

## Eleventh Sunday After Pentecost

Luke 12:13-21

Most of us have learned through sermons or Sunday school classes that the Bible does not say that money is the root of all evil. Rather it says that the *love* of money is a root of evil. (1Tim.6:10) Whether rich or poor in the material sense, the primary question in a Christians' life remains the same, "Who do you say that I am?" What or Who is your greatest love?

Who Jesus is in my life or in your life determines our actions and attitude. Did you earn your money, or is it a gift from God, or is it both? If I have earned my money, isn't my very ability to learn the skills that bring my paycheck a gift from God? As you can see, the basic question that underlies my answer to these questions remains, "Who do you say that I am?" Is Jesus my Lord and Provider of all that I have? Or is He a bystander Who can only observe my talents, abilities, and wealth?



The rich man in Jesus' parable had chosen to reject the idea that Jesus could be Lord and Provider. As a result, he clung to his wealth as his only security, not realizing that his money could not bring him the most valuable prize of all, salvation in Christ and eternal life in Him. That prize was and is only available as a free gift through Christ.

Money is a wonderful thing. It can bring fun, nice homes, comfortable bank accounts, cruises, etc., but it must never become lord of our lives. The greatest philanthropists of our century were happiest in trying to give their money away to help others. Some of the most miserable families in our century were those whose patriarchs hoarded and squandered their money on more "things." May each of us learn how to turn *everything* in our lives over to God, proclaiming as Paul did, "I have *learned* to be content...how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity..." (Phil. 4:11-12) For Paul, all life was a joy because he lived his answer to the question, "Who do you say that I am?"

*Is God's Word part of the wealth in your life?*

**A message from your Iowa District West Education Committee**

## Eleventh Sunday After Pentecost

Luke 12:13-21

1. What issue (vs. 13) gave occasion for this parable? Do inheritance issues still come up today?
2. What sin does Jesus' parable especially address? (vs. 15)
3. How would the rich man have described "the good life"? (vs. 18-19)
4. What word in vs. 20 describes God's description of those who rely only on "things?"
5. What does it mean to be "rich toward God"? (vs. 21)
6. Have there been times where you have struggled with greed? How has God reshaped your heart and your response at those times?

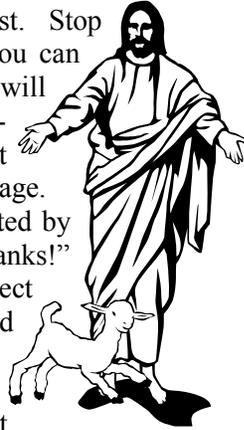


## Eleventh Sunday After Pentecost

Isaiah 55:1-5

Come to my table; eat and drink without cost. Stop paying for food that does you no good, when you can have the best for free! You will be delighted. I will never fail you and you always have life and abundance, even if you come to me with nothing! That is the message from God to His people in this passage.

This picture of salvation continues to be rejected by millions of people today, as they reply, “No thanks!” Unbelievable! Unbelievable that anyone could reject such an offer and unbelievable that salvation could be that easy. Salvation wasn’t really all that easy, but we don’t seem to understand that.



Salvation was the costliest venture ever, at least for God. It meant saving a people that willingly rebelled against Him and continued to defy Him throughout history. It meant God being willing to send His Son to this world to accomplish a task that He knew would be unappreciated; sending His Son to suffer insult, rejection, torture, death, and even separation from Himself. It meant that not only would Christ die, but He would die as a criminal and truly cry the agonized, “My God, My God, Why have You forsaken Me?” And still, the world continues to reject Him, and He continues to love the world. Wow.

Unbelievers obviously don’t understand this, but why would anyone suggest that we Christians don’t seem to understand this? A German theologian once said that we “flock around the carcass of cheap grace...”. Yuk! What he meant was that we fail to understand that our free salvation wasn’t free to God. The theologian believed that if we really understood what God had paid for our free gift of salvation, we would respond by living our faith.

How do you respond to God’s costly gift of salvation? Are you a studier of His Word? Are you a person who diligently prays to your Lord? Are you a sharer of His love and of His gift of salvation? That sounds really “works” related, but God does ask these things of us. The neat part is that as we seek His help, He will gladly grant it!

***Studying God’s word is easier with friends. Please Join a Bible study group!***

A message from your District Education Committee

## Eleventh Sunday After Pentecost

Isaiah 55:1-5

1. Picture the banquet described in the opening verses. What is being served? What is the atmosphere? Who is present?
2. The “price” of the banquet is significant. What is the cost of salvation? Who has paid the price?
3. God had made several timed and conditioned covenants with Israel. Why would this covenant be everlasting? (vs. 3) Who would be included?
4. Who is the “witness,” “leader and commander” promised in verse 4? See Revelation 1:5 for a word of fulfillment.
5. In our sinful nature what is our spiritual “dress?” (see Isaiah 64:6). When we are dressed with Christ, what is our attire (see 55:5b)?
6. When have you been spiritually thirsty or hungry? How does the invitation of Isaiah 55:1 speak to you?



## Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Exodus 19:1-6

“Now, if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession...” (vs. 5) Those are scary words to us, but in the verse just after today’s passage, the Israelites gladly agreed and said that they would do everything that the Lord commanded (vs. 7-8). We read those words and know that there is no way that they will do it, and they didn’t. Why the “if”? God already knew that they couldn’t be completely obedient to Him. In fact, they had a streak of rebellion that just wouldn’t quit.

Israel was a brand new nation and they didn’t yet understand their relationship with God. They didn’t understand the transcendent nature of their God. The gods that surrounded them were pretty much like they were—jealous, easily angered, married, and full of human flaws. One thing that the covenant with God would do was to reveal human nature in comparison to God’s nature. Many Israelites came to understand God’s unfathomable love for His very imperfect people.

Knowing that His people could not be perfect, God provided a system of sacrifice, not so that their sin could be forgiven through the death of an animal, but so that they could understand that sin brought death, and so that they could see a picture of the coming perfect and final sacrifice in Christ for their sinfulness. It was a way for them to picture God’s gift of salvation.

Israel only knew God through His promises and deeds. We are blessed to also know God through His Son, who shows us the Father. We fear “if...then” statements between us and God because we are confronted with our sin and His perfection. Although we have not been literally guarded by pillars of flame, or crossed the Red Sea with walls of water on either side, the joy that we know in Christ is even greater than that of Israel because we know that our salvation does not depend upon our obedience, but upon the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

*Learn more about you and God in a Bible Study this week!*

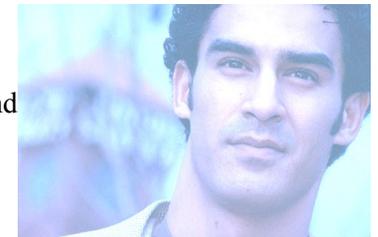
**A message from your Iowa District West Education Committee**



## Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Exodus 19:1-6

1. What had happened in the three months from the exodus to the arrival at Sinai? (Review Exodus 15-18)
2. What did it mean for Israel to be carried on eagles’ wings? Where else in Scripture is this picture used? (See Isaiah 40:31)
3. Covenants often have “if . . . then” language. What was the “if” of God’s covenant with Israel at Sinai? What was the “then” response?
4. “Although the whole earth is mine you will be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” (vs. 5b-6) Out of all the people of the earth, why had God chosen to bless this people?
5. How is the language of “priests” and “holy nation” used in 1 Peter 2:9-10?



6. Is there a time where God especially carried you on his wings?

## Mary Mother of Our Lord

Isaiah 61:7-11

Today's passage from Isaiah reads in part, "I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness..." (vs. 10) Mary's words of praise recorded by Luke are similar. She was responding to the news that her's would be an important part in the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. Salvation was about to be revealed in God's Son.

Mary was an extraordinary person, but not only because she bore the Savior. Nor was she extraordinary only because she would be called blessed throughout the future. Her unique experience of being a virgin mother was not even her most extraordinary experience. Mary, above all of these things, was a person of faith!

Mary knew the word of God. Her song of praise to Him echoes her familiarity with the Old Testament. She was devoted to God and attentive to spiritual things. She was not astounded that an angel would appear, but wondered about his greeting. Then the angel explained that she would bear the Son of God.

It is here that we see Mary's reply of faith to this impossibility. She said, "Behold, the bondservant of the Lord." Like Isaiah, Mary's response to God was praise and obedience even in the midst of a confusing, impossible, and frightening situation. These believers did not say, "Not me! I'm unqualified," because they understood that God was able to do the qualifying.

Before deciding that it is impossible to experience such faith, let's not forget that Mary had her unsettling moments, like the time she lost track of 12-year old Jesus, or her agony at His death, or her bewilderment at His tomb. Isaiah, too, experienced doubt and frustration as he met days of trial and puzzlement. Though the walk is bumpy, they were, and we can be, people of faith by the power and grace of God whose love for us does not end!

**Learn more about faith in a Bible study this week.**

*A message from your Iowa District West Education Committee*

## Mary Mother of Our Lord

Isaiah 61:7-11

1. Read Isaiah, chapter 61. What is the mood of the chapter? When is "the year of the Lord's favor" (vs. 2)?
2. How does God dress the faithful (vs. 10)?
3. According to vs. 11, what is God growing in His garden?
4. What parallels are there between Isaiah's song in this text and Mary's annunciation song (Luke 1:46-55)?
5. Find the "joy" words in this text? Isaiah's joy was in the anticipation of the Messiah. What is your joy in the fulfillment of God's promise?
6. Today "Mary, Mother of Our Lord" is remembered. Read the Introit, collect and gradual of the day on page 112 of Lutheran Worship. Why is it appropriate for us to remember Mary?

## Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Romans 8:35-39

A very serious question posed by Paul brings a smile to the face of any Christian because the answer to the question, “Who will separate us from the love of Christ?” is “No one and no thing.” Paul has posed a rhetorical question in order to share with us the assurance of God’s abiding presence.

Paul lists seven things that we might sometimes fear or we might perceive as causing God’s love to depart from us. Turmoil, fear, demons, enemies, doubt, or “created things” can cause us to doubt that even Jesus can protect us. But, Paul points to the Psalms as a reminder to Christians that God’s people have always faced uncertainty and even death. They are part of every person’s life.

Believers are considered “sheep to be slaughtered” not by God, but by those who are without God. The world will never make the life of the believer easy. As the adopted children of God we are by nature opposed to the value system of the world and the gods of the world. The world is likewise by nature opposed to God and to any who serves Him.

Every day we see both temptations to walk away from God and dangers that cause us to fear that we might be forced from God. We may not be torn to pieces by lions for the entertainment of Nero’s subjects, but we are often thought to be less than intelligent, superstitious, weak, unthinking, narrow-minded, hateful, uninformed, primitive, and even harmful to society’s advancement. To believers in our time, these labels are as painful as the persecution in Paul’s day. Though we tout the old saying, “Sticks and stones may break my bones...”, our culture can cause much pain without resorting to violence of any sort.

So, what does this mean? It means that no matter what we experience or suffer or find frustrating, God will never leave us. Jesus will be with us through every problem and peril. He is not just for the good times, nor just for the bad times—He is for every time. And, we do not merely survive or endure in our relationship with Him. Paul says, “in all these things we *overwhelmingly conquer* through Him who loved us.” (NASB)

Learn more about God’s power in our lives in a Bible study this week.

## Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Romans 8:35-39

1. What is the ultimate demonstration of God’s love? (John 3:16)
2. How expansive is God’s love? (vs. 38-39)
3. What earthly circumstances might cause us to question God’s love (vs. 35)? What additions might we add to the list?
4. What does it mean to be “more than conquerors?” (vs. 37)

### For Family Reflection:

5. Have there been times where you have felt distracted or defeated? How were you strengthened?
6. Put Romans 8:38-39 on the family refrigerator or bulletin board. Memorize these passages. Discuss what they mean to your family.

## Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Ephesians 4:17-24

Last week's passage emphasized the importance of being mature Christians, walking in a worthy manner, loving one another, building up the body of Christ. Why is that so tremendously important? Does the way we act really matter in the situations we face every day? Today, Paul addresses these questions. The questions were asked in the Ephesian church two thousand years ago, and they fill our minds in our own world as well.

There is an old saying that seems to have become popular as computers gained their foothold in our world. Many people complained about the callous beasts because they would not work properly. Their programs crashed and their promised power seemed to fail at the most crucial, inconvenient, times. Their inventors began saying, "Garbage in—garbage out." That meant that the computer could only use the information fed to it by the programmer, and if the information was faulty or incorrect, the mind of the computer could not be expected to perform properly.

The human mind is far more complicated than any computer, even today. Yet, the same saying applies to our own wonderful minds. Garbage in—garbage out.

Paul talks about the actions and priorities of the unbelievers surrounding the church in Ephesus, home of the fertility goddess Aphrodite. Ephesians practiced all of the vice and excessiveness that our own culture enjoys and cultivates. For its time, it was as wealthy and famous as any city of the United States. Citizens that did not participate in the local lifestyle, seemed to apathetically approve.

In today's passage we learn from Paul that those who practice evil, even the often "acceptable" evil of false ethics, or actions planned to harm others, fall victim to the slavery of such things.

The *old self*, even in the Christian, will battle to reassert its control over the mind and spirit. Paul says to put that old self aside in every situation that we face. He urges us to put on the *new self*, the one connected to Christ, the one that seeks to do everything the way God wants it done; the self that is guided by the Holy Spirit and filled with His wisdom. It is He who guards us from the old garbage by filling our minds and hearts with His love and wisdom.

Learn more about living our faith in a Bible study this week.  
A message from your Iowa District West Education Committee

## Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Ephesians 4:17-24

1. What words in verses 17-19 are used to describe the life and character of those separated from Christ? (for example: futile, ignorant, insensitive . . . )
2. What happens when we give ourselves over to our natural, sinful, sensual ways? (See also Romans 1:24-27)
3. What does it mean to be "made new" (vs. 23-24). When did we become new?

### For Family Reflection

4. How do we see that we also live in a very sensual society? How does vs. 19 speak to our culture? What are the dangers for us as Christians?
5. What is the key to the "attitude" of vs. 23? (See Philippians 2:5-8)
6. Is it enough just to know Christ? What does it mean to "live" Christ in your family, your school, or your place of work?

## Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Hebrews 11:1-16

Of all the faithful leaders that the author mentions, perhaps Abraham is the most encouraging for us who live in today's world. Faith, Abraham demonstrates, is not the ability to "be good"; not the ability to be ever-intelligent; not the ability to place others before ourselves; not the ability to place our spouse's well-being first; not the ability to never question God; not even the ability to remain at peace with others. And, that is a comfort for us all.

Let's look at some of Abraham's less impressive acts: After God's promise of a son, this faithful man became impatient, apparently deciding that God needed some help in fulfilling His promise. So, he took his wife's slave, Hagar, as his concubine, which caused no end of trouble; He then failed to protect Hagar when his wife became jealous and mistreated her; When God assured Abram that his wife, Sarah, would bear the son to inherit God's blessing, Abram doubted, and begged God to bless Hagar's son, Ishmael, instead; Abraham turned his wife over to King Abimelech out of fear that he might be killed for her. He also lied to the king, but later only claimed that he just didn't tell all of the truth.

We don't list Abraham's faults in order to claim that his faith was less than that of other men and women—it was not. He was a man of great faith and greatly loved by God, but his life proves that being faithful does not mean being perfect. Faith is trusting God to be who He says He is. It is trusting God's promise that He is in control; trusting in His Son as the one path to the Father.

Faith is a gift from God, but we don't use it consistently. Faith is easy when things are going well. Abraham rejoiced in God at the birth of Isaac, the son of promise, and he surely wept at realizing what danger he had placed Sarah in with King Abimelech. In each situation faith carried him and assured him that God was God and in Him was an expressed joy in good times and a reverent and hope-filled joy in times of failure or sadness.

Faith is assurance—not a feeling of "maybe." It is a trusting heart given us by God. Faith, though a gift, must be practiced in order to become full and constant.

**Learn more about faith in a Bible study this week.**

*A message from your Iowa District West Christian Education Committee*

## Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Hebrews 11:1-16

1. How many times is "by faith" used in today's text?
2. How does Hebrews 11:1 define faith? Who is always the object of our faith? Why is faith necessary (vs. 6)?
3. Review the hymn "I'm But a Stranger Here" (LW# 515; LSB#748). What is the connection between this hymn and vs. 13-16?

### For Family Reflection

4. Which of the Biblical faith "heroes" mentioned in this section is your favorite? Why? Do you have another Bible faith "hero"?
5. Faith examples did not cease with the Biblical record. Who in your family, church, or other context is a faith "hero"? Why?
6. In Hebrews 11:1 we have a definition of faith. How do you define "faith"? Perhaps you can "illustrate" your definition in some way other than with words.

## Eleventh Sunday After Pentecost

Matthew 13:44-52

It seems that everyone is seeking Atlantis these days. Plato is back in style as are many new cult leaders who claim that the secret of the lost civilization of Atlantis is about to be uncovered, along with its location. The legends of Atlantis imply that it was a city and culture of unparalleled stature. Some claim that its science was advanced beyond even what we know today, and the city's citizens were at peace. It seems to have been the utopia that many authors and thinkers have pursued over the centuries. However, men still argue as to whether it ever even existed. Some think that it was built by aliens. How sad that many people continue to pursue a shadowy, earthly or galaxial kingdom of perfection while God's very real and contemporary kingdom is in our midst right now.

The parables of Jesus in this week's passage indicate the great value and importance of becoming a member of God's kingdom. In Philippians, St. Paul wrote, "*...I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him...*" (Phil. 3:8) What is of great value to you...your children, spouse, life, job? Is Jesus on your list of "most valuable in my life"?

When I want to know what is of great value to people, I listen to their words and watch their lives. Do your words and life reflect St. Paul's devotion to Christ and His kingdom? Are you still searching for an earthly utopia like Atlantis, or is your heart and mind focused on Christ Jesus and His kingdom? He is Master of the Universe. Everything, without exception, is subject to Jesus. His love for us is unbounded and His gift of salvation to us is free. The abundant life that He offers is far more exciting than finding Atlantis.

*Have you been to a Bible study this month?*

(A message from your Iowa District West Christian Education Committee)

## Eleventh Sunday After Pentecost

Matthew 13:44-52

1. There are three parables in this text. How do all three stories begin? Why did Jesus use stories to explain His kingdom?
2. How do the stories in vs. 44-46 emphasize that being in Jesus' kingdom is something very valuable and very special?
3. What happened to the good fish found in the net? What happened to the bad fish? What does this story mean for the believers? What does it mean for the unbelievers? What kind of fish are you?
4. Read the reaction to Jesus' teaching (vs. 53-58). How were Jesus' teachings received?

### For Family Reflection

5. God's Word always has "new treasures" (vs. 52) for us. What new things about Jesus have you learned recently?
6. Think of your own parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like . . ." What does it mean to be part of Jesus' kingdom now and forever?

## Eleventh Sunday After Pentecost

John 6:51-69

In this passage, Jesus continues to teach about His position as the bread of life. His words are intense as He emphasizes that only in His gift of His body and blood on the cross can there be true nourishment. Jesus' call to the listeners is clear. Unless they accept that only in His body and blood can they have hope for fellowship with God, they will be lost. The language is tough, but so is the audience. They are grumbling, obstinate unbelievers.

Jesus said, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves." That is how important Jesus is to us. Without Him in our lives; without His death on the cross and His life in us, we have nothing and are nothing. Without Jesus, we would also be obstinate, grumbling unbelievers.

Jesus' followers began wandering away after hearing His most difficult teaching. He asked the remaining disciples, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" Peter's reply said it all, not only for him, but for us as well, "Lord, to whom shall we go?"

Indeed, where would we turn without Jesus? He not only gave us eternal life through the shedding of His blood, but also gave us answers to the questions of life here and now through the example of His life.

Have we not all asked, "What happens when I die?" The world says, "That's it. You're gone, but we'll help you go with *dignity*." Jesus promises that upon leaving this world, we will go to be with Him in Heaven. "I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14:3)

Peter said it all and we must heartily agree with him. "Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

**Have you invited a friend to attend a regular Bible study with you?**  
(A message from your Iowa District West Christian Education Committee)

## Eleventh Sunday After Pentecost

John 6:51-69

1. Beginning in vs. 33 (and several times continuing through this section) Jesus talks about "coming down." When did He come down? Why did He come down? When will He come down again?
2. When did Jesus give His flesh for the world to "eat"? When did He offer His blood for the world to "drink" (vs. 53-56)?
3. How is the "bread" of Jesus more satisfying and more permanent than the manna of the Old Testament or any bread today?
4. Why would Peter never leave Jesus (vs. 68-69)? What did Jesus have to offer him and us? Was Peter faithful to his confession?

### For Family Reflection

5. When is it hard for you to follow Jesus (vs. 60)?
6. Which of the disciples didn't believe in Jesus? Do you know of anyone who doesn't believe in Jesus? What can you tell them about Jesus?

## Eleventh Sunday After Pentecost

Luke 12:22-40

It's important to note in this passage that it directly refers to last week's lesson. Jesus says, "For this reason I say to you...." It is His reassurance to His disciples then and His disciples now (that's us) that what He has said is trustworthy.

Let's be honest. We have all wondered at some time if God really cares about our daily lives. Does God know? Does God take care of anything but our eternity? Some parents chide their children for praying that God will let them have a new bike, but to the children their request is no different than hearing their parents ask that God provide the family's "daily needs." However the children are often told, "Don't bother God with that kind of prayer." Verse 27 expresses God's promise to provide our needs according to His will. We are free to place Him first in our lives and this we must do (contrary to the man in last week's parable). What about the bike? To be personal for a moment, my daughter is a musician. After she prayed, her first instrument was indeed arranged through a miracle from her caring Father. It's a long story, or I would tell you about it.

Do you still wonder if depending on God is wiser than depending on the bank account? Read verses 25 and 26. They are, in a way, shocking. Jesus challenges His listeners with the question of whether their worry can lengthen their lives. He then says.... "if then you cannot do even a very little thing, why do you worry about other matters?" All the intricacies of nature are a "very little thing" to our creating and sustaining Father.

By trusting in God for all things, we automatically obey Jesus' final words in today's lesson. We are ready at all times for His return when He is first in our hearts; first in our lives; first in our thoughts; first in our jobs; first in our families; first in everything. The only other thing that He asks of us in our time here is to bring others to Him. As we trust in Him for everything, we also live as His witnesses to the truth of the gospel of salvation given to us through His death on the cross.

***Have you invited a friend to attend a regular Bible study with you?***

(A message from your Iowa District West Christian Education Committee)

## Eleventh Sunday After Pentecost

Luke 12:22-40

1. What examples from nature does Jesus use to teach us about God's provision? Can you think of other illustrations?
2. What does the world seek after? What do you, as a Christian, seek after (vs. 31)? What assurances does Jesus give about our earthly security?
3. What special appearance of Jesus is described in vs. 35-40? How can we be ready for our Master's arrival?

### For Family Reflection

4. Are there times when we have "little faith" (vs. 28)? What do you worry about? What can we do in those times of doubt or worry?
5. What are some times that you get ready for? How do we get ready for Jesus?
6. Jesus says "Give to the needy" (vs. 33). How can your family help those who are needy in your church or community?