

St. Paul Lutheran Church
of Stillwater, Minnesota

November 23, 2025

The Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

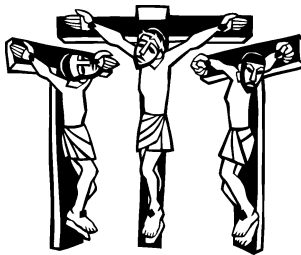


Your presence at worship is important to God and to us! Whether you are a first-time visitor, frequent participant, neighbor, member, or friend, please take a moment as you prepare for worship to share some information on the "Welcome to Worship" card included with your bulletin. Place it in the offering plate at the time the offering is received.

Jeremiah's promise of the execution of "justice and righteousness in the land" finds ironic fulfillment in the execution of Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. It appears utterly contradictory that a king should be crucified with a criminal. This victory appears for all the world as humiliating defeat. Yet through the gate of death Jesus opens the door to paradise.

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.

Prelude

Thanksgiving for Baptism

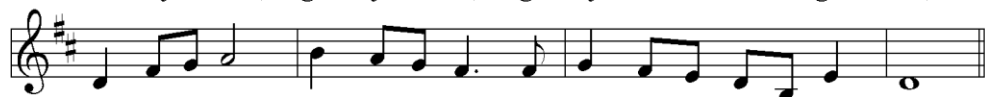
ELW Page 97

Gathering Song

"Glory to God"



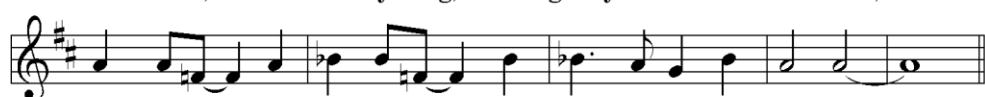
☐ Glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God in the high - est;



glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God, and peace to God's peo - ple on earth.



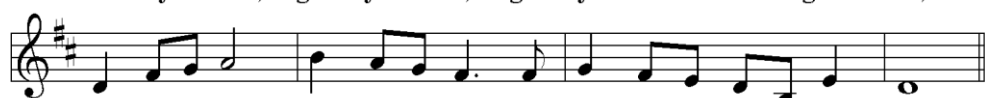
☐ Lord God, heav - en - ly king, al - might - y God and Fa - ther, we



wor - ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glo - ry.



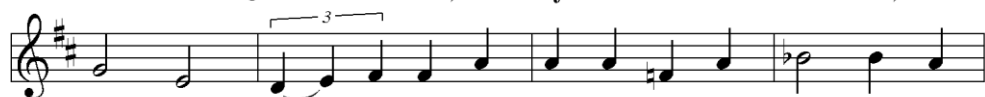
☐ Glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God in the high - est;



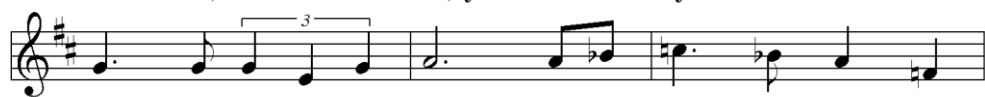
glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God, and peace to God's peo - ple on earth.



☐ Lord Je - sus Christ, on - ly Son of the Fa - ther,



Lord God, Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the



world: have mer - cy on us; you are seat - ed at the



right hand of the Fa - ther: re - ceive our prayer.

(Continued on the next page.) 2



Glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God in the high - est;
 glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God, and peace to God's peo - ple on earth.

I For you a - lone are the Ho - ly One, you a - lone are the Lord,
II you a - lone are the Most High, Je - sus Christ, with the Ho - ly
 Spir - it, in the glo - ry of God the Fa - ther, A - men.

Glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God in the high - est;
 glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God, and peace to God's peo - ple on earth,
 and peace to God's peo - ple on earth.

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

O God, our true life, to serve you is freedom, and to know
you is unending joy. We worship you, we glorify you, we
give thanks to you for your great glory. Abide with us,
reign in us, and make this world into a fit habitation for
your divine majesty, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and
Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.

Amen.

WORD

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

First Reading

Pew Bible: Old Testament Page 725

Jeremiah 23:1-6

Today's reading builds on the common, ancient Near Eastern metaphor of the king as shepherd. Judah's unjust rulers have caused their people, their "flock," to be scattered. Nevertheless, God will raise up a new and righteous shepherd who will rule a restored Judah.

At the conclusion:

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.



Psalm 46

Kim Alswager, soloist

"Be Still and Know"

Colossians 1:11-20

An early Christian hymn praises the mystery of the political, personal, and mystical Christ, the one who was present at creation and is eternally reigning with God.

At the conclusion:

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.



Children's and Outreach Message

Jenny Brelje

Gospel Acclamation

“Alleluia”

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

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

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Luke 23:33-43

Amid scoffing and slander from those who sarcastically call him Messiah and king, Jesus reveals that to be Messiah and king is to give one's life for others. Here he uses his power to welcome a despised sinner to paradise but puts his own death into God's hands.

The gospel is introduced:

The holy gospel according to Luke.

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

ELW Hymn 431

"O Christ, What Can It Mean for Us"

Prayers of Intercession

After each prayer:

Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

At the conclusion:

We offer these and all our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your grace and unyielding love; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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.

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

Offering *"For the Beauty of the Earth"*

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 Prayer

God of healing and hope, you bless those who are hungry, promising to fill them with good things. Fulfill that promise through us and these your gifts. Nourish us with the abundance of your feast and unite us into the blessed body of Jesus Christ our Savior, now and forever.

Amen.

Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts,

We lift them to the Lord

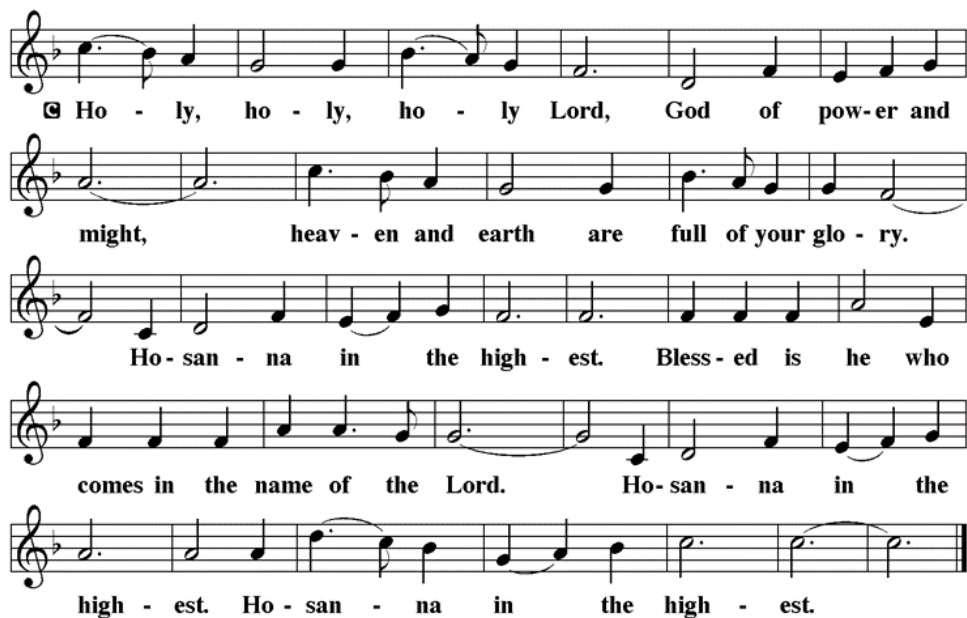
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy . . .

. . . we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

(Continued on the next page.) 7



You are indeed holy, almighty and merciful God . . .

In the night in which he was betrayed . .

For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Remembering, therefore, his salutary command . . .

To you, O God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be all honor and glory in your holy church, now and forever.

Amen.

(Continued on the next page.) 8

**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.**

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

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

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

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



Communion

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.

Special Music

Sue Benson, flute

"Jesus, Messiah"



Prayer After Communion

God of field and flower, wheat and grape, you have nourished us with the bread of heaven that gives life to the world. Strengthened by the body and blood of your Son, send us out to gather your good gifts for all who hunger and thirst, and embolden us to love and serve in Christ's name.

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

ELW Hymn 855

"Crown Him with Many Crowns"

Dismissal

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

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DAILY PRAYER

Prisons and Correctional Institutions



God of justice, for our sake your Son was condemned as a criminal. Visit our jails and prisons with your judgment and mercy. Remember all prisoners; bring the guilty to repentance and amendment of life according to your will; and give hope for the future. When any are held unjustly, raise up for them advocates to bring them release, and give us the wisdom to improve our system of justice. Watch over those who work in these institutions; give them strength and compassion, and keep them from becoming brutal or callous.

Lead us to do for those in prison what we would do for Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

CONNECTIONS WITH THE LITURGY

Praying with the Saints



The prayer of the day is inspired by one composed by Augustine, the fifth-century bishop of Hippo, North Africa. Augustine is arguably the most influential Christian teacher in Western (European) Christianity. An adult convert to the faith, Augustine gave up a prominent role in Roman culture in order to serve Christ and his needy ones. In this prayer, we ask God to reign in us and throughout the world. In serving God, we experience true freedom and joy.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

Pure Acceptance



The God of heaven and earth is also our personal Lord. A lord is someone who has the power to "buy us back" from an enemy. In Martin Luther's time, medieval lords were often expected "buy back" their subjects if they were taken captive by a neighboring lord during a dispute or battle. A good lord pays the ransom whether or not the subject deserves it. In our gospel today, Jesus "buys back" the undeserving thief on the cross from sin and death. Perhaps when Martin Luther taught about the Creed in the Small Catechism he was imagining himself as the thief: "I believe that Jesus Christ . . . is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned human being."

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

Clement, Bishop of Rome, died around 100

Sunday, November 23, 2025

Clement was the third bishop of Rome. He is best remembered for a letter he wrote to the congregation in Corinth, still struggling with the same problems that led to Paul's letters to them. As did Paul, he focused on the need for love among Christians.

Miguel Agustín Pro, martyr, died 1927

Sunday, November 23, 2025

Pro grew up in a time when the Mexican revolutionaries accused the church of siding with the wealthy. He became a Jesuit priest, and worked on behalf of the poor and homeless. Falsely accused of throwing a bomb at a government official, he was executed, but not before crying out "Long live Christ the King!"

Justus Falckner, died 1723; Jehu Jones, died 1852;

William Passavant, died 1894; pastors in North America

Monday, November 24, 2025

Not only was Falckner the first Lutheran ordained in North America, but he published a catechism which was the first Lutheran book published on the continent. Jones was the Lutheran church's first African American pastor and carried out missionary work in Philadelphia which led to the formation there of the first African American Lutheran congregation (St. Paul's). William Passavant helped to establish hospitals and orphanages in a number of cities and was the first to introduce deaconesses to the work of hospitals in the United States.

Isaac Watts, hymnwriter, died 1748

Tuesday, November 25, 2025

Thought by many to be the greatest hymnwriter in the English language, Watts as a youth was critical of the quality of the metrical psalter of the time. He wrote about 600 hymns—many based on the psalms, but others that are not.

GOSPEL MESSAGE

The Servant King

Many congregations will sing a hymn this Sunday that declares, “Crown him the Lord of life, who triumphed o’er the grave and rose victorious in the strife for those he came to save” (ELW 855). This is an image of a conquering hero who fought Satan and won. Hail to the king! But that is not the king we are presented with in today’s gospel reading. Jesus is a broken, rejected man hanging naked in public shame, dying for a capital offense, sandwiched between two criminals.

Many people struggle to think of Jesus as king because of the negative actions of historical kings. Kings have too often been men wielding power for their own gain, sitting on thrones upheld by patriarchy and wealth. Furthering this negative image are colonialism and the kings who issued decrees to ravage and control people in their native land. Neither is this the image of Christ the king in today’s reading.

At Gonzaga University (Spokane, Washington), a focus on servant leadership is offered as a concentration in the master’s program in organizational leadership. Its focuses are forgiveness and restorative justice, listening and discerning, community-building, foresight and strategy, and transformational thinking. Doesn’t that sound a lot more like the leadership of Jesus?

Perhaps we are reminded of the hard parts of Jesus’ journey to draw our attention to his purpose and the focus of his teachings. He wasn’t a conqueror, and he didn’t wield power for his own gain. He hung naked on the cross to be the ultimate servant leader. We claim Jesus as our king because of his servant leadership—his focus on forgiveness and restoration, building community, and thinking in transformational ways. Hail the servant king!