

**St. Paul Lutheran Church
of Stillwater, Minnesota**

October 4, 2026

19th Sunday after Pentecost



Our Vision

Love and serve God by walking with, caring for,
and learning from our members, friends, and neighbors.

Our Values

Welcome. Generosity. Faithfulness.

In today's second reading, Paul questions why we judge one another, since we all stand before the judgment of God. Yet we do sin against one another, and Jesus' challenge that we forgive seventy-seven times reveals God's boundless mercy. When we hear the words of forgiveness in worship and sign ourselves with the cross, we are renewed in baptism to be signs of reconciliation in the world.

In today's gospel reading, Jesus tells a vineyard parable, which serves as an image of Israel, the prophets' mission, and Christ's death. For Christians, the vineyard also speaks of God's love poured out in the blood of Christ, given to us for the forgiveness of sin. Grafted onto Christ the vine at baptism, we are nourished with wine and bread so that we may share Christ's sufferings and know the power of his resurrection.

Many of our worship materials are taken from the red Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW). Page numbers are located in the front half of the book, and hymn numbers are located in the back half of the book.

The assembly speaks or *sings* the **bold** responses.

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.



Gathering Song

"Lord, I Need You"

**Lord I come I confess
Bowing here I find my rest
And without You I fall apart
You're the one that guides my heart**

***Lord I need You oh I need You
Ev'ry hour I need You
My one defense my righteousness
Oh God how I need You***

**Where sin runs deep Your grace is more
Where grace is found is where You are
And where You are Lord I am free
Holiness is Christ in me
Where You are Lord I am free
Holiness is Christ in me R.**

**So teach my song to rise to You
When temptation comes my way
And when I cannot stand I'll fall on You
Jesus You're my hope and stay
And when I cannot stand I'll fall on You
Jesus You're my hope and stay R.**

**Lord I need You oh I need You
Ev'ry hour I need You
My one defense my righteousness
Oh God how I need You
My one defense my righteousness
Oh God how I need You**



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

Beloved God, from you come all things that are good. Lead us by the inspiration of your Spirit to know those things that are right, and by your merciful guidance, help us to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

Children's Word

First Reading

Pew Bible: Old Testament Page 634

Isaiah 5:1-7

The prophet sings a sad, parable-like love song about the relationship between God and Israel. In this song Israel is compared to a promising vineyard. Despite God's loving care, the vineyard that is Israel has brought forth "rotten grapes" of injustice and distress, when fine grapes of justice and righteousness were expected.

At the conclusion:

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.



Psalm 80:7-15

Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

**You have brought a vine out of Egypt;
you cast out the nations and planted it.**

You cleared the ground for it;
it took root and filled the land.

**The mountains were covered by its shadow
and the towering cedar trees by its boughs.**

You stretched out its tendrils to the sea
and its branches to the river.

**Why have you broken down its wall,
so that all who pass by pluck off its grapes?**

The wild boar of the forest has ravaged it,
and the beasts of the field have grazed upon it.

**Turn now, O God of hosts,
look down from heaven;**

behold and tend this vine;
preserve what your right hand has planted.



Second Reading

Pew Bible: New Testament Page 198

Philippians 3:4b-14

Paul reviews some of his supposed credentials, which no longer have any bearing in comparison to the right relationship he has been given through the death of Christ. The power of Christ's resurrection motivates him to press on toward the ultimate goal, eternal life with Christ.

At the conclusion:

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation



Gospel Reading

Pew Bible: New Testament Page 24

Matthew 21:33-46

Jesus tells a parable to the religious leaders who are plotting his death, revealing that their plans will, ironically, bring about the fulfillment of scripture.

The gospel is introduced:

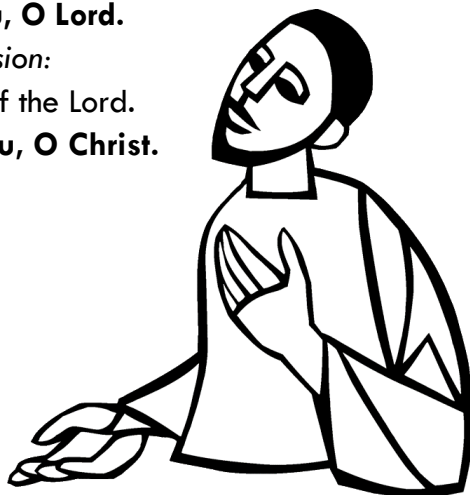
The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

At the conclusion:

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.



Sermon

Pastor Laurel Halvorson Bernard

Silence for reflection follows the sermon.

Hymn of the Day

"Give Thanks"

Give thanks with a grate - ful heart, give thanks to the Ho - ly One,
give thanks be - cause he's giv - en Je - sus Christ, his Son.
Give thanks with a grate - ful heart, give thanks to the Ho - ly One,
give thanks be - cause he's giv - en Je - sus Christ, his Son.
And now let the weak say, "I am strong," let the poor say, "I am
rich," be - cause of what the Lord has done for us. And
now let the weak say, "I am strong," let the poor say, "I am
rich," be - cause of what the Lord has done for us. Give thanks!

Last time



Prayers of Intercession

*After each prayer:
Hear us, O God.*

Your mercy is great.

At the conclusion:

Into your hands, gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen.

Peace

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

All are invited to greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace.

Temple Talk

Jan Stevens, Mission Outreach

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

Offering

Our offering is a collection of money for the church's mission, including the care of those in need, as a sign of the giving of our whole selves in grateful response for all God's gifts. Your offering and "Welcome to Worship" card may be placed in the offering plate. The QR code on the right may be used if you wish to give electronically.



Offering Hymn

Mark Zempel, soloist

"Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling"

Offering Prayer

Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts: our selves, our time, and our possessions. Use us, and what we have gathered, in feeding the world with your love, through the one who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Holy God, our Bread of life . . .

In the night in which he was betrayed . . .

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks . . .

By your Spirit nurture and sustain us with this meal . . .

Through him all glory and honor is yours, Almighty Father,
with the Holy Spirit, in your holy Church, both now and
forever.

Amen.

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

**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.**

Communion

We celebrate at an open communion table. All who hear our Lord's invitation are welcome to participate. Receive the bread first with an open hand and eat immediately, followed by the juice (white) or wine (red). Gluten-free bread is available at the front end of the center aisle. Please indicate to an usher if you need to receive communion from your pew. Children who have received age-appropriate instruction are welcome to commune. If you prefer instead to receive a blessing, please indicate by crossing your arms over your shoulders.

*When giving the bread and cup, the communion ministers say:
The body of Christ, given for you.
The blood of Christ, shed for you.*

and each person may respond:

Amen.

Communion Song

"Be Not Afraid"

**You shall cross the barren desert
But you shall not die of thirst
You shall wander far in safety
Though you do not know the way
You shall speak your words in foreign lands
And all will understand
You shall see the face of God and live**

***Be not afraid
I go before you always
Come follow Me
And I will give you rest***

**If you pass through raging waters in the sea
You shall not drown
If you walk amid the burning flames
You shall not be harmed
If you stand before the power of hell
And death is at your side
Know that I am with you through it all R.**

Prayer After Communion

We give you thanks, almighty God, that you have refreshed us through the healing power of this gift of life. In your mercy, strengthen us through this gift, in faith toward you and in fervent love toward one another; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

Announcements

Blessing

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.

Amen.

Sending Song

"Love Lifted Me"

Dismissal

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

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UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

Francis of Assisi, renewer of the church, died 1226

Sunday, October 4, 2026

Born into the family of a wealthy merchant, Francis gave up his inheritance to serve poor people. He formed the Order of Friars Minor (called Franciscans), who took on poverty and the task of preaching "using words if necessary." Francis had a spirit of gratitude for all of God's creation.

Theodor Fliedner, renewer of society, died 1864

Sunday, October 4, 2026

Fliedner helped to bring about a revival of the ministry of deaconesses among Lutherans. He was influenced in this by Moravian deaconesses he had met. The motherhouse he founded in Kaiserswerth, Germany, inspired many around the world to take up this ministry.

William Tyndale, translator, martyr, died 1536

Tuesday, October 6, 2026

Tyndale was ordained a priest in England, and wished to translate the Bible into English. He was opposed in this by King Henry VIII, causing him to flee to Germany. He completed the New Testament in 1525, but before he could finish the Old Testament, he was tried for heresy and burned at the stake.

Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, pastor in North America, died 1787

Wednesday, October 7, 2026

Divided Lutherans in America asked leaders in Europe to send someone who could take charge and unite their work. Muhlenberg was sent, and was effective in organizing the American Lutherans. Among other accomplishments, his liturgical principles became the basis for the Common Service of 1888.

Massie L. Kennard, renewer of the church, died 1986 (TFF)

Saturday, October 10, 2026

A native of Chicago, Kennard was a major figure in supporting and working toward ethnic and racial inclusiveness in the former Lutheran Church in America. Ordained in 1958, he served in positions including Director for Minority Concerns of the Division for Mission in North America.

GOSPEL MESSAGE

One Word: Jesus

The tennis team had a word for the season: rally. That one word centered everything: “Extend each rally.” “Rally when you’re down.” “Rally back after a rough week.” Each practice began with the word “Rally” at the top of the chalkboard above the conditioning drills. The huddle before each meet was broken with the shout “Rally!” And it wasn’t just on the team. At night, when the coach’s family sat down to dinner, they all shared what they’d done that day to “rally” in their lives. Everything and everyone was centered, gathered around that one word. In our lives of faith, that one word is Jesus.

Jesus reminds his hearers that he is the cornerstone of faith: for the Pharisees, for the rest of the crowd gathered at the temple that day, and for us, the church here and now. The grace we find in Jesus’ love—the love that goes to the cross, to the empty tomb, and even beyond for us and our salvation—is the bedrock of our faith as we live out the life to which we are called in baptism. Jesus is the one word—indeed, Jesus is the Word—that gathers us together, that centers our lives.

United to Jesus, the cornerstone of our lives, in baptism, we are also united with one another. Today’s parable certainly showcases what human division can be and do at its worst, but in Jesus, we are not divided. Where division causes hurt and suffering, unity in Jesus brings hope, healing, and restoration. Where hope seems lost, Jesus rekindles that flame. Centered and united around Jesus’ baptismal grace, we are empowered and emboldened to proclaim the good news of Jesus, the cornerstone of our faith.