

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

November 22, 2020

9:00 AM

CHRIST THE KING



On this final Sunday of the church year our gospel is Jesus' great story of judgment. In the end, the faithful are those who served Christ by ministering to those who are poor, hungry, naked, sick, or estranged. In the first reading God is the shepherd who seeks the lost, weak, and injured and feeds them with justice. We gather this day to celebrate the reign of Christ and his victory over death, yet we await the consummation of all things yet to come. Acknowledging Christ as our merciful ruler, we go forth that his reign may be known in our loving words and deeds.

GATHERING

PRELUDE

“Air for the G String”

by J.S. Bach
Mary Perkinson, violin

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

(stand)

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P Blessed be the Holy Trinity, one God, Father, Son ✠ and Holy Spirit, in whose image we were made, who claims us and calls us beloved.

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 Holy One,

C we confess that we are not awake for you.

We forget the least of our siblings.

We do not see your beautiful image in one another.

We are infected by sin

that divides your beloved community.

Open our hearts to your coming,

open our eyes to see you in our neighbor,

open our hands to serve your creation. Amen.

P Beloved, we are God’s children, and Jesus, our Beloved, opens the door to us. Through ✠ Jesus you are forgiven, by Jesus you are called to rejoice! Let us live in the promises prepared for us from the foundation of the world.

C Amen.

PROCESSIONAL HYMN

“All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name!”

ELW 634 vs. 1, 4-6

**1 All hail the pow’r of Jesus’ name!
Let angels prostrate fall;
bring forth the royal diadem
and crown him Lord of all.
Bring forth the royal diadem
and crown him Lord of all.**

**4 Sinners, whose love can ne’er forget
the wormwood and the gall,
go spread your trophies at his feet
and crown him Lord of all.
Go spread your trophies at his feet
and crown him Lord of all.**

**5 Let ev’ry kindred, ev’ry tribe
on this terrestrial ball
to him all majesty ascribe
and crown him Lord of all.
To him all majesty ascribe
and crown him Lord of all.**

**6 Oh, that with yonder sacred throng
we at his feet may fall!
We’ll join the everlasting song
and crown him Lord of all.
We’ll join the everlasting song
And crown him Lord of all.**

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.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

- ☐ Oh God of power and might,
- ☑ **your Son shows us the way of service, and in him we inherit the riches of your grace. Give us the wisdom to know what is right and the strength to serve the world you have made, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

WORD

(sit)

FIRST READING

Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24

Because Israel's kings proved to be bad shepherds, Ezekiel declares that the Lord will assume the role of shepherd in Israel. The Lord will also set over them a shepherd-messiah, "my servant David," who will feed and care for the people.

Thus says the Lord God: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. ¹²As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. ¹³I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. ¹⁴I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. ¹⁶I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.

²⁰Therefore, thus says the Lord God to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. ²¹Because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, ²²I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep.

²³I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. ²⁴And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken.

☐ The word of the Lord.

☑ **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 95:1-7a (read responsively)

¹Come, let us sing to the LORD;
let us shout for joy to the rock of our salvation.

²**Let us come before God's presence with thanksgiving
and raise a loud shout to the LORD with psalms.**

³For you, LORD, are a great God,
and a great ruler above all gods.

⁴**In your hand are the caverns of the earth;
the heights of the hills are also yours.**

⁵The sea is yours, for you made it,
and your hands have molded the dry land.

⁶**Come, let us worship and bow down,
let us kneel before the LORD our maker.**

^{7a}For the LORD is our God,
and we are the people of God's pasture and the sheep of God's hand.

THE SECOND READING

Ephesians 1:15-23

In this passage, God is praised for revealing ultimate divine power in raising Jesus from the dead. The resurrected, exalted Christ is Lord of both the church and the entire universe, now and in the age to come.

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason ¹⁶I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. ¹⁷I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, ¹⁸so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, ¹⁹and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. ²⁰God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. ²²And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

L The word of the Lord.

G Thanks be to God

(stand)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go?



You have the words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia.

☞ The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew.

☞ **Glory to you, O Lord!**

HOLY GOSPEL

Matthew 25:31-46

Jesus compares himself to a king who moves among his subjects to see how he is treated: what is done for the least of those who belong to his family is truly done for him.

Jesus said to the disciples: ³¹“*When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory.*” ³²*All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats,* ³³*and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left.* ³⁴*Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;* ³⁵*for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me,* ³⁶*I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’* ³⁷*Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?’* ³⁸*And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing?’* ³⁹*And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’* ⁴⁰*And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family you did it to me.’* ⁴¹*Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels;* ⁴²*for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink,* ⁴³*I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’* ⁴⁴*Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’* ⁴⁵*Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’* ⁴⁶*And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”*

☞ The Gospel of the Lord.

☞ **Praise to you, O Christ.**

(sit)

CHILDREN’S BLESSING

SERMON

Pastor Roynesdal

From Sundays and Seasons.com. ©2020 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License #SAS006828. Reprinted under OneLicense.net #A-705181. New Revised Standard Version Bible, ©1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Evangelical Lutheran Worship ©2006 Augsburg Fortress. Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License #26828. CCLI License #1511530.

(stand)

HYMN OF THE DAY

“Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service ”

ELW 712

- 1 Lord, whose love in humble service
bore the weight of human need,
who upon the cross, forsaken,
worked your mercy's perfect deed:
we, your servants, bring the worship
not of voice alone, but heart;
consecrating to your purpose
ev'ry gift which you impart.
- 2 Still your children wander homeless;
still the hungry cry for bread;
still the captives long for freedom;
still in grief we mourn our dead.
As you, Lord, in deep compassion
healed the sick and freed the soul,
by your Spirit send your power
to our world to make it whole.
- 3 As we worship, grant us vision,
till your love's revealing light
in its height and depth and greatness
dawns upon our quickened sight,
making known the needs and burdens
your compassion bids us bear,
stirring us to ardent service,
your abundant life to share.
- 4 Called by worship to your service,
forth in your dear name we go,
to the child, the youth, the aged,
love in living deeds to show;
hope and health, good will and comfort,
counsel, aid and peace we give,
that your servants, Lord, in freedom
may your mercy know and live.

Text: Albert F. Bayly, 1901-1984
Text © 1961 Oxford University Press.

THE APOSTLES' CREED

☐ God has made us his people through our Baptism into Christ.
Living together in trust and hope, we confess our faith.

☑ 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 Ed White; to the family and friends of Edna Krog, mother of Marsha Vance

Thanksgiving: for the baptism of Gabriel Louis Anderson, son of Nolan and Laura Anderson

Illness: Richard Bock, Don Burton, Carol Duncan, sister of Debbie Robinson, Mike Edris, Rodney Edwards, Ranae Gardner, Samuel Garrett, Richard Holzer, father of James Holzer, Renee Johnson, daughter-in-law of Ken & Linda Johnson, Harlan Kirkvold, father of Steve Kirkvold, Marcie Lafleur, Tim Mathisen, friend of Debbie Bogue, Mary Olson, Gary Rodene, Phoebe Stanga, niece of Karen & Shirley Bonneau, Sheri Tipton, Dorothy Vancaster, Charlie Wachholtz, Ed & Darlene White, Robert Whitehead, Kimberly Wilson, Joanne Worm

Other Prayers: *Those serving in the military* – Amy Dyer, Brennan Hron, Wyatt Johnson, Josh Kropenske, 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: *Seminarians*—Adam Klinker, Katie Larson, Giselle Loucks, Justin Perkins

WE SHARE GOD’S PEACE

P The peace of Christ be with you always.
C 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

“Arise, My Soul, Arise”

Charles Wesley
arr. Dan Forrest

Dayle Johnson, *soloist*

Jean Johnson, *piano*

Mary Perkinson, *violinist*

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** God of all goodness,
C generations have turned to you, gathered around your table, and shared your abundant blessings. Number us among them that, as we gather these gifts from your abundance, and give thanks for your rich blessings, we may feast upon your very self and care for all that you have made, through Jesus Christ, our Sovereign and Servant. Amen.

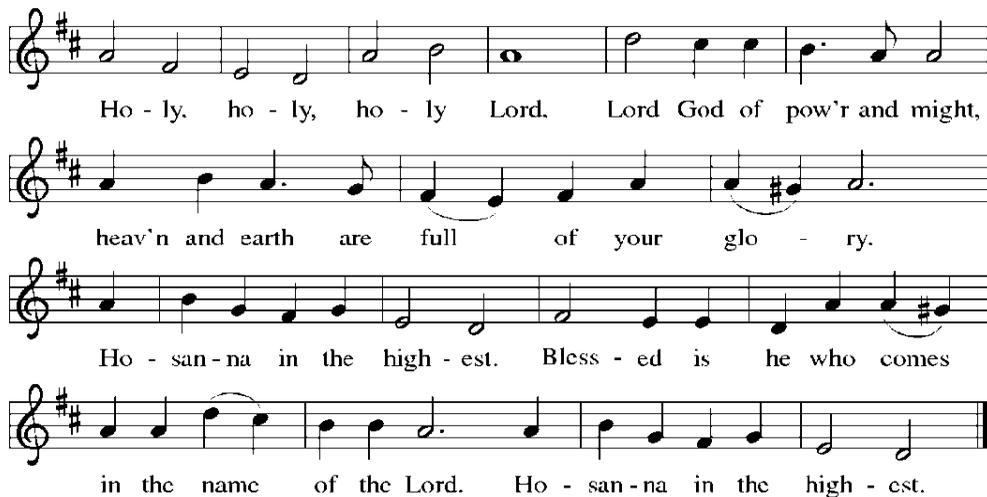
HOLY COMMUNION

- 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



Ho - ly. ho - ly, ho - ly Lord. Lord God of pow'r and might,
heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry.
Ho - san-na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes
in the name of the Lord. Ho - san-na in the high - est.

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 There is a place for you at the banquet.

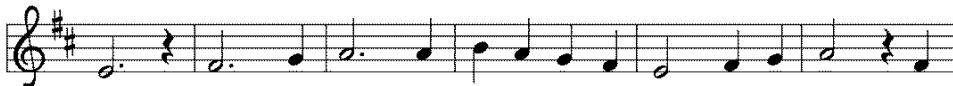
C Come and feast at Jesus' table.

(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.

- 1 Crown him with many crowns,
the Lamb upon his throne;
hark, how the heav'nly anthem drowns
all music but its own.
Awake, my soul, and sing
of him who died for thee,
and hail him as thy matchless king
through all eternity.
- 2 Crown him the virgin's Son,
the God incarnate born,
whose arm those crimson trophies won
which now his brow adorn;
fruit of the mystic rose,
yet of that rose the stem,
the root whence mercy ever flows,
the babe of Bethlehem.
- 3 Crown him the Lord of love--
behold his hands and side,
rich wounds, yet visible above,
in beauty glorified.
No angels in the sky
can fully bear that sight,
but downward bend their burning eyes
at mysteries so bright.
- 4 Crown him the Lord of life,
who triumphed o'er the grave
and rose victorious in the strife
for those he came to save.
His glories now we sing,
who died and rose on high,
who died, eternal life to bring,
and lives that death may die.
- 5 Crown him the Lord of years,
the potentate of time,
creator of the rolling spheres,
ineffably sublime.
All hail, Redeemer, hail!
For thou hast died for me;
thy praise and glory shall not fail
throughout eternity.

Text: Matthew Bridges, 1800-1894, sts. 1-3, 5;
Godfrey Thring, 1823-1903, st. 4

“Beautiful Savior”

ELW 838

- 1 Beautiful Savior,
King of creation,
Son of God and Son of Man!
Truly I'd love thee,
truly I'd serve thee,
light of my soul, my joy, my crown.
- 2 Fair are the meadows,
fair are the woodlands,
robed in flow'rs of blooming spring;
Jesus is fairer,
Jesus is purer,
he makes our sorrowing spirit sing.
- 3 Fair is the sunshine,
fair is the moonlight,
bright the sparkling stars on high;
Jesus shines brighter,
Jesus shines purer
than all the angels in the sky.
- 4 Beautiful Savior,
Lord of the nations,
Son of God and Son of Man!
Glory and honor,
praise, adoration,
now and forevermore be thine!

(stand)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

☞ Lord Jesus,

☛ **in this simple meal you have set a banquet. Sustain us on the journey, strengthen us to care for the least of your beloved children, and give us glad and generous hearts as we meet you on the way. Amen.**

SENDING

BLESSING

☞ May the God of all creation, in whose image we are made, who claims us and calls us beloved, who strengthens us for service, give you reason to rejoice and be glad! The blessing of Almighty God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, be with you today and always.

THREE-FOLD AMEN

HYMN

“Lead On, O King Eternal!”

ELW 805

1 **Lead on, O King eternal!**
The day of march has come;
henceforth in fields of conquest
your tents will be our home.
Through days of preparation
your grace has made us strong;
and now, O King eternal,
we lift our battle song.

2 **Lead on, O King eternal,**
till sin's fierce war shall cease,
and holiness shall whisper
the sweet amen of peace;
for not with swords loud clashing,
nor roll of stirring drums,
but deeds of love and mercy
the heav'nly kingdom comes.

3 **Lead on, O King eternal:**
we follow, not with fears,
for gladness breaks like morning
where'er your face appears.
Your cross is lifted o'er us;
we journey in its light;
the crown awaits the conquest;
lead on, O God of might!

Text: Ernest W. Shurtleff, 1862-1917

DISMISSAL

☞ Beloved of God, go in peace to serve the Lord.

☛ **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

November 21 & 22, 2020

Kountze Food Pantry Need Personal Care Items & Volunteers

Mondays, 7:30 - 9:00 AM;

9:00 - 11:00 AM;

11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Fridays, 4:00 - 7:00 PM

The Kountze Food Pantry is only about \$5,000 short of having our \$100,000 in Family Fare receipts! When we reach our goal, the Pantry will receive \$1,000! That money goes a long way in fulfilling our mission to "Feed the Poor, in Christ's Name." We are also asking for full-sized, personal care and hygiene products to give out in lieu of the holiday bags we have given to our guests in the past. We would like to include an all-in-one shampoo/conditioner, bar soap or body wash, toothbrush and paste, razor and shave cream. Of course, toilet tissue is always needed. Thank you! If you would like to volunteer please sign up at the following link:
<https://form.jotform.com/200834787701155>

Today at Kountze

Altar Flowers

are given to the glory of God in honor of Lynn Schneiderman's birthday

Special Congregation Meeting

Sunday, November 22, 2020 at 10:30

A special congregational meeting for the sole purpose of voting on calling The Reverend Shari Duminy as Associate Pastor will be held Sunday, November 22, 2020 at 10:30 AM in the sanctuary. Attendance at the meeting will also be permitted through Zoom.

Online Sunday School

Lessons are videotaped and posted on the KMLC Parents Facebook page as well as our Kountze Facebook Page.

Zoom Codes: Meeting ID 938 1883 9381

Passcode: 697624

Youth Forum

Sundays at 10:10 AM

IN-PERSON: The youth group will meet in-person in on the 1st & 3rd Sundays of the month. The 1st 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 2nd & 4th Sundays of the month.

Omaha Interfaith Thanksgiving Service

Sunday November 22, 5 PM

All are welcome to join online for this year's Omaha Interfaith Thanksgiving Service. In its 25th year, this worship service brings together faith communities across the Muslim, Jewish, and Christian tradition to pray, sing, and reflect together. This year's theme is Rise in Gratitude as we seek to name all that we lament and that is out of order from this year while also giving thanks for God's goodness in the midst of it and through it all. The service will be broadcast on Trinity Episcopal Cathedral's Facebook page at 5pm and also be available on their website (trinityepiscopal.org/video) and YouTube channel. Please consider participating!

Adult Forum

Pr. Hall continues to post videos for a multi-week study of Martin Luther's "Freedom of a Christian" (1520), on a Kountze Memorial designated channel on YouTube. The YouTube link to the videos is:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChalSdEjyMBKlzbGGIyfA/>

The text of "Freedom of a Christian" and the study guide are available for free on the ELCA's Reformation homepage:
www.elca500.org.

Pledge Cards

None of us bears the financial burden of our ministry or the debt-retirement alone. Together (yes, even while apart!) we can do so much. Thank you if you have already turned in your 2021 pledge cards. If you haven't returned your pledge cards yet we ask you to prayerfully consider your financial commitment to Kountze's mission and ministry for the coming year, as well as addressing our debt, and return your pledge cards to Kountze sometime this month either at worship or by mailing them to the church. Thank you!

Attendance and Giving

Saturday Attendance: 16

Sunday Attendance: 9:00: 43

Total: 59

Pantry Guests Served: 966

Medical Clinic Guests Served: 20

Offering:

\$9,141.00 (Regular) \$3,444.93 (Specials)

\$1,367.00 (Debt Reduction)

God's justice cares for the weak and lost.

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

Sunday	Matthew 25:31-46	The sheep and goats
Monday	Ezekiel 34:11-24	God, the true shepherd
Tuesday	Ephesians 1:15-23	Paul's prayer
Wednesday	Psalms 100	All lands called to praise God
Thursday	Isaiah 1:16-20	Justice is needed
Friday	Amos 5:10-15	Choose good, not evil
Saturday	Psalms 95:1-7a	Worship and obey the Lord
Sunday	Mark 13:24-37	When the Son of Man appears



© 2019 Vibrant Faith Ministries. All rights reserved.
Go to www.vibrantfaithathome.org for more faith-forming activities.

I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice. **Ezekiel 34:16 (NRSV)**

A Prayer for the Week:

God of glory and might, we give thanks that you are our God and that we are the sheep in your hand through Christ our Lord. (Psalm 95:7a)

Mealtime Prayer:

Dear God, to you we make a joyful noise for all that you do, including your gift of this food for us today. Amen. (Psalm 95:1)

A Blessing to Give:

May the God of power and might bless you with joy and peace.

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

- If you had all the power you could want, what would you want to do?
- What is wrong with the religious leaders in the Bible using their power for themselves?
- Why is it good news to know that God cares for the poor, the sick, and the hungry?

Read: Matthew 25:31-46.

The God of the Bible is the God of justice but not just any kind of justice. God's justice recognizes the unfairness of power that abuses the weak. In Ezekiel 34 God has had enough of Judah's unjust shepherds, specifically, the kings who have not taken care of God's sheep. Therefore, God declares the sheep that are lost, strayed, injured, and weak will be cared for by God's power and the fat and the strong sheep—supposedly those well off at the expense of the weak—will be destroyed (v. 16). That is the divine judgment Jesus presents in the parable of the sheep and the goats. God's will—Jesus' will, as seen in the Son of Man in the parable—is to provide for the needs of the hungry, thirsty, lonely, naked, or sick. The message is so strong that when anyone has cared for these, they have cared for the Son of Man. The Gospel of Matthew does not shy away from judgment that distinguishes the authentic from the inauthentic life of those who follow Jesus. Matthew speaks against those who abuse their powers, whether religious, social, political, or economic. This final Sunday in the church year recognizes that all evil abuses will end one day and only God's compassion will survive through Christ, the true ruler of all things. How do you live as though Jesus, the Son of Man is with you as you show care and help others in need?

Pray: **Almighty God, help us to see you in our neighbors, especially those in need of care through Jesus Christ, the one who is above all rule and authority. Amen.**

Whether you live in an urban or rural setting, there are many in need. Donations of time and money are appreciated by those in need and the organizations that help them. Think about how you can help support these individuals or organizations.

Read Psalm 95:1-7a and circle or say the action words like "sing," "make a joyful noise," "bow down," and "kneel." Reread the psalm out loud and act out the parts you highlighted. Afterward, close with this blessing: **May the Lord God rejoice at the sound of your joyful noise and songs of praise.**

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS: Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37