

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
NOVEMBER 12, 2023

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, FALLS CHURCH, VA



PRELUDE

With the Lord Begin Your Task
Setting: Willian Braun

WELCOME

ENTRANCE HYMN (Stand)

With the Lord Begin Your Task

LSB 869

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1 With the Lord begin your task;
Jesus will direct it.
For His aid and counsel ask;
Jesus will perfect it.
Ev'ry morn with Jesus rise,
And when day is ended,
In His name then close your eyes;
Be to Him commended.</p> <p>2 Let each day begin with prayer,
Praise, and adoration.
On the Lord cast ev'ry care;
He is your salvation.
Morning, evening, and at night
Jesus will be near you,
Save you from the tempter's might,
With His presence cheer you.</p> | <p>3 With your Savior at your side,
Foes need not alarm you;
In His promises confide,
And no ill can harm you.
All your trust and hope repose
In the mighty Master,
Who in wisdom truly knows
How to stem disaster.</p> <p>4 If your task be thus begun
With the Savior's blessing,
Safely then your course will run,
Toward the promise pressing.
Good will follow ev'rywhere
While you here must wander;
You at last the joy will share
In the mansions yonder.</p> |
|---|---|
- 5 Thus, Lord Jesus, ev'ry task
Be to You commended;
May Your will be done, I ask,
Until life is ended.
Jesus, in Your name begun
Be the day's endeavor;
Grant that it may well be done
To Your praise forever.**

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Silence for reflection on God's Word and for self-examination.

Let us then confess our sins to God our Father.

Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

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.

Amen.

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

or the peace from above and for our salvation let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Amen.

This is the feast of victory for our God.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose blood set us free to be people of God.

This is the feast of victory for our God.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Power, riches, wisdom, and strength, and honor, blessing, and glory are His.

This is the feast of victory for our God.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

**Sing with all the people of God, and join in the hymn of all creation:
Blessing, honor, glory, and might be to God and the Lamb forever. Amen.**

This is the feast of victory for our God.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

For the Lamb who was slain has begun His reign. Alleluia.

This is the feast of victory for our God.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray. Lord God, heavenly Father,
send forth Your Son to lead home His bride, the Church, that with all the company of the redeemed we may finally enter into His eternal wedding feast; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST LESSON (Be seated)

Amos 5:18-24

Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD!
Why would you have the day of the LORD?
It is darkness, and not light,
as if a man fled from a lion,
and a bear met him,
or went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall,
and a serpent bit him.
Is not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light,
and gloom with no brightness in it?
“I hate, I despise your feasts,
and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.
Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,
I will not accept them;
and the peace offerings of your fattened animals,
I will not look upon them.
Take away from me the noise of your songs;
to the melody of your harps I will not listen.
But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM 70 (Sung responsively)

Make haste, O God, to deliver me!
O LORD, make haste to help me!
Let them be put to shame and confusion
who seek my life!
Let them be turned back and brought to dishonor
who desire my hurt!
Let them turn back because of their shame
who say, “Aha, Aha!”

May all who seek you
rejoice and be glad in you!
May those who love your salvation
say evermore, "God is great!"
But I am poor and needy;
hasten to me, O God!
You are my help and my deliverer;
O LORD, do not delay!

SECOND LESSON

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ALLELUIA VERSE (Stand)

LSB 156

Alleluia.

Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life.

Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Matthew 25:1-13

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew the 25th chapter

Glory to You, O Lord.

[Jesus said:] "The kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For

when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ.

SERMON

When we hear Matthew's great parable of the wise and foolish young women with its stirring call to be ready, we know that the Church's year is racing toward its ending. In these end of the church year days, which very directly signal the end time, in these days we are urged to shake off everything that does not focus on Jesus' nearness. Jesus said in one of His other end time exhortations, "If the Master of the house had known when the thief would break in, he would have been ready." But even we as Christ's Church are not given a "when" towards which to aim; we are given the promise that Jesus will come soon, riding the clouds of heaven. Always the exhortation of these days is "Watch and pray. Be ready."

The prophet Amos served the Lord during the rule of Uzziah of Judah and Jereboam of Israel in the middle of the 8th century B.C. In those relatively peaceful days, God sent His prophet to call His people to repent. Sacrifices and festivals had become empty formalities and Yahweh did not value them in the way He regarded treating your neighbor as God's much loved child. Then and now it is easier to perform sacrifices and go to church services, especially if they don't require much sacrifice from us. Then and now it is easier to perform liturgies, than to "...let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream." In these last days we are summoned to be ready with lives that love and honor God and our neighbor and are concretely "...justice rolling down like waters...." By living righteously, and according to God's justice, we are living as His stewards, the nurturers of God's best. Whether sought or not, whether wanted or not, God has called us to steward as His servants until He comes.

The cycle of our church year does not only include last days exhortations, but by our own choosing, these days are also when we again examine how we are stewarding the gifts God has given us. You all received a reminder of your call to stewardship this week. And it is my privilege to underscore that call.

It is so American to tense up when the Federal Reserve raises interest rates, to grumble about how much it is costing us, and to follow politicians who offer us a more satisfying set of answers. They tell us, and we believe them, "It's your money. I can handle it better than the other party. You deserve more of what is yours." One law firm runs commercials which stars a woman whose last name is "More." She is the American dream, always wanting more, more ice cream with more sprinkles, and between the lines, more out of her law suit than anyone else can get her. Stewardship isn't about such values. It is about beholding the bounty God has given and listening to His call to use His bounty for good -- to be a good "Steward/Manager" of the Divine treasure. Unlike American politics and advertising, Churchly stewards begin with the confession, "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it." Like Adam, I am only God's steward. But think of it -- God chose you as steward of all that He has made..

"More" is not a stewardship value. According to St. Paul, contentment with what God has given is the new path of life. Right beside contentment with God's kindness we are called to practice generosity, to be generous toward God and neighbors as God is generous to us. How well you are doing with those stewardship values can be measured by your reaction to every change in the stock market and your sense of your share of the "more" of earthly treasures you can not take beyond the grave. It can be measured in how often you choose to answer God's stewardship call with, "I cannot afford to give more," while you go on freely indulging yourself. Not just on the last day, but in these days, our stewardship can be measured. And is measured.

Given the festive nature of the wedding in Jesus' parable, it made little sense to save oil for an imprecise yet to come moment. When the music played and the crowd gathered, it seemed time for the party to begin. But this wedding is not about you and me. And while our society centers on the bride, Jesus' parable centers on the bridegroom. The bridegroom is Christ, and this delay is Jesus' way of teaching us that we do not know the "when" of His coming again. Readiness in this parable is pictured by the extra oil taken by the faithful. In other places Jesus' favorite exhortation is "Watch and Pray." Here the exhortation is "Be ready for the Bridegroom." Focus on Jesus and His nearness, not on me and my pleasure.

“And He will come again, in glory, to judge the living and the dead.” So we confess the end of days in our great creed. In anticipation of that day the Church has always prayed, “Even so Lord Jesus, quickly come.” The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field for which the faithful sell all that they have so they can buy it. The Kingdom is the “Pearl of greatest price” which we confess in our next hymn as the shining portal of heaven. Jesus is the pearl and Jesus is the door to heaven. When we join God’s Church in anticipating the nearness and the coming of Jesus, we look forward to the fulfillment of all God’s promises and the completion of His Kingdom. We don’t just pray, “Thy Kingdom come,” we yearn for His Kingdom and the completion of our stewardship.

O how much the Father loves you.....He has entrusted this world to your care and keeping, To be a good steward is to steward so well that you can’t wait to give to God the Ten talents He gave you, with which you have made ten talents more. We don’t just sing: “Jesus, Jesus, only Jesus,” we live with Him as our rock, our center and our future. It is so easy to be one of the unwise young women because then you can enjoy what you want, when you want to. But it is an enjoyment as empty as their flasks of oil. You are God’s steward and you are privileged to serve in His Kingdom. And be ready on His clock, not yours.

The Bridegroom comes, at a day and hour known only to the Father. That you don’t know that day or hour has never been a stewardship issue. Our stewardship is as the watching and praying people of God. The Bridegroom is coming and every eye will see Him. He comes, not to catch us in our sins and failings, but to welcome us to the glory He has prepared for us. He Who comes is the One Who washed you clean in His own precious blood. The Bridegroom is coming and His nearness should shape every day of my life. My stewardship goes on until that moment when the trumpet will sound. In fact every stewarding deed and thought in my life falls into its rightful shape when it begins with, “The King is coming. Amen. Come Lord Jesus, come quickly.”

- 1 **“Wake, awake, for night is flying,”**
The watchmen on the heights are
crying;
 “Awake, Jerusalem, arise!”
Midnight hears the welcome voices
And at the thrilling cry rejoices:
 “Oh, where are ye, ye virgins wise?
The Bridegroom comes, awake!
Your lamps with gladness take!
 Alleluia!
With bridal care
Yourselves prepare
To meet the Bridegroom, who is near.”
- 2 Zion hears the watchmen singing,
And all her heart with joy is springing;
 She wakes, she rises from her gloom.
For her Lord comes down all-glorious,
The strong in grace, in truth victorious;
 Her star is ris’n, her light is come.
Now come, Thou Blessèd One,
Lord Jesus, God’s own Son,
 Hail! Hosanna!
We enter all
The wedding hall
To eat the Supper at Thy call.

- 3 Now let all the heav’ns adore Thee,
Let saints and angels sing before Thee
 With harp and cymbals’ clearest tone.
Of one pearl each shining portal,
Where, joining with the choir immortal,
 We gather round Thy radiant throne.
No eye has seen the light,
No ear has heard the might
 Of Thy glory;
Therefore will we
Eternally
Sing hymns of praise and joy to Thee!

**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.**

OFFERING

Offerings support the church's mission work – both here and through our many partners. Offerings may be placed in the box at the sanctuary entrance or sent to the church through our website or the mail. **Fellowship Cards** help us welcome new people and track participation. Please fill one out and place it in the offering box following the service.

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

The response to each petition will be:

“let us pray to the Lord:”

“Lord, have mercy.”

**Let the vineyards be fruitful, Lord,
And fill to the brim our cup of blessing.
Gather a harvest from the seeds that were sown,
That we may be fed with the bread of life.
Gather the hopes and the dreams of all;
Unite them with the prayers we offer now.
Grace our table with Your presence, and give us
A foretaste of the feast to come.**



THE LITURGY OF HOLY COMMUNION

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who, out of love for His fallen creation, humbled Himself by taking on the form of a servant, becoming obedient unto death, even death upon a cross. Risen from the dead, He has freed us from eternal death and given us life everlasting. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord God of pow'r and might:
Heaven and earth are full of Your glory.
Hosanna. Hosanna.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

LSB 161

Blessed are You, Lord of heaven and earth, for You have had mercy on those whom You created and sent Your only-begotten Son into our flesh to bear our sin and be our Savior. With repentant joy we receive the salvation accomplished for us by the all-availing sacrifice of His body and His blood on the cross.

Gathered in the name and the remembrance of Jesus, we beg You, O Lord, to forgive, renew, and strengthen us with Your Word and Spirit. Grant us faithfully to eat His body and drink His blood as He bids us do in His own testament. Gather us together, we pray, from the ends of the earth to celebrate with all the faithful the marriage feast of the Lamb in His kingdom, which has no end. Graciously receive our prayers; deliver and preserve us. To You alone, O Father, be all glory, honor, and worship, with the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

THE WORDS OF OUR LORD

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."

As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

O Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, in giving us Your body and blood to eat and to drink, You lead us to remember and confess Your holy cross and passion, Your blessed death, Your rest in the tomb, Your resurrection from the dead, Your ascension into heaven, and Your coming for the final judgment. So remember us in Your kingdom and teach us to pray:

LORD'S PRAYER

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.

PAX DOMINI

LSB 163

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

Amen.

AGNUS DEI

LSB 163

**Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world; grant us peace.**

DISTRIBUTION (Be seated)

Those wishing to commune at the foot of the steps should come forward first. Those wishing to commune at the altar rail should come forward after these, front rows first, from both sides of the aisle. After receiving, all should return to their seats. A common dismissal will be given at the end.

COMMUNION HYMN

Soul, Adorn Yourself with Gladness

LSB 636

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1 Soul, adorn yourself with gladness,
Leave the gloomy haunts of sadness,
Come into the daylight's splendor,
There with joy your praises render.
Bless the One whose grace unbounded
This amazing banquet founded;
He, though heav'nly, high, and holy,
Deigns to dwell with you most lowly.</p> | <p>2 Hasten as a bride to meet Him,
And with loving rev'ence greet Him.
For with words of life immortal
He is knocking at your portal.
Open wide the gates before Him,
Saying, as you there adore Him:
Grant, Lord, that I now receive You,
That I nevermore will leave You.</p> |
|--|---|

**3 He who craves a precious treasure
Neither cost nor pain will measure;
But the priceless gifts of heaven
God to us has freely given.
Though the wealth of earth were
proffered,
None could buy the gifts here offered:
Christ's true body, for you riven,
And His blood, for you once given.**

**4 Now in faith I humbly ponder
Over this surpassing wonder
That the bread of life is boundless
Though the souls it feeds are
countless:
With the choicest wine of heaven
Christ's own blood to us is given.
Oh, most glorious consolation,
Pledge and seal of my salvation!**

**5 Jesus, source of lasting pleasure,
Truest friend, and dearest treasure,
Peace beyond all understanding,
Joy into all life expanding:
Humbly now, I bow before You;
Love incarnate, I adore You;
Worthily let me receive You
And, so favored, never leave You.**

**6 Jesus, sun of life, my splendor,
Jesus, friend of friends, most tender,
Jesus, joy of my desiring,
Fount of life, my soul inspiring:
At Your feet I cry, my maker,
Let me be a fit partaker
Of this blessed food from heaven,
For our good, Your glory, given.**

**7 Lord, by love and mercy driven,
You once left Your throne in heaven
On the cross for me to languish
And to die in bitter anguish,
To forego all joy and gladness
And to shed Your blood in sadness.
By this blood redeemed and living,
Lord, I praise You with thanksgiving.**

**8 Jesus, bread of life, I pray You,
Let me gladly here obey You.
By Your love I am invited,
Be Your love with love requited;
By this Supper let me measure,
Lord, how vast and deep love's
treasure.
Through the gift of grace You give me
As Your guest in heav'n receive me.**

NUNC DIMITTIS (Stand)

LSB 165

**Lord, now You let Your servant go in peace; Your word has been fulfilled.
My own eyes have seen the salvation which You have prepared in the sight of ev'ry
people:
A light to reveal You to the nations and the glory of Your people Israel.
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen**

POST-COMMUNION COLLECT

BENEDICTION

SENDING HYMN

Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers

LSB 515

**1 Rejoice, rejoice, believers,
And let your lights appear;
The evening is advancing,
And darker night is near.
The Bridegroom is arising
And soon is drawing nigh.
Up, pray and watch and wrestle;
At midnight comes the cry.**

**2 The watchers on the mountain
Proclaim the Bridegroom near;
Go forth as He approaches
With alleluias clear.
The marriage feast is waiting;
The gates wide open stand.
Arise, O heirs of glory;
The Bridegroom is at hand.**

**3 The saints, who here in patience
Their cross and suff'rings bore,
Shall live and reign forever
When sorrow is no more.
Around the throne of glory
The Lamb they shall behold;
In triumph cast before Him
Their diadems of gold.**

**4 Our hope and expectation,
O Jesus, now appear;
Arise, O Sun so longed for,
O'er this benighted sphere.
With hearts and hands uplifted,
We plead, O Lord, to see
The day of earth's redemption
That sets Your people free!**

ANNOUNCEMENTS (Be seated)

DISMISSAL

POSTLUDE

Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers

Setting: Donald Rotermund

Those serving:

Sunday, November 5, 8:00 a.m.:

Greeter: Bob Juenger

Comm. assist: Jim Easterly

Reader: Rich Kauzlarich

10:30 a.m.:

Greeter: Lynn Jacquez

Comm. assist: Jill Hecht

Reader: Lynn Jacquez

Acolyte: Noah Starck

AV Assistants: Hannes Buuck

Andreas Buuck

Acknowledgements

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- 516 Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying Text: tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–78, alt. Text and tune: Philipp Nicolai, 1556–1608 Text and tune: Public domain
- 636 Soul, Adorn Yourself with Gladness Text: Johann Franck, 1618–77; (sts. 1, 4–5): tr. Lutheran Book of Worship, 1978; (sts. 2–3, 6–8): tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–78, alt. Tune: Johann Crüger, 1598–1662 Text (sts. 1, 4–5): © 1978 Lutheran Book of Worship. Used by permission: LSB Hymn License no. 110005326 Text (sts. 2–3, 6–8) and tune: Public domain
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