

GATHERING AROUND GOD'S WORD

PRAYER: Jesus, our companion in life, death and resurrection, call us into your way of life. Guide us away from the ways of the world that tempt us to focus only on ourselves and our own gain. May we be open to new ways of thinking, so that we might be reconciled and restored to one another. Lead us in your ways of serving others, so that we might participate in your kingdom here on earth. In your precious name, we pray. Amen.

GREETING: This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it! Welcome to worship this fall Sunday from wherever you are watching. We pray the Spirit will speak to you in ways that bring you comfort and peace, and perhaps even some nudging and challenging.

A reminder to the congregation that we will have our Stated Congregational Meeting on November 1 as planned. How that meeting will take place is still in discussion, but as we finalize details, we will pass on that information.

In our prayers this week,

*we ask for the comfort of the Spirit to be with the family of Alice Brooks and they return to Texas for her memorial service

*we remember the family of Bill Pitts as they mourn the loss of Bill

*remember Cleta Neill, Sherry's sister, who has tested positive for COVID19

*we lift up our country and leaders, asking that the care of people rise above political agendas

CALL TO WORSHIP: The world tells us we need to be part of something big and bold; so, we reply, we belong to God. The world tells us to put our hope in wealth and success; but we reply, we put our faith and trust in Jesus. The world tells us to seek our own gain and satisfaction, instead, we reply, we seek joy in the Spirit of God. We choose to follow in the way of Jesus Christ our Lord, the path that leads us away from the ways of the world.

VOLUNTARY

Melody Davis

OPENING HYMN 4 *Holy God, We Praise Your Name*

CALL TO CONFESSION: We know, despite our sincere efforts to live in God's way, that all too easily we slip off the path to the kingdom. Trusting that God will answer our prayers and forgive us, let us confess our sins, as we pray together,

PRAYER OF CONFESSION: God of justice, hear our prayers: Called to treat all people equally, we often take sides and pick favorites; chosen to be your children, all too often we arrogantly assume others are not so honored; challenged to be examples of faith, more than we like, we reveal our worst natures to our families and friends. Forgive us. Enable us to stop putting you to the test, so we can open our hearts to your healing touch of compassion and hope. As Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, has given all for us, may we give ourselves to you - confidently, completely, faithfully. Amen

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS: Hear the good news: the One who created goodness and beauty is also the One who shows no partiality, but offers grace and peace to all. God has heard our prayers and done the very thing we asked - forgiven us, healed us, restored us. Thanks be to God. Amen.

RESPONSE 582 *Glory to God, Whose Goodness Shines on Me*

PROCLAIMING GOD'S WORD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION: Gracious God, as your church and children, we know that you have declared your kingdom is among us. Open our eyes to see it, our ears to hear it, our hearts to hold it, and our hands to serve it. Speak to us now through your Spirit and remind us again of the family you created us to be. In the name of the One who saves us, we pray, Amen.

EPISTLE READING (*Pew Bible, page 203*)

1 Thessalonians 1: 1-10

This week we hear another one of Paul's letters of encouragement written to the Christians in Thessalonica, reminding them that as they have kept him and Silvanus and Timothy in their prayer, so too do they remember their friends. Listen for the Word of the Lord.

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. ²We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly ³remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sake. ⁶And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, ⁷so that you

became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. ⁸For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. ⁹For the people of those regions report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, ¹⁰and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

ANTHEM We Are Called Mark Hayes
Sanctuary Choir, Yasmine Bougach, Violin, Sean Turner, Hand Drum

NEW TESTAMENT READING (*Pew Bible, page 24*) Matthew 22: 15-22
This week brings us that famous (infamous?) incident from Matthew 22, wherein the Pharisees try to trap Jesus by asking if it is lawful to pay taxes to the emperor. They know, as does Jesus, as does the biblical scholar, that for Jesus to say no puts him in direct opposition to the government, and for him to say yes breaks the hearts of the poor who have no money to pay. He would also anger the Pharisees and the crowds. A conundrum indeed.

¹⁵Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. ¹⁶So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. ¹⁷Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?” ¹⁸But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, “Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? ¹⁹Show me the coin used for the tax.” And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰Then he said to them, “Whose head is this, and whose title?” ²¹They answered, “The emperor’s.” Then he said to them, “Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” ²²When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

*HYMN (*LUYH*) 33 *He is Exalted*

SERMON *I Pledge Allegiance* Sherry Holloman

RESPONDING TO GOD’S WORD

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH inspired by *1 John*
We believe in God the Father, who reveals his love to us in Christ. We believe in God the Son, who pours out God's Holy Spirit on us. We believe in the Holy Spirit, who teaches us God's truth. We believe in one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH AND THE LORD'S PRAYER: We remember before God our country and its people and give thanks for them and for all people. Hear our prayer.

We pray that everywhere on earth Christ's Church may speak out without fear for peace and the rights and dignity of the human person. Hear our prayer.

We pray that justice, love and responsible freedom may be the basis of the social order in the world and in our country, that all may live in peace and security. Hear our prayer.

We pray that all humanity may share equitably in the world's material and spiritual goods, and that the state and civic organizations may help and protect the weak and the victims of calamities, and all peoples. Hear our prayer.

We pray that all citizens may have a strong sense of civic responsibility and actively participate toward the common welfare. Hear our prayer

We pray that Christ's Church in our country may bear witness to God's kingdom; that our country may play a role of honor in the family of nations and cooperate to world peace and unity. Hear our prayer.

We pray for our families, friends, neighbors and all who are in need of God's healing and hope-filled message, be that for body, spirit or mind. We especially lift before God Alice and Bill's family and Cleta. Hear our prayer.

God, you love people and people are your concern. Make us share in your care through your Son who became one of us, and whose name we pray, saying: **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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.**

OFFERTORY SENTENCE: May we always give our gifts to God as a thank offering for the magnificent gift of Jesus so generously given to us.

PRESENTATION OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS

OFFERTORY

Let the People of God
Sanctuary Choir

Ken Medema

*RESPONSE 708 *We Give Thee But Thine Own*

*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING: You do not choose favorites, God, but pour out your blessings on all your children, trusting that we will empty our hearts, our lives, our

treasure in meeting the needs of those around us. Bless these gifts, and use them to bring healing and hope to your people. Amen.

GOING INTO THE WORLD WITH GOD'S WORD

***DISMISSAL AND BENEDICTION:** Go now as those who have found favor in the sight of God. Be imitators of Jesus Christ and an example to all of the life of faith. To the world in which you live, give your love and service, and to God, give all that you are and all that you shall be.

And may the glory of God's goodness be revealed to us;
may the grace and peace of Jesus Christ take root in us;
and may the inspiration of the Holy Spirit fill us with joy.

***CLOSING HYMN 757** *Today We are Called to be Disciples*