Order of Worship for October 18, 2026

Prelude

P: The Lord be with you.
C: And also with you.

Opening Hymn: *"Thee Will I Love, My Strength, My Tower"* – **Hymn #694**

Confession and Absolution page 151

Service of the Word

Entrance Psalm:
P: The LORD is your keeper;
C: the LORD is your shade on your right hand.
P: I lift up my eyes to the hills.
C: From where does my help come?
P: My help comes from the LORD,
C: who made heaven and earth.
P: He will not let your foot be moved;
C: He who keeps you will not slumber.
P: Behold, He who keeps Israel
C: will neither slumber nor sleep.
P: The LORD will keep you from all evil;
C: He will keep your life.
P: The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in
C: from this time forth and forevermore.
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 is your keeper;
C: the LORD is your shade on your right hand.

Kyrie (Lord, Have Mercy): pages 152-3

Hymn of Praise: *"This Is the Feast"* page 155

Salutation: page 156

Prayer of the Day
P: Let us pray. … O God, the protector of all who trust in You, have mercy on us that with You as our ruler and guide we may so pass through things temporal that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
C: Amen

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 45:1-7

R: Thus says the LORD to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed: "I will go before you and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. For the sake of My servant Jacob, and Israel My chosen, I call you by your name, I name you, though you do not know Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides Me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know Me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides Me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Epistle Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

R: Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,
To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers loved by God, that He has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Alleluia and Verse p. 156

Holy Gospel – Matthew 22:15-22

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 22nd chapter.

C: Glory to You, O Lord. (sung)

P: Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle [Jesus] in His talk. And they sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and You do not care about anyone's opinion, for You are

not swayed by appearances. Tell us, then, what You think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put Me to the test, you hypocrites? Show Me the coin for the tax." And they brought Him a denarius. And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said, "Caesar's." Then He said to them, "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." When they heard it, they marveled. And they left Him and went away.

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ. (sung)

Sermon Hymn: *"God of Grace and God of Glory"* **- Hymn #850**

Sermon: *"Is it: God's or Mine?"* **- Matthew 22: 15 – 22**
Grace, Mercy, and Peace from God our Father, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit. Amen.

When we start reading the Gospel reading for today, we want to yell using the famous line from the third "Star Wars" movie: "It's a Trap"; "It's a Trap": To warn Jesus regarding that trap the Pharisees were setting for Him. We are also reminded of the famous quote that was taken from a letter that Benjamin Franklin wrote to a friend in 1789: "In this world nothing is certain but death and taxes." Margaret Mitchell in 1936 used a similar phrase in the movie Gone with the Wind: "Death and taxes and childbirth! There's never any convenient time for any of them." How true. When it comes to money – taxes can be very intriguing and at times scary.

It is very clear in this encounter with the Pharisees', their disciples, and the Herodians, Jesus does not let other people determine His teaching or actions, which is in the contrast to the statement made by the priest and elders: "We are afraid of the crowds." Jesus, unafraid listened to their question regarding the paying of taxes. When they brought Him a denarius, He calmly asked whose image was on the coin; and they replied: Caesar's. Jesus clearly answers them: "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's". We do not read in the Gospel text Jesus flinging the coin away as though it was white-hot with paganism; or that he rolled His eyes at the unbelievable fact that not everyone present truly worshiped God that Jesus called Father. You can almost see Jesus shrugging His shoulders, furrowing His brow conveying the message; IS THIS the best that you can come up with to challenge Me?"

In our Gospel reading for today, we move out of the world of parables into the real world of death and taxes. Whereas the parables talked about God's authority, our Gospel reading today is like a case study in applying God's authority to the real-life situation of paying taxes. The tax that Jesus was referring to was in no doubt the flat-rate tax that was levied on all men from the age of fourteen until death; and levied on all women from the age of twelve to the age of sixty-five. It was levied at minimum, at the rate of one denarius per year; the amount equivalent to a day's wage. Later, it was combined with a percentage tax on property. This tax was critical because the Roman government needed this money to pay their expenses for their occupation of the land which was very costly, and the tax collection was a very expensive undertaking in itself. No doubt there were complaints about paying these taxes and how the money was used: Just like what we experience today.

In the time of Christ and Matthew, the annual paying of this tax to Rome was a painful reminder of living in a land occupied and ruled by a foreign power who worshiped false gods. The tax could only be paid with Roman coins which were not just legal tender, but also pieces of propaganda. Most of the coins contained an image of the Caesar with inscriptions proclaiming him to be divine - or - being the son of a god. One common phrase on coins during the time of Jesus was: "Tiberius Caesar, august son of the divine Augustus, high priest." In this: We must remember that graven images and polytheism were blasphemous to the Jews. Thus, paying taxes with Roman coins raised both political and religious issues. Every time the Jews used Roman money, they were reminded they were an occupied land with the emperor was making himself a god and thus making a mockery of the Ten Commandments.

With this as background regarding taxes and money: What does it mean to be stewards of what God has given to us; and what is God's desire for us to do with our time, talents and treasure? In considering the answer to this question, we need to keep in mind that Jews living in the Roman Empire at the time of Jesus was nothing like us living in the United States in the 21st century: They were an occupied land with no freedoms like we have. To understand this conflict for the Jewish people; we must go back to the account of Creation. If we truly believe that we are created in the image of God; that is every tiny part of us; then it follows that the tiniest parts of our body, the smallest thoughts in our heads, and all that has been given to us as possessions belong to God. Thus, we cannot say that only this part belongs to God, so I will give it to God; and since this part does not belong to God, I do not have to give it back to God; it is mine. However: Reality is: Everything we have belongs to God and we are but mere managers or stewards of these gifts God has given to us. This has a profound impact on us when we consider what we do with our "Time, Talents and Treasure." The question we must honestly answer is: Do we sincerely believe our time, talents and treasure are 100% God's for us to use and that we are called to return a portion in gratitude for all God has given us: Or, is our feeling: What about me? Do we proclaim that X, Y, and Z are mine simply because I deserve them. This feeling, what about me, is often heard in the expression of many in the church today regarding Mission and Stewardship: "I am getting sick and tired of always hearing about Mission and Stewardship. All they want is more money. Are they even being good stewards of the money that is given them? I am doing all I can and can afford: What about me? I deserve a good life as well."

In addressing this common attitude regarding Mission and Stewardship: It is important for us Christians to remind ourselves that the primary purpose for the existence of the church, and of every congregation, is Mission. Mission and stewardship are much more than a transaction, a giving a certain amount of one's time, talents, and financial resources: It is regarding a way of life. It is reaching out to others in proclaiming the Gospel message not only in Word, but in actions of our service that provide resources to assist people and for others to serve as well. However too often, many in the church have considered mission work as an auxiliary function, an optional activity, in which the members may or may not choose to participate: Reality is: A committed believer is necessarily a disciple and a missionary.

Discipleship is being in service to God. As Dierich Bonhooeffer, a noted Pastor and Theologian

in Germany in the WW-2 era proclaimed: Discipleship is completely turning oneself over to Christ 24 / 7 and to journey wherever Christ may lead him – even if it meant his death. Dying for Bonhoeffer meant much more than one's physical death; it meant dying to oneself and selfish interests. One could say that one's physical dying for the sake of Christ is indeed a remarkable act of love, however a greater feat may be one's daily living for Christ: To take up one's cross and daily following Him: To proclaim the Gospel in word and action when it is not a popular position to take. Thus, it is very clear that Discipleship does not mean that a person retreats from this world; it means becoming most actively engaged in this world. Thus, we do not gather as a congregation for worship to escape from the world or to run away from daily life in an attempt to feel safe and secure for one hour a week; but rather to seek the strengthening power of Word and Sacrament so that we might go forth into the world to proclaim the Gospel, being present to the people God puts in our life, and confront the evil forces of the world 24 hours a day, day after day, 168 hours a week, week after week, 365 days, year after year.

Yes, Jesus Christ is a sending Lord and we who are His followers are the ones who are being sent. Being sent as Christ's representatives, disciples to all we come into contact daily. Responding to this Call. We must come to the mirror of honesty and determine what the priorities in our life are. To recognize how easy it is to be pulled by the various advertisements that claim, "only if" we use their products or live in certain ways, our lives will be much easier, and yes, even "totally fulfilled". As these messages become more seductive, we move away from the critical spiritual aspects of our lives and into the material arena which many times profoundly disappoint us in the end. This is not to say material things are bad in themselves: But, when they become the consuming priority in our lives, they become idols we worship and these idols demand that we sacrifice to them to the detriment of our lives.

In accepting God's invitation to become workers to further the Kingdom of God simply means it is not just enough to know God, to accept the goodness and graciousness of God: But genuinely to understand and appreciate our redemption through Christ's Death and Resurrection and to respond in gratitude for all that Christ has done for us. This call to discipleship is to acknowledge and accept the authority of God over one's life: An authority which calls for an honest evaluation of what part we are to play in this missionary effort and how we use our time, talent and treasure. Thus, it is not sufficient just to hold membership in a church; to sit at table as an invited guest; to have said yes instead of no to the call of Discipleship. It requires our reaching out to others in proclaiming the Gospel message and doing what is required of us in doing the Father's will so that the bearing of good fruit will result. As it is stated clearly in the book of James: Chapter 2: Verse 17 "In the same way, faith by itself, if it not accompanied by action, is dead." Once we are called everything is left for each person decide: Obedience or disobedience to the call. We must come to grips with the fact in answering this call: Only the person who believes is obedient and the person who is obedient truly believes. The first step of answering the call of Jeus is obedience, and this proves to be an act of faith in the Word of Christ. In choosing obedience the journey for each of us begins with the words of forgiveness to our broken spirit and contrite hears. It is so precious and costly because it cost God the life of His Son to free us from the bondage of sin. In our call to Discipleship, we must acknowledge that God can use us for His purposes regardless of our sin – no matter how great the sin may be.

Our responding yes, gives credence to the power of the phrase in the Lord's Prayer: Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

What will happen to us if we accept the call to discipleship? Will all our troubles cease: NO. Will we be free from all innless? NO. Will everything become perfect in our lives? NO. What will result is that we will be able to live in the freedom that Christ gave us. To live freely in gratitude for the gift of our forgiveness. The forgiveness of our sins and being restored to a right relations ship with God: Living in the peace know that no matter what we may face; God will be with s through it all.
As Professor Long stated in his commentary in the Westminster Bible Companion: "To come into the church in response to the gracious, altogether unmerited invitation of Christ and then not conform one's life to that mercy is to demonstrate spiritual narcissism so profound that one cannot tell the difference between the wedding feast of the Lamb of God and happy hour in a bus station:" Something for us to honestly think about and then respond accordingly. For this great opportunity to be disciples witnessing to the saving message of Grace using our time, talents and treasure: We say thanks be to God.

May the peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds in our Risen Lord and Savior; Jesus Christ. Amen.

Creed: Nicene Creed

Prayers

P: Lord God, You tell us how we should act towards authority:

C: "Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

P: Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.

C: For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended.

P: For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

C: Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience." (Romans 13:1-5)

P: "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by Him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.

C: For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish

people.

P: Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor." (1 Peter 2:13-17)

C: "Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good." (Titus 3:1)

P: Yet, we want things our way. We forget Your command:

C: "Do not blaspheme God or curse the ruler of your people." (Exodus 22:28)

P: Help us to remember:

C: "All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall." (1 Peter 1:24)

P: Instead send Your Holy Spirit so that we listen to You and those You put over us:

C: "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock." (Matthew 7:24)

P: "For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother." (Matthew 12:50)

C: "Jesus replied, 'Anyone who loves Me will obey My teaching. My Father will love them, and We will come to them and make Our home with them.'"
(John 14:23)

P: Help us to see that real authority in You and what You direct us to do:

C: "Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:19)

P: Especially guide us so that we use the authority You give us as Jesus did to serve others.

C: "Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant," (Matthew 20:26)

(Other concerns) , , ,

P: All this we pray in Jesus' name as we remember:

C: "He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble. I will deliver him and honor him." (Psalm 91:5)

Sharing Our Ministry

Offering:

Preface: page 160

P: The Lord be with you.
C: And also with you.
P: Lift up your hearts.
C: We lift them to the Lord.
P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
C: It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

Sanctus *(Holy, Holy, Holy)* page 161

The Prayer of Thanksgiving:

Lord's Prayer and the Words of our Lord: page 162

Pax Domini (Peace of the Lord) Agnus Dei *(Lamb of God)* page 163

Distribution of Holy Communion
"All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" - **Hymn #549**
"Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us" - **Hymn #851**

Prayer after Communion:
P:
C: Amen.

Blessing (Pastor) page 166
C: Amen.

Closing Hymn: *"Praise Be to Christ"* - **Hymn #538**

Postlude