

OCTOBER 22, 2023
TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY
AFTER PENTECOST

taking 
faith
home

Love and trust God above everything else.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

Sunday	Matthew 22:15-22	The question of paying taxes
Monday	Isaiah 45:1-7	Cyrus serves the Lord
Tuesday	1 Thessalonians 1:1-10	The example of faith
Wednesday	Psalms 28	Prayer for help
Thursday	Proverbs 3:1-6	Trust God
Friday	Jeremiah 17:5-8	Trust the Lord
Saturday	Psalms 96	Sing a new song
Sunday	Matthew 22:34-46	Loving God and neighbor

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

For the people of those regions [Macedonia and Achaia] 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. 1 Thessalonians 1:9 (NRSV)

PRAYERS AND BLESSING

A Prayer for the Week:

God of the nations, you alone are worthy of worship and praise; give us wisdom to see the false gods around us and remain true to you through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mealtime Prayer:

Dear God, you made the heavens and the earth to praise you. We praise you now for this food that strengthens the body and gladdens the heart. Amen.

A Blessing to Give:

May God bless you with joy and the steadfast love of Jesus.



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HYMN OF THE WEEK

Lead Me, Guide Me

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WEEKLY MILESTONES

Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

CARING CONVERSATIONS

Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- Doing the right thing is not always easy. What is something you have struggled with?
- A false god can be anything that we worship and trust to make us feel safe and secure. What false gods have you been tempted to worship in your life?

DEVOTIONS

Read: Matthew 22:15-22.

A surprising point of this story concerns trust in God, not false gods. Jesus had just successfully opposed religious leaders in the temple. Now those leaders go from debate to entrapment by getting Jesus to take a position that would place him against the Roman government (a deadly decision) or against the Hebrew Scriptures (an unfaithful position). Jesus navigates between these traps by tricking his opponents. He asks to see the coin used for the tax. It's a "gotcha" moment. The Jewish leaders should not have had the Roman coin in the temple. It has the face of the Roman Emperor on it and a confession that Emperor Augustus is the Son of God! With the coin they show Jesus the image and confession of an idol. Jesus says give back to Caesar the idolatry of the empire. Everything else is God's. These religious leaders had not considered that Jesus would outwit them, but he did. His words leave his opponents amazed and speechless. Idolatry to false gods can easily trip us all.

Discuss: What challenges you to be faithful to God above everything else?

Pray: Almighty God, give us wisdom to turn away from false gods in our life and courage to follow you and you alone through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

SERVICE

Jesus calls us to serve our neighbor in love. Based on the Daily Bible Readings for this week, how might you care for those who are struggling to trust God?

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

Paul wrote that the Christians in Thessalonica had become imitators of Jesus. Play a game of Simon Says. Then have a discussion about ways in which we imitate others in our lives—both in good and bad ways. Talk or think about what it means to be an example of Christian faith, hope, and love to others.

Pray: Lord Jesus, open our hearts to receive the gospel with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit so that we may become examples to all believers. Amen. (1Thessalonians 1:6-7)

