

# Grace

## AND THE FRUITS OF OUR LABOR

*Devotional Meditations*



ST. PETER'S  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

**2023 GENEROSITY PROGRAM**

# 2023 Fall Schedule

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## A Generosity Prayer

Monday 10/16/23

***“This is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more . . . so that you may be...filled with the fruit of righteousness...” (Philippians 1:9-10).***

Stewardship is giving and helping and doing acts of service, but, far beyond that, it is being. Being children of God makes us his stewards. If we never do a single deed, we are still stewards, just not stewards who please God.

We do not choose to be stewards, and, on our own, we can do nothing to please God. It is only through faith that our good deeds are acceptable to him and only when they are done out of love in response to the love he has first shown us.

This is why the Apostle Paul prays that our love may abound more and more, but he is writing about love based on *“knowledge and depth of insight . . .”* This is love with strength, love that keeps us faithful, not only to do the tasks God places before us, but also love that discerns the best way to accomplish his will. This is God’s love that is ours through his Son Jesus who showed us what love is. This is love that his Holy Spirit matures in us through Word and Sacrament that we might be about our Father’s business. This is love that *“fill[s us] with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ.”* This is love that redounds *“to the glory and praise of God”* (Philippians 1:9-10). This is love that bears *“fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God”* (Colossians 1:10). This is love that enables us to give wholeheartedly *“being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might...”* (Colossians 1:11).

**Read Hebrews 11:6. How does faith relate to stewardship?**

**Read John 15:12. What standard does God set for our love?**

*Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, thank you for your Word for it is the power of salvation for all who believe. Through your Word we are enabled to love even as you have loved. Through Jesus, your Son. Amen.*

***“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).***

As a Christian, I believe that God created all things. I believe that Jesus was born in a manger; he was without sin; he died on the cross for you and me; and he rose again to give you and me victory over sin and death. These truths we readily accept and embrace whole-heartedly. However, what I struggle with in my walk with Jesus is that I don't always live my life with the understanding that Jesus is here with me. In my humanity, I become independent. I forget sometimes that Jesus experiences my good and bad times with me, and that he is my constant companion and support.

In the way we live our lives, we can place Jesus in heaven rather than with us. Jesus gave us proof that he was alive after his crucifixion. Over a period of forty days, he appeared to the apostles, and he spoke to them. At his ascension, after Jesus was taken up into the clouds, the angels spoke to those who saw Jesus disappear into the clouds. “ ‘Men of Galilee,’ they said, ‘why do you stand here looking into the sky?’ ” (Acts 1:11).

In some ways, I find myself looking into the clouds and sky. I need to be reminded that Jesus is not off in some distant location. Yes! “*Christ lives in me.*” He is with us every minute of every day. He promises never to leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). He knows us by name, and, in spite of our sinful ways, he will never stop loving us. His strength becomes our strength. He enables me to give it all I've got!

**Read and meditate on Ephesians 3:14-19. What do these verses tell you about Christ's love for you?**

***Prayer:*** Dear heavenly Father, we pray for your forgiveness when we do things our way, and when we don't always rely on you. We pray that you will use us as your ambassadors to tell others of the Gospel. In your name we pray. **Amen.**

## Being Rich Toward God!

Wednesday 10/18/23

***“Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15).***

We live in a society which is driven by the desire to have and spend money. In our culture, money and the things it can buy are king. People foolishly believe that money provides happiness and a lifetime of security, so they spend their time and resources chasing after it. Unfortunately, if they are successful in their pursuit, their lives are often filled with loneliness and despair.

The desire for wealth and prestige was just as prevalent in Jesus’ time, so these topics were the central focus of many of his illustrations. However, in his illustrations, we find a different focus toward money than our society has. Rather than being “rich toward money,” God wants us to be “*rich toward God.*” Money is to be used instead of being idolized. As Christian stewards, our motive is not to amass more money solely for our use and enjoyment. We understand that money is a tool that can be used for the furtherance of the Gospel.

Money is one of the subtlest attractions in our lives. At any age and at any time, greed and the love of money can overcome us. In the Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:13-21), Jesus tells about a greedy farmer who wanted to build bigger barns. He had no time for God or his neighbors. Jesus called him a fool. Luke 12:20 reads, “*But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’*”

At the end of the parable, Jesus warned his disciples as he warns us today that, if we store up money and things of this world for ourselves and are not “*rich toward God,*” we will not live in eternity with him. If we are not “*rich toward God,*” we will receive what we have prepared for ourselves ... nothing!

**Read Luke 12:13-21. What kind of riches do you treasure?**

***Prayer:*** Lord, Help us to keep money in its proper perspective and grant us giving hearts. In your name we pray. ***Amen.***

***“For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died” (2 Corinthians 5:14).***

God seeks a relationship with us that is rooted in love. *“For God so loved the world that he gave . . .”* (John 3:16). God has never stopped pouring out his love for us. It is with the love that he gives to us that he wants us to return to him. His love for us compels us to give, serve, and honor him.

God is pleased when we serve him as faithful stewards out of love rather than out of obligation. To illustrate this, say I give my wife a dozen red roses on Valentine’s Day. Upon greeting her I simply tell her “Happy Valentine’s Day.” She says, “They are beautiful, but you shouldn’t have spent so much money.” I respond by saying, “Don’t mention it. Today is Valentine’s Day, and as your husband it is my duty to get a gift for you.” Of course, my wife wouldn’t be pleased. If I had responded differently by saying, “Honey, there is nothing I’d rather do with my money than use it for you because I love you so much,” her response would be quite different. It is the same money and the same gift. However, one gift is motivated out of duty and obligation and one is motivated out of love. God is pleased when we give to him cheerfully and willingly because we love him.

Abraham, King David, Zacchaeus, and Barnabas are just a few of the many people in Scripture who gave out of love for the Lord. The widow in Luke chapter 21, who gave her last coins, provides a wonderful example of how love compels us to give so sacrificially. *“ ‘I tell you the truth,’ [Jesus] said, ‘this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on’ ”* (Luke 21:3-4). Her love for Jesus was so great that she gave everything she had. Through faith, we understand God’s love and that love will compel us to give freely.

**Read 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. Why did the Macedonians give freely?**

***Prayer:*** Lord, we thank you for your love that is given to us, not because we merit it, but because you are a God of love. **Amen.**

## Rating Your Effort

Friday 10/20/23

***“Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men” (Ephesians 6:7).***

On a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being the absolute best, how would you rate what you are doing as a steward in giving it all you’ve got? As you think about this for a moment, you will begin to realize that, by your own efforts, you will never come close to being a “10”. On God’s grading scale, we all rate a zero without him. Fortunately, God knows that we are not perfect. Since the fall of Adam, God has used ordinary sinful people to do the extraordinary.

In spite of our imperfections and frailties, God wants to use us as his hands and feet to feed the hungry, house the homeless, build his church, and seek the lost with his Gospel. God has made us his stewards, and he equips us for the task. The Apostle Paul wrote, *“And God is able to make all grace to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work”* (2 Corinthians 9:8).

God doesn’t expect us to be perfect stewards, but he expects us to have attitudes that desire to praise and serve him. Jesus didn’t say, “Blessed are those who achieve their potential and never make a mistake,” nor did Jesus say, “Well done, good and successful servant.” What Jesus did say was, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit . . . those who mourn . . . the meek”* (Matthew 5:35). He also said, *“Well done, good and faithful servant”* (Matthew 25:23). In our humanity, it is easy for us to make a mess of things, but we please the Lord when we, through faith, willingly use our time, talents, and treasures to help others and his church.

The good news for us is that, in Christ, our “0” becomes a “10.”

**Memorize Colossians 1:10. Why should we give wholeheartedly?**

***Prayer:*** Lord, we thank you for your strength that enables us to do what we can to give you honor and praise. In your name we pray.  
***Amen.***



## The Lord Is with You

Saturday 10/21/23

***“God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’ So we say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?’” (Hebrews 13:5b-6).***

Why are we so timid when it comes to sharing the Gospel with others? Would-be witnesses often cite rejection as a fear. Do you think Jesus has sympathy for us in this area? Isaiah wrote, *“He was despised and rejected by men . . . ”* (Isaiah 53:3). Jesus knows what it’s like to suffer rejection. He lived the phrase, “Been there, done that.” Others are afraid that they will be inadequate for the task; they do not know their Bibles well enough and their defense of the Gospel is weak. Again, is Jesus unaware of our state? Read the interchange between God and Moses in Exodus 3-4. Yes, we are inadequate; yes, there are mysteries in the Scriptures that we will not understand until we’re in Heaven; and, yes, we won’t have the proper words to say. Jesus said, *“Do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time [the time when you need it] you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you”* (Matthew 10:19-20).

God loves us so much that he gave his only Son to die for us. That child was born into a powerless family living in an unstable world. Yet the will of God was accomplished. Will he not also accomplish his purpose through us, powerless and inadequate as we are? It is God’s plan and God’s work, not our own, and he reiterates his promise to be with us to accomplish his will through us. So give it your all!

**Read Joshua 1:5-9. List as many times as you can find where God promises to be with us in all kinds of situations.**

*Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, forgive us for our excuses. Help us to learn through the lives of Moses and Joshua and the prophets and disciples that you never forsake your people and that you are present to help us carry out your will on earth. Thank you for the opportunity to be stewards of the Gospel. Through Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Faithful Use of Money

Sunday 10/22/23

***“So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?” (Luke 16:11).***

What we do with our money reveals to us and others what we value. When we make a purchase, give a gift, or make an investment, we communicate what we care about. Our priorities dictate how we handle and use money. What we do with money speaks louder than words.

Money has power. For example, have you ever been tempted or actually given the maitre d' in a fancy restaurant some money after being informed that without reservations there is no seating available? Miraculously, a table can become available. Money gets people's attention. Money talks, and, unfortunately, we often listen. Money is one of Satan's best tools to separate us from a loving relationship with Jesus.

A major problem in our attitude toward money and our relationship with it is greed. Because of greed, we are never satisfied. Jesus said, *“Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed . . .”* (Luke 12:15). Greed affects people of all ages and people at all income levels. We can have lots of money and not be greedy, or we can have little money and be very greedy.

As Christian stewards of God's money, we are called to keep it in its proper perspective. Jesus said that we can't serve two masters. We must choose between God and Money (Matthew 6:24). With God's help, we can keep money from becoming too important. When we faithfully follow God's will for our lives, we will use money as a tool to extend his kingdom.

**Read Ecclesiastes 5:10. How old is the problem of greed? Read also Matthew 6:20. Should we be greedy for spiritual treasures?**

*Prayer: Lord, we pray that you will grant us proper attitudes regarding our money. We pray for discipline so that we may use it properly and faithfully. In your name we pray. Amen.*

# Our Offerings to God

Monday 10/23/23

***“Honor the Lord with your wealth . . .” (Proverbs 3:9).***

In the church service, the offering is an important part of our worship of God. God is honored when we faithfully and cheerfully give to him. In our offering, we are giving to the Lord through the church. Because our money represents our God-given time, inspiration, energy, and perspiration, we are giving, in reality, ourselves. It is as if we are putting ourselves into the offering plate.

When we give to God because of who he is and out of gratitude for what he has done and continues to do, he is pleased. The focus of our giving must always be on God rather than on institutions or people. To illustrate this point, there is a story about a church that had a fund-raising campaign to raise money for a new sanctuary. On their commitment Sunday, the members were ushered to the front of the church to place their pledges on the altar. One of the people moving forward was a young handicapped woman who had a very meager income. Over the years, the people in the congregation had come to love and admire her. As she reached the altar, the members of the congregation noticed that she placed a ring that had been given to her by her mother in the offering plate. After the worship service was over, the elders decided that this precious ring was too valuable for this lady to give. One of the elders went to her apartment to return the ring to her. In talking with her, the elder said, “Because of your financial condition, we’ve decided that we want to give your ring back.” Upon hearing this, the young lady started crying and gave the ring back saying, “This ring was not given to you; I gave it to Jesus!”

**Read Luke 21:1-4. How is the woman in the illustration above like the woman in this account?**

*Prayer: Lord, we pray that you will grant us the faith to be faithful stewards of the treasures which you entrust to us. We pray that we will faithfully surrender to you our first and best so that through our giving you are honored and glorified. In your name we pray. Amen.*

## Whom Do You Serve?

Tuesday 10/24/23

*“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men . . . It is the Lord Christ you are serving”  
(Colossians 3:23-24).*

It is a very human quality to desire the recognition of others. Should our names or faces be publicized for some achievement, we go out of our way to make sure we get copies of that publication to save and savor and show to our friends and relatives.

In our employment, if we don't receive the raise or promotion we think we deserve, we may begin to slack off on the job, coming in late, leaving early, taking long lunch breaks – in essence, stealing from our employers because we perceive them as not appreciating us.

This dissatisfaction results because of a faulty perspective. We have forgotten who our boss is! As we have focused on the situations we're in and on what should rightfully be ours, we have lost sight of whom we are to be serving.

The Christian steward needs to remember that all he is and has are gifts from God. Moses had to remind the Israelites of that fact also: *“But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth . . . ”* (Deuteronomy 8:18). The Apostle Paul, who earned his living by making tents, urged us to use our gifts from God to work with enthusiasm and with a whole heart in the realization that it is God we really are working for and that it is he who gives us our reward. Since you're working for God, give it all you've got!

**Read Ephesians 6:5-6. How does this corroborate the thoughts expressed above?**

*Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, help us not to complain about our work situations or our employers but help us to be grateful for our employment and strive to be of benefit wherever we work, keeping in mind that it is you we are serving. For Christ's sake. Amen.*

***“Bring the best of the first-fruits of your soil to the house of the Lord your God” (Exodus 23:19).***

Giving is part of life. We probably give many people birthday, anniversary, Valentine’s Day, and Christmas gifts. As Christians, we also give to God who first gave to us. In contrast to our giving to other people, our gifts to God should represent our first and best because he is our creator and redeemer. Our giving to God reminds us of his sovereignty and expresses our gratitude to him for what Jesus did on the cross for us. *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3:16). Through giving, we express our love. We give to others because we love them. Our attitude towards or love for that person will determine what and how much we give. When we know the love and mercy of God, we become giving people who want to give to him by sharing with others. It has been aptly said that the mind grows by what it takes in, whereas the heart grows by what it gives out.

The account of the brothers Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:3-5) exemplifies how giving or lack thereof reveals what is in the heart. Abel raised animals while Cain worked the soil and harvested grain. Abel loved the Lord and gave him the first-fruits of his flock. However, Cain merely gave some of the harvest. The Lord honored Abel’s offering because of his loving and obedient heart, but he was not pleased with Cain’s offering.

As we examine our giving, we should ask ourselves whether God is getting our best or just our leftovers? Is our giving a proper response to God’s love for us? As we read and meditate on his word and participate in the Sacraments, God changes our hearts so that we are willing to give him our best.

**Read 2 Chronicles 31:5. What was the attitude of these givers?**

*Prayer: Lord, we thank you for your tremendous love for us which enables us to give you our best. We thank you for your promise that you will never leave us nor forsake us. In your name we pray. Amen.*

## Boasting in the Lord

Thursday 10/26/23

***“Let him who boasts boast in the Lord” (2 Corinthians 10:17).***

When my children were small, they would sometimes get a little carried away with self-commendation. “I got the best grade on the spelling test, “one would boast. “Well, I was the last one out in dodge ball,” the other would counter. “Don’t toot your own horns, boys,” I would reprimand and then read them Proverbs 27:2: *“Let another praise you, and not your own mouth.”* Soon just the words, “Toot, toot,” would be enough to curtail the boastful words of any of us.

The Apostle Paul would appreciate this practice, for he reminds us that our only reason for boasting lies in the Lord. Without his gracious gifts, we are nothing, have nothing, and can accomplish nothing. Let the “self-made man” examine his life, and he will see that without intelligence, ambition, ingenuity, and helpful people along the way, he would not have attained the success that he enjoys. All these are gifts from God. Well-being in any area of our lives can be traced back to the goodness of God who so tenderly watches over us and provides for our needs.

The question then is, “Are we boasting in the Lord?” As stewards of the Gospel, we have something to tell others about. Are we as eager to work into our conversations examples of what God is doing in our lives as we are to talk about how smart our kids are or what a good deal we got on the last cars we bought? When the subject of the weather comes up, as it always does, it is easy to boast in the Lord who has created the Heavens and the Earth and sends the snows, the rains, and the sunshine. Let us give wholeheartedly as we boast in the Lord so that his name may be made known to all and that the seed of faith may be planted and watered in the lives of those around us.

**Read Psalm 34:1-3. How can boasting in the Lord cause the afflicted to rejoice? Read also Isaiah 40:21-31 and rejoice in God!**

*Prayer: You are indeed an awesome God! There is none to compare with you! Give me courage to boast in you. Through Christ. Amen.*

## Why Should We Give?

Friday 10/27/23

***“But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you” (Matthew 6:3-4).***

These are the words of Jesus who was warning us to avoid a very common temptation – that of a desire for recognition. Some can handle the praise of others, but most of us probably cannot.

Paul had a partner in ministry whose name was Joseph. You may know him by his more familiar name, Barnabas, which means Son of Encouragement. Barnabas *“sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles’ feet”* (Acts 4:36-37). All of us recognize that as a very generous act. It’s likely that word of this went through the early church and that he was spoken of very highly. This seems probable because of what followed his act.

Ananias and Sapphira, husband and wife, also sold some property. They, too, brought the proceeds and gave them to the apostles. The only difference was that they only pretended to give all the money while keeping a portion for themselves. Just as we recognized the generosity of Barnabas, we now recognize the hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira. The punishment for this treachery was instant death! (Acts 5:1-11).

Aren’t you glad God hasn’t administered the same punishment to you for your impure motives and hypocrisy? It is no wonder Jesus spoke so strongly on this topic. He knows our human nature and wants us to avoid falling into these sins. Only by God’s grace can we give without thought of any kind of reward, only out of joyful response to what God has given us and done for us.

**Read about another person who was more eager to please others than to please God (1 Samuel 15, especially verse 30).**

***Prayer:*** *Dear heavenly Father, help me to keep my eyes on the cross for therein lies my only cause for boasting. Forgive me when I search for human recognition, forgetting that I am only your servant. Through Christ I pray. Amen.*

***“It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing [good] when he returns” (Matthew 24:46).***

A man who worked the night shift received a lot of ridicule from his fellow workers who thought he took his job too seriously. “Hey, take a break,” they’d call to him as they lounged long past the normal coffee break period. “Who are you trying to impress? The boss doesn’t come in till morning.” He wasn’t oblivious to their remarks, and he was tempted at times to join them. It wasn’t easy to remain free of resentment, as he often had to complete their tasks in order to fulfill his own responsibilities. However, one night the employer stopped in unannounced. It didn’t take him long to size up the situation and issue some pink slips. Word had gotten around, however, about the one employee who was faithful in his work, and that employee was rewarded with a promotion.

Jesus made it very clear that he would ascend into Heaven, but that he would return again one day. Even he, the Son of God, does not know when that will be. What we do know, though, is that he has put us in charge until that day (Matthew 24:45). He has left us with specific tasks – feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick – and he has given us the gifts of time and talent and treasure necessary to carry out his will. Above all, we are here to spread the Good News of Jesus’ love for us and of his sacrifice for our sins that we might be forgiven and live with him forever in Heaven.

Jesus asked, *“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time?”* (Verse 45). God’s grace enables each of us to be that faithful and wise servant until our Master returns once more.

**Read Jesus’ exposition on “The Sheep and the Goats” in Matthew 25:31-46. Explain the relationship between faith and works.**

*Prayer: heavenly Father, keep us faithful to our task of caring for others with the love of Jesus. Help us to please you in all we do in faith and love for you. Through Christ we pray. Amen.*



## Lessons from the Wise Men

Sunday 10/29/23

*“Magi from the east came . . . On coming to the house, they saw the Child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh” (Matthew 2:1-11).*

We don't often think of the Wise Men as stewards, but we can learn some valuable stewardship lessons from their actions. First they came. They didn't stay in their homes, studying the ancient books and watching the stars and wondering. They followed the one star some distance in order to find the newborn King. They entered his house and bowed before him. They were kings in their own right, yet they submitted to a baby, because they acknowledged that baby to be who he was. They didn't come empty-handed, either. They brought expensive gifts to present to him. By all these acts, they worshiped him.

As stewards, we, too, are to seek the Lord where we can find him. We are to enter his house where we find him in Word and Sacrament. We are to submit to him in reverence, acknowledging him as King of kings. We are to come with gifts in our hands to offer him.

Will our worship require sacrifice? Look at the sacrifice of the Magi. They left their luxurious surroundings and endured difficult travel for many days, weeks, maybe much longer. They sacrificed their own power as they knelt in worship before the baby. They sacrificed their treasures. Does our sacrifice compare? (We haven't even mentioned the sacrifice of our Savior himself in coming to this sinful world!)

**Search your Bible to find other examples of people sacrificially worshiping their Lord (Start with Matthew 26:6-13).**

*Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, forgive me for considering my own comforts and convenience and neglecting proper worship of you. Give me joy in sacrificial stewardship. Return to me the joy of my salvation that results in grateful service through all the gifts you've given me. Through Christ I pray. Amen.*

## **Week Three – All Saints Day**

### **\*Veneration of Saints**

Christians began to honor their departed heroes of the faith as early as the second century. After Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, was martyred in about 155, his ashes were gathered up by the faithful and laid in a suitable place. The cult concerning the relics of saints began at the same time. Memorial buildings came to be built over the graves of saints or martyrs, and the eucharist was celebrated on the anniversaries of their deaths. Christian teaching about the communion of the saints is the foundation for the custom of the veneration of the saints.

### **\*Saint**

A holy person, a faithful Christian, one who shares life in Christ. The term may also indicate one who has been formally canonized or recognized as a saint by church authority. In the NT, the term is applied to all faithful Christians (see Acts 9:32, 26:10). Paul addresses the saints or those called to be saints who are the members of Christian communities that receive his letters (see Rom 1:7, 1 Cor 1:2, 2 Cor 1:1, Eph 1:1, Phil 1:1, Col 1:2). Christ makes it possible for us to be saints as we share his life. We are washed, sanctified, and justified “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11).

The term later came to be applied to “elite” Christians whose lives were distinguished and exemplary because of their self-sacrifice, witness, virtue, or accomplishments. Special recognition was given to the martyrs of the early church. A feast of All Martyrs dates from at least the third century. The saints were the heroes of the church. The identification of saints as exceptional Christians has been associated with the legalization of Christianity and the growth of the church to include members who were not fervently committed to Christian faith. The celebration of All Saints ’Day in the west dates from at least the ninth century. In the western church, the requirement for papal approval for canonization of a saint dates from the twelfth century. An elaborate and complicated process for canonization developed in the Roman Catholic Church. A multiplication of saints ’days followed the establishment of Christianity in the Roman world. This may reflect a need to provide a Christian alternative to days of celebration for pagan gods and heroes. The saints came to be seen as protectors and intercessors rather than witnesses for the Christian faith. Saints ’days proliferated in the western church during the Middle Ages. Churches and institutions were named for saints. Many

faithful people made pilgrimages to shrines of saints, such as the shrine of Thomas Becket at Canterbury.

Lutheran church orders restricted holy days to feasts of our Lord, the days of apostles and evangelists, St. Stephen, the Holy Innocents, St. John the Baptist, St. Michael the Archangel, and All Saints. The Book of Common Prayer (“BCP”) followed the example of the German church orders, although other observances were later added. The calendar of the church year of the 1979 BCP includes the names of saints and many others whose lives are commemorated with feasts (pp. 15-33). The BCP provides collects, psalms, and lessons for holy days, including apostles such as St. Andrew (Nov. 30) and evangelists such as St. Mark (Apr. 25). The BCP also provides collects, psalms, and lessons for the Common of Saints for commemoration of saints listed in the calendar for which no proper is provided in the BCP (pp. 246-250, 925-927), including propers such as “Of a Martyr” and “Of a Missionary.” [Lesser Feasts and Fasts](#) provides collects, psalms, and lessons for commemorations in the calendar that do not have propers appointed by the Prayer Book, such as Nicholas Ferrar (Dec. 1) and John Henry Hobart (Sept. 12). Lesser Feasts and Fasts also includes a short biographical sketch for each person commemorated. New commemorations may be added to the calendar with the approval of two General Conventions.

The saints are “the lights of the world in every generation,” people whose lives and deeds have shone brightly and helped others more closely follow God. There are saints who lived long ago and there are saints living and working in the world today, saints who are known by the church and saints who are known only to God. We say that the church—we—are part of the Communion of Saints, the company of all faithful people, connected through our baptism to those Christians who have died, those who are alive now, and those who haven’t yet been born. The word “saint” means holy.

## **Halloween - A Perspective**

### **All Saints' Eve / All Saints' Day - by the Rev. Charles Hoffacker**

In recent years Halloween seems to have needed defending against those who regard it as terrible. Certainly, there can be excess at Halloween, but in itself the holiday is worthwhile. It can even teach us something of importance.

Halloween is October 31, and All Saints 'is November 1, though many congregations celebrate All Saints 'on the following Sunday. As is well known, the name Halloween means All Hallows 'Eve, or All Saints ' Eve. It's also widely known that many popular Halloween customs date back to the pre-Christian Druids of Ireland and Britain.

However, these customs come to us through the filter of many Christian centuries. Christ has conquered the powers of darkness and revealed the old gods to be nothing. The once fearful aspects of this season have become playful. Where once adults shuddered in fear, now even the smallest child can laugh.

It's Christian confidence that makes Halloween a light-hearted time. Just as many who are not Christian share the joy of Christmas each year because the light of Jesus is abundant, even so many who are not Christian share our confidence at Halloween because grace is abundant. It overflows.

Halloween has been baptized. It has become All Saints 'Eve in more than name alone. Both occasions address the same themes, though they do so in different ways. Both occasions are concerned with the hope of life beyond the grave, choosing the side of the angels, and courage in a scary universe. All Saints 'approaches these themes with triumphant joy. Halloween deals with them through mischievous humor. Blessed are those who pass through the humor of Halloween to the joy of All Saints '.

Children are the chief celebrants of Halloween. Those of us who are adults serve as their acolytes. And what do children do on Halloween? They dress up in outlandish costumes and witness their peers dressed up the same way. They walk through their neighborhoods in the evening, enter houses made to look frightful, they collect candy, and they return home again. The whole business is a delightful joke. Behind the scary masks and costumes are laughing children. Inside the frightful houses, decorated with spider webs and candles, are friendly, generous neighbors.

The child who goes forth with a trick-or-treat bag takes a sane, healthy, and adventuresome risk, and finds that the universe can be a safe place. The trick-or-treater discovers that the world is a comedy where terrible

things have been defeated and remain only as a laughingstock. It's a great therapy for fear. There's nothing hellish about it, because in hell there is no laughter.

Those of us past childhood would do well to imitate the willingness of children to venture forth into the unknown, take risks, and return home not only safe but triumphant. Children are not embarrassed to struggle with the great division between good and evil, life and death, heaven and hell. They are new to this fight and want to prove themselves heroic.

**Benedictine sister Genevieve Glen writes of children:** They are all too aware of the human need to wrestle in the inward night with the unreasoning, the untamed, the inexplicable, and yes, the evil in us to believe us when we tell them that there are no witches and warlocks, no ghosts and goblins, and no phosphorescent skeletons. They know, too, that if you're afraid of something, the best thing to do is to dress yourself and your friends — and even your little brother — as the thing you're afraid of, so that you can see it in familiar flesh and confront it and deal with it and prove to yourself that it can't really hurt you. They know that pretending that it isn't real won't work if it is. There are monsters under the bed.

So, the Halloween wisdom of children comes down to this: There are monsters under the bed, but we can face our fears, and by grace and struggle be set free from them. This is infinitely preferable to the common adult attitude that denies monsters under the bed, yet insists on remaining fearful. The children have caught the Gospel. Their hearts are filled with faith and fun.

This feast of All Saints', with triumphant music, splendid prayers, white hangings and vestments, and everything else — this is the sunny side of Halloween. Today is joy while last night was comedy. The saints we honor this day, a vast, innumerable crowd, are but graduates of the school of grace and struggle in which trick-or-treaters have just enrolled. The saints are those wise enough to face their fears and accept the help of God as naturally as a small child walking in the dark accepts a parent's hand.

The saints are those who accept an adventuresome risk, and one that's

sane and healthy too, even if their contemporaries can't figure them out. These saints know the great therapy for fear. They take God seriously, at his word, while everything else, everyone else, including themselves, they regard not seriously, but lightly.

Saints are people who aren't afraid to live with both the gruesome and the glorious. They are not embarrassed to struggle with the great division between good and evil, life and death, heaven and hell. They are called forth into the unknown as into a dark night, they venture forth, enter spooky places, and return home not only safe but triumphant.

What makes them the saints they are? The renowned Episcopal preacher Barbara Taylor offers a list of upsetting characteristics, including moderate faith, intemperate hope (and) inordinate love. They put on these characteristics like the outlandish costumes of Halloween, and never take them off.

Their hearts are full of faith and fun. Ignatius Loyola told his seminarians, Laugh and grow strong Philip Neri performed ridiculous dances in the presence of cardinals and wore his clothes inside out. Teresa of Avila taught her Carmelite nuns to dance on holy days and even gave them castanets.

Children at Halloween recognize that beyond the very real struggle, there is a world of delight, free from fear's control. That world is where the saints dwell, both saints in heaven and saints on earth.

Perhaps you have known some saints. Perhaps you know some now. Perhaps you are one of these saints, dwelling, part of the time at least, in that world of delight.

Today is the feast of All Saints. We remember those who have gone before, and pray that we may follow after.

Trick-or-treaters venturing forth on Halloween night provide us with a map for the journey, one drawn in the bright colors of childhood trust, courage, and humor.

The saints massed in their glorious ranks are a promise of our happy return home, with hearts glad and eyes open to the wonder of God.

As on Halloween night children were everywhere in outlandish attire, so every day of the year saints are everywhere, in heaven and on earth, known to us and unknown, costumed and uncostumed, children of God living by love and delight, all of them with one common home where the feast has no ending.

Using words from the priest and poet John Donne, let us pray to join the saints in that one common home:

Bring us, O Lord God, at our last awakening into the house and gate of heaven, to enter into that gate and dwell in that house, where there shall be no darkness nor dazzling, but one equal light; no noise nor silence, but one equal music; no fears nor hopes, but one equal possession; no ends nor beginnings, but one equal eternity in the habitations of thy glory and dominion world without end. Amen.

In the Episcopal Church we have a Calendar of Saints, holy men and women we remember in prayer and with readings from the Bible on their feast day. We have selected the following to remember for their Generosity: (hover over to see electronic link)

- [Andrew](#), Nov. 30
- [Dietrich Bonhoeffer](#), April 9
- [Mary Magdalene](#), July 22
- [Florence Nightingale](#), Aug. 12
- [Antony of Egypt](#), Jan. 17

## **ANDREW THE APOSTLE**

Most references to Andrew in the New Testament simply include him on a list of the Twelve Apostles, or group him with his brother, Simon Peter. But he appears acting as an individual three times in the Gospel of John. When a number of Greeks (perhaps simply Greek-speaking Jews) wish to speak with Jesus, they approach Philip, who tells Andrew, and the two of them tell Jesus (Jn 12:20-22). (It may be relevant here that both "Philip" and "Andrew" are Greek names.) Before Jesus feeds the Five Thousand, it is Andrew who says, "Here is a lad with five barley loaves and two fish." (Jn 6:8f) And the first two disciples whom John reports as attaching themselves to Jesus (Jn 1:35-42) are Andrew and another disciple (whom John does not name, but who is commonly supposed to be John himself -- John never mentions

himself by name, a widespread literary convention). Having met Jesus, Andrew then finds his brother Simon and brings him to Jesus. Thus, on each occasion when he is mentioned as an individual, it is because he is instrumental in bringing others to meet the Savior. In the Episcopal Church, the Fellowship of Saint Andrew is devoted to encouraging personal evangelism, and the bringing of one's friends and colleagues to a knowledge of the Gospel of Christ.

Just as Andrew was the first of the Apostles, so his feast is taken in the West to be the beginning of the Church Year. (Eastern Christians begin their Church Year on 1 September.) The First Sunday of Advent is defined to be the Sunday on or nearest his feast (although it could equivalently be defined as the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day).

Some men of St Peter's Church belong to [the Brotherhood of St. Andrew](#) founded in 1883. and may wear this pin.



## **DIETRICH BONHOEFFER**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was born in 1906, son of a professor of psychiatry and neurology at the University of Berlin. He was an outstanding student, and at the age of 25 became a lecturer in systematic theology at the same University. When Hitler came to power in 1933, Bonhoeffer became a leading spokesman for the Confessing Church, the center of Protestant resistance to the Nazis. He organized and for a time led the underground seminary of the Confessing Church. His book *Life Together* describes the life of the Christian community in that seminary, and his book *The Cost of Discipleship* attacks what he calls "cheap grace," meaning grace used as an excuse for moral laxity. Bonhoeffer had been taught not to "resist the powers that be," but he came to believe that to do so was sometimes the right choice. In 1939 his brother-in-law introduced him to a group planning the overthrow of Hitler, and he made significant contributions to their work. (He was at this time an employee of the Military Intelligence Department.) He was arrested in April 1943 and imprisoned in Berlin. After the failure of the attempt on Hitler's life in April 1944, he was sent first to Buchenwald and then to Schoenberg Prison. His life was spared, because he had a relative who stood high in the government; but then this relative was himself implicated in anti-Nazi plots. On Sunday 8



April 1945, he had just finished conducting a service of worship at Schoenberg, when two soldiers came in, saying, "Prisoner Bonhoeffer, make ready and come with us," the standard summons to a condemned prisoner. As he left, he said to another prisoner, "This is the end -- but for me, the beginning -- of life." He was hanged the next day, less than a week before the Allies reached the camp.

## **MARY MAGDALENE FIRST WITNESS OF THE RESURRECTION**

Mary Magdalene is mentioned in the Gospels as being among the women of Galilee who followed Jesus and His disciples, and who was present at His Crucifixion and Burial, and who went to the tomb on Easter Sunday to anoint His body. She was the first to see the Risen Lord, and to announce His Resurrection to the apostles. Accordingly, she is referred to in early Christian writings as "the apostle to the apostles."

Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany (sister of Martha and Lazarus), and the unnamed penitent woman who anointed Jesus's feet (Luke 7:36-48) are sometimes supposed to be the same woman. From this, plus the statement that Jesus had cast seven demons out of her (Luke 8:2), has risen the tradition that she had been a prostitute before she met Jesus.

Because of the assumption that Mary Magdalene had been a spectacular sinner, and also perhaps because she is described as weeping at the tomb of Jesus on the Resurrection morning, she is often portrayed in art as weeping, or with eyes red from having wept. From this appearance we derive the English word "maudlin", meaning "effusively or tearfully sentimental." There is a Magdalen College at Oxford, and a Magdalene College at Cambridge (different spelling), both pronounced "Maudlin."

## **FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE NURSE, RENEWER OF SOCIETY**

Florence Nightingale was born to a wealthy English family in Florence, Italy, on May 12, 1820. She trained as a nurse in a hospital run by a Lutheran order of Deaconesses at Kaiserwerth, and in 1853 became superintendent of a hospital for invalid women in London. In response to God's call and animated by a spirit of service, in 1854 she volunteered for duty during the Crimean War and recruited 38 nurses to join her. With them she organized the first modern nursing service in the British field hospitals of Scutari and Balaclava. Making late-night rounds to check on the welfare of her charges, a hand-held lantern to aid her, the wounded identified her as "The Lady with the Lamp." By imposing strict discipline and high standards of sanitation, she radically reduced the drastic death toll and rampant infection then typical in field hospitals. She returned to England in 1856, and a fund of £50,000 was subscribed to enable her to form an institution for the training of nurses at St. Thomas's Hospital and at King's College Hospital. Her school at St. Thomas's Hospital became significant in helping to elevate nursing into a profession. She devoted many years to the question of army sanitary reform, to the improvement of nursing, and to public health in India. Her main work, *Notes on Nursing*, went through many editions. An Anglican, she remained committed to a personal mystical religion, which sustained her through many years of poor health until her death in 1910. Until the end of her life, although her illness prevented her from leaving her home, she continued in frequent spiritual conversation with many prominent church leaders of the day, including the local parish priest, who regularly brought the Eucharist to her. By the time of her death on August 13, 1910, her accomplishments and legacy were widely recognized, and she is honored throughout the world as the founder of the modern profession of nursing.

[also see James E. Kiefer's sketches of memorable Christians](#)

## **ANTONY OF EGYPT**

Before the conversion of the Emperor Constantine in 312 AD, back in the days when Christianity was still a persecuted religion, the act of becoming a Christian involved turning one's back on the pursuit of

security, of fashionable prestige and popularity, of success as the term is widely understood. After the Emperor had changed Christianity from a persecuted religion into a fashionable one, many earnest Christians felt the need to make such a renunciation in the service of Christ, and did not see mere Church membership as any longer enough to constitute such a renunciation. Accordingly, many of them sought Christian commitment by fleeing from society into the desert, and becoming hermits, devoting themselves to solitude, fasting, and prayer.

Although this trend was much accelerated and reinforced by the conversion of Constantine and attendant changes, it had already begun earlier. An outstanding early example is Antony of Egypt, often reckoned as the founder of Christian monasticism.

Antony of Egypt, the son of Christian parents, inherited a large estate. On his way to church one day, he found himself meditating on the text, "Sell all that you have, and give to the poor, and come follow me." When he got to church, he heard the preacher speaking on that very text. He took this as a message for him, and, having provided for the care of his sister, he gave his land to the tenants who lived on it, and gave his other wealth to the poor, and became a hermit, living alone for twenty years, praying and reading, and doing manual labor. In 305, he gave up his solitude to become the head of a group of monks, living in a cluster of huts or cells, devoting themselves to communal singing and worship, to prayer and study and manual labor under Antony's direction. They did not simply renounce the world, but were diligent in prayer for their fellow Christians, worked with their hands to earn money that they might distribute it as alms, and preached and gave personal counseling to those who sought them out.

In 321, Christians in Alexandria were being persecuted by the emperor Maximinus (the rule of Constantine was not yet universal), and Antony visited Alexandria to encourage those facing the possibility of martyrdom. He visited again in 335, when Arianism was strong in the city, and converted many, by his preaching and testimony, and by prayer and the working of miracles. His biography was written by Athanasius, who said of him: "Who ever met him grieving and failed to go away rejoicing?"

Some of our fellow parishioners will learn more about St. Antony on their pilgrimage to Italy in April.

***“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms” (1 Peter 4:10).***

This is a verse every Christian steward has probably memorized. It seems to cover every aspect of stewardship. “Each one:” every Christian; “whatever gift he has received”: everyone has at least one gift and that’s just what it is – a gift; “to serve others”: the reason we have these gifts is to help others, not ourselves; “faithfully”: consistently, without fail; “administering God’s grace”: without God’s grace working within us, we would not be able to use the gifts he has given us; “in its various forms”: God is a God of diversity who gives different kinds of gifts to different people. This is pretty basic stewardship, but we should examine the verses surrounding this one (verses 7-9,11) as well.

Peter tells us the end is near. Some scoff and say that that warning has been repeated for thousands of years and we’re still here. While that is true, it doesn’t guarantee that Christ won’t come today and, when he comes for you, the end will not only be near, it will be here! In light of our mortality, how should we practice stewardship of our lives? *“Be clear minded and self-controlled,”* Peter says, *“so that you can pray”* (1 Peter 4:7). Thanking God, asking his forgiveness, and expressing your deepest thoughts to your Father in Heaven are necessary acts for the faithful Christian steward. Our strength to obey his command to love as we’ve been loved and to use our gifts to the greatest potential comes from communion with God as he speaks to us through his word and Sacrament and we speak to him in prayer. Christ in us enables us to give wholeheartedly!

**Compare Peter’s exhortations with Paul’s as found in Romans 12:6- 13. Note similarities and additions.**

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, giver of every good and perfect gift, help me to treasure your gifts to me and to use them diligently and joyfully in your service. Help me to live each day as if it were my last, that you might find me faithful when you come for me. Through Jesus. Amen.*

***“Help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the Gospel . . . whose names are in the book of life” (Philippians 4:3).***

The women Paul was talking about were two servants of the Lord who were quarreling over something. What it is we aren't told, and it doesn't matter, for haven't we all been involved in similar situations? How can Christians, “*whose names are in the book of life,*” be fighting, we wonder? Once again we are made aware of our status as simultaneous saint and sinner.

What is important is that we handle the situation in a God-pleasing manner. Paul urges the Philippians to “*help these women.*” We are to help them to discover what God would have them do in order to resolve their differences and continue as fellow workers in the Kingdom of God.

How is this done? The verses following show us how we are to relate to each other as fellow workers as well as others to whom we are ministering. “*Rejoice in the Lord always*” (verse 4), is Paul's first counsel. “*Let your gentleness be evident to all*” (verse 5), he continues. “*Do not be anxious about anything, but . . . present your requests to God*” (verse 6). God, who has chosen us to be his stewards will also give us his peace, “*which transcends all understanding*” (verse 7).

Sometimes our greatest challenges as stewards present themselves within the community of believers. It would be good for us to follow Paul's counsel in 1 Corinthians 1:10 in order to meet these challenges.

**Read Acts 15:36-41. What good came out of this parting of the ways? (See also 2 Timothy 4:11)**

*Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, forgive us when we cause you grief through our arguing and dissension. Give us the mind of Christ that we may serve you with unity of spirit, to the praise and glory of your name. Through Christ we pray. Amen.*

***“I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy; I took up the case of the stranger” (Job 29:15-16).***

Job *“was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil”* (Job 1:1). He was also extremely wealthy and blessed with a large family. Then disaster struck – disaster allowed, even suggested, by God – and Job lost everything. Job was confused, bewildered, and unable to understand why God would allow all this misfortune to come upon him when he was such an upright man. *“I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame . . . father to the needy . . . took up the case of the stranger.”*

We find this difficult to comprehend also. Is this the thanks we get for doing good? Shouldn't we be rewarded for the good we do?

It is true that, through faithful giving, we may receive material blessings, but that is only a possibility, not a promise, and certainly not a reason to give or love or serve. Because of our giving, God does promise us spiritual blessings, but, if receiving is our motive for giving, if the thought of reward is our incentive for serving, we are not showing love for God or others, but love for ourselves.

We cannot understand God's reasons for doing what he does. Job himself tried and concluded, *“Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know”* (Job 42:3). Let us emulate Job by helping the helpless and, as we give and serve and love, let us also ask God to give us a pure mind, a selfless attitude, and a true desire to glorify God and not ourselves. With God's help, we can give wholeheartedly in helping those in need.

**Read Luke 6:35. What kind of reward should we expect for righteous living? Read John 16:33. What should we expect from this life?**

*Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, we are quick to cry, “Why me?” when disaster or even inconvenience strikes us. Forgive us and help us to accept your will for us in all things. Help us to look beyond our own circumstances to see the needs of others and to give help gladly. For Jesus' sake. Amen.*

## Cause for Thanks

Thursday 11/09/23

***“This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God” (2 Corinthians 9:12).***

For all that God in Christ has accomplished for us, it is our duty to give him thanks and praise and to serve him by serving those around us. Just as we should give willingly of our financial blessings, so should we be eager to give of our time and abilities to help those in need.

Even though we have sinned and disobeyed our Lord, he continues to forgive us and pour out his blessings on us. So should we forgive others as we have been forgiven and continue to share with them out of our abundance. God promises that he will provide so richly for us that we will always be able to be generous with others.

There are many results from your selfless service, not the least of which is the joy our Lord gives us as we give of ourselves. It is one of God’s principles of giving that the giver benefits as much as the recipient. Of course, the one on the receiving end benefits as well. After all that’s the purpose of your serving. The Apostle Paul, in our text for this meditation, offers another and perhaps the most important outcome of giving and that is that your act gives cause for thanks and praise to be given back to God who has enabled the whole exchange! He writes that *“men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel . . . ”* (verse 13).

What a marvelous God we have who makes all things work for our good and to the praise of his glory!

**Study more closely Paul’s exposition on this principle of giving producing gratitude to God in 2 Corinthians 9:6-15.**

***Prayer:*** *Our gracious heavenly Father, thank you for all you’ve given us and for the opportunity to serve you as we serve others. Help us to remember our calling; to love and serve and obey you in all we do as you give us grace to do. Through Jesus we pray. Amen.*

## Rejoice in Your Work

Friday 11/10/23

***“And on that day they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy” (Nehemiah 12:43).***

Nehemiah had been chosen by God to return to Judah to rebuild the city walls. There were many obstacles to overcome before Nehemiah could complete this work. First, as a servant to the king who had taken him captive, he had to be allowed to leave. Before he asked for permission, Nehemiah *“prayed to the God of Heaven”* (Nehemiah 2:4). God heard his prayer and even caused the king to grant Nehemiah’s requests for help in his work.

The enormity of the task before him became clearer as Nehemiah rode around the city at night before approaching the officials and others who would be his fellow-workers. Without minimizing the effort that would be required, Nehemiah told them *“about the gracious hand of [his] God upon [him],”* and together they began the *“good work”* (Nehemiah 2:18).

The work was further complicated by troublemakers, Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem, who did all in their power to subvert their plans and activities. Even when his life was threatened, Nehemiah continued his work, and, when it was finished, everyone, including their enemies *“realized that this work had been done with the help of our God”* (Nehemiah 6:16). Then came the return of many exiles, and the wall was dedicated. Once the work was done, it was time for celebration, *“and on that day they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy . . . The sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away.”* Set before us in this account from Nehemiah is a pattern for work: God ordains it; God directs it; God blesses it; God completes it; God gives us joy in the undertaking.

**Read the inspiring book of Nehemiah. Read also Ephesians 2:10.**

***Prayer:*** *Dear Father in Heaven. I know that you have a plan for my life and have prepared work for me to do. Help me to listen so that I can know your plan and give me courage to do it. Through Christ I pray. Amen.*



## Struggling with the Kingdom's Economy Sat 11/11/23

***“Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death” (Proverbs 11:4).***

First Thessalonians 5:2-3 informs us that *“the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night . . . destruction will come . . . suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman . . .”* These words do not evoke a pleasant image. We imagine chaos and fear. We do not imagine anyone holding out his wallet and offering to pay to get himself out of a dire situation. Even the wealthiest who have used their financial means throughout their lives to get what they want or need will realize that *“wealth is worthless in the day of wrath.”*

It is *righteousness [that] delivers from death.*” To that end our wealth can be rightly and effectively used. Jesus said, *“I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings”* (Luke 16:9). What this means for us is that, through our financial support of our churches' ministry and mission, we can make a contribution to the building up of the Kingdom of God. We can have a part in the winning of souls as we support missionaries. We can reach out to the needy through our donations of food and offers of service. Then, when we reach Heaven, we will find ourselves *“welcomed into eternal dwellings”* by those *“friends”* we have made on earth.

**Read the Parable of the Shrewd Manager in Luke 16:1-13. Can you relate that to Jesus' command in John 21:17?**

***Prayer:*** Dear Lord, you have given us all we have. Help us not to grasp our money with clenched hands. Help us instead to find our treasure in Heavenly riches and to use our resources to further your Kingdom. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

***“However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace” (Acts 20:24).***

What is your life worth? To those who love you, the worth of your life is incalculable, but what would **you** say your life is worth? Paul said his life was worth nothing to him. He said that because he had a higher goal in mind. Paul lived for one purpose only, and that was to serve the Lord. His life was valuable only in that it was used to *“finish the race and complete the task.”*

Why are we put on earth? And why are we left here? Paul spoke of the *“earthly tent”* in which each of us lives and said we are *“longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling”* (2 Corinthians 5:1-2). This place is alien to believers who long to be in Heaven, our real home. There is a definite reason for our remaining here, however brief our time on earth may be. Paul said his life was worth nothing unless he completed the task the Lord had given him. Paul was talking about stewardship! He was talking about what we do while we wait to be transported to our final destination. He was talking about using all God has given us in this great task of *“testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.”*

Just as Paul, having been called to faith by the Lord Jesus Christ, was a steward of God’s gifts, so are we. Let us pray, along with Paul, that we will *“finish the race and complete the task the Lord has given [us].”* Let’s **give wholeheartedly!**

**Read 2 Timothy 4:7-8. What promise do you find in these verses?  
How was Paul – how are you – able to run this race?**

***Prayer:** Gracious Lord, we are awed by the life of the Apostle Paul, and, yet he declared his life worth nothing to him! Help us to see that it is only by your grace to him and to us that either Paul or we can run this race set before us. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

**SAVE THE DATE:  
Sunday November 12th**

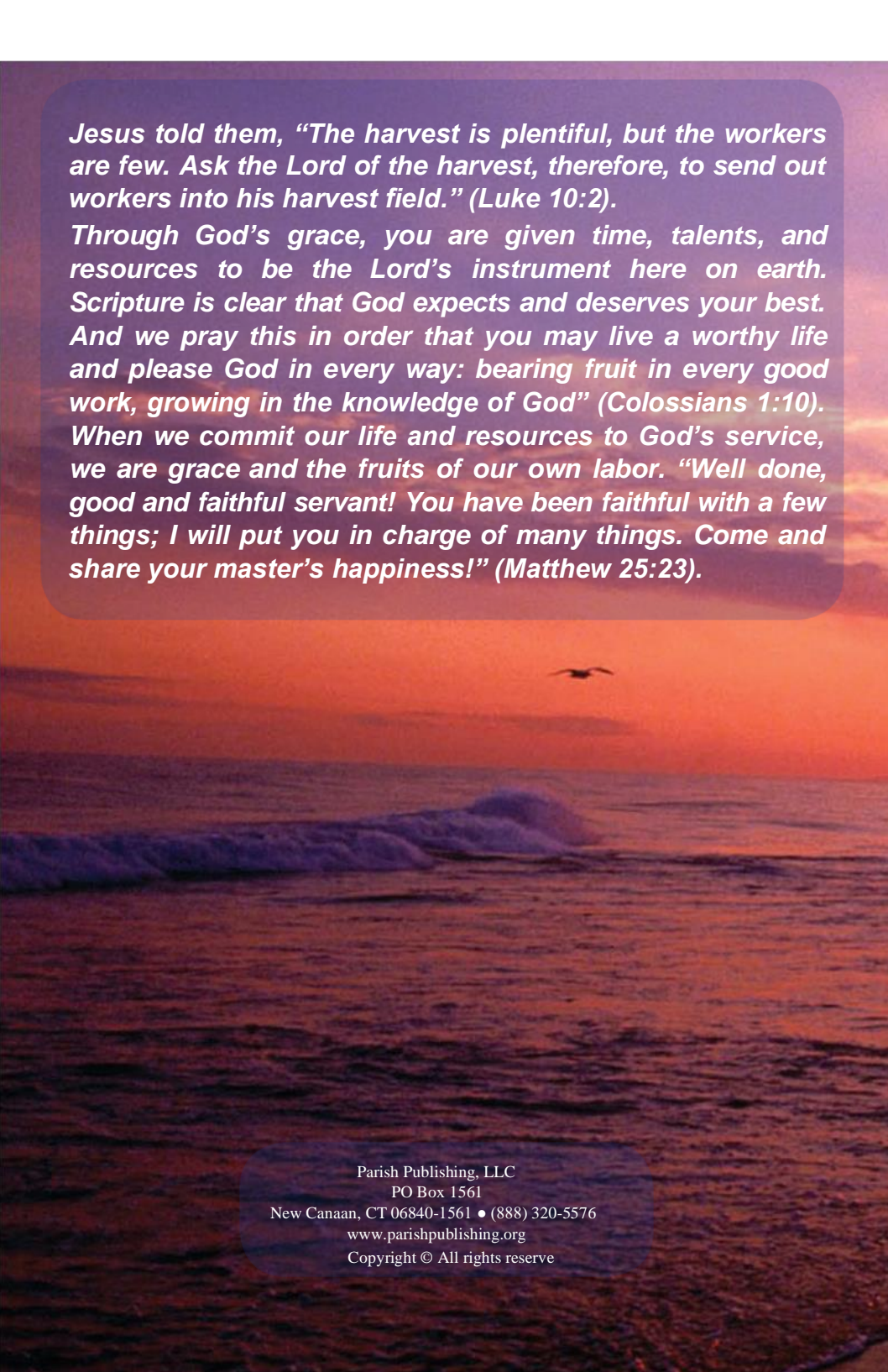
A special sermon will be delivered by one of the candidates in our recent DWTX Bishop Election, followed by a celebration Luncheon in Tucker Hall.



**THE REV. ALEX MONTES-VELA**

Fr. Alex will join us from the Mission for Congregational Vitality New Initiatives - Diocese of Texas in Houston, Texas.

**Be sure to pick up the November/December Rock Road  
Newsletter to read our interview with Fr. Alex!**

A sunset over the ocean with a bird in flight. The sky is a mix of orange, red, and purple, and the water is dark with white-capped waves. A single bird is silhouetted against the sky in the center.

*Jesus told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” (Luke 10:2).*

*Through God’s grace, you are given time, talents, and resources to be the Lord’s instrument here on earth. Scripture is clear that God expects and deserves your best. And we pray this in order that you may live a worthy life and please God in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God” (Colossians 1:10). When we commit our life and resources to God’s service, we are grace and the fruits of our own labor. “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!” (Matthew 25:23).*

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