



Celebrate

Sunday, October 18, 2026
21st Sunday after Pentecost

In today's first reading God uses the Gentile ruler Cyrus to accomplish divine purposes. When the Pharisees try to trap Jesus, he tells them to give the emperor what belongs to him and to God what belongs to God. To gather for worship reminds us that our ultimate allegiance is to God rather than to any earthly authority. Created in the image of God, we offer our entire selves in the service of God and for the sake of the world.

Prayer of the Day

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 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.

Thus says the LORD to his anointed,
to Cyrus,
whose right hand I have grasped
to subdue nations before him
and to 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 give you a title, 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.



Sing to the LORD ¹ a new song;

sing to the LORD, ¹ all the earth.

²**Sing to the LORD, bless the name ¹ of the LORD;
proclaim God's salvation from ¹ day to day.**

³Declare God's glory a- ¹ mong the nations
and God's wonders a- ¹ mong all peoples.

⁴**For great is the LORD and greatly ¹ to be praised,
more to be feared ¹ than all gods. R**

⁵As for all the gods of the nations, they ¹ are but idols;
but you, O LORD, have ¹ made the heavens.

⁶**Majesty and magnificence are ¹ in your presence;
power and splendor are in your ¹ sanctuary.**

⁷Ascribe to the LORD, you families ¹ of the peoples,
ascribe to the LORD hon- ¹ or and power.

⁸**Ascribe to the LORD the honor due the ¹ holy name;
bring offerings and enter the courts ¹ of the LORD. R**

⁹Worship the LORD in the beau- ¹ ty of holiness;
tremble before the LORD, ¹ all the earth.

[¹⁰**Tell it out among the nations: "The ¹ LORD is king!
The one who made the world so firm that it cannot be moved
will judge the peo- ¹ ples with equity."**

¹¹Let the heavens rejoice, and let the ¹ earth be glad;
let the sea thunder and all that is in it;
let the field be joyful and all that ¹ is therein.

¹²**Then shall all the trees of the wood
shout for joy at your com- ¹ ing, O LORD,
for you come to ¹ judge the earth.**

¹³You will judge the ¹ world with righteousness
and the peoples ¹ with your truth.] **R**

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.

Paul, 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 from 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 they 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 coming wrath.

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.

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 Caesar 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, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Give therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." ²²When they heard this, they were amazed, and they left him and went away.

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Seeking the Spirit of God who makes all things new, we pray for the church and the world.

A brief silence.

Living and true God, you inspire us to share the message of the gospel. Give your spirit of love to seminarians and those beginning their lives in ordained ministry (*local seminarians or newly called ministers may be named*). Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

We give you thanks for the majesty of our oceans. Protect the abundant life within them and sustain all those who work to preserve them. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

We seek your wisdom in all things. Direct all who hold positions of authority around the world, that they act with compassion, seeking the good of all. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

We pray for all people who work in dangerous or degrading environments. Grant them safety and courage, and heal all those who are injured, sick, or suffering (*especially*). Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

We ask your blessing on those who do the quiet, unseen work of the church (*congregational ministries may be named*). Encourage them in their work of faith and labor of love. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We thank you for our ancestors who have been called home to you (*especially*). Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Trusting in your boundless grace, O God, we lift up these spoken prayers and those in our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday (Luke, Evangelist [transferred]) Luke 1:1-4; 24:44-53. **Tuesday** Psalm 98. **Wednesday** Matthew 17:22-27. **Thursday** Psalm 1. **Friday** (commemoration of James of Jerusalem, martyr, died around 62) Titus 2:7-8, 11-15. **Saturday** John 5:39-47. **Reformation Sunday** Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 46; Romans 3:19-28; John 8:31-36 or **Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost** Leviticus 19:1-2, 15-18; Psalm 1; 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8; Matthew 22:34-46.

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