



Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost October 18, 2020

Introduction

When the Pharisees try to trap Jesus, he tells them to give the emperor what belongs to him and to God what belongs to God. To gather for worship reminds us that our ultimate allegiance is to God rather than to any earthly authority. Created in the image of God, we offer our entire selves in the service of God and for the sake of the world.

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity one God, Father, ✝ Son, and Holy Spirit,
whose steadfast love is everlasting,
whose faithfulness endures from generation to generation. **Amen.**

Trusting in the mercy of God, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Reconciling God,

**we confess that we do not trust your abundance,
and we deny your presence in our lives.**

We place our hope in ourselves and rely on our own efforts.

We fail to believe that you provide enough for all.

We abuse your good creation for our own benefit.

We fear difference and do not welcome others as you have welcomed us.

We sin in thought, word, and deed.

By your grace, forgive us; through your love, renew us;

and in your Spirit, lead us;

so that we may live and serve you in newness of life. Amen.

Beloved of God,

by the radical abundance of divine mercy

we have peace with God through ✝ Christ Jesus,

through whom we have obtained grace upon grace.

Our sins are forgiven. Let us live now in hope.

For hope does not disappoint,

because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Gathering Hymn ELW # 883 / LBW # 245 *All People That on Earth Do Dwell*

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Prayer of the Day

Sovereign God, raise your throne in our hearts. Created by you, let us live in your image; created for you, let us act for your glory; redeemed by you, let us give you what is yours, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Psalmody: Psalm 96:1-9

- ¹Sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all the earth.
- ²**Sing to the LORD, bless the name of the LORD;
proclaim God's salvation from day to day.**
- ³Declare God's glory among the nations
and God's wonders among all peoples.
- ⁴**For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised,
more to be feared than all gods.**
- ⁵As for all the gods of the nations, they are but idols;
but you, O LORD, have made the heavens.
- ⁶**Majesty and magnificence are in your presence;
power and splendor are in your sanctuary.**
- ⁷Ascribe to the LORD, you families of the peoples,
ascribe to the LORD honor and power.
- ⁸**Ascribe to the LORD the honor due the holy name;
bring offerings and enter the courts of the LORD.**
- ⁹Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness;
tremble before the LORD, all the earth.

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Most likely this letter is the first written by Paul. Paul gives pastoral encouragement and reassurances to new Christians living in an antagonistic environment. Their commitment of faith, love, and hope makes them a model for other new Christian communities.

Read the text [here](#).

Gospel: Matthew 22:15-22

After Jesus begins teaching in the temple, religious leaders try to trap him with questions. First they ask if God's people should pay taxes to an earthly tyrant like Caesar.

Read the text [here](#).

Reflection on the Text

Faith, Hope, and Love. Paul writes about these often. Paul seems to think that they are somehow important. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul tells us that Faith, Hope, and Love remain, and that the greatest of these is Love.

In Paul's first letter to the church in Thessalonica, Paul begins by giving thanks for their work. They are a church that has thrived in the in the face of persecution, and have continued to live in faith and hope, and to share love for one another. Paul gives them praise for their perseverance, in spite of all that is going on.

It might make you wonder what Paul would say about the modern-day Church. Have we learned to love on another so that no one among us is hungry or in need? Have we learned to welcome the stranger as one of our own? Have put our faith in God, through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? Do we have hope, in Christ, so that we put our brothers and sisters ahead of ourselves, knowing that Christ died for our sins so that we could love one another?

Or would Paul find that we are still stuck on the law, beating and imprisoning others who do not fit our interpretation of the law? Would Paul find that we are so wrapped up in ourselves that we do not take time to worship God, and take up an offering so that we can help others? Where would Paul find us placing our faith, our hope? Would Paul find love in our actions?

I think, if we are honest, that just hearing those words should give us pause. We admit in our confession that we are not all that God wants us to be. We admit that we sin in thought, word, and deed. We admit these things and we ask for forgiveness. But true repentance means that we are also willing to change our ways, to do better, to be more faithful, to love one another better that we have in the past.

This letter is one of Paul's first writings and is written to one of the churches Paul founded. In the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, we hear about Paul and Silas arriving in Thessalonica. Paul preaches in the synagogue, as was his practice, and converts many to the Gospel of Jesus. Soon, however, the leaders of the synagogue become upset and try to have Paul and Silas arrested.

Instead, the new believers help them escape but they continue to believe. They take Paul's preaching to heart and become a church Paul is proud of, as we can tell by the way he greets them in this letter. In spite of turmoil in their own community, this young, start-up church imitates Paul and follows his preaching. They have Faith in God; they have Hope in the Spirit, and they show the Love of Jesus to everyone.

If the same cannot be said about us, the modern-day church in this country, then we are not doing the work Paul set before the churches he founded (from which we are descended). Our faith should be in God, through his Son, Jesus, who died on a cross for our sakes, and was raised on the third day so that we might have everlasting life.

Our hope should be in the work of the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus sent to us to bring and build up our faith. Love should be an action of our hearts to all, not just to those who look like us, or those who think like us, or those who vote like us. Our love should be for everyone – friend, family, and stranger.

Paul gives thanks because he sees and hears about these things happening in Thessalonica. We might hope that Paul would find some things to give thanks about when he hears of us.

Jesus, in our Gospel texts, tells us to, “Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

We are made in the image of God and are called to imitate God; to imitate Jesus, and to imitate Paul. We are called to love one another. We are called to give God the Glory, the praise, and thanks for all things. To share God’s love with all, just as it is freely given to you. We are called to be faithful in all that we do, and to plant seeds of hope rather than despair.

We are reminded of this in the words of the hymn:
*We give thee but thine own, whate'er the gift may be;
all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.*

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Hymn of the Day ELW # 686 / LBW # 410

We Give Thee but Thine Own

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Apostles’ Creed

We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s 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 to the dead. On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

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

Prayers of Intercession

With confidence in God's grace and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

Gracious God, you call us by name and invite us to share your good news. Send your Holy Spirit among preachers, missionaries, and evangelists. We give thanks for the witness of your servant Luke, the evangelist, whom the church commemorates today. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of praise, the heavens and all creation declare your salvation. From the rising of the sun to its setting, may the whole universe show forth your goodness. Raise up devoted stewards of all that you have made. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of all, may your word of justice sound forth in every place. Restore divided nations and communities with reconciling truth. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of light, we pray for those living with pain, illness, isolation, grief, anger, or doubt especially those we name now. Join their voices in a new song, assuring them that you call them each by name. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of truth, you show no partiality. May your spirit guide the work of justices, magistrates, court officials, and all vocations of the law, that your promise of restoration may be known. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Living God, as you raised Jesus from the dead, so raise up those who have died in you. We give thanks for their witness, confident of your rescuing welcome for all. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Listen as we call on you, O God, and enfold in your loving arms all for whom we pray, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**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.

Closing Hymn ELW #825 / LBW # 252

You Servants of God

Listen and sing along [here](#).

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Today's reflection was written by Pastor Ray Sipe.