

October 18th Worship
20th Sunday After Pentecost

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
who creates, redeems, and sustains us and all of
creation.

Amen.

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of
one another.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Faithful God,

have mercy on us.

**We confess that we are captive to sin
and cannot free ourselves.**

**We turn from your loving embrace
and go our own ways.**

**We pass judgment on one another
before examining ourselves.**

**We place our own needs before those of our
neighbors.**

We keep your gift of salvation to ourselves.

**Make us humble, cast away our transgressions,
and turn us again to life in you
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.**

Amen.

God hears the cries of all who call out in need,
and through his death and resurrection,
Christ has made us his own.

Hear the truth that God proclaims:

Your sins are forgiven in the name of † Jesus
Christ.

Led by the Holy Spirit, live in freedom and newness
to do God's work in the world.

Amen.

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.

Lesson – Psalm 96:1-13

¹Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth.

²Sing 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.

⁴For 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.

⁶Majesty 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.

⁸Ascribe 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.

¹⁰Tell it out among the nations: "The LORD is king! The one who made the world so firm that it cannot be moved will judge the peoples with equity."

¹¹Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea thunder and all that is in it; let the field be joyful and all that is therein.

¹²Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy at your coming, O LORD, for you come to judge the earth.

¹³You will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with your truth.

Gospel – Matthew 22:15-22

¹⁵Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap [Jesus] 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.

Message

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

This gospel text brought to mind two ideas or concepts for me. The first being “our marks” and the second, “God's reminders.” That first idea, our marks, comes from this discourse that Jesus has with the Pharisees who planned to entrap him.

“They sent him their disciples along with the Herodians.” Right off the bat we’ve got ourselves a whole lot at play in this situation. It's significant that the Pharisees - the elite of the church - send their disciples along with the Herodians – the more government and politically oriented - to entrap Jesus. In this discourse that comes from their attempts, Jesus will allude to the marks on the coins they carry.

The mark on the coin defines to whom it truly belongs. It was soon that I wondered what marks it is that we carry, and quickly realized we’ve each got our own marks. What does it mean for us, this story of Jesus addressing the marks? I started to look at the different marks I can find on myself.

One of the marks that I've got is from stitches on my right thumb. I was doing dishes years ago and had my hand inside of a glass when it broke, and sliced my thumb in the process. That is perhaps the most severe injury I've ever experienced. I've never broken a bone. I've only had stitches once. But I can still see that mark.

Another Mark I have is on the back of my left calf. When I was younger, my friend Johnny was pedaling a bike and I was standing on the pegs on the back. Now, when we were younger Johnny was much bigger than my really small self was. As Johnny started to pedal faster and faster, I soon found my really small self trying to reach the shoulders of really tall Johnny as he is now pedaling the bike standing up. And I couldn't. The next thing I know my left calf is tearing some tread off of that back bike tire. It is a mark that has become a little more difficult to find, but it is a mark that is definitely there.

The marks that we have each carry a story. We've each got our own marks and we've all got our own stories to go with them. And for some of us, we think those marks maybe define us. For some of us those stories that accompany those marks may be difficult stories to think about. For some, maybe those marks are a thing we have conquered. Perhaps they're a thing we've gotten away from. Maybe it's a thing that we are going through. But each and every one of us has those marks.

See, Jesus confronts those who have confronted him with this question. They come to him and want to ask him, in an attempt to trap him, if it is okay to pay taxes. Is it okay for them to give to the emperor? Jesus flips it back on them and has them look at the mark that is on the coins that they carry. Whose mark is it? He knows that it is the mark of the Emperor.

Now we so quickly want to define ourselves, and our worth, by our money. And so they try to trap Jesus in this idea that paying taxes is this wrong thing to do. But also saying that it is the right thing to do is going to get Jesus to say the wrong thing.

But, in asking him if it is okay to pay these taxes, he turns it back on them asking them the questions that they have the easy answers to. "Whose Mark is on the coins that you carry?" They are ready to produce that coin and it is clearly the emperors.

But Jesus doesn't stop there. He doesn't just say "it's the Mark of the emperor, therefore, you should pay taxes to the emperor." You see, Jesus goes beyond saying, "give to the emperor what is the emperors."

And here is where that second idea comes that popped into my mind, mentioned earlier, comes into play. That being God's reminders.

See, because Jesus knows that they're up to something. Remember when it said, "but Jesus, aware of their malice..." Jesus is aware that they are scheming Jesus is aware that they are trying to catch him. Jesus is aware that they are up to no good. So instead of stopping at "give to the emperor what is the emperors," instead of stopping at that first idea of "whose Mark is on the coin," he goes a step further - for them and for us.

We hear now this God reminder, "give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperors, and to God the things that are Gods." In doing this, Jesus reminds them - and it's very Lutheran of him - that it can be both/and. Like Martin Luther saying that we are both simultaneously sinner and saint. This is a very Lutheran moment for Jesus. He doesn't say that it is going to be one way or the other. He says, very clearly, "give to the emperor the things that are at the emperors, but remember, don't just stop at the Mark on the coin in determining and defining your worth. But rather," and he's saying this to us as many of us, not all of them, baptized people of faith, "remember that Mark that you share." That being the Mark of baptism.

Later in worship, we will gather and we will see the video from the baptism of Aspen Emilie Langman. And in that portion of our service we will be reminded again, and again, and again, of the promise of those waters as we invite Aspen's big brother Colin to splash in the Waters of Baptism as we prayed over the waters before baptizing her. And sure enough, as we always do, we invite the children that are there to splash in the water to bring it to life. And we were given this reminder.

While we want to define ourselves, and define our worth, and declare our place, by the marks that we find in the coins in our pockets, Jesus says we are truly defined by the grace of God that we find in and the mark of the waters of baptism.

We never know where those God reminders are going to come from, and it always catches me off guard a little bit when I hear them. Earlier this week on one of my mornings to be up early with the early risers in our home I had one of these God reminder moments.

While I cherish that cuddle time of being the first one up, I would rather be sleeping in my bed. And there are days when my level of joy in those moments, isn't very high. It sometimes gets to a point even where it bubbles over a little bit. On this particular day one of our children was testing his dad a little bit and in his testing asked if he could go play downstairs.

Now, the child in question here knows how to get himself downstairs, AND he knows that it is always kind of a challenge to do this without the baby noticing because the baby will undoubtedly want to join him. After getting himself through our newly installed safety gate, instead of proceeding to the basement, he stood there on the

other side of the gate tauting his baby brother. I kindly reinforced the idea that it was okay for him to go play downstairs, “but please don’t stand there and be a little jerk to your brother.”

Disgruntled, he turned and started down the stairs. And I heard the steps stop halfway down, and I could hear the person to whom these footsteps belonged, turn around and offer up this little God reminder, when our almost 4 year old shouted up the stairs, “I think YOU are being a jerk, but I want you to know that I love you.”

He'll be four next month. And, it was the reminder that I needed. Yes, the child had bothered me just a scoosh, but also that that's the love that God has for us. Not only that, but it is the love that God in Christ Jesus has for those who came to test him. “Whose mark is on those coins. I know you're here to trap me. Just tell me who's Mark is on those coins. The emperors? Well, guess what? God loves you.”

We so often think that “give to the emperor what is the emperors and to God what is God's means that we can't do both things. Yes, we would love to tear down these structures that oppress rather than participate in them. But some of these things need to be done from within.

Jesus wanted to, in that moment, tear down the oppressive structure that was the high church and the political scene. Rather, he says “sure, participate in it, but remember whose you are. Remember that you are God’s and all that you do is God’s. And all who see what it is that you do see a reflection of what it means to be God’s.”

I saw a tweet earlier this week that said, “the reason so many young people are unchurched is because they are the ones working the Sunday brunch when church folks come in after church.” I've served in a restaurant settings. My least favorite group to serve was church people, particularly clergy.

It would do us well to remember this reminder that Jesus gives to those who are challenging him in this gospel text. It would do as well to remember the marks that we carry and the marks that we have in common with one another. It would do us well to remember the reminders that God gives us in this life, whether it's a four year old saying, “I don't want you to be a jerk, but I love you anyways” or the challenge of someone who doesn't go to church saying it's because they’ve seen you church people out public

“Give to the emperor what is the emperor's, but give to God what is God's.”

People of God, we are God’s.

This is a call and a mandate and a challenge and a reminder - we are to give ourselves to God.

That's what this is about.

That's what church is about.

That's what listening in our living rooms to worship on Sunday mornings is about.

It's about how this good news shapes us to go into God's world to see God's people as who they are - their marks and everything - and who God made them to be. And to remind them, and carry with us, that grace that God has given us to remind each and every single person that we encounter, that God loves them. Their marks, whatever they may be, do not determine their worthiness to hear that reminder that God loves them. And so do we.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Apostle’s Creed

Prayers

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*). 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 (*especially*). 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

Blessing

Mothering God,
Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit,
bless you and lead you into the way of truth and life.

Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Remember the poor.

Thanks be to God

At Home Communion Liturgy

+WORDS OF INSTITUTION+

(Holding the bread) In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

(Holding the cup) Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this in remembrance of me." When we eat this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

(Tear the bread, share with each person – invite them to dip into the cup of wine/grace juice) +

LORD'S PRAYER +

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION +

In the mystery of Christ's resurrection, you shine light into darkness, provide water that brings new life, and give bread that nourishes your people and frees from our fear. Help us be witnesses of the resurrection and empower us to show your glory to all the world, through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord. AMEN +

BLESSING EACH OTHER +

(Using your pointer finger, dip it in the bowl of water, and make the sign of the cross on another's forehead or the back of their hand)

"Child of God, marked as God's own, Jesus loves you, and will love you forever. AMEN"

Take turns until each person has been blessed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS!

Opportunities to Connect!

Mondays: Coffee and Conversation in the Upper Fellowship Hall at 9 am

Tuesdays: Lunch and Laughter

Wednesdays: Youth and Family Ministries throughout the Day

Thursdays: Sanctuary open for "Prayer Around the Cross"

*Communion is available each day by appointment

*All opportunities require a mask and spacing precautions will be in place

Church Pews available for purchase

If you would like your very own piece of Good Shepherd history in the form of a pew please contact the church office.

The month of October is your opportunity to claim a pew. If you'd like to claim it with your dollars you can do that. If you want to claim it because you put money towards them 57 years ago you can do that. We have a November 1st target date of having the pews out of the building.

If you'd like to purchase a chair, chairs for your family, a row of chairs, or a section of chairs we will be happy to have those conversations as well.. Each chair costs \$70. We've already had 30 chairs purchased.

Any funds raised over the cost of the chairs will be put towards the remaining balance on the Boiler Loan from the Good Shepherd Endowment Fund.