

## Order of Worship for October 1, 2023

### Prelude

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

### Opening Hymn: “Jesus! Name of Wondrous Love” – Hymn #900

#### Confession and Forgiveness:

P: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

P: Do we recognize authority? Do we know what it means that Jesus has authority?

C: **God alone has authority. Authority is not wishful thinking. It is not something we can ignore.**

P: We complain about Your way of doing things.

C: **“If only You would do it my way, God!”**

P: But whose ways are at fault?

C: **Is it not our ways that are at fault?**

**All: Lord God, we confess that we don’t want to take responsibility for what we have done and have failed to do. We are at fault. Help us to stop trying to shift the blame and to instead depend only on Your mercy. Forgive us!**

P: By the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you of all Your sin in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

#### Service of the Word

##### Entrance Psalm

P: The LORD lifts up the humble;

C: **He casts the wicked to the ground.**

P: Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God;

C: **for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting.**

P: The LORD builds up Jerusalem;

C: **He gathers the outcasts of Israel.**

P: He heals the brokenhearted

C: **and binds up their wounds.**

P: He determines the number of the stars;

C: **He gives to all of them their names.**

P: Great is our LORD, and abundant in power;

C: **His understanding is beyond measure.**

**All: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

P: The LORD lifts up the humble;

C: **He casts the wicked to the ground.**

## **Prayer of the Day**

Almighty God, You exalted Your Son to the place of all honor and authority. Enlighten our minds by Your Holy Spirit that, confessing Jesus as Lord, we may be led into all truth; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C: Amen**

## **Old Testament Lesson:** Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

The word of the LORD came to me: "What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? As I live, declares the LORD God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die. Yet you say, 'The way of the LORD is not just.' Hear now, O house of Israel: Is My way not just? Is it not your ways that are not just? When a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it; for the injustice that he has done he shall die. Again, when a wicked person turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he shall save his life. Because he considered and turned away from all the transgressions that he had committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die. Yet the house of Israel says, 'The way of the LORD is not just.' O house of Israel, are My ways not just? Is it not your ways that are not just? Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the LORD God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the LORD God; so turn, and live."

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

## **Epistle Lesson:** Philippians 2:1-4, 14-18

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

## **Holy Gospel:** Matthew 21:28-32

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter.

**C: Glory to You, O Christ.**

[Jesus said,] “What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' And he answered, 'I will not,' but afterward he changed his mind and went. And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" [The Pharisees] said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

**Statement of Faith:** Close of the Commandments - **page 322**

**Sermon Hymn:** “*When in the Hour of Deepest Need*” - **Hymn #615**

**Sermon:** “*Freed from Victomhood*” - **Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32**

The great basketball coach John Wooden wrote:

As my father reminded me more than once, “Great leaders give credit to others and accept the blame themselves.” If one of my assistant coaches made a suggestion that we decided to implement, I would make sure to praise him for his foresight in the press conference afterward. But if one made a suggestion that didn’t prove to be as successful, I accepted the blame myself rather than pinning it on the assistant. After all, as the head coach, I had decided to go forward with it. I found that this was the most effective way to keep my assistant coaches feeling engaged with the game, willing to make suggestions and ready to contribute to the betterment of the team. It worked with my players, too. I would never publicly criticize a player for poor performance. Even in moments of extreme frustration, I would check myself because it just didn’t seem right—because it didn’t seem like something my father would have done. And I’m proud to say that to the best of my knowledge, I never did slip up in that regard.

In the book *The Essential Wooden*, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar described Wooden, who was his coach at UCLA, this way:

We understood that if we played up to the standard he had set in practice, we’d probably win. If not, if we lost, he took the blame and tried to fix it the next practice. He was very focused, very intense. Always, always with his emotions under control.

The idea of taking the blame when things go wrong can be very noble, but it is so hard to do. It is so much easier to blame someone else and play the part of the victim. That is certainly a big controversy in our society today. Many feel that people who should be taking responsibility are trying to get out of it by claiming they are the victims. Most of time it depends on which end of the blame you are on. Many older people are against the government paying off students loans,

but how would they feel if they had that debt? The cost of going to college has exploded. Others see people getting away with crime, while on the other side are those raised in poverty that sees no alternative to it.

If any groups see themselves as victims, it was the people Ezekiel prophesied to. Ezekiel was among the first group of people taken into captivity to Babylon. God had warned His people Israel that they would be punished if they continue to forget Him and worship other gods. First He allowed the Assyrians to destroy the northern kingdom. Then He sent the Babylonians to punish the rest around the city of Jerusalem. The captives like Ezekiel put their hope in God preventing Jerusalem and the temple from being conquered. But through Ezekiel God warned that the Babylonians would come back and destroy the temple. Instead of turning to God for forgiveness, they blamed their ancestors. They said, “The parents eat sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” In other words, “Our ancestors screwed up, and now we take the punishment for them.” They were playing the victim.

We are so tempted to play the victim. It is very easy to see in a marriage. We become experts on the shortcomings of our husband or wife. So it is easy to see that the solution to problems in a marriage is for him or her to shape up. The problem cannot be with me!

We hear about people who claim in the most ridiculous ways to be victims. A woman sued a candy company because she claimed it did not warn her there was sugar in their jelly beans. A kidnapper sued those he kidnapped because they didn’t help him escape from the police. A fireman claimed discrimination because his fear of fire led the department to give him a desk job. A man sued a beer company because his dreams did not come true drinking the beer as ads indicated.

All that seems so silly. How do you think it is to God when we try to play victim with Him? We have a whole list of excuses when confronted with our sin. Our parents brought us up with bad habits. We have innate compulsions that we were born with. If God didn’t want us to get drunk, overeat, have sex outside of marriage, and hold on to our temper, then why did He make us with those desires? If we fail to do what he wants us to do, well no one’s perfect. “To err is human.”

I remember as a child on the way to school in the car on Monday mornings anxious to listen to the weekly broadcast of “Monday Morning Quarterback.” A sports reporter would always give his assessment of the Sunday game by the home team.

It is easy to be a “Monday Morning Quarterback.” We can come up with brilliant analysis. But the bottom line is that we are not on the playing field. Then it is all about “their mistakes, not mine.” And we like it that way because no one is going to point the blame at us.

But God puts us on the field. “For everyone belongs to Me, the parent as well as the child—both alike belong to Me. The one who sins is the one who will die.”

It is a totally different thing to be on the field. Deion Sanders is causing quite a stir as coach of the Colorado football team. He was a Hall of Fame cornerback in the NFL. But he also played ten years of Major League Baseball. He said the hardest thing he ever had to do was hit a

baseball. The ball is pitched over 95 mph from just 90 feet away. As he said, “If you get it just a third of the time, you are a great success. Most of the time you fail.”

On the “playing field” of life we miss most of time. God shows us who we really are; not victims who deserve pity, but sinners who deserve to die. But why does He do that? He does that to get to the root of our problems, not how others treat us, but what we have done to ourselves. If we paint over rust, the rust will appear again. If we cover and try to ignore a bad infection, it will grow worse. If we do not admit we have an addiction like alcoholism, then we never will be cured. God tells us in Ezekiel, “I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked.” What God delights in is the sinner turning to Him for help.

“The soul that sins shall die.” Death is the proof that we are at fault, not the victims. But God became the true victim for us. Jesus, the truly innocent one, allowed Himself to take all the punishment we deserve. He took the blame; we receive the blessing. Jesus got on the “playing field” with us, not with the power of God Almighty, but with His love. He won the victory for us by allowing Himself to be beaten on the cross. But He took our sins with Him. And He rose freed from it so we can be freed as well. Now we can turn from sin and put our lives in God’s hands. Now we can be saved. Now we are freed from pretending we are victims and embracing God’s full love. Now we are God’s!

### **Prayer of the Church**

P: Lord, in Your mercy,

**C: hear our prayer.**

### **Sharing Our Ministry**

#### **Offering/Voluntary:**

### **Service of the Sacrament**

#### **Prayer of Thanksgiving:**

P:

**C:Amen.**

### **Words of our Lord**

#### **Lord’s Prayer**

P: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**C: Amen.**

**Distribution of Holy Communion:**

**Hymns:**     *“Renew Me, O Eternal Light”* – **Hymn #704**  
              *“Lord, Enthroned in Heavenly Splendor”* – **Hymn #534**

**Prayer After Communion:**

P: O God, we thank You for Your humble example. Be with us as we go from this place, serving others as You have served us.

**C: Amen.**

**Blessing:** (Pastor)

**C: Amen.**

**Closing Hymn:** *“Lord, Whose Love Through Humble Service”* – **Hymn #848**

**Postlude**