



Celebrate

Sunday, October 22, 2023
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 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.



Sing to the LORD ¹ a new song;

sing to the LORD, ¹ all the earth.

²Sing 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.

⁴For 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.

⁶Majesty 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.

⁸Ascribe 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.

[¹⁰Tell 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.

¹²Then 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 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:

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 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.

Prayers of Intercession

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

Trusting in the transformative power of God's loving Spirit, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

Faithful God, your Spirit animates the church throughout the world and binds believers near and far into the body of Christ. Equip us for the work of faith, and enlarge our hearts for the labor of love. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Creating God, the sea roars, the earth rejoices, and the heavens are glad at the wonder of all you have made. Bless the work of ecologists and conservationists and all those who safeguard the riches of creation. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Sovereign God, your rule and authority is over the cosmos. As you once worked through the ruler Cyrus for the good of your people, accomplish your purposes through the work of elected leaders and public servants (*especially*). Guide them with your wisdom and compassion. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Caring God, your arms enfold all who are lonely, oppressed, despairing, sick, and suffering (*especially*). Pour out your abundant mercy on all whom this world has neglected, abandoned, and forgotten, that they may know your joy. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Almighty God, all our life belongs to you. When earthly idols threaten to lead your church astray, remind us that you alone are the source of our eternal hope. Direct the work of church treasurers, councils, and all who manage financial matters. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Everlasting God, the saints of every age have sung your praise and shared your word. We give you thanks for their witness and pray that we may join them as citizens of your unending kingdom. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Gracious God, into your hands we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your unending love and amazing grace; through Jesus Christ, our Savior.
Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday (commemoration of James of Jerusalem, martyr, died around 62) Psalm 98. **Tuesday** Daniel 3:19-30. **Wednesday** Matthew 17:22-27. **Thursday** (commemoration of Philipp Nicolai, died 1608; Johann Heermann, died 1647; Paul Gerhardt, died 1676; hymnwriters) Psalm 1. **Friday** Titus 2:7-8, 11-15. **Saturday** (Simon and Jude, Apostles) John 14:21-27. **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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