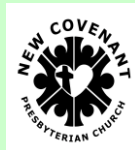




So the **LAST**
will be
FIRST
and the **FIRST**
LAST.

Matthew 20:1-16

New Covenant Presbyterian Church
September 24, 2023 10:00am Service



1125 Jamison Corner Road Middletown, DE
(302) 378-4446 www.newcov-church.org

The Worship of God

September 24, 2023 Seventeenth Sunday After Pentecost

Welcome and Announcements

Lay Leader

Sharing Our Vision

Preparing Ourselves for Worship During the Musical Prelude ...

- *An interesting parallel can be made between the elder brother of Luke 15 (the Prodigal Son parable) and the grumbling laborers in today's parable (the one where all the workers get paid the same salary regardless of how long they worked). Both the elder brother and the grumbling laborers begrudge the generosity of the father/landowner and both dishonor the father/landowner by questioning his judgment and integrity. Both are quite demanding, and they are characterized by pride rather than humility. It may be easy to understand their human side with such behavior, but neither is to be lifted up as a good example of how to live with a thankful spirit for whatever blessings we have.*
- *Thoughts on service:
No one can help everybody, but everybody can help someone.
God, grant that the heat in my heart will melt the lead in my feet.*

**Cultivating
Gratitude Towards
God Helps us
Focus on What we
Have Rather Than
What we Lack**

Preparing to Meet God

Call to Worship

- L: The heavenly reward God promises is not a reward we earn by good works.
- P: *We could never become righteous enough to make up for past sin, or to be worthy of heaven.***
- L: God's love is given, then, not in proportion to our righteousness, but simply because God IS love.
- P: *We thank God for loving us. May we never become jealous over God's love for others who may seem, according to our viewpoint, less deserving than ourselves.***
- A: *Praise God for the undeserved and abundant love that is bestowed on us all!***

Hymn # 376*Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*

*1-Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven, to earth come down,
Fix in us thy humble dwelling, all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, thou art all compassion; pure, unbounded love thou art;
Visit us with thy salvation; enter every trembling heart.*

*2-Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit into every troubled breast;
Let us all in thee inherit; let us find the promised rest.
Take away the love of sinning; Alpha and Omega be;
End of faith, as its beginning, set our hearts at liberty.*

*3-Come, Almighty, to deliver; let us all thy life receive;
Suddenly return, and never, nevermore thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing, serve thee as thy hosts above,
Pray, and praise thee without ceasing, glory in thy perfect love.*

*4-Finish then thy new creation; pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see thy great salvation perfectly restored in thee:
Changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise.*

**Prayer of Confession**

O God, you search for us when we have gone far from you and we confess that we have become consumed with our own affairs. We seldom pause to listen to the wind in the trees or hear the happy voices of children. Sometimes we feel that the burdens of our world fall entirely on our shoulders, and we have been slow to put our trust in you or to cooperate with others. When we take ourselves too seriously, remind us that we are only human. Make us patient with our mistakes and those of others, always willing to forgive. And remind us that we are also precious, not because we are good, but because you have accepted us and called us to be your very own. And now, holy God, we turn to you in a time of silent prayer that we might confess our sins.....Amen.

**Assurance of Pardon**

L: Friends, God deals with us mercifully.

P: ***The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is lavished upon us with the faith and love which are ours through him.***

L: Friends, believe the Good News of the Gospel-

P: ***In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!***

Meeting God in the Word

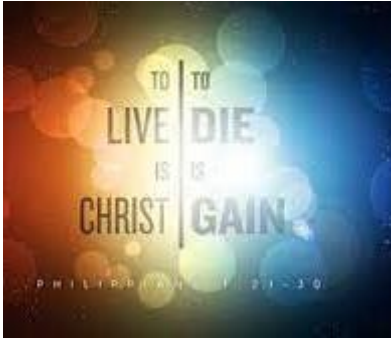
Children's Message

First Lesson

Philippians 1: 21-30

Life in Christ

Lay Leader



For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well - since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

L: This is the Word of the Lord. **P:** *Thanks be to God.*

Second Lesson

Matthew 20: 1-16

The Laborers in the Vineyard

Lay Leader



'For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, "You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right." So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock he went out and

found others standing around; and he said to them, "Why are you standing here idle all day?" They said to him, "Because no one has hired us." He said to them, "You also go into the vineyard." When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, "Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first." When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, "These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat." But he replied to one of them, "Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give

to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?" So the last will be first, and the first will be last.'

L: This is the Word of the Lord. **P: Thanks be to God.**

Sermon

No More Keeping Score

Responding to the Word

Hymn # 553

For the Fruit of All Creation

FORGIVENESS
IS NOT
ABOUT KEEPING
SCORE,
IT'S ABOUT
LOSING COUNT.



*1-For the fruit of all creation, thanks be to God.
For the gifts to every nation, thanks be to God.
For the plowing, sowing, reaping, silent growth while we are sleeping,
Thanks be to God.*

*2-In the just reward of labor, God's will be done.
In the help we give our neighbor, God's will be done.
In our worldwide task of caring for the hungry and despairing,
In the harvests we are sharing, God's will be done.*

*3-For the harvests of the Spirit, thanks be to God.
For the good we all inherit, thanks be to God.
For the wonders that astound us, for the truths that still confound us,
Most of all that love has found us, thanks be to God.*

Unison Prayer

Lord Jesus, we make mistakes. We think blessings go to the best and the brightest of your children. We think blessings are prizes, instead of understanding that blessings are salve for the wounded - solace for the lonely - strength for the suffering – and rest for the weary. We think blessings are shiny, sparkly things to rub in other people's faces, instead of seeing them as the wonder of the child looking at a cloud, - the sweet love from the overlooked older lady - the strength of a survivor sitting with someone else in the same pain and trauma that he has experienced. Lord, we do not understand blessings, so we don't think there's enough, which lets all of our humanity show clearly to one and all. Help us to discern when blessings peak through. Forgive us when we forget to share our blessings, and love us so we can do better we pray. In your loving, holy name we pray. Amen.

Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer

The Celebration of Our Gifts

Fill our minds with your wisdom, O God, and our hearts with sincerity, lest our offerings be a mockery and not acceptable to you. Make us willing to obey you in all our ways that our lives might be long and fruitful and that others might be drawn to you as a result. Amen.

Going Out to Serve

Hymn # 358

Help Us Accept Each Other

*1-Help us accept each other as Christ accepted us;
Teach us as sister, brother, each person to embrace.
Be present, Lord, among us and bring us to believe
We are ourselves accepted, and meant to love and live.*

*2-Teach us, O Lord, your lessons, as in our daily life
We struggle to be human and search for hope and faith.
Teach us to care for people, for all, not just for some,
To love them as we find them, or as they may become.*



Blessing

- L: We are partners in faith. Let us carry from this place a deep commitment to work with one another in carrying out God's will,
- P: *And seeing the best in each other while we possess a joyful willingness to serve God with all that we have and are.***
- L: *And may the blessings*



Response

*He is Lord – He is Lord. He has risen from the dead, and he is Lord.
Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.*