

## **Sunday, October 22, 2023 – Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost**

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### **Introduction**

In today's first reading God uses the Gentile ruler Cyrus to accomplish divine purposes. 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.

### **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.**

### **First Reading: Exodus 33:12-23**

<sup>12</sup>Moses said to the LORD, "See, you have said to me, 'Bring up this people'; but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.' <sup>13</sup>Now if I have found favor in your sight, show me your ways, so that I may know you and find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people." <sup>14</sup>He said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." <sup>15</sup>And he said to him, "If your presence will not go, do not carry us up from here. <sup>16</sup>For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people, unless you go with us? In this way, we shall be distinct, I and your people, from every people on the face of the earth."

<sup>17</sup>The LORD said to Moses, "I will do the very thing that you have asked; for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name." <sup>18</sup>Moses said, "Show me your glory, I pray." <sup>19</sup>And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, 'The LORD'; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. <sup>20</sup>But," he said, "you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live." <sup>21</sup>And the LORD continued, "See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock; <sup>22</sup>and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; <sup>23</sup>then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen."

## Psalm 99

<sup>1</sup>The LORD is king; let the <sup>l</sup> people tremble.

The LORD is enthroned upon the cherubim; let <sup>l</sup> the earth shake.

<sup>2</sup>**The LORD, <sup>l</sup> great in Zion,  
is high a- <sup>l</sup> bove all peoples.**

<sup>3</sup>Let them confess God's name, which is <sup>l</sup> great and awesome;  
God is the <sup>l</sup> Holy One.

<sup>4</sup>**O mighty king, lover of justice, you have es- <sup>l</sup> tablished equity;  
you have executed justice and righteous- <sup>l</sup> ness in Jacob.**

<sup>5</sup>Proclaim the greatness of the LORD and fall down be- <sup>l</sup> fore God's footstool;  
God is the <sup>l</sup> Holy One.

<sup>6</sup>**Moses and Aaron among your priests, and Samuel among those who call upon  
your <sup>l</sup> name, O LORD,  
they called upon you, and you <sup>l</sup> answered them,**

<sup>7</sup>you spoke to them out of the pil- <sup>l</sup> lar of cloud;  
they kept your testimonies and the decree <sup>l</sup> that you gave them.

<sup>8</sup>**O LORD our God, you answered <sup>l</sup> them indeed;  
you were a God who forgave them, yet punished them for their <sup>l</sup> evil deeds.**

<sup>9</sup>Proclaim the greatness of the LORD and worship upon God's <sup>l</sup> holy hill;  
for the LORD our God is the <sup>l</sup> Holy One.

## Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

<sup>1</sup>Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:  
Grace to you and peace.

<sup>2</sup>We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly <sup>3</sup>remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup>For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, <sup>5</sup>because 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. <sup>6</sup>And 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, <sup>7</sup>so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. <sup>8</sup>For 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. <sup>9</sup>For 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, <sup>10</sup>and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

## **Gospel: Matthew 22:15-22**

<sup>15</sup>Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap [Jesus] in what he said. <sup>16</sup>So 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. <sup>17</sup>Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?" <sup>18</sup>But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? <sup>19</sup>Show me the coin used for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. <sup>20</sup>Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" <sup>21</sup>They 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." <sup>22</sup>When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

Prayers and introductions from  
[SundaysAndSeasons.com](http://SundaysAndSeasons.com)

## Prayers of Intercession

Trusting in the transformative power of God's loving Spirit, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

*A brief silence.*

Faithful God, your Spirit animates the church throughout the world and binds believers near and far into the body of Christ. Equip us for the work of faith, and enlarge our hearts for the labor of love. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Creating God, the sea roars, the earth rejoices, and the heavens are glad at the wonder of all you have made. Bless the work of ecologists and conservationists and all those who safeguard the riches of creation. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Sovereign God, your rule and authority is over the cosmos. As you once worked through the ruler Cyrus for the good of your people, accomplish your purposes through the work of elected leaders and public servants (*especially*). Guide them with your wisdom and compassion. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Caring God, your arms enfold all who are lonely, oppressed, despairing, sick, and suffering (*especially*). Pour out your abundant mercy on all whom this world has neglected, abandoned, and forgotten, that they may know your joy. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, all our life belongs to you. When earthly idols threaten to lead your church astray, remind us that you alone are the source of our eternal hope. Direct the work of church treasurers, councils, and all who manage financial matters. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Everlasting God, the saints of every age have sung your praise and shared your word. We give you thanks for their witness and pray that we may join them as citizens of your unending kingdom. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious God, into your hands we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your unending love and amazing grace; through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

**Amen.**

## **A reflection for this Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost**

### **What's in Your Wallet? Not Enough.**

Say the word stewardship in some congregations and people are protectively guarding their wallets faster than you can say "pledge card!" Unfortunately, too often we associate stewardship exclusively with issues of money. The good news is that God has little interest in our wallets. God wants our whole lives, wallets and all! Nevertheless, this week is prime time for stewardship campaigns in congregations around the country. The stewardship theme is reflected in our announcements, our prayers, our songs, and our readings. Today's gospel provides an ideal time to reflect on stewardship of all sorts—time, talent, and financial treasures.

The Pharisees approach Jesus in a thinly veiled attempt to trap him on issues of financial obligations to the Roman government. Their question of Jesus, simplified to the extreme, is "who gets your wallet?" If Jesus answered one way, he would be guilty of treason. If he answered the other way, he would have been considered guilty of heresy in the eyes of the religious leaders. Jesus responds by issuing a challenge of his own—give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and give to God what belongs to God. This statement challenges us to ponder: if God created the world and everything in it, what doesn't belong to God? God wants a whole lot more than just your wallet. God wants your life, wallet and all!



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LUTHERAN CHURCH