

**ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**Aitkin, Minnesota**  
**November 19, 2023**  
**Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost**  
**ONLINE ORDER OF WORSHIP**

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

C **Amen.**

P Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

P Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C **who made heaven and earth.**

P I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,

C **and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.**

P O almighty God, merciful Father,

C **I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.**

P Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

## Introit

*Introit*

Hear my prayer, O LORD; give ear to my pleas for mercy!

In your faithfulness answer me, in your righteousness!

Enter not into judgment with your servant,  
for no one living is righteous before you.

I remember the days of old; I meditate on all that you have done; I ponder the work of your hands.

I stretch out my hands to you;

my soul thirsts for you like a | parched land.

Teach me to do your will, for you | are my God!\*

Let your good Spirit lead me on | level ground!

For your name's sake, O LORD, pre- | serve my life!\*

In your righteousness bring my soul out of | trouble!

**Glory be to the Father and | to the Son\***

**and to the Holy | Spirit;**

**as it was in the be- | ginning,\***

**is now, and will be forever. | Amen.**

Hear my prayer, O LORD; give ear to my pleas for mercy!

In your faithfulness answer me, in your |  
righteousness!

## Collect of the Day

*Proper 28 (Year A)*

P Let us pray.

Almighty and ever-living God, You have given exceedingly great and precious promises to those who trust in You. Dispel from us the works of darkness and grant us to live in the light of Your Son, Jesus Christ, that our faith may never be found

wanting; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C Amen.**

**Old Testament Reading**

*Zephaniah 1:7–16*

Be silent before the Lord GOD!

For the day of the LORD is near;  
the LORD has prepared a sacrifice  
and consecrated his guests.

And on the day of the LORD's sacrifice—  
"I will punish the officials and the king's sons  
and all who array themselves in foreign attire.

On that day I will punish  
everyone who leaps over the threshold,  
and those who fill their master's house  
with violence and fraud.

"On that day," declares the LORD,  
"a cry will be heard from the Fish Gate,  
a wail from the Second Quarter,  
a loud crash from the hills.

Wail, O inhabitants of the Mortar!  
For all the traders are no more;  
all who weigh out silver are cut off.

At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps,  
and I will punish the men  
who are complacent,  
those who say in their hearts,  
'The LORD will not do good,  
nor will he do ill.'

Their goods shall be plundered,  
and their houses laid waste.

Though they build houses,  
they shall not inhabit them;  
though they plant vineyards,  
they shall not drink wine from them.”  
The great day of the LORD is near,  
near and hastening fast;  
the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter;  
the mighty man cries aloud there.  
A day of wrath is that day,  
a day of distress and anguish,  
a day of ruin and devastation,  
a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of clouds and thick darkness,  
a day of trumpet blast and battle cry  
against the fortified cities  
and against the lofty battlements.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

## **Epistle**

*1 Thessalonians 5:1–11*

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let

us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

### **Holy Gospel**

*Matthew 25:14–30*

[Jesus said:] “For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master’s money. Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy

of your master.’ And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sowed and gather where I scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C **Praise be to Thee, O Christ.**

### **Apostles’ Creed**

C **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 Text – Matthew 25:14-30**

#### **Theme – What Do We Do As We Wait?**

**[Delay in starting sermon.]** We don't like to wait, do we? We don't like waiting in line. We don't like waiting for a web page to load. We don't like waiting for our meal to be served at a restaurant. And, we don't like waiting for the pastor to start the sermon. Maybe more so, we don't like waiting for the pastor to end the sermon. "Fast" is big business in our world today: fast food, fast internet, fast church. Don't make me wait! Pastor, keep it short and sweet and to the point!

Last week, the parable that served as our text talked about waiting, waiting for the end, waiting not for the end of a sermon, but waiting for the day when Jesus

will return and bring an end to the world. Many fear that day, after all it is going to be “Judgment Day.” The way Jesus describes it, though, for those who believe in Him it will be a “Joyful Day,” the kind of joy that we associate with a wedding feast. With faith in our hearts, we can look forward to that day. With God’s help, we can wait for it, not in fear, but with joyful anticipation.

The question the parable in our text answers is this: “What do we do until that day comes?” You see, Christianity isn’t just about getting into heaven in the hereafter. Christianity is also about how do we live our lives in the here and now.

In the parable, we hear about three servants. The first two servants had a totally different view of the master than the third servant had. The third servant thought the master was **“a hard man, reaping where [he] did not sow, and gathering where [he] scattered no seed”** (Matthew 25:24). We don’t know if the master was really like that, though. In fact, the master’s actions in the parable seems to indicate that he was not a **“hard man.”** He gave each of the servants quite a sum of money. A talent was more than what an average worker of that day made in a year. And the master gives each of the servants a varying number of these talents.

The first two servants don’t seem concerned about what the master is going to think when he returns. They simply go out and put what they had been given to good use. They did something with it that earned 100% return. The master was happy with those first two servants, saying to each of them, **“Well done, good and faithful**



**servant**” (Matthew 25:21 & 23). The master doesn’t take back what they had received and what they had earned. In fact, the master gives them more. That doesn’t sound like a **“hard man”** to me!

Well, who is our master? He is our God, of course! How do we think of Him? The answer to that question makes all the difference in the world. If we think of Him as a **“hard man”** like the third servant thought of his master, that says something. If we live in fear of His punishment, that says something. If we think we have to earn His love, that says something.

God is not a “taking God;” He is a “giving God.” All that we have is from Him. If He didn’t give it, we wouldn’t have it. All is a gift from Him, for us to use. To some He gives more and to some He give less, as in the parable. He gives what He gives to each of us because He truly know us. He gives what we need, but never gives us more than we can handle. He gives to us, not because we deserve it.

Remember what we confess in the catechism when we are talking about 1<sup>st</sup> article gifts from God: **“All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me.”** Just as it is in the parable, it is all gift. We don’t’ deserve God’s gifts. What we deserve is death because of our sin.

So that we don’t get what we deserve, God not only gives us all that we have, He also gave His Son. Jesus came and gave His life for us on the cross. He took upon Himself all the **“wrath”** that we hear about in our Old

Testament lesson for today from the book of Zephaniah. He took upon Himself all the **“distress and anguish,”** all the **“ruin and devastation,”** all the **“darkness and gloom”** (Zephaniah 1:15) that we deserve. That way He can give us a new life to live, not in fear, but in joy and confidence.

And as if that is not enough: He gives us more! He gives us His Holy Spirit who gives us the faith we need to receive the forgiveness and life that Jesus wants to give us. The Holy Spirit also helps us to use the **“1<sup>st</sup> Article gifts”** that God has given to us to the glory of God and for the benefit of others.

Knowing who our master is and what He is like makes all the difference! We don't need to wait in fear for Him to return. We can look forward to that day when He will say to us and all who believe in Him: **“Well done, good and faithful servant ... Enter into the joy of your master”** (Matthew 25:21 & 23). AMEN

P The peace of God, which passes all understanding,  
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

C **Amen.**

### **Prayer of the Church**

Lord God, enter not into judgment with Your servants, for no one living is righteous before You. Have mercy on those haunted by guilt and shame, and faithfully convince them of Your grace and holiness for them in Christ Jesus.

Teach us to do Your will, for You are our God. Strengthen pastors to meditate on all You have done and proclaim Your Word in its truth and purity, that Your good

Spirit may lead us on level ground, holy and righteous before You.

Father in heaven, You have made us children of the light and of the day. Bless our homes, especially parents as they teach their children Your ways, that Your people may walk as those armored in faith, love and salvation.

Holy God, a nation that despises You will be as a sacrifice to others, for it has rejected You as its strength and shield. Grant repentance in our land, that our laws may be just, our transactions honest and our love for others fervent.

Almighty God, give ear to our pleas on behalf of the afflicted [*including* \_\_\_\_\_]. For Your name's sake, preserve their life and grant them healing according to Your will. In Your righteousness, strengthen their faith through all trials and bring their souls out of trouble.

awake or asleep, we might live with Him. Receive our thanks for Your kindness to all who have died in the faith. Comfort those who mourn with the consolation that all who die in Christ live with Him forever.

God of grace, preserve us from the temptation to consider You a hard and unmerciful master. Keep us mindful that You give us every good thing in abundance, most of all a place in Your household; for the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## Lord's Prayer

**C 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.**

## Benediction

*LSB 202*

**P** The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make His face shine upon you and be  
gracious unto you.  
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and T  
give you peace.  
**C Amen.**

## Acknowledgments

Divine Service, Setting Three from Lutheran Service Book  
Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy  
Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing  
ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.  
Created by Lutheran Service Builder © 2023 Concordia Publishing House.