

# KOUNTZE MEMORIAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

## A CITY-WIDE CHURCH WITH A WORLD-WIDE MINISTRY

Olaf Roynesdal, Senior Pastor  
H. Ashley Hall, Associate Pastor  
Inba Inbarasu, Visitation Pastor

2650 Farnam Street  
Omaha, NE 68131-3616  
402-341-7761  
[www.kmlchurch.org](http://www.kmlchurch.org)

October 11, 2020

9:00 AM

NINETEENTH SUNDAY after PENTECOST



*In Isaiah we are given a vision of the great feast to come, when God will wipe away death forever. In Jesus' parable about a great banquet, those invited do not come, so the invitation is extended to others. In our liturgy God spreads a table before us. Even amid anxiety and hardship we rejoice in the peace of God which surpasses all understanding. With great joy we feast at the table of the Lord, and we go forth to share the wonderful invitation with others hungering and thirsting for the abundant life of God.*

# GATHERING

## PRELUDE

*Mark Jones, Organist*

## WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

*(stand)*

## CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

**P** Blessed be the Holy Trinity, one God, Father, Son † and Holy Spirit, who creates, redeems, and sustains us and all of creation.

**C** Amen.

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

*Silence is kept for reflection and self-examination.*

**P** Faithful God,

**C** 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.**

**P** 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.

**C** Amen.

- 1 **God is here! As we your people meet to offer praise and prayer, may we find in fuller measure what it is in Christ we share. Here, as in the world around us, all our varied skills and arts wait the coming of the Spirit into open minds and hearts.**
- 2 **Here are symbols to remind us of our lifelong need of grace; here are table, font, and pulpit; here the cross has central place. Here in honesty of preaching, here in silence, as in speech, here, in newness and renewal, God the Spirit comes to each.**
- 3 **Here our children find a welcome in the Shepherd's flock and fold; here as bread and wine are taken, Christ sustains us as of old. Here the servants of the Servant seek in worship to explore what it means in daily living to believe and to adore.**
- 4 **Lord of all, of church and kingdom, in an age of change and doubt, keep us faithful to the gospel; help us work your purpose out. Here, in this day's dedication, all we have to give, receive; we, who cannot live without you, we adore you! We believe!**

Text: Fred Pratt Green, 1903-2000  
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## APOSTOLIC GREETING

- ☐ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
- ☑ **And also with you.**

## HYMN OF PRAISE

### *Refrain*

**This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia,**

- 1 **Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose blood set us free to be people of God. ☑**
- 2 **Power, riches, wisdom, and strength, and honor, blessing, and glory are his. ☑**
- 3 **Sing with all the people of God, and join in the hymn of all creation: Blessing, honor, glory, and might be to God and the Lamb forever. Amen. ☑**
- 4 **For the Lamb who was slain has begun his reign. Alleluia. ☑**

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

☞ Lord of the feast,

☞ **you have prepared a table before all peoples and poured out your life with abundance. Call us again to your banquet. Strengthen us by what is honorable, just, and pure, and transform us into a people of righteousness and peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

## WORD

### FIRST READING

Isaiah 25:1-9

*After a hymn of praise acknowledging God as a shelter for the poor, the prophet portrays a wonderful victory banquet at which death—which in ancient Canaan was depicted as a monster swallowing up everyone—will be swallowed up forever. The prophet urges celebration of this victory of salvation.*

**O** Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you, I will praise your name; for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure. <sup>2</sup>For you have made the city a heap, the fortified city a ruin; the palace of aliens is a city no more, it will never be rebuilt. <sup>3</sup>Therefore strong peoples will glorify you; cities of ruthless nations will fear you. <sup>4</sup>For you have been a refuge to the poor, a refuge to the needy in their distress, a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from the heat. When the blast of the ruthless was like a winter rainstorm, <sup>5</sup>the noise of aliens like heat in a dry place, you subdued the heat with the shade of clouds; the song of the ruthless was stilled.

<sup>6</sup>On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. <sup>7</sup>And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; <sup>8</sup>he will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. <sup>9</sup>It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

☞ The word of the Lord.

☞ **Thanks be to God.**

### PSALM 23 (read responsively)

<sup>1</sup>The LORD is my shepherd;

I shall not be in want.

<sup>2</sup>**The LORD makes me lie down in green pastures  
and leads me beside still waters.**

<sup>3</sup>You restore my soul, O LORD,  
and guide me along right pathways for your name's sake.

<sup>4</sup>**Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil;  
for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me**

<sup>5</sup>You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil, and my cup is running over.

<sup>6</sup>**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.**

## THE SECOND READING

**Philippians 4:1-9**

*Though writing from prison and facing an uncertain future, Paul calls on the Philippians to rejoice and give thanks to God no matter what the circumstance. God's peace is with us and binds together our hearts and minds in Jesus Christ, especially when things around us do not seem peaceful.*

**M**y brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

<sup>2</sup>I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. <sup>3</sup>Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

<sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup>Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup>Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup>Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. <sup>9</sup>Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

**L** The word of the Lord.

**G** Thanks be to God

*(stand)*

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



**P** The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew.

**G** Glory to you, O Lord!

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## HOLY GOSPEL

Matthew 22:1-14

Jesus tells a parable indicating that the blessings of God's kingdom are available to all, but the invitation is not to be taken lightly.

Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: <sup>2</sup>“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. <sup>3</sup>He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. <sup>4</sup>Again he sent other slaves, saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.’ <sup>5</sup>But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, <sup>6</sup>while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. <sup>7</sup>The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. <sup>8</sup>Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. <sup>9</sup>Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.’ <sup>10</sup>Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

<sup>11</sup>“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, <sup>12</sup>and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless. <sup>13</sup>Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ <sup>14</sup>For many are called, but few are chosen.”

☐ The Gospel of the Lord.

☑ Praise to you, O Christ.

(sit)

## CHILDREN'S BLESSING

## SERMON

Pastor Roynesdal

(stand)

## HYMN OF THE DAY

“The King of Love My Shepherd Is”

ELW 502

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 The King of love my shepherd is,<br>whose goodness faileth never;<br>I nothing lack if I am his<br>and he is mine forever.                   | 4 In death's dark vale I fear no ill,<br>with thee, dear Lord, beside me,<br>thy rod and staff my comfort still;<br>thy cross before to guide me. |
| 2 Where streams of living water flow,<br>my ransomed soul he leadeth<br>and, where the verdant pastures grow,<br>with food celestial feedeth.  | 5 Thou spreadst a table in my sight;<br>thine unction grace bestoweth;<br>and, oh, what transport of delight<br>from thy pure chalice floweth!    |
| 3 Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,<br>but yet in love he sought me,<br>and on his shoulder gently laid,<br>and home, rejoicing, brought me. | 6 And so, through all the length of days,<br>thy goodness faileth never.<br>Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise<br>within thy house forever.     |

Text: Henry W. Baker, 1821-1877

## THE APOSTLES' CREED

**P** With the whole church, let us confess our faith.

**C** 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 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

**Response:** **P** Lord, in your mercy, **C** hear our prayer.

*(In our prayers today, during a time of silence, pray for those listed below and for others according to their needs)*

**Sympathy:** to the family and friends of Tim Daugherty; to the family and friends of Chris Saklar, father of Tracy Saklar & Kristina Placzek

**Illness:** Christine Bachman, sister of John Natvig, Richard Bock, Ron Brown, Don Burton, Carol Coffey, Carol Duncan, sister of Debbie Robinson, Mike Edris, Rodney Edwards, Samuel Garrett, Richard Holzer, father of James Holzer, Tom Jensen, Renee Johnson, daughter-in-law of Ken & Linda Johnson, Rod Kamrad, partner of Ken Johnson & Ron Brown, Harlan Kirkvold, father of Steve Kirkvold, Marcie Lafleur, Shirley McCord, Mary Olson, Lloyd Peters, Eva Reed, mother of Lorie Groenjes, Gary Rodene, Evelyn Sueper, grandmother of Melissa Osentowski, Sheri Tipton, Teresa Valentine, Dorothy Vancaster, Ed & Darlene White, Kimberly Wilson, Joanne Worm, Mary Yocum

**Other Prayers:** *Those serving in the military*—Amy Dyer, Brennan Hron, Wyatt Johnson, Michael McNeill, Daniel Milstead, Cody Ray, Sheldon Skovgaard, Michael Vutov, Joel Woosley

**Other Prayers:** *Those serving in mission*—Rev. Chandran Paul Martin, India; Dr. Stephen & Jodi Swanson, Tanzania; Rev. Rachel Ringlaben, Argentina; Meghan Brown Saavedra, Mexico; and Dan & Ginny Rath, international translators

**Other Prayers:** *Seminarrians*—Adam Klinker, Katie Larson, Giselle Loucks, Justin Perkins

## WE SHARE GOD'S PEACE

☐ The peace of Christ be with you always.

☑ And also with you.

*As we share the peace today – and you do so in your home – You are invited you to contact a fellow member by phone, email or letter. You can do that today or any time during the week. Pick someone from the church directory. We could email each other or call each other during this time when we cannot meet. Then each week select another person to contact. Try to make it someone you don't really know and get acquainted with them. Always be sure to leave your address, email, and phone number on your message in case they do not have a directory. Talk to people you know and get the names and addresses of those who might not have directories and try to contact them. By the time we meet again we will have made many new friends.*

## MEAL

(sit)

### THE OFFERING IS RECEIVED

*Please Support the overall ministry of Kountze Memorial during these difficult times. If you are able, please mail in your offering or donate on-line. Thank you!*



### OFFERTORY ANTHEM

“Meditation”

Matthews/McCabe  
Jean Johnson, *flute*

### THE TABLE IS PREPARED

(stand)

### OFFERTORY HYMN

“Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful”

ELW 184

Let the vine-yards be fruit-ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of  
bless-ing. Gath-er a har-vest from the seeds that were sown, that  
we may be fed with the bread of life. Gath-er the hopes and dreams of  
all; u-nite them with the prayers we of-fer. Grace our ta-ble  
with your pres-ence, and give us a fore-taste of the feast to come.



## OFFERING PRAYER

- P** Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things.
- C** **You have set before us these gifts of your good creation. Prepare us for your heavenly banquet, nourish us with this rich food and drink, and send us forth to set tables in the midst of a suffering world, through the bread of life, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

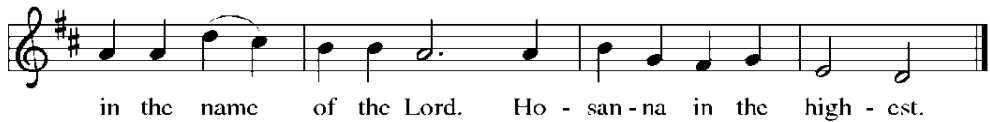
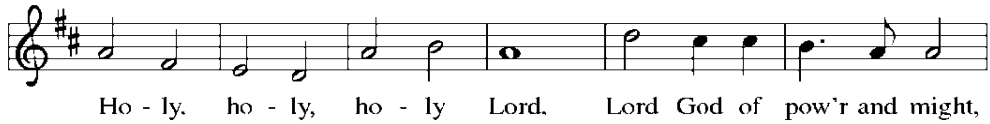
## HOLY COMMUNION

- P** The Lord be with you.
- C** **And also with you.**
- P** Lift up your hearts.
- C** **We lift them to the Lord.**
- P** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
- C** **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

## PREFACE FOR TIME AFTER PENTECOST

- P** It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,  
that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you,  
almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ;  
who on this day overcame death and the grave,  
and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life.  
And so, with all the choirs of angels,  
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,  
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

## SANCTUS



## THE WORDS OF INSTITUTION

### THE LORD'S PRAYER

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

**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.**

## INVITATION TO COMMUNION

**P** Come to the banquet table

**C** where Jesus Christ gives himself as food and drink.

(sit)

## AGNUS DEI



Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on



us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have



mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the



sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

## COMMUNION HYMN

*“Just As I Am, without One Plea”*

ELW 592

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>1 Just as I am, without one plea,<br/>but that thy blood was shed for me,<br/>and that thou bidd'st me come to thee,<br/>O Lamb of God, I come, I come.</p> <p>2 Just as I am, though tossed about<br/>with many a conflict, many a doubt,<br/>fightings and fears within, without,<br/>O Lamb of God, I come, I come.</p> | <p>3 Just as I am, thou wilt receive,<br/>wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;<br/>because thy promise I believe,<br/>O Lamb of God, I come, I come,</p> <p>4 Just as I am; thy love unknown<br/>has broken ev'ry barrier down;<br/>now to be thine, yea, thine alone,<br/>O Lamb of God, I come, I come.</p> |
|---|--|

Text: Charlotte Elliott, 1789-1871

(stand)

## PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

- ☐ We give you thanks, gracious God,
- ☑ that you once again fed us with food beyond compare, the body and blood of Christ. Lead us from this place, nourished and forgiven, into your beloved vineyard to wipe away the tears of all who hunger and thirst, guided by the example of the same Jesus Christ and led by the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

# SENDING

## BLESSING

- ☞ The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace. In the name of the Father, Son ✠, and Holy Spirit.

## THREE-FOLD AMEN

## HYMN

*“A King Planned a Party”*

**tune: ELW 881**

- 1 **A king planned a party — a feast, rich and hearty.  
He sent invitations to all of his guests.  
So what could be better than getting a letter  
And being invited and welcomed and blessed?  
"My work needs attention," said one, "Not to mention,  
My family is growing. There's so much to do."  
"My farm," said another, "Is big, and — oh, brother —  
I'm busy with hobbies I want to pursue."**
  
- 2 **"The wedding is ready! My guests are not worthy!"  
The king told his servants when nobody came.  
So go search the alleys, the hills and the valleys,  
And bring in the poor and the blind and the lame."  
That day there was singing and halls that were ringing  
With laughter and joy in that wonderful place.  
For those who attended knew how they depended  
Upon the king's generous mercy and grace.**
  
- 3 **O God, you invite us! You seek to delight us.  
Your table is ready for those who say "Yes!"  
Do we make excuses when you want to choose us  
To sit at your table, forgiven and blessed?  
And, Lord, as you welcome us into your kingdom,  
May we reach to welcome the world by your grace.  
You love the outsider. Now may we reach wider  
To welcome the world with your loving embrace.**

Biblical References: Matthew 22:1-14;  
Text: Copyright © 2014  
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## DISMISSAL

- ☞ Go in peace. Remember the poor.  
☞ Thanks be to God.

## POSTLUDE

*Mark Jones, Organist*

## Special Notice

If you plan to attend Worship in person, please call/e-mail the church office no later than noon on the Thursday before the Saturday or Sunday you want to attend. Please note that the plans set forth are subject to immediate change. You may still join us for Worship on Cox channel 13 or live streamed at <https://www.kmlchurch.org/live-streaming/>



# KOUNTZE

Memorial Lutheran Church

2650 Farnam Street  
402-341-7761

Omaha, NE 68131  
[www.kmlchurch.org](http://www.kmlchurch.org)

October 10 & 11, 2020

## Bible Sunday

**Saturday, October 17 - Pick up Bibles - 9—11 AM**

**Sunday, October 25 - Blessing of Bibles**

**For Ages 2, 4, and 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades**

Due to physical distancing restrictions, Bible Sunday will not take place in its traditional format. However, we honor the importance of this day and providing children with the Holy Scripture. We are asking that you pick up your Bibles on October 17, between 9:00 and 11:00 AM, in the west parking lot of Kountze. On October 25, there will be a Blessing of the Bibles during the televised church service. Your children

are encouraged to watch this service and have their Bibles with them at that time. Children ages 2 and 4 years of age, and those in 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades receive Bibles. For accuracy, we ask that you have your child registered for Sunday School. If you have not done so yet, registration can be found online at

<https://www.jotform.com/Kristinboe/Registration>

## Q & A with Pastor Shari Duminy

We will hold a Question and Answer session with Pastor Shari Duminy on Thursday, October 22 from 7:00-8:30 PM. It will take place in person in the sanctuary (and the Fellowship Hall if necessary) and will also be live-streamed. Tim Backora, Chair of the Call Committee, will lead the session.

Those present will have the opportunity to ask Pastor Duminy questions. Those live-streaming can email their questions to [info@kmlchurch.org](mailto:info@kmlchurch.org) (by Tuesday, October 20). Those planning to be in attendance must register by Noon on Tuesday, October 20. As has been the custom, you will enter through the Kountze Commons Link (west side) and exit through the Farnam Street doors.

## Attendance and Giving

**Saturday Attendance:** 37

**Sunday Attendance:** 9:00: 80

**Total:** 117

**Pantry Guests Served:** 757

**Medical Clinic Guests Served:** 25

**Offering:**

\$13,603.00 (Regular)      \$2,703.05 (Specials)

\$26,567.00 (Debt Reduction)

## Special Congregation Meeting

A special congregational meeting for the sole purpose of voting on calling The Reverend Shari Duminy as Associate Pastor will be held Sunday, November 1, 2020 at 10:30 AM in the sanctuary. Attendance at the meeting will also be permitted through Zoom.

## Today at Kountze

**Altar Flowers** are given to the glory of God in memory of Tim Daugherty by Linda Daugherty and Family

## Online Sunday School

Lessons are videotaped and posted on the KMLC Parents Facebook page as well as the Kountze Memorial Facebook Page. In addition, there will be pintables and activity suggestions that complement the lesson. If you would prefer to receive the lessons by email, please contact Kristin Boe at [-kristin@kmlchurch.org](mailto:-kristin@kmlchurch.org).

## Youth Forum

**Sundays at 10:10 AM**

**IN-PERSON:** The youth group will meet in-person in the green space on the 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays of the month. The 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month will be current event Sunday. Please bring an article or current event to share (must be non-COVID related).

**ZOOM:** The youth group will meet via Zoom on the 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays of the month.

## Book Group

**October 11 at 10:15 AM**

**West Parking Lot Near the Commons Entrance**

Join us after the 9:00 AM church service (weather permitting).

## Adult Forum

Starting October 18 (please note date change), members and friends of the congregation will have the opportunity to study Martin Luther's "Freedom of a Christian" (1520). The ELCA is encouraging study of this monumental text on its 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Pr. Hall will post videos for this multi-week study on a Kountze Memorial designated channel on YouTube. The text of "Freedom of a Christian" and the study guide are available for free on the ELCA's Reformation homepage: [www.elca500.org](http://www.elca500.org).

*God's grace makes a difference in our lives.*

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

Sunday	Matthew 22:1-14	Parable of the wedding feast
Monday	Isaiah 25:1-9	A prayer of thanks to God
Tuesday	Philippians 4:1-9	Paul encourages his co-workers
Wednesday	Exodus 32:1-14	The people make an idol
Thursday	Psalms 106:1-6, 19-23	A nation asks for forgiveness
Friday	Matthew 5:1-11	The Beatitudes
Saturday	Psalms 23	The Lord is my shepherd
Sunday	Matthew 22:15-22	The question of paying taxes



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Finally beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. **Philippians 4:8 (NRSV)**

### **A Prayer for the Week:**

Dear God, guide our thoughts and actions in ways that reflect your reign of goodness and mercy through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Mealtime Prayer:**

Dear God, you who promise us a feast of rich food, help us to take joy in this meal today. Amen. (Isaiah 25:6)

### **A Blessing to Give:**

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7)

Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- Talk or think about a time you went to a party filled with friends, food, and laughter.
- Would you invite someone off the street who you do not know to a party? Why or why not?
- God's love in the Bible is seen sometimes as an invitation to a great party or feast. What does this say about God?

*Read:* Matthew 22:1-14.

It is said we can have our own opinions, but not our own facts. Similarly, you can have your own message, but not your own Christian gospel. Matthew makes it clear that the good news of Jesus is powerful. God's mercy has the last word; it includes a divine judgment that says that the marginalized, the belittled, the "poor in spirit" (Matthew 5:3) will be blessed (v. 10). If we take the grace of God for granted, we not only miss the feast, we miss the fact that "many are called, but few are chosen" (v. 14). This text is from Jesus' final week before his crucifixion. The people see him as a prophet, a true messenger of God (Matthew 21:46), but soon he will suffer, be humiliated, and die. There will be false prophets who come along. They are like the guest who is not wearing the proper clothing and their message will be rejected. Our life in Christ will not be associated with messages and actions of hate, racism, prejudice or contempt for the poor. God's grace makes a difference in our lives and in the world in which we live. How does God's grace challenge your thoughts and actions toward people who are different from you?

**Pray: God of grace and mercy, cleanse us of our way of life that can become indifferent to the people you love through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

There is a theme this week about feasts and hospitality. Hospitality is receiving and treating guests and strangers in a warm, kind, and generous way. Think about what it means to show hospitality. Invite someone you may not know very well to your house for a meal.

Psalms 23 is one of the most well-known scriptures in the Bible. This psalm is the shepherd David's song to God. David likens how a shepherd cares for sheep to how God loves each one of us. Write a list of ways a shepherd cares for sheep. Look at your list and think about God caring for

**NEXT WEEK'S READINGS:** Isaiah 45:1-7; Psalms 96:1-9 [10-13]  
1 Thessalonians 1:1-10; Matthew 22:15-22