE BOXES: We will be having our fall LWML Mites collection on Sunday, October 25th. You can bring your box in anytime this month or if you prefer checks will be accepted also.

FROM SOCIAL MINISTRIES: Coming in November we will begin collecting new toys for the Salvation Army Toy Drive. We are looking for a Thrivent member to sponsor a Thrivent Action Grant to help with this collection. If you are interested, please e-mail Marie Garcia at elmaG98@aol.com. We will be doing our Hat and Mitten drive in December and would like to get a Thrivent grant for that also.

HEAR “THE LUTHERAN HOUR” on Sunday mornings at 6:05 a.m. on WCCO 830 AM radio. Next week’s broadcast: “No Boasting, Just Belonging” Speaker: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler “The kingdom of God is not a game. The law teaches us how to love others as God first loved us. Our performance matters, but in God’s kingdom belonging comes before performance.” Dr. Michael Zeigler (Romans 3: 19-31)

POLKA SERVICE: The community is cordially invited to attend the 17th annual polka service at St. Matthew Lutheran Church, 4101 Washington St NE, Columbia Hts, on Saturday, October 24. The service begins at 5:30 p.m. Chuck Thiel and the Jolly Ramblers from Lester Prairie, MN are featured musicians for the event. St. Matthew is handicap accessible. Due to COVID restrictions, no Bavarian dinner will be served this year.

“Setback or Setup?”

I want to introduce you to a young man named Jake Olsen who is quite inspirational. Shortly after Jake was born, it was discovered that he had cancer in one eye. The doctors did everything they could do to save the eye, but they finally recommended removing it, hoping that the cancer would not spread to the other one.

As Jake grew up, he was an energetic young boy with a tremendous love and giftedness for sports. However, several years later, the cancer came back and was found in Jake's other eye. Again, he went through numerous treatments, and for a while, the cancer would go into remission, but, sadly, would come back. There were more treatments and again more remissions. But, then the cancer appeared once more. After several years, the doctors recommended removing Jake's other eye.

As a senior in high school, Jake wrote a book called *Open Your Eyes: 10 Uncommon Lessons to Discover a Happier Life*. In his book, Jake talks about his years as a high school student. Throughout high school, he maintained straight-As, played on the football team as the long snapper, and enjoyed golf, skiing, surfing, and playing the guitar. In fact, his golf score was often in the high 70s or low 80s. He learned to read the contours of the green with his feet as he prepared to putt.

In the book, though, as Jake tells the story of what's happened in his life so far, he says he's come to believe that maybe sometimes God uses certain setbacks in our lives to create setups for what he's going to do with us next. That's some pretty remarkable insight from a cancer survivor who hadn't yet graduated high school, isn't it?

When the Pharisees and Herodians came to Jesus in our Gospel text, they were hoping it would be a setback to Jesus' ministry. However, the setback they tried to create became a setup for Jesus to advance His message. What started out as a setback became a setup for Jesus.

Our text starts Tuesday of Holy Week, and the tension is high between Jesus and His opponents. He has repeatedly avoided their traps and plots against Him, and they want Jesus dead at all costs. In our text, there are two groups working together to do it. The first is the Pharisees. The Pharisees are a Jewish group who closely followed the Laws and ceremonies of the Old Testament, and then added over 600 of their own! They longed for an independent Jewish state like in the good ol' days of David, and they hated the Romans and especially hated paying the taxes that supported their rule. On this occasion, they team up with the very people that they hate, the Herodians, to trap Jesus. The Herodians are the political party that supports the Roman rule of the Herods in the land of Israel. The Pharisees hate Jesus so much they would work with the Herodians to get rid of Him!

Unfortunately for Jesus, throughout His ministry, there were many attempts to discredit Him and set Him back. In Mark 3, when Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath, the Pharisees accused Him of breaking the Law. In Luke 4, when Jesus preached in His hometown of Nazareth, they rejected Him and His message, and tried to throw Him off a cliff. In the next chapter, Jesus gets accused of blasphemy for forgiving the sins of the paralytic man. In John's Gospel, Jesus' opponents say "He has a demon and is insane; why listen to Him?" In Matthew 12, a similar accusation is leveled when they say that Jesus is the prince of demons since He drives out demons. Potential setbacks for Jesus and His ministry is nothing new to Him. This one, however, is one of the most malicious.

These two unlikely groups of people team up together to try trap Jesus with their question: "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" At a first glance, it seems like an innocent and honest question. We might even wonder it ourselves. However, at a deeper look, we see that it is a loaded and deceptive one. If Jesus answers, "yes, it is lawful to pay taxes," the Pharisees will use His answer to turn the people against Him. They can use it slander Jesus and His reputation by saying that He is disloyal to the Jewish people since it seems that He supports the evil Romans more than the Jesus. On the other hand, if Jesus says, "no, it isn't lawful to pay taxes," the Herodians would report Him and have Him executed for treason. It seems like a win-win situation for His opponents, does it not? They have Jesus right where they want Him.

To carry out their evil plan, they send their disciples, along with the Herodians, to ask the question. Before they ask Jesus their question, they butter Him up, they complement Jesus so that He would drop His guard and give the answer people want to hear. It is the classic teenage trick, for don't teenagers build up their parents before they ask them their request? "Hey Dad, you're the best and waaayyy cooler than all the other parents. You are so understanding, you love me, did I say you are awesome? You are awesome. Can I borrow the car?" The complement serves as a way to drop your guard to try to force what you want. These disciples do

the same when they say, “Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone’s opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances. Tell us, then, what you think.” Fortunately, Jesus sees through their hypocrisy, for they don’t mean a thing they say, although what they say about Jesus is entirely true.

So Jesus asks for a coin and begins to turn the table on them, for Jesus is going to entangle them with their answer, instead. To do this, Jesus asks for a coin and also asks whose inscription is on it. The disciples of the Pharisees comply and do both requests. They give Him a coin and answer, “It is Caesar’s inscription.” The very fact that the people accepted the coin as their money implies and shows that the nation belongs to the emperor. Since they use his money, they should submit to and acknowledge his rule. As a result, they owe him and his authorities the due respect, honor, and fear that they deserve, whether they like them or not.

Both in Jesus’ day, and in our own time, our officials and those over us are to be respected since they are placed by God and rule in His stead. This is clearly seen in our Isaiah reading, where it is made clear that God set the pagan king Cyrus as the ruler of Babylon to serve God’s plan and purpose for His chosen people Israel. In the end, we see that those disciples answered their own question, that it *is* lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, but, as far as they were concerned, the wrong person answered the question!

But there is another dynamic to His answer, right? Jesus says, “Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” Jesus honors the temporal authority that God has established and honors God’s as well. The bigger, the more pressing issue, is the rule and authority that God has, especially over spiritual matters. That is why we are to render the things to God that are God’s. God’s authority in spiritual matters He administers not by means of emperors or laws or the Law, but through the Gospel. When Jesus’ opponents hear His answer, they marvel at it, and walk away. Their set-up didn’t work, so they would devise more setbacks.

They plot with Judas to betray Him. They create a mock trial with false witnesses to condemn Him. They work with the Romans to beat Him and legally kill Him. They work the crowd to pick Barabbas, and get the death sentence for their foe. Game. Set. Match. Jesus is crucified, died and buried. The cross seemed to be the final setback, complete defeat. However, it was, in fact, the very way that God was setting us free from sin and death, and Easter proved that as Christ is raised victoriously. What seemed to be the greatest setback that Jesus’ enemies could throw at Him turned out to be the greatest setup. For by the cross, we are saved and redeemed. The cross proclaims that God can take good from evil, and work all things for our good. Our worst setbacks, both in life and at death, set us up for perfect joy. Jake Olsen was on to something.

The Pharisees’ and Herodians’ question was also a perfect setup for Jesus not only to announce God’s authority but also to point to His rule and reign that calls for a Gospel response. Martin Luther offers a helpful suggestion in how we may do that. In his explanation of the first article of the Apostles’ Creed, he points out that God graciously gives us all that we need to support this bodily life: clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, spouse and children, land and animals, and all that we have. He also defends us from all harm and danger. Luther notes that in response to these things, it is our “duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true.” When we hear the Gospel, when we hear all that God has done for us, we really cannot help but do these things. We cannot help but thank and praise Him for the forgiveness that He gives that we don’t deserve. We cannot help but thank and praise Him for all of His daily blessings, those of body and soul. When hear all that Jesus has done for us, aren’t we moved to live for Him by serving and obeying Him? We do it not to earn these things, but in response to these things.

As the Pharisees and Herodians asked Jesus that fateful question, we see that what started out as a setback became a setup for Jesus. In His name, Amen.