

October 18, 2020
Time After Pentecost

Scripture Readings

FIRST READING: Isaiah 45:1-7

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.

PSALM: Psalm 96:1-9 [10-13]

Ascribe to the LORD honor and power. (Ps. 96:7)

¹Sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all the earth.

²**Sing to the LORD, bless the name of the LORD;
proclaim God's salvation from day to day.**

³Declare God's glory among the nations
and God's wonders among all peoples.

⁴**For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised,
more to be feared than all gods. R**

⁵As for all the gods of the nations, they are but idols;
but you, O LORD, have made the heavens.

⁶**Majesty and magnificence are in your presence;
power and splendor are in your sanctuary.**

⁷Ascribe to the LORD, you families of the peoples,
ascribe to the LORD honor and power.

⁸**Ascribe to the LORD the honor due the holy name;**

bring offerings and enter the courts of the LORD. R

⁹Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness;
tremble before the LORD, all the earth.

[¹⁰**Tell it out among the nations: "The LORD is king!**

**The one who made the world so firm that it cannot be moved
will judge the peoples with equity."**

¹¹Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;
let the sea thunder and all that is in it;
let the field be joyful and all that is therein.

¹²**Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy at your coming, O LORD,
for you come to judge the earth.**

¹³You will judge the world with righteousness
and the peoples with your truth.] **R**

SECOND READING: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

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.

GOSPEL: 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.

¹⁵The 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.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. You have set before us these gifts of your good creation. Prepare us for your heavenly banquet, nourish us with this rich food and drink, and send us forth to set tables in the midst of a suffering world, through the bread of life, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We give you thanks, gracious God, that you have once again fed us with food beyond compare, the body and blood of Christ. Lead us from this place, nourished and forgiven, into your beloved vineyard to wipe away the tears of all who hunger and thirst, guided by the example of the same Jesus Christ and led by the Holy Spirit, now and forever. **Amen.**

October 18, 2020
LECTIONARY 29

The Image of God

The Pharisees and Herodians come to Jesus with a seemingly simple question: "Is it lawful to pay taxes or not?" In a deft move characteristic of his ministry, Jesus refuses to pick a side. He doesn't debate them, but reframes the whole question. In doing so, he creates space in which they are open to hear a new possibility and be amazed.

The imperial coin bears the image of the emperor, just as our currency bears the image of our nation's favored leaders. What bears God's image? You! In the first chapter of Genesis we learn that all of humankind is created in the image of God, blessed, and entrusted with caring for every living creature.

When Jesus says, "Give . . . to God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:21), we are reminded that there is nothing in this world and nothing in ourselves that is beyond the scope of God's care. Like the money stamped with the ruler's image, we see what God treasures in the face of every person on the planet: ourselves and our neighbors, those we love and those we fear. God's own image is in every race, every age, every gender identity, every ability. Each of us shines forth a unique facet of who God is. All that we have and all that we are is from God and for the sake of the whole world.

The sacred image in us is reinforced every week when we take part in the celebration of Holy Communion. As we are fed with the body of Christ, we pray that we too might "give ourselves away as bread for the hungry" (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, p. 114). Nothing is ours to keep. All is gift from God, freely given and constantly renewed. Set free by the promises of God's steadfast presence and generosity, we may live with open hands and open hearts.

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*Please contact the office if you know of anyone who had a recent illness or surgery that would like to receive a card or someone who needs extra prayers. We will include this information in our weekly communications. Please pray for Sunouk Wright, mother-in-law of Casey Kinosz. Cards and prayers are appreciated for Fred Matthews as he faces medical problems and Shirley Bowser as she has cataract surgery this week. Please pray for Don Briscoe, Dixon Lightcap (on recent hospital stay), Carol Sue Nichols (on her recent hospital stay) and Dana Lehman.

