



a STEWARDSHIP CHALLENGE
GOD-LIVED
life

A Life Lived Shrewdly

November 24th, 2024

Last Sunday of Church Year | Thanksgiving

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WELCOME TO WORSHIP!

God became man and lived life in our place. Christ lived the perfect God-lived life. Living as a Christian, a little Christ, we have the privilege of demonstrating what God looks like in how we live our lives, in living lives that show God. This is the final of four Sundays where God's Word will be challenging us, and we'll be challenging one another to live a God-lived life.

While stewardship of our finances isn't the only part of stewardship, it is a part of it. Today God's Word encourages us to use all of the financial gifts God has given us with an eye on our purpose. May God grant us grace to use money for what really matters! Today, we focus on wise ways to use the resources God has given us for the greatest good. Today, as we celebrate Thanksgiving, God bless us to see the blessings he has placed into our lives.

Week One: A Life of Being a Disciple

Week Two: A Life Lived for Others

Week Three: A Life of Generosity

Week Four: A Life of Thanksgiving

PRAYER OF PREPARATION

Lord God, in coming to hear your Word this morning, you have planted us like trees beside streams of water. Grant that we may ever delight in your Word and yield abundant fruit in our lives, through Jesus Christ, your Son our Lord. Amen.

ORDER OF SERVICE

OPENING HYMN: B158 *Great is Thy Faithfulness*

GATHERING RITE

Music begins playing underneath spoken word.

M: We begin our worship in the same way we were baptized: In the name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION

M: Heavenly Father, every good and perfect gift comes from you, including the physical gifts you pour out into our lives. You intend these treasures to be used for your glory and in service to our neighbors. We repent for being selfish in the use of the treasures you have given. Forgive us and let your peace rule our lives.

C: 🎵 May the peace of God my Father Rule my life in everything, That I may be calm to comfort Sick and sorrowing. (CW467:3)

M: Dear Savior Jesus, though you were rich, yet for our sakes you became poor, so that through your poverty we might become rich. All too often we have been rich toward ourselves instead of rich towards you out of thanks for our forgiveness won for us by your cross and empty tomb. Forgive us and let your love fill our lives.

C: 🎵 May the love of Jesus fill me As the waters fill the sea, Him exalting self abasing – This is victory. (CW467:4)

M: O Holy Spirit, you have worked faith in our hearts and you cause us to produce good fruit. We are sorry that our financial stewardship often fails to qualify as good fruit motivated by your love. Forgive us and live within us.

C: 🎵 May his Spirit live within me As I seek the lost to win, And may they forget the channel, Seeing only him. (CW467:6)

M: As a called servant of the Triune God, I announce to you his grace and forgiveness. On behalf of and by the command of our Savior Jesus Christ, I forgive you all of your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**C: ♪ May the mind of Christ my Savior Live in me from day to day,
By his love and pow'r inspiring All I do or say.
May the Word of God dwell richly In my heart from hour to hour,
So that all may see I triumph Only through his pow'r. (CW467:1-2)**

M: We pray:

Almighty God, you have brought us into the body of Christ by your grace and mercy. Help us to imitate the example of your Son and of our brothers and sisters who have gone before in humble and willing service to you full of faith, hope and love, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

**C: ♪ May I run the race before me, Strong and brave to face the foe,
Looking only unto Jesus As I onward go. (CW467:5)**

OLD TESTAMENT READING:

II Kings 4:8-17

*A godly woman uses her resources for what really matters.
She wasn't giving to get, she was giving to support ministry.*

⁸ One day Elisha went to Shunem. And a well-to-do woman was there, who urged him to stay for a meal. So whenever he came by, he stopped there to eat. ⁹ She said to her husband, "I know that this man who often comes our way is a holy man of God. ¹⁰ Let's make a small room on the roof and put in it a bed and a table, a chair and a lamp for him. Then he can stay there whenever he comes to us."

¹¹ One day when Elisha came, he went up to his room and lay down there. ¹² He said to his servant Gehazi, "Call the Shunammite." So he called her, and she stood before him. ¹³ Elisha said to him, "Tell her, 'You have gone to all this trouble for us. Now what can be done for you? Can we speak on your behalf to the king or the commander of the army?'" She replied, "I have a home among my own people."¹⁴ "What can be done for her?" Elisha asked.

Gehazi said, "She has no son, and her husband is old."

¹⁵ Then Elisha said, "Call her." So he called her, and she stood in the doorway. ¹⁶ "About this time next year," Elisha said, "you will hold a son in your arms."

"No, my lord!" she objected. "Please, man of God, don't mislead your servant!"

¹⁷ But the woman became pregnant, and the next year about that same time she gave birth to a son, just as Elisha had told her.

RESPONSIVE READING: African American Heritage Hymnal #99: Thanksgiving

GOSPEL:

Luke 16:1-15

Jesus tells a parable about a shrewd manager to make the single point that a God-lived life uses its resources for God's purposes.

16 Jesus told his disciples: "There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. ² So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.'

³ "The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and

I'm ashamed to beg— ⁴ I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.'

⁵ "So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?'

⁶ "'Nine hundred gallons of olive oil,' he replied.

"The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred and fifty.'

⁷ "Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you owe?'

"A thousand bushels of wheat,' he replied.

"He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eight hundred.'

⁸ "The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. ⁹ I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

¹⁰ "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. ¹¹ So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? ¹² And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?

¹³ "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

¹⁴ The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. ¹⁵ He said to them, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God's sight.

M: This is the Gospel of our Lord.

C: Praise be to you, O Christ!

CHILDREN'S SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY: R609 *We Praise You, O God, Our Redeemer*

SERMON TEXT: *Now What Shall I Do?*

Luke 16:1-15

1. Live for the now?
2. Live for the new.

CONFESSION OF FAITH:

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

Amen.

OFFERING: R610 *Now Thank We All Our God*

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

M: Almighty Father, you are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing. You give us time, energy, talents, and treasures. Because of you we can say with the psalmist, "the boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places." Your Word teaches us of your great love for us and how to love our neighbor. Give us wisdom in using your gifts in God-pleasing ways. Lord in your mercy:

C: Hear our prayer.

M: Lord Jesus Christ, you tell us that "what people value highly is detestable in God's sight." Help us to recognize our true treasure in you, our Savior and our God. Protect us from the devil who would have us marvel at insignificant things as a treasure, while neglecting the great gifts you give us in your Word and Sacraments. Give us wisdom in cherishing you and your greater gifts in God-pleasing ways. Lord, in your mercy:

C: Hear our prayer.

M: Holy Spirit, you have set us apart and made our bodies your temple. You live in us. Your Word teaches us who we really are by the grace of God and through the innocent suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. Give us wisdom to see that godliness with contentment is great gain and grow in us the fruit that is pleasing to you Lord, in your mercy:

C: Hear our prayer.

Special prayers and intercessions may follow.

M: Hear us, Lord, as we bring you our private petitions.

Silent prayer.

M: Accept our prayers for the sake of Jesus our Savior. Help us to not be arrogant nor put our hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but help us put our hope in you, who richly provides

us with everything for our enjoyment, for Jesus, our Savior's sake. Amen.

PRAYERS

LORD'S PRAYER

C: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

BLESSING

M: Brothers and sisters, go in peace.

Live in harmony with one another.

Serve the Lord with gladness.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and give ✠ you peace.

C: AMEN.

CLOSING HYMN: B194 *Come Ye Thankful People Come*

Bible Class | Wednesdays | 7:00 pm

Google Meet: <https://meet.google.com/xzp-nphi-sdt>

Blessings, challenges, and opportunities in WELS schools

WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools completed the annual Lutheran school statistics collection from all WELS schools for the 2024-25 school year. On the surface, the numbers are very close to a year ago, with preparatory and area Lutheran high school enrollments increasing by 103 for a total of 7,484 students, Lutheran elementary school enrollments increasing slightly to 28,361 students from 28,081 in 2023, and the number of students served by early childhood ministries decreasing to 11,338 from 11,799. The number of called teachers has grown by 49 to 3,108.

The following insights come through close examination of trends in our schools over the past 3, 5, and even 15 years. Even though early childhood ministries and Lutheran elementary schools have continued to open, a much greater number have closed. When compared to the 2010 statistical report, the number of early childhood ministries has decreased from 388 (225 connected to a Lutheran elementary school and 163 standalone) to 345 (241 connected to a Lutheran elementary school and 104 standalone), though total enrollment has increased by 13 percent. The number of Lutheran elementary schools has decreased from 328 in 2010 to 276 currently, though during that period total enrollment has increased by 17 percent. The number of area Lutheran high schools has grown by four, including a fully accredited WELS online high school enrolling 14 students, with overall area Lutheran high school enrollment increasing by 23 percent since 2010.

Although enrollment overall has been at record numbers the last two years due to increased interest in Christian education, fewer but larger schools are a result of mergers, consolidations, and closures due to the reality of rising costs and decreased enrollments, making it more difficult for smaller schools in smaller congregations with fewer supporters to continue to exist.

The Commission on Lutheran Schools stands ready to provide consulting guidance and onsite support for schools dealing with fiscal sustainability challenges, declining enrollment, and merger considerations. Thanks to generous gifts toward utilizing schools for outreach, funds are now available to review, provide guidance for, and help all schools develop and implement effective harvest strategies for the growing number of

unchurched and community members enrolling in our schools. It is our prayer that every school is effectively using a harvest strategy to connect more families to the gospel. Please contact lutheranschools@wels.net for further information.

In Christ,

Mr. James Rademan, director, Commission on Lutheran Schools

Dear Friend of Missions,

“. . . because of your partnership in the gospel. . .” – *Philippians 1:3-5*

This was Paul’s reason for giving thanks. He cherished his partnership with God’s people, knowing he couldn’t do mission work without his brothers and sisters in Christ in the congregation at Philippi. So, he said this at the beginning of his letter: “I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel. . .” (Philippians 1:3-5)

We, too, cherish our partnership with you in the gospel. Humanly speaking, we couldn’t do what we do in Home and World Missions without it. This is by God’s design. The many parts of the body are meant to work in partnership with each other for the common good. Your partnership in the form of prayers, encouragement, and gifts enables us to enter new mission fields and provide ongoing support to missions throughout North America and across the globe. We thank God for this blessed partnership!

We also join with you in giving thanks to our gracious God. We know where we would be without him. Yet, by his grace, we are children of God, bought with the blood of Jesus Christ and heirs of eternal life. By his grace, we are showered with an abundance of earthly blessings that provide for our daily needs and more! And by his grace, we are partners in gospel outreach ministry that has an eternal impact on souls around the world. Praise the Lord!

From all of us in WELS Missions, we thank God for you.

Happy Thanksgiving!

WELS Home, World, and Joint Missions

| Serving at CoL: | Today | Next Sunday |
|------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Music | Katherine, Elijah | Karis, Elijah |
| Ushers | Bob, Seth | Keith |
| Reader | Seth | |
| Altar | | |
| Streaming | Noah | Noah |
| Refreshments | Thanksgiving | |
| Cleaning | Beth | |
| Mowing | Keith | |

CALENDAR

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Wednesday | 7:00 PM Online Bible Class |
| Sunday | 10:00 AM Bible Class, Sunday School |
| Sunday | 11:00 AM Worship |
| Today | Council Meeting |
| Dec 14 th | Happy Birthday Jesus |
| Dec 24 th | 6:00 PM Christmas Eve Service |
| Dec 25 th | 11:00 AM Christmas Service |

| OFFERING | Total | Budget | %Budget Met |
|-------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Last Week | \$3,577.00 | \$2,548.40 | 140.4% |
| October (revised) | \$10,926.05 | \$11,043.08 | 98.9% |
| November | \$12,230.00 | \$11,043.08 | 110.7% |
| Qtr-to-Date | \$23,156.05 | \$33,129.25 | 69.9% |
| Year-to-Date | \$116,228.93 | \$132,517.00 | 87.7% |



*"...give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."
II Corinthians 9:7*

