

THE TIME IN BETWEEN

A horizontal timeline with tick marks and a double-headed arrow indicating a period between two points.

A TIME FOR WATCHFULNESS

The Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

GRACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH | Seward, Nebraska

November 12, 2023

SERIES THEME: THE TIME IN BETWEEN

In the great timeline of human history, there are only two ultimately significant points: the first time Christ came to our world to win salvation by his life, death, and resurrection; and the second time Christ will come to consummate his everlasting kingdom. We live in the time in between those two points. It is a time of tension. We know that peace and perfection are ours already because of what Jesus did the first time he came. Yet we do not enjoy a peaceful and perfect existence now already. We will not know such a life until Christ comes again. And so we wait and watch, living in the time in between. As the church year draws to a close, Scripture points us toward the end of time when Christ will come again. Until then Christ teaches us how to live in the time in between.

THEME OF THE DAY: A TIME FOR WATCHFULNESS

Imagine you are planning to take the family out to dinner. You all have to wait on someone to get ready. Minute after minute passes. What can happen in that situation? It is easy to focus on something else and completely forget the original goal. When that family member is finally ready, you've become immersed in a movie. Or perhaps, as you were waiting, you grew drowsy and fell asleep. As we wait for Christ to return, as day after day passes, it can be easy to get distracted, to lose vigilance, to become spiritually drowsy. God forbid that Christ should return and find us spiritually asleep. Today we are reminded that the time in between Christ's first and second coming is a time for watchfulness. The Church prayers, "Lord God, keep us every watchful for the coming of your Son that we may sit with him and all your holy ones at the marriage feast in heaven."

Worship Leader
Organist/Pianist

Pastor Justin Wilkens
Karma Ridpath

Acknowledgments

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The Service, Setting Two (page 172 in Christian Worship 21)

Hymn: 870 O Church, Arise

Choir will sing verse 1. Congregation is invited to join in when they feel comfortable.

Stand

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Confession

CW 172

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

**If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just
and will forgive us our sins
and purify us from all unrighteousness.**

Let us confess our sins to the Lord.

Holy God, gracious Father,

I am sinful by nature

and have sinned against you in my thoughts, words, and actions.

I have not loved you with my whole heart;

I have not loved others as I should.

I deserve your punishment both now and forever.

But Jesus, my Savior, paid for my sins

with his innocent suffering and death.

Trusting in him, I pray: God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Silence for meditation and reflection

Our gracious Father in heaven has been merciful to us. He sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, who gave his life as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Lord, Have Mercy

CW 174

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

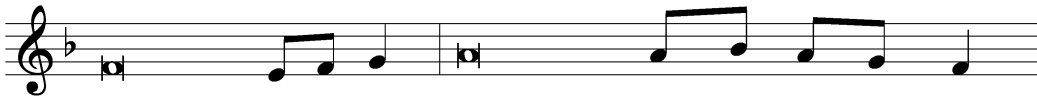
Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Amen.

Glory Be to God on High

CW 157



Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good will toward men.



We praise you, we bless you, we wor - ship you, we glorify you,



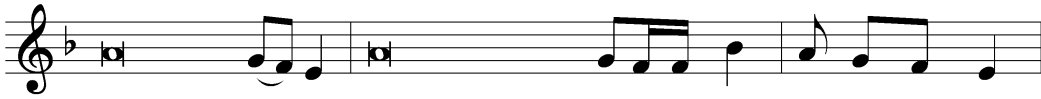
we give thanks to you, for your great glory, O Lord God, heav'n-ly King,



God the Fa-ther Al - mighty. O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Je-sus Christ;



O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sin of the world;



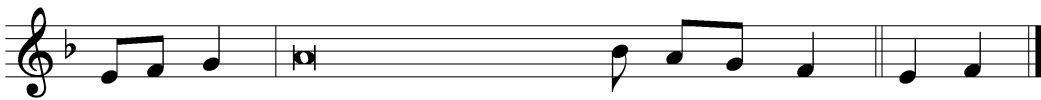
have mercy on us. You take away the sin of the world; re-ceive our prayer.



You sit at the right hand of God the Father; have mercy on us.



For you on-ly are holy; you on-ly are the Lord. You only, O Christ, with the



Ho - ly Spirit, are most high in the glory of God the Father. A - men.

THE WORD

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Prayer of the Day

Let us pray.

Almighty God and Savior, you have set the final day and hour when we shall be delivered from this world of sin and death. Keep us ever watchful for the coming of your Son that we may sit with him and all your holy ones at the marriage feast in heaven; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Be seated

First Reading

Isaiah 52:1–6

The nation of Israel was sleepwalking through life, exhausted by their present problems. "Awake!" the prophet cries to get them to watch for the coming redemption.

¹Wake, awake!

Clothe yourself with strength, O Zion.

Put on your beautiful garments,

Jerusalem, you holy city,

for never again will the uncircumcised

and the unclean enter you.

²Shake off the dust.

Get up and take your seat, Jerusalem.

Loosen the chains from your neck,

you captive daughter of Zion.

³Yes, this is what the Lord says.

You were sold for nothing,

and you will be redeemed without money.

⁴Yes, this is what the Lord God says.

In the beginning, my people went down to Egypt to stay there

for a while.

Later Assyria oppressed them without cause.

⁵Now what do I have here? declares the Lord.

Indeed, my people have been taken away for nothing.

Their rulers howl with mockery, declares the Lord.

My name is continually despised all day.

⁶Therefore my people will know my name.

So on that day they will know that I am the one—

the one who is saying, "Here I am!"

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Second Reading

1 Thessalonians 5:1–11

St. Paul teaches how we should wait for Jesus to return. Be watchful. Don't fall asleep. And live as children of the light.

The Day of the Lord

¹Concerning the times and dates, brothers, there is no need to write to you, ²for you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³When people are

saying, "Peace and security," destruction will suddenly come on them, like labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will certainly not escape. ⁴ But you, brothers, are not in the dark so that this day takes you by surprise like a thief, ⁵ for you are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or the darkness. ⁶ So then let us not sleep like everyone else, but rather let us remain alert and sober.

⁷ To be sure, those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. ⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. ⁹ You see, God did not appoint us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁰ He died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. ¹¹ Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up, just as you are also doing.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Stand

Gospel Acclamation

Matthew 24:42



Refrain



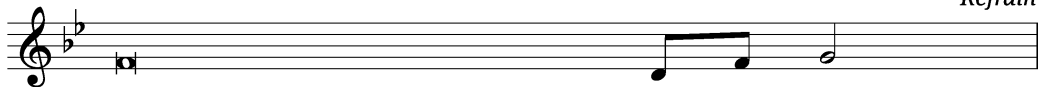
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Tone



Therefore keep watch,

Refrain



because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.

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Gospel

Matthew 25:1–13

The wise, those who are watching and ready for the Bridegroom, enter into the great wedding banquet.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

¹ "At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³ When the foolish ones took their lamps, they did not take any oil with them; ⁴ but the wise took oil in their containers with their lamps. ⁵ While the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep. ⁶ But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' ⁷ Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil because our lamps are going out.' ⁹ But the wise answered, 'No, there may not be enough for us and for you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' ¹⁰ But while they were away buying oil, the bridegroom came. Those who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet, and the door was shut. ¹¹ Later, the other virgins also came and said, 'Lord, Lord, let us in.' ¹² But he answered, 'Amen I tell you: I do not know you.' ¹³ Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ!

Be seated

Hymn of the Day: 486 Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying

Sermon: Matthew 25:1-13

Stand

Nicene Creed

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is,
seen and unseen.**

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,

**eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one being with the Father.**

Through him all things were made.

**For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,
and became truly human.**

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate.

He suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

We believe in the Holy Spirit,

the Lord, the giver of life,

who proceeds from the Father and the Son,

who in unity with the Father and the Son

is worshiped and glorified,

who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead

and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Be seated

Prayer of the Church

Brief intercessory prayers may be added in a fitting place.

Eternal Lord, give us peace as we ponder the good news that you forgive our sins in Christ.
Lead us to see clearly the path you have laid out for us.

Work in us so that we believe and live the Word we have heard today.

Provide courage and compassion to all who preach and teach your Word. Fill them with a love like yours as they proclaim your grace to us and all people.

Move us to love all ministers of the Word wherever they serve.

Guard and guide the families of our congregation. Lead husbands and wives to love each other with commitment, respect, and patience. Help parents to grasp the eternal value of keeping their children close to Jesus all their lives. Grant joy to those who are single, and make them a blessing to others.

Protect us from the temptations that surround us; give us pure hearts and minds.

Provide wisdom and insight to those who make laws and set policies. Give us respect for those who protect us from crime. Lead us to value the rights of our fellow citizens and to defend those who cannot defend themselves.

Bless our land with peace and prosperity so that the gospel may be proclaimed to all.

Give us passion to share the story of your love with our family and friends. Overcome unbelief, and open the hearts of people everywhere to believe the good news that Jesus has forgiven their sins and opened the gates of heaven.

Fill us with joy over every sinner who repents and comes to trust in you.

Extend your healing power to those who are sick and suffering in body or mind. [Pour out your special blessing on . . . *here name the person and the cause of the petition.*] Give patience and compassion to all who care for the sick and dying.

Lift the eyes of the distressed to your love in Christ.

Hear us, Lord, as we pray in silence.

Silent prayer

Gracious God, you govern and direct all things and you love all people. Hear our prayers, spoken and silent, and answer them in your wisdom and grace.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Offering

Offering Hymn: 713 I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light

sts. 1–2

THE SACRAMENT

Stand

Preface

CW 183

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give him thanks and praise.

It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who promised that wherever two or three come together in his name, there he is with them to shepherd his flock until he comes again in glory. Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

Holy, Holy, Holy

CW 184



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow - er,



God of might. Heav - en and earth are full of your



glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the
 Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est, ho -
 san - na in the high - est!

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Prayer of Thanksgiving

Lord God, you are worthy to receive thanks and praise from all people. You created the world and all who live in it, and in your mercy you saved us. We give thanks to you for the grace of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Though in very nature God, he took the nature of a servant and became obedient to death, even death on a cross. He offered himself as a sacrifice for sin and redeemed us from its curse and penalty. He rescued us from the terrors of death and restored eternal life with you. He conquered our enemies and gained for us the kingdom of grace and glory.

Bless us as we receive your Son's body and blood, and lead us to remember his suffering, death, and resurrection. Forgive our sins and fill us with the hope of new life in heaven. Hear our praise and receive our thanks as we worship you—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Lord's Prayer

**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.

Words of Institution

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my + body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my + blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The peace of the Lord be with you always.
Amen.

Jesus, Lamb of God

CW 186

Je - sus, Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; have mer - cy on us.

Je - sus, Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; have mer - cy on us.
Je - sus, Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; grant us your peace.

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Be seated

Distribution

Close Communion We ask that only those who have previously spoken to our pastor or are members in good standing of this or another WELS or ELS congregation come to Holy Communion today. Our practice of Close Communion (which has been the practice of the Christian Church throughout the ages) is in no way trying to judge anyone's faith. What we are trying to do is follow the Bible's clear teaching (1 Corinthians 11) to first study God's Word together. As we do so, we can share with/review with you what the Lord's Supper is all about. You, then, also have an opportunity to examine what we believe and teach before you come to the Lord's Supper and make a public profession that you agree with what we teach.

Distribution Hymn: 665 What Is This Bread

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his mercy endures forever.

Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup,
we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet you have given us in this Sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith, nourished our hope, and strengthened our love. By your Spirit, help us to live as your holy people until that day when you will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and + give you peace.

Amen.

Hymn: 884 Lord, When Your Glory I Shall See

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today: 8:00 AM Bible Study, 8:45 AM Worship and Communion, 9:45 AM Fellowship and Sunday School

Sunday: 8:00 AM Bible Study, 8:45 AM Worship, 9:45 AM Fellowship and Sunday School

Thursday 11/23: 8:45 AM Thanksgiving Eve Worship Service

Food Drive for Blue Valley

Today is the last day to donate items for the food drive. Items will be dropped off tomorrow.

NELHS Veterans Day Service

All veterans and their families are cordially invited to attend the Veterans Day Service at NELHS on November 10th. The program will begin with a light breakfast at 9:15 AM with chapel starting at 10:00 AM. Following the service there will be a guest speaker at 10:30 AM. If you have any questions please contact Tutor Hannah Zabel at hzabel@nelhs.org or 402-366-1428.

New Bible Class- The Righteous Shall Live by Faith: A study on the book of Galatians

Next week we will be starting our new Bible Study on the book of Galatians. A book written by Paul to a congregation that was being led astray by false teachers who were proclaiming a false gospel. What "gospel" were these false teachers proclaiming? How does Paul respond to their attacks and encourage this group of believers? And why was this one of Martin Luther's favorite books in all of God's Word? These are just some of the questions we'll look at throughout the course of this study. Hope to see you there!

Christmas Decorating

Following our worship service on November 26th we will decorate the church for the Advent and Christmas seasons.

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Personal assisted listening devices are available.

Given to the Lord: Attendance: Sunday Bible Class 19, Worship 44 in person, Facebook Reached 30, Audio/YouTube 9. Offerings: Home 4,485.00, WELS 375.00, NELHS 100.00, Trinity 450.00 **To God be the glory!**

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