

# **TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

November 15, 2020

For video viewing of music and service go to:

## **\*PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P: Let us pray together:

**C: *Righteous God, our merciful master, you own the earth and all its peoples, and you give us all that we have. Inspire us to serve you with justice and wisdom, and prepare us for the joy of the day of your coming, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen***

## **FIRST LESSON: Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18**

A reading from Zephaniah.

Zephaniah (like the prophet Amos in last week's first reading) presents the day of the LORD as one of judgment and wrath. Descriptions of the last day in the New Testament include details taken from Old Testament accounts of the day of the LORD.

7Be silent before the Lord GOD!

For the day of the LORD is at hand;  
the LORD has prepared a sacrifice,  
he has consecrated his guests.

12At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps,

and I will punish the people  
who rest complacently on their dregs,  
those who say in their hearts,  
"The LORD will not do good,  
nor will he do harm."

13Their wealth shall be plundered,  
and their houses laid waste.

Though they build houses,  
they shall not inhabit them;  
though they plant vineyards,  
they shall not drink wine from them.

14The great day of the LORD is near,  
near and hastening fast;  
the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter,

the warrior cries aloud there.  
15That day will be a day of wrath,  
a day of distress and anguish,  
a day of ruin and devastation,  
a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of clouds and thick darkness,  
16a day of trumpet blast and battle cry  
against the fortified cities  
and against the lofty battlements.

17I will bring such distress upon people  
that they shall walk like the blind;  
because they have sinned against the LORD,  
their blood shall be poured out like dust,  
and their flesh like dung.  
18Neither their silver nor their gold  
will be able to save them  
on the day of the LORD's wrath;  
in the fire of his passion  
the whole earth shall be consumed;  
for a full, a terrible end  
he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth

## **\*THE SECOND LESSON**

### **1 Thessalonians 5:1-11**

A reading from 1 Thessalonians.

Though we do not know and cannot calculate the day of Christ's return, we live faithfully in the here and now as we anticipate the day when we will be given eternal salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. 2For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3When they say, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! 4But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; 5for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. 6So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; 7for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. 8But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. 9For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus

Christ, 10who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. 11Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

### **\*THE GOSPEL READING**

#### **Matthew 25:14-30**

*Jesus tells a parable about his second coming, indicating that it is not sufficient merely to maintain things as they are. Those who await his return should make good use of the gifts that God has provided them.*

[Jesus said to the disciples:] <sup>14</sup>“For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; <sup>15</sup>to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. <sup>16</sup>The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. <sup>17</sup>In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. <sup>18</sup>But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. <sup>19</sup>After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup>Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.’ <sup>21</sup>His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ <sup>22</sup>And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.’ <sup>23</sup>His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ <sup>24</sup>Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; <sup>25</sup>so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ <sup>26</sup>But his master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? <sup>27</sup>Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. <sup>28</sup>So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. <sup>29</sup>For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. <sup>30</sup>As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ ”

### **SERMON: PASTOR LIZ YATES**

*St. Paul calls us “Children of day and of the Light.” Jesus shows us the Love of His Father and invites us to call Him “Our Father.” Jesus’ love leads us to love and*

trust God, His Father, just as He did. In these troubled and troubling times of Covid-19 and political transitions, this is Good News indeed! Today Jesus also lets us know that God has expectations for the life and behavior of His children.

Sometimes God's expectations lead us sinners to fear God who loves, created, and saves us. It's true that a just God can be expected to judge those who fail to live according to God's will. I've been cleaning out my garage this week after my move to a condo about a year ago. It's fascinating the things you come across! Do you remember the comic strip Kudzu? (I miss it!) Kudzu is kneeling in prayer. Answer our prayers Father. You don't want to look like a deadbeat dad....ZAP.... Never threaten the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob!

No, don't tempt God to wrath. Martin Luther thought of God as angry and vengeful, until his Bible study revealed GRACE, the greatest gift of God to us in the Reformation. By grace faith transformed Luther's (Nov 10) whole life and transformed a law focused church to evangelical. Grace/Gift. But let's be honest—we expect any reasonably good human parent to give punishment when needed. We sinners should also fear God, our Father, when we are at odds with God's will. Our fear is not so much fright as respect. God passionately loves and cares for us, is generous in abundantly blessing us with physical, material, and spiritual riches. So misuse of what God entrusts to us is reason for God's judgment.

In these last days of the Church Year our Scriptures paint pictures of the end time when 1) Jesus will return, 2) the dead will be raised, and 3) the Last judgment comes. The "Day of the Lord" that Zephaniah warns (and last week Amos warned) is near and hastening fast. The warning seeks the attention of those who don't know God now—or worse, are indifferent to God and God's will. To them it will be a day of wrath, of distress and anguish, ruin and devastation, darkness and gloom, clouds and thick darkness. (1:13) We sinners often attempt to rule our own lives and risk finding ourselves cast into the outer darkness where people will weep and gnash their teeth as today's gospel warns.

Today Jesus tells us about a man who entrust his talents, his property, to slaves. God's grace and judgment are clear in this story. Jesus says God expects good management by those to whom God entrusts what is His. Everyone gets gifts in this story. No one is left out! The ones with 2 and 5 (talents) used them and got a good return. The slave with 1 feared the master, buried his, and gained nothing. We Christians are counseled by Jesus Himself to caution—be wise as serpents—risk bold actions trusting God, the giver of all good gifts. You have heard it before: Use it or lose it! To treat God's gifts—including the Gospel—as something to be preserved rather than tested and put to work is to lose it. God makes us His stewards (stye-wards) over what is God's—everything is!

God's love calls and saves for a purpose—God's purpose—to share God's love, to witness in bold actions trusting God, using all God's gifts—to God's

glory. Yes, we are tempted to see what we have as “ours.” God is generous giving us “talents” to serve others. Faith in action calls all to point beyond us to praise and honor God

In these troubling days of Covid-19, we Christians are in a very strange situation. Usually it is the assembling of God's people together in worship, education, service of outreach and in-reach that shows the world the Church. The church, we know is not the building, but the baptized people off God living faith in the world. This good news —Gospel—is our heritage through the ages. These days we wear masks to protect ourselves and others, we distance when together and have few and small gatherings. What St. Paul tells us --is still true— we are to “encourage one another and build up each other as indeed you are doing.” 1 Thess. 5:11.

These fall days we may see geese flying overhead to their winter homes. You've noticed how they honk--encouraging the leader and then taking turns as leader. It's a good image for our life together in the Church—“to encourage one another and to share faith.” We continue to be strengthened in worship—in whatever form it comes—and prayer and study. We are called to be bold risking God's gifts to God's glory. We share food with those who are out of work, make desks for children learning virtually at home, other acts of love.

I'm haunted and challenged by a radio (NPR) interview some time ago. An extraordinarily wealthy man told how he is using his wealth—using it all, using it up, during his own lifetime. Why not just use the interest and keep the principle for the future? He said he came into the world with nothing and will leave it with nothing. What about his heirs? They have gotten what they need most, tools to live their lives—education, health, family, and community—as he did. He hopes his example will inspire others to follow in his steps during this age in which the greatest transfer of wealth the world has ever seen is taking place.

That's walking the talk—a faithful steward using well what God has generously gifted us with. It's risky to expose our faith and values to the glare of public. This is the stewardship of “our” time, talents, money (we call it “ours” but it's God's) just as our life is! Erma Bombeck observed:

When I stand before God at the end of my life I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left and could say I used everything You gave me.

Erma's way is daring—and faithful. I confess that at age 77, the first couple of months of “lockdown,” I learned to do nothing for the first time in my life. That's ok for awhile. Then God's grace gave me a mission that some faithful Christians, especially Pr. Ruth Fortes, have been doing for years—making quilts for Lutheran World Relief. It's a group effort—some cut squares, design tops, sew pieces into tops, finish with backs and batting, tie and bind. I'm sewing and help finish a quilt now and then. My daughter, Rebecca, had gone with the quilting group to New Windsor Church World Service where LWR quilts are packed along with school, health, sewing, infant kits are checked and packed. She was disappointed when we couldn't go in April—but decided she wanted to sew tops! She bought a sewing machine, which needed a desk to set it on,

*an iron--\$300 invested! Now after her accounting job she doesn't just read books, she sews quilts—while listening to library audio books! And her sister Esther, the artistic one, designs and sews a few too.*

*Walking wet in Baptism, what “talents” is God challenging you to exercise for the glory of God? Covid, or scarcity, or doubt don't overwhelm God's grace given abundantly. Gospel prevails, Jesus Christ, crucified, risen, and ascended is Lord! As “children of the light and of the day” be alert and awake—wise as serpents and innocent as doves—people of the day. Live, don't just exist, LIVE LIFE. The Day of the Lord is grace and mercy for the faithful who learn and live His will. Thanks be to God. Amen.*

### **\*NICENE CREED**

**We believe in one God,**

**the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,**

**the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God, begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven;  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,  
and became truly human.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.**

**With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.  
He has spoken through the prophets.**

**We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.**

**We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins.**

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen**

### **PRAYERS**

A: Longing for Christ's reign to come among us, we pray for the outpouring of God's power on the church, the world, and all in need. *[Brief silence]*

A: Lord of the church, ignite your people with the passion of your love. By the fire of your Holy Spirit, unify us across ministries, congregations, and denominations, and refine us to participate in your activity throughout the world. Hear us, O God

**C: *Your mercy is great***

A: Lord of creation, we stand in awe at the works of your hands and praise you for the beauty of nature (local places of natural beauty may be named). Bless the earth for your glory and restore its integrity where exploitation has caused ruin. Hear us, O God

**C: *Your mercy is great***

A: Lord of the nations, sound forth your justice in the ears of all leaders. Increase concern for those who are most vulnerable, especially as international leaders forge trade agreements and cooperate to end human rights abuses. Hear us, O God

**C: *Your mercy is great***

A: Lord of all in need, search out all who cry to you in distress. Scatter the heavy clouds of depression, chronic illness, unemployment, and loneliness with your radiant light. Send us as encouragement and signs of your healing. Hear us, O God

**C: *Your mercy is great***

A: Lord of the stranger, stir up holy restlessness in us to extend love to those at the margins. Release our desire for control and open us to learn from the perspectives of others. Hear us, O God

**C: *Your mercy is great***

A: Lord of the living and the dead, we give you thanks for all the saints at rest from their labors (especially). Rouse us to live by their example, that saints yet to come may also know your love. Hear us, O God

**C: *Your mercy is great***

A: God, you are life. We pray for our world, our country, our community, our church as they face the challenges of coronavirus. We pray for those who grieve the loss of love 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. Hear us, O God

**C: *Your mercy is great***

A: Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of families. For all our Messiah families and especially this week for the Cline, Collie and Combs families. For the talents and good things You have given each of them. Keep them united and faithful to You and each other. Guide them, protect them and equip them to do Your will Hear us, O God

**C: Your mercy is great**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

A: Receive our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior, until that day when you gather all creation around your throne where you will reign forever and ever.

**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: 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 God, Sovereign, ✠ Savior, and Spirit, be with you today and always.

**C: Amen**

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## **PLEASE WELCOME, THE REV. ELIZABETH YATES**

The Rev. Elizabeth Yates is with us this morning to conduct worship. Please take time to welcome her.

## **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; Thursdays 1-5 and Fridays 9-3**

## **LOST AND FOUND**

Lost and Found, the annual Virginia Synod weekend retreat for youth in 7th and 8th grades and their adult advisors, will be DIGITAL this year! The event will take place via Zoom during four blocks of time on Nov. 20-21, 2020 (Friday 6 PM to Saturday 7:30 PM). For more information and to register for this year's event, visit <https://www.vasynod.org/event/lost-and-found/>.

## **WEEKLY FINANCIAL UPDATE**

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

- Contributions to general fund averaged \$\$2,797 through November 8, 2020 (slightly up from \$2789 on November 1).
- We are \$(\$27,299.00) behind the year-to-date budget needs (increasing from \$27,040.00 behind the budget the week prior).
- Weekly budget need is \$3404.00.

## **FUNRAISER FOR MCEF**

The third Monday of each month from 4 to 8 p.m. at Chicken Salad Chick, mention that you support MCEF and 10% of sale will be donated to MCEF. It is located at 6575 Mechanicsville Turnpike, Brandy Creek Commons. Available for drive-through, carry out, curbside pick-up or eat in. A large variety of chicken salads and more on the menu.

### **FOSTER CHILDREN CHRISTMAS GIFTS**

It is time to think of our Foster Children and Christmas gifts. This year is going to be different. After polling the families, they are asking for things they can do at home. The Social Ministry team decided that gift cards, which the families have suggested, are the best gifts. They will be able to purchase whatever they want or need. They are requesting cards from Walmart, Target, Amazon, Kroger or Food Lion. The cards need to be in the amount of \$25 each, in order for them to be distributed equally. If it is difficult for you to get to a store, you can give any amount of money to a Social Ministry member and we can add to or just purchase the card. Please drop them off during the month of November, the latest being Nov. 29th. There will be a decorated box, for the cards, at the door of the Fellowship Hall, where we will be worshipping. Also you can drop them off at the church office during the week. If you have any questions please call Sharon Addair, 543-9709. Other Social Ministry members are, Diane Absher, Marilyn Gunn, Sheila Whirley, and Debbie Walker. Thank you, for your generosity!

### **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.

### **PASTOR WALTONEN MEMORIAL DONATION**

Church Council would like to offer the opportunity for members to help Messiah honor Pastor Waltonen by making contributions to a designated fund in his name. Monies given to this fund will be sent by Messiah to the Lewy Body Dementia Association in honor of Pastor Tim. It is such a privilege for Messiah to honor this gentle giant of a man who was among us for 2 years (prior to Pastor Lou) as an interim pastor. When donating, please make any checks payable to Messiah and then designate your contribution to the "Pastor Waltonen Fund" and put it in the weekly offering plate by December 1, 2020.

### **SMALL GROUPS**

If you'd like to have a small group or committee meeting at the church, please check out the Small Group Meetings and Cleaning Protocols. You can contact Davina when wanting to schedule a time for your group to meet and get the latest protocols. 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 are also 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. Thanks for all you do! Stay well everyone!

### **VIRTUAL THANKOFFERING SERVICE**

The **Virginia Synodical Women's Organization (VSWO)** is very excited to announce that they will be hosting a virtual Thankoffering Service on Saturday November 21st beginning at 10 AM. Thankofferings are a long-standing custom among Lutheran women, to show gratitude for God's blessings and give an important and tangible way to express that gratitude. This year's VSWO event will be using the *Light the Way for Justice, Light the Way for Love* Thankoffering service. Lisa Plorin, the Women of ELCA president will join to deliver the sermon. In addition, before the service the VSWO will host breakout room opportunity. This will allow for time to reconnect and share with each other, since the organization has not been able to meet in person and connect as a community this year. The event will be hosted on Zoom, with registration required to join. To register for the event, please check out the **VSWO Facebook page**.

### **NO ROOM AT THE INN**

Experience A Thrill of Hope In this year of fear and struggle we need the hope and joy of Christmas. Our 13th annual No Room at the Inn will be a virtual event with a live online Preview Gala on Friday December 4th, 2020. The virtual Nativity Exhibit will be available online through Christmas. Funds raised will be shared with My Path Forward, MCEF's emergency housing assistance program, and AFAL in Haiti building modest homes for their neediest families. Visit [churchredeemer.org/no-room](http://churchredeemer.org/no-room) or call 730-7980 for details. Like and Share us on Facebook by searching for us on Facebook at No Room at the Inn Mechanicsville VA.

### **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.

## **FINANCIAL SUPPORT – COMING BACK**

We're continuing the getting-back-together process. Small groups have already been meeting, and now we're making the first go and worshipping inside together again. 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](http://messiahmech.com) for more details. Thank you!

## **UPDATED: REBUILD RVA GRANT PROGRAM**

On October 28, the Governor's Office released information about an expansion of the Rebuild Virginia Grants. The grants are available to small businesses and non-profits. Unlike the last time round of Rebuild Virginia grants, the expansion specifically says that an organization can receive funding even if the organization received CARES Act Funding. Qualified recipients can receive a grant of up to three months' worth of expenses to help with salaries, mortgage, utilities, etc. The FAQs aren't as entirely clear, but when you combine the FAQs with the application guide (pg 4 in particular addresses what is excluded for those with CARES Act funding), it appears that most organizations in Virginia are eligible. This funding may prove particularly helpful for child care and preschool ministries that had issues with part-time employees and PPP Loan calculations. One potential hurdle for an application is the requirement for a DUNS number. The DUNS numbers appear to be standard practice in the for-profit world and almost unheard of in the non-profit world. It is possible for a church or non-profit to apply for a DUNS number, but the online process to get the number can be confusing.

## **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](http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/rmrp).