

check out from your local library, or you can look up some constellations on the internet. After you have found the night sky for our area, you can look for the constellations from your own backyard.

All of creation belongs to God, including the sun, the moon, and the stars of night. All are part of "Our Father's World." May we join with all creation in praise and thanks to God.

Peace,  
Pastor Cathy

#### CONTACTS DURING CORONAVIRUS CLOSURE

In case of emergency, contact Pastor Cathleen, via text, 608-865-1074, Justin Arndt (608-435-6336) (414-587-6642) or Nalani Bever (608-387-2311).

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St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Wilton, WI

23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

November 8, 2020

**Inviting People to  
Journey with Christ's Family  
In Spreading God's Love and Mercy**  
Broadcasting on 91.5 FM

#### Gathering

*The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God\**

#### Prayer of the Day

**O God of justice and love, you illumine our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, and awaken us to the needs of others, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.**

**Amen.**

#### FIRST READING

*In the days of Amos, people thought that the day of the LORD would be a time of great victory, but Amos announced that it would be a day of darkness, not light. He said liturgy is no substitute for obedience. The LORD demands justice and righteousness in the community.*

#### A reading from Amos 5:18-24

<sup>18</sup>Alas for you who desire the day of the LORD!

Why do you want the day of the LORD?

It is darkness, not light;

<sup>19</sup>as if someone fled from a lion,

and was met by a bear;

or went into the house and rested a hand against the wall,

and was bitten by a snake.

<sup>20</sup>Is not the day of the LORD darkness, not light,  
and gloom with no brightness in it?

<sup>21</sup>I hate, I despise your festivals,  
and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.  
<sup>22</sup>Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,  
I will not accept them;  
and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals  
I will not look upon.  
<sup>23</sup>Take away from me the noise of your songs;  
I will not listen to the melody of your harps.  
<sup>24</sup>But let justice roll down like waters,  
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

### Psalm 70

<sup>1</sup>Be pleased, O God, to deliver me;  
O LORD, make haste to help me.  
<sup>2</sup>Let those who seek my life be put to shame and confounded;  
let those who take pleasure in my misfortune draw back and be  
disgraced.  
<sup>3</sup>Let those who say to me “Aha!” and gloat over me  
turn back because of their shame.  
<sup>4</sup>Let all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you;  
let those who love your salvation say forever, “Great is the LORD!”  
<sup>5</sup>But as for me, I am poor and needy; come to me quickly, O God.  
You are my helper and my deliverer; O LORD, do not tarry.

### SECOND READING

*Some of the Thessalonians are worried that dead Christians will be excluded from the resurrection to eternal life when Christ comes again. Paul reassures them with the word of hope that all Christians, living or dead, will be raised into everlasting life with Christ.*

A reading from 1Thessalonians 4:13-18

<sup>13</sup>We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. <sup>14</sup>For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again,

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

We have enjoyed some beautiful weather this past week! Several days have been warmer and sunnier than usual for this time of year. I hope that you have been going outside and getting some exercise. I went for a walk yesterday, and plan to do the same, today. Whether you walk, bike, or participate in some other recreational activity outdoors, now is a wonderful time to enjoy God's creation!

In addition to the beautiful weather, I have also noticed that more leaves have fallen from the trees. It brought back many happy memories of being a child jumping into piles of leaves that my parents had raked. As my brothers and I got a little older, we still enjoyed this fall activity. So, we would rake the leaves ourselves and jump into them. I had not thought of it before, but perhaps jumping into leaves as a child is preparation for raking the leaves, jumping into them, and eventually bagging them or putting them by the curb for pick up during one's teen years.

The warmer days have also given way to warmer evenings. My older brother likes astronomy, and when he was in upper elementary school, he got a telescope for Christmas. I can still picture him reading, preparing, and then heading outside at night, especially when some special astronomical event was happening. He would set up his telescope, put a paper and pencil on a clipboard, put out a chair, and spend hours looking at the sky. He and my sister-in-law still tell me, on occasion, about special evening skies, before they head out to look at the stars.

We, too, can enjoy these warmer evenings and look at the stars. One does not need a telescope. All of us are fortunate to live in a rural area where it is easier to see the stars. We do not have the bright lights of the cities to diminish our view. Perhaps you, and/or you and your immediate family, might like to head outside some evening this week and enjoy looking at the stars. There are books that you can

## **CALENDAR FOR NOVEMBER**

Sun., Nov. 15	Drive-in Worship	9:00 AM
Thurs., Nov. 19	Quilting	9:00 AM
	WELCA General Meeting	10:00 AM

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **THANKOFFERINGS**

Thankofferings are a long-standing custom among Lutheran women. We give in thanksgiving for blessings received—and we do receive so many blessings, don't we? And we are so grateful. That's why we give Thankofferings. Envelopes are included in today's bulletin. You may either place your Thankoffering in the collection or mail your offering to the office at your convenience. We would appreciate receiving your offering by the end of November. Thank you.

### **OPERATION SHOEBOX**

A reminder that the shoeboxes should be returned no later than Noon on Monday, November 23. We know this might cause somewhat for a problem in that we are not holding services after next week. Not to worry, just give Nalani a call #608-387-2311 and arrangements will be made to gather your shoeboxes. We want to again thank those of you participating in this endeavor.

### **CHRISTMAS ANGELS AND GOOD GIFTS**

Each household of the congregation should have received information with regard to this project. We will be announcing a "decorating" gathering in next week's bulletin. We anticipate decorating the tree, the railings, and erecting the Nativity. Of course, we will ask that folks wear masks and practice social distancing. Should be fun!! Hot chocolate and cookies will be served. You don't have to decorate, just come and supervise from your car if you'd like!!

even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. <sup>15</sup>For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. <sup>16</sup>For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup>Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever. <sup>18</sup>Therefore encourage one another with these words.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

### **GOSPEL READING**

*Jesus tells a parable about his own second coming, emphasizing the need for readiness at all times.*

### **The gospel according to Mathew 25:1-13**

### **Glory to you, O Lord.**

[Jesus said to the disciples:] <sup>1</sup>"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup>Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. <sup>3</sup>When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; <sup>4</sup>but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. <sup>5</sup>As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. <sup>6</sup>But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' <sup>7</sup>Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup>The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' <sup>9</sup>But the wise replied, 'No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' <sup>10</sup>And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. <sup>11</sup>Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' <sup>12</sup>But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I do not know you.' <sup>13</sup>Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

## Sermon

This past week has been filled with a whirlwind of uncertainty for us in a variety of ways. For example, the close tallies in the Presidential election, the increasing Coronavirus cases in Wisconsin, including Monroe County; and questions as to whether we should gather in-person with extended family members for Thanksgiving. These and other uncertainties have left many of us anxious, uneasy and uncomfortable. We are hearing dissenting voices, perhaps even our own internal voices, calling us to do, or not to do any number of things! As a result, we may be finding it harder to be our true selves and to walk on the path that God encourages us to take.

When we initially hear our scripture passage from the Book of Amos, we may be uncomfortable and confused by its message. Amos is a prophet who is communicating God's thoughts to the Israelite people. But, we don't understand...Why is God calling the "day of the Lord," "darkness, not light." Why is God comparing it to someone "bitten by a snake in their house?" Why is God angry about the Israelite's worship, their festivals and solemn assemblies, their offerings of animals and grain, and their music? What are the Israelites doing while worshiping God that is so terrible?

To answer these questions, we must first understand that this pericope is less about the external actions of the Israelites during worship, and more about their internal actions! It is about what is going on in their hearts and minds! Knowing this, and after considering this pericope in its context, we gain a better understanding of the message God is communicating to them and all who read this pericope.

It is the 8th Century, BCE (i.e. Before the Christian Era). Amos is a shepherd, a farmer who has been called by God to be a prophet. God has told Amos his concerns about the Israelite people-- the wealthy are abusing the poor. The poor are being forced into debt, and when they

Holy Protector, be with all observing Veterans Day. Guard the lives of active duty and retired military personnel. Comfort all who mourn those who have died in the line of duty. Heal the wounds, both physical and mental, experienced by service members. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Holy and Immortal One, we pray in thanksgiving for the lives of all who have died. Remind us of the frailty and shortness of our own lives and inspire us to use them for the building up of your kingdom. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

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.

**Amen.**

P: Beloved of God,  
go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

### IN OUR PRAYERS

Katie Wallace, Carla Von Haden, Ruth Johnson, Judy Bever, Alrita Ornes, Dick Krause, Lisa Rhodes, Pam Liefke, Curt Brueggen, Deb Paeth, Lois Reineke, Tessa Klipstein, Colton Krueger, Michelle Krueger, Frank Wendt, Jeff (Scott) DuCharme.

### IN THE MILITARY

Jacob Picha, Todd Nofsinger, Dylan Dougherty, Seth Tormoen, Robert Cale

## **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION** (Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**)

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.

Holy God, rouse us to deep praise as we gather together for worship. Enliven our worship with sincere and heartfelt song. Sustain the work of all church musicians and artists who lead your church in praise and prayer during this time of the Coronavirus pandemic. Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

Holy Creator, surprise and delight us with the beauty of the world you have made. Bless the work of landscapers, architects, and artists whose work invites us into harmonious living with your creation. Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

Holy Judge, let justice roll down like waters over this world. Reign over the courtrooms of every land, in the hearts of those who guard the law and those who stand accused of crimes. Be present in cases where we long for both justice and mercy to prevail especially, the racial justice cases affecting many persons throughout the world. Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

Holy Companion, console those who feel lonely or abandoned. Share the hours of those who live and eat alone. Comfort those who have few friends or who struggle with their identity and place in this world. Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

We pray for all who are in distress due to depression or anxiety. We pray for those dealing with abuse. We pray for all who are suffering in body, mind or spirit, including Katie, Carla, Ruth, Judy, Alrita, Dick, Lisa, Pam, Curt, Deb, Lois, Tessa, Doug, Chris, Karl, Frank, Michelle, Colton, Jeff, those affected by the Coronavirus, and those we name aloud and in our hearts. Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

cannot pay what they owe, they are being sold into slavery. Yet, the wealthy do not see their actions as unjust! They continue to participate in the "light" of worship, acting as if they are pious, holy people! But, their lives are in fact, "darkened," by their abuse and mistreatment of the poor.

Prior to our pericope, in Amos, Chapter 4, we hear about what God has done for the people of Israel. God has done amazing, marvelous, merciful things for them! We also hear what God will do to them if they do not heed God's warnings and change their ways. Chapter 4 tells about God's degradation of the wealthy who oppress the poor (4:1-3), their transgressions involving hypocritical animal sacrifices and artificial piety (4:4-5), how God has tried to encourage them to return to God (Amos 4:6-11), and the proclamations of what they need to do, as God states what, "I will do to you, O Israel." (Amos 4:12-17)

But the people continue in their unjust ways. So, now, in Chapter 5, God is really angry! God is condemning their worship, because their hearts are calloused and hardened to their neighbors. Their worship is a mockery of true worship, a joyous festival without true reverence. They are sinning and disrespecting God, and even though God forewarned them of their evil ways, God's words appear to be a surprise to many of the Israelite people!

Fast forward to today. What we are experiencing, what we are living with on a daily basis, may be causing anguish, frustration and even fatigue within us. We are tired of the divisiveness--of angry words, of mudslinging, of incivility, of injustices directed toward others, of racial tensions, and more. Some persons are saying, "I've had enough. I am going to do what I want to do." They are giving up, and perhaps... even moving away from God, God's path and God's command to love one's neighbor as oneself. This is what God is cautioning us about in our

pericope today. Now is not the time to focus on our own external wants, our privileges, our power, our fame, or our own selfish desires! Now is not the time to listen to those who are promoting discord, unrest, strife and hatred in an attempt to draw us into their own ways of thinking and behaving. Now is not the time to abandon our neighbors. Now is not the time to deviate from God's path that moves us toward, not away from, justice and righteousness!

In Amos 5:24 we hear these words: "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." Let us pause, and reflect deeply, in our innermost beings, on these words. "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." We live in a country in which justice is to be for all people, not just a chosen few. Yet, there are many persons who do not know what justice and peace truly mean! The divisiveness, hatred, and injustices that they experience, do not communicate the justice and righteousness that God desires for us.

Righteousness comes to us as Christians through Christ's death on the cross. Jesus personally bore the sins of all humanity, so that those who believe in him might have eternal life. Through our one baptism, we become children of God, and the Holy Spirit works within us to strengthen our faith. Our sins are washed away, and evil is drown within us! But, we must daily die to sin and rise to new life in Christ! Daily, we must move away from the sins that weigh us down; sins that weigh heavily on our hearts and minds! The waters of baptism remind us of "justice [that] rolls down like waters," and "righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." For, Martin Luther described the waters of baptism as "a flood of grace." Baptism reveals God's grace which is poured out for us through our faith in God and Christ's death and resurrection. And it is in our baptismal vows that we are called to "care for others and the world God made, and work for justice and peace." (ELW, p. 228).

We are people of faith who receive forgiveness of sins and righteousness from Christ, not from our works. We receive God's ever-flowing grace as a free gift! We are called to love God and neighbor-- old and young, rich and poor, of all colors, abilities, ethnicities, whether friend or foe. Yes, God even calls us to love our enemies and to pray for them! God directs us, leads us, and encourages us to walk the path of justice and righteousness for the sake of humanity! God calls us to love God and one another, to demonstrate kindness, and to be God's faithful servants promoting justice and righteousness on earth.

The prophet, Micah, in the Book of Micah, verses 6:8, shares with us another familiar passage about justice and righteousness. Hear these words, spoken in response to an individual seeking to know what God requires: "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" Amen.

#### **Apostles' Creed**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.**

**On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.  
Amen.**