

*Messiah Lutheran Church
Mechanicsville, Virginia*



October 18, 2020

The Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

*To share the Good News of Jesus Christ
and to invite all to join us in faith, worship, and service.*

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

(October 18, 2020)

For video go to:

<https://messiahmech.com/messiah-digital/>

GATHERING SONG, "Give Thanks"

(W&P 41)

Give thanks with a grateful heart,
give thanks to the Holy One,
give thanks because he's given Jesus Christ, his Son.
Give thanks with a grateful heart,
give thanks to the Holy One,
give thanks because he's given Jesus Christ, his Son.

And now let the weak say, "I am strong,"
let the poor say, "I am rich,"
because of what the Lord has done for us.
And now let the weak say, "I am strong,"
let the poor say, "I am rich,"
because of what the Lord has done for us.
Give thanks!

***PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P: Let us pray:

C: 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 LESSON: Isaiah 45:1-7

Lector

A reading from Isaiah.

The prophet announces that Cyrus the Persian emperor is the one the LORD has anointed to end Israel's exile. The LORD makes this choice so that the whole world will recognize this LORD as the only God. Persia had a god of light and a god of darkness; the LORD claims sovereignty over both light and darkness.

¹Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus,

whose right hand I have grasped

to subdue nations before him

and strip kings of their robes,

to open doors before him—

and the gates shall not be closed:

²I will go before you

and level the mountains,

I will break in pieces the doors of bronze

and cut through the bars of iron,

³I will give you the treasures of darkness
and riches hidden in secret places,
so that you may know that it is I, the LORD,
the God of Israel, who call you by your name.
⁴For the sake of my servant Jacob,
and Israel my chosen,
I call you by your name,
I surname you, though you do not know me.
⁵I am the LORD, and there is no other;
besides me there is no god.
I arm you, though you do not know me,
⁶so that they may know, from the rising of the sun
and from the west, that there is no one besides me;
I am the LORD, and there is no other.
⁷I form light and create darkness,
I make weal and create woe;
I the LORD do all these things.

L: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

SECOND LESSON: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Lector

A reading from 1 Thessalonians.

Most likely this letter is the first written by Paul. Paul gives pastoral encouragement and reassurances to new Christians living in an antagonistic environment. Their commitment of faith, love, and hope makes them a model for other new Christian communities.

¹Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

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

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

L: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

***THE GOSPEL READING**

Matthew 22:15-22

After Jesus begins teaching in the temple, religious leaders try to trap him with questions. First they ask if God's people should pay taxes to an earthly tyrant like Caesar.

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.

SERMON: PASTOR RYAN RADTKE

Have you heard about this whole coin shortage thing? Technically, it's not that there's a shortage of coins. There are plenty of coins. The problem is circulation. When the pandemic hit, lots of stores closed. That means less money being passed back and forth. There were also concerns about handling money of any kind, and the germs that could get shared in the exchanging. Once upon a time, I was a bank teller, and I can attest to the fact that money gets gross and filthy. So, touchless payments, paying with cards. Add to all of this that in the early stages of the pandemic, the Fed – you know, the ones who make the coins and hold the coins in reserve and send shipments of coins to banks – cut back on workers to prevent the spread of the disease.

So, to recap: stores closed; people staying home and not spending money; people buying things online or with cards; money is surprisingly yucky on the surface; and less coins being circulated into the system from the government because there weren't as many people working. All that equals: coin shortage.

On the surface, today's Gospel lesson is about coins. Money and taxes. With malice in their hearts after all the recent parable slams and confrontations from Jesus, their power and standing threatened by Jesus' authority and

popularity, the Pharisees, backed by the chief priests and elders, send a delegation to try to trap Jesus, damage his reputation, and get him in trouble with the Roman authorities.

Taxes were a big issue; the Jewish people didn't want to pay them, didn't want to be under Roman rule. Tax-collectors often took an extra portion for themselves, and they were vilified by the people. So: let's get Jesus on the public record saying that he was against taxes. If you're against taxes, you're against Caesar. He thinks he's the Messiah? The Messiah is supposed to free Israel. Let's see if Jesus will put his money where his mouth is. That'll show 'im.

So they butter him up with sarcastic compliments: you're so sincere; you teach the word of God in accordance with truth (let's lay that foundation to really tick off the Romans); you show deference to no one and don't regard anyone with partiality (that sounds like a compliment, but really it just means they're mad that Jesus doesn't show them deference or partiality). And then they lay the trap: "What do you think – is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?" Either Jesus will say, "No taxes to Rome!" and get in trouble with the Romans. Or he'll say, "Taxes schmaxes, pay the piper," and lose his standing with the people. They think they have him neatly cornered.

Not so much. Jesus slips right through: whose face is on that denarius? Caesar's? Fine – give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's. Mic drop.

Like I said, on the surface, today's Gospel reading is about coins. Money and taxes. But go just a little deeper and it's about a whole lot more. It's about politics and power and honor and maneuvering. It's about malice and entrapment. It's a duel. And their trap is no match for Jesus, who takes it even deeper, to the shame of the would-be entrappers: "Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and give to God the things that are God's." It's the point Jesus has been making through the parables we've been hearing over the last few weeks: the spiritual leaders of Israel had gotten too wrapped up in the "leader" part and had neglected the "spiritual" part. Jesus turns the trap back on them – it's about their relationship with God. Are they giving to God the things that are God's?

Are we?

What does it mean to give to God the things that are God's? What things belong to God? I mean, I guess I could just say, "everything!" But that doesn't really give much direction, does it? Let's use Jesus' example: whose face is on that coin? The emperor. Caesar. Someone who wanted to be worshipped like a god. Someone who wanted control over your life and your full allegiance. But God is above and beyond all countries, all rulers, all earthly allegiances. So Jesus says: pay your taxes, participate in the government, be a citizen; but give to God what is God's. Because whatever country you live in, whatever type of government you have, whatever flag is on the poles, whatever political party has the majority, whoever is currently "in charge," Jesus is Lord. God is God. Give to God what is God's.

Caesar's face, Caesar's slogan – that's what was imprinted on those coins. A constant reminder of who was in charge. But God is imprinted on you. When God created human beings, we were created in the image of God. All of us. Every woman, man, and child. No matter the country, no matter the government, no matter the flag, no matter the party, no matter the anything – every single ever-lovin' person on this planet, past present and future, is created in the image of God. God has written on our hearts. God knew us before we were born. God knows every hair of our heads. God knows our prayers even when we don't have words for them. God has called us by name. What belongs to God? You do. I do. They do. We do. People do. Created in the image of God, called good, called very good, loved so much that Jesus died for them, for us. That's what belongs to God.

And us Christians? We have extra imprinting – sealed, even stamped, with the cross of Christ at our baptisms, named and claimed by God. We are God's currency in this world. And I hate to say it, but there's a coin shortage where Christians are concerned, too.

I'll never be partisan with you. I'll never tell you who to vote for. But Christianity is political. Jesus was political. "Politics" means "people-related." And God's Word was made flesh in Jesus the Christ. Jesus was a person, for God's sake, and for our salvation. So, it's an election year. And, like other election years, politicians are trying to entrap one another with ads and debates and all the rest. Trying to, if not entrap, to at least entice, voters their way. And it gets ugly. And it gets messy. But that's what Jesus took on – all of our ugly. All our messy. And Jesus redeems us, all of us who belong to God, all of us who God wants to circulate into the world, all of us who are imprinted by God, with God, to be spent in this world and to exchange ugliness for love. But I'm not seeing a lot of love. I think there's a coin shortage.

Mostly what I see is hostility and polarization. Name-calling. Personal attacks. I've even heard it in this parking lot. Just little snide remarks, little digs. Little de-humanizations. And I do it too. In my head. Out loud with folks who think like me. It's not about issues, or policies, all the time. We attack the person. The other image-bearers. The way they look, the way they talk. Their families. Our discourse isn't civil. We mock. We disparage. We tear down. Ugliness.

I'm not talking about political correctness, or at least what that term has often come to mean; I'm talking about the Golden Rule. I'm talking about giving to God what is God's. I'm talking about recognizing the image of God in others, and, for that matter, in ourselves. We are supposed to be imitators of God, imprinted with the cross of Christ. And the example we set, the coinage we put into circulation in the world, is teaching others about God through ourselves. Think about your least favorite politician. They belong to God. And so do you. Think about your political "opponents." They belong to God. And so do you. But I think we've forgotten about that. I think there's a coin shortage. Christians should be the ones who never forget that we are all created in the image of

God, all valuable, of worth, all imprinted with God's love. But I'm not seeing a lot of that in circulation.

This is a stewardship issue. A lot of times folks think stewardship is just about your coins. Your money. But stewardship isn't just the financial slice of the pie that is your life. It's the pie plate. It undergirds everything. Your monetary contributions, sure, but also your contributions to the world, your degree of imitation of God, your exchange rate of ugliness to love in the world.

So, just like Jesus, I'm getting political today – by reminding you to be good stewards of the image of God that has been imprinted on you and on everyone single other human being. Your words matter. Your actions matter. Give to the emperor what is the emperor's, and vote how you're going to vote, but let your faith and your Lord guide your politics and let God's love guide you. Give to God what is God's, and put yourself – along with all the love of God that has been stamped onto you – into circulation in the world. Put an end to the coin shortage, for the love of God. Go be spent. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY, "We Give Thee but Thine Own"

(ELW 686)

1 We give thee but thine own,
whate'er the gift may be;
all that we have is thine alone,
a trust, O Lord, from thee.

2 May we thy bounties thus
as stewards true receive,
and gladly, as thou blessest us,
to thee our firstfruits give.

3 The captive to release,
to God the lost to bring,
to teach the way of life and peace--
it is a Christlike thing.

4 And we believe thy word,
though dim our faith may be:
whate'er we do for thine, O Lord,
we do it unto thee.

***CREED**

**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

A: With confidence in God's grace and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. *[Brief silence]*

A: 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,

C: hear our prayer.

A: 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,

C: hear our prayer.

A: 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,

C: hear our prayer.

A: 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,

C: hear our prayer.

A: 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,

C: hear our prayer.

A: 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,

C: hear our prayer.

A: God, you are life. We pray for our world, our country, our community, our church as we face the challenges of coronavirus. We pray for those who grieve the loss of loved ones, for the sick and their families, for those fearful of an unknown future. We pray for the millions of unemployed, for children and others at home - that they be safe from abuse. We pray for those who are alone and isolated during this time that they may feel your loving presence. We pray for all the hospital and health care workers, and all first responders, that they receive needed supplies and be kept protected in the work they do. We pray for those making decisions about how to live into the future and when that will happen. Keep us all in your care as we wait for a new day. Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

A: God of all families, you have given us families to be sanctuaries of blessing, comfort and love for each other. Under your protection fill us with harmony, hope and health. We pray this week for the Absher, Addair and Albertson families as well as our Messiah family. Guard all of our hearts that we may display love instead of hate, anger or bitterness. Lead us all to be grateful for your abiding love and enable us to glorify you by sharing that love with others. Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

A: 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.

C: Amen.

***THE LORD'S PRAYER**

P: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

**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.***

BLESSING

P: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy. The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace.

C: **Amen**

SENDING SONG, "For the Fruit of All Creation"

(ELW 679))

1 For the fruit of all creation,
thanks be to God.
For these gifts to ev'ry nation,
thanks be to God.
For the plowing, sowing, reaping,
silent growth while we are sleeping,
future needs in earth's safekeeping,
thanks be to God.

2 In the just reward of labor,
God's will is done.
In the help we give our neighbor,
God's will is done.
In our worldwide task of caring
for the hungry and despairing,
in the harvests we are sharing,
God's will is done.

3 For the harvests of the Spirit,
thanks be to God.
For the good we all inherit,
thanks be to God.
For the wonders that astound us,
for the truths that still confound us,
most of all, that love has found us,
thanks be to God.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PASTOR RYAN'S OFFICE HOURS

Here are Pastor Ryan's office hours (posted below)! Dedicated drop-in hours (= Pastor Ryan is there if you want to drop in) will be: Tuesdays from 2-4:00 pm. Otherwise during posted hours he will either be in the office or making visits, but still in the area. Other times Pastor Ryan will be working from home (to help with his kids' distance learning), and will still be available via phone and email, which are: messiahmechpr@gmail.com and 507-360-7276. Pastor Ryan's day off is Monday.

Pastor Ryan in the office - Tuesdays 1-5

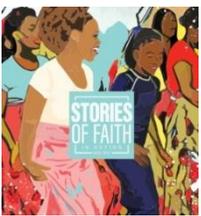
Pastor Ryan in the office- Thursdays 1-5

Pastor Ryan in the office- Fridays 9-3

MCEF – THANKSGIVING BAGS

THANKSGIVING BAGS at MCEF will begin being distributed the last week of October. Clients will have an opportunity to choose the items they will use (this is good stewardship of resources). The following items are needed to complete their meal: canned collards, boxed mashed potatoes, brownie mix, cake mix and frosting in addition to the items normally provided. These items can be placed in the shopping cart in the narthex or make a monetary donation for the purchase of needed items by going to the website, 4MCEF.com and use the "Donate" button. Thank you for your continued support of your Mechanicsville neighbors.

"STORIES OF FAITH IN ACTION"



"Stories of Faith in Action" is an annual publication highlighting how God changes lives through ministries funded by Mission Support. Mission Support is the portion of your offering that your congregation shares with your synod, and your synod shares with the ELCA churchwide organization. This publication and the resources that accompany it illustrate how your congregational offering sustains and advances the work of this church. Stories, videos and an interactive flipbook of the publication are available at ELCA.org/SOFIA.

WEEKLY FINANCIAL UPDATE

Beginning March 8th, we began providing a summary of the financial well-being of our congregation. Here is this week's information:

- Contributions to general fund averaged \$2865 through October 4 (slightly down from \$2918 on October 4th.)
- We are \$22,082.50 behind the year-to-date budget needs (decreasing from \$23,385.50 behind the budget the week prior).
- Weekly budget need is \$3404.00.

CAROLINE FURNACE UPDATES

NEW! Winter Camp at Home (online) - Session One starts on October 18. Winter Camp at Home meets weekly on Sunday afternoons, from 4:30-6pm. Join in for community building, small group discussions, and engaging activities! Session One is October 18 to December 13. Session Two is January 17 to March 14. Cost is \$20 per three month session. Sign up for Camp at <https://carolinefurnace.campbrainregistration.com/>

Adventure Weekend, October 30 to November 1 - Come and get outside with your family! Late October will be perfect for horseback riding, rock climbing, hiking, biking, and fishing. Our family rate is \$200-250 per night for your own heated cabin + meals provided; some activities may cost extra. Contact us at (540) 449-0012 or julie@carolinefurnace.org to reserve your cabin. Basic health pre-screening is required for all overnight guests. Book at least 14 days in advance!

SMALL GROUPS

Hopefully everyone has received the guidelines for Small Group Meetings and Cleaning Protocols either through email or hard copy. Please contact Davina when wanting to schedule a time you would like your group to meet at church. The only areas open at this time include the Fellowship Hall, the hallway to the restrooms, and the restrooms. All other parts of the building remain 'closed' for now. There will be copies of the forms at church on the kitchen counter for you to use at your meeting along with necessary cleaning supplies. Davina will maintain the completed forms in her office. Although apart, we are still Messiah! Stay well everyone!

WEBSITE CHANGE

A new tab has been added to our church website entitled "E-Messages". Under this tab you will find links to Bible Study Handouts, weekly Sunday Bulletins, and the monthly Messenger. Hope you find this change helpful when you're looking for these items.

LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE: HURRICANES AND CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

Following the devastation caused by hurricanes along the Gulf Coast, as well as the impact of wildfires across California and the Northwest, Lutheran Disaster Relief (LDR) is responding. You can help LDR as they assist the communities who have been impacted by these natural disasters, through prayer and giving through Lutheran Disaster Relief. Your gifts designated for "Hurricane Response" or "U.S. Wildfires" will be used entirely (100%) for direct response until it is complete. Together, we can help provide immediate and long-lasting support for those whose lives have been impacted by hurricanes or wildfires.

REBUILD RVA GRANT PROGRAM

The Rebuild VA Grant Fund is a program to help small businesses and non-profits whose normal operations were disrupted by COVID-19, including restaurants, brick and mortar retail, exercise and fitness facilities, personal care and personal grooming services, entertainment and public amusement establishments, and campgrounds. Businesses and non-profits that are approved for a Rebuild VA grant may receive up to 3 times their average monthly eligible expenses up to a maximum of \$10,000.

VIRGINIA RENT AND MORTGAGE RELIEF PROGRAM (RMRP)

The Virginia Rent and Mortgage Relief Program (RMRP) is designed to support and ensure housing stability across the commonwealth during the coronavirus pandemic. Depending on availability of funds and household need, the RMRP may provide financial assistance for rent or mortgage payments for eligible households. This includes financial assistance for rent or mortgage payments past due beginning April 1, 2020 and onward. Financial assistance is a one-time payment with opportunity for renewal based on availability of funding and the household's need for additional assistance and continued eligibility. For more information please visit: Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD): www.dhcd.virginia.gov/rmrp.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT – COMING BACK

We've started to get together again – the parking lot now, and hopefully the building soon. Small groups have already been meeting. As we come back together in person, we also encourage you, prayerfully and as you are able, to come back in your giving, too. Thank you for the generosity you have already shown through these difficult times! Please mail in your offering to the church office, 8154 Atlee Road, Mechanicsville, VA 23111, or use on-line giving through Vanco which is available on the church website. See messiahmech.com for more details. Thank you!