

Home Service for October 4, 2026

Welcome and Announcements

You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship.

We gather to learn about God. We gather to know Christ more deeply. We gather to remember and give thanks that we are a part of the community of faith—a community that reaches around the world.

Call to Worship:

The heavens proclaim the glory of God! We too proclaim what God has done in our lives. Voices of praise shout to the ends of the earth. May we join the chorus, as we sing of God's great and abiding love!

Opening Prayer:

Creating God, like the earth around us, we gather to proclaim your glory. We pray that you will revive our souls today. We pray that you will help us become a little bit wiser. We pray that our hearts will rejoice at the sound of your name. We pray that our eyes will be opened to your ways. We pray that we might live in peace and harmony with one another. And we pray that today, and every day, we will again choose to follow in the ways of Christ, so that our lives may become an example of your love and grace to the world. In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Loving God, present and near. You are beyond our words and our understanding. Help us to remember that You are at once infinite, boundless, timeless, and eternal, but, at the same time, intimately entwined with our lives. You are with us no matter where we find ourselves. When we have forgotten You, when we have failed to speak words of love, when we have neglected the need of another, Loving God, present and near, help us to recognize Your presence and nearness with us as we worship together. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Words of Assurance:

Brother and sisters and siblings in Christ, God will wipe away all our faults. Know that the grace and mercy of God are never far from us, and that God desires that we live in righteousness. In the name of the risen Christ, you are forgiven. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Read Psalm 19

The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

² Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.

³ They have no speech, they use no words;
no sound is heard from them.

⁴ Yet their voice ^[b] goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.

In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.

⁵ It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
like a champion rejoicing to run his course.

⁶ It rises at one end of the heavens
and makes its circuit to the other;
nothing is deprived of its warmth.

⁷ The law of the Lord is perfect,
refreshing the soul.

The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.

⁸ The precepts of the Lord are right,
giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the Lord are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.

⁹ The fear of the Lord is pure,
enduring forever.

The decrees of the Lord are firm,
and all of them are righteous.

¹⁰ They are more precious than gold,
than much pure gold;

they are sweeter than honey,
than honey from the honeycomb.

¹¹ By them your servant is warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.

¹² But who can discern their own errors?
Forgive my hidden faults.

¹³ Keep your servant also from willful sins;
may they not rule over me.

Then I will be blameless,
innocent of great transgression.

¹⁴ May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart
be pleasing in your sight,
Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Prayers of the People:

Gracious and loving Creator, Sometimes the words just are not there. God, you are so amazing that our words and thoughts of how best to praise you pale in comparison to the splendors of your name. You are the Almighty, you are the Redeemer, you are grace never ending and the embodiment of love itself. And when we come to you in prayer, sometimes words fail us in what to say. Yes, we lift up our concerns, and yet sometimes they seem so small in comparison to the tribulations encountered across your creation. How can our problems compare to disasters people face, or the fighting that surrounds people trying to escape, or the horrors that no child should ever experience? Lord God, sometimes when we come to you to pray, we are clueless as to what we should ask for. You know the thoughts in our minds and the desires of our hearts, and there are times when they conflict. Sometimes we want what is not always the best for us, and there are times that we long to hold on to the things we should let go of. There are times when really the best thing we can do is just pray thy will be done. In these moments, dear God, we are so very thankful for the lessons of your Son Jesus Christ for teaching us the words to pray when our own are insufficient, for our tradition teaches that Jesus said to pray to Our Father ...

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever and ever. AMEN

Read the Old Testament Lesson: Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20

And God spoke all these words:

² “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

³ “You shall have no other gods before ^[a] me.

⁴ “You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

⁷“You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

⁸“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work,

¹²“Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

¹³“You shall not murder.

¹⁴“You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵“You shall not steal.

¹⁶“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

¹⁷“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

¹⁸ When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance ¹⁹ and said to Moses, “Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.”

²⁰ Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.”

Read the Epistle Lesson: Philippians 3:4b-14

though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

⁷ But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in ^[a] Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do:

Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Matthew 21:33-46

“Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. ³⁴ When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.

³⁵ “The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third.

³⁶ Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. ³⁷ Last of all, he sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said.

³⁸ “But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him and take his inheritance.’ ³⁹ So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

⁴⁰ “Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?”

⁴¹ “He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,” they replied, “and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.”

⁴² Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

“The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
the Lord has done this,
and it is marvelous in our eyes’^[a]?

⁴³ “Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. ⁴⁴ Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.”^[b]

⁴⁵ When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus’ parables, they knew he was talking about them. ⁴⁶ They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.

Message

Our Gospel combines Christian closeness with other teachings Jesus would like us to review. Believers are blessed with closeness to God through and by His holy word. Believers are blessed with closeness to other Christians by the bonds of faith tied together with God’s love. All of this is because of God’s free grace given that

we believe. Now we are to live our lives by loving God. Our lives are lived by loving others. More importantly, our lives are lived because of the love of God. Without God, without his love there would be no closeness. In John 15:5 Jesus states: “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” As branches we are attached to the vine of Christ. In him we move, live, and flourish. This brings us to today’s parable. Not only are we branches attached to the divine vine, but we are also to be laborers in the Lord’s vineyard.

Jesus again teaches with a parable. This is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. We are given the setting and principal people involved. The Lord is the landowner. The vineyard represents Israel. The Lord entrusts the vineyard to tenants. When it is time to collect the fruit, as payment for the rent, so the landowner sends servants to collect. The tenants mistreat the servants not once, but twice. The landowner decides to send his son for he thought they would respect him. This son is Jesus, but the tenants reject and do not respect him. Soon Jesus would be crucified. They did not return fruits that were due the landowner, but they rejected and therefore were rejected.

Rejection is still the strength of worldly thought today. People are quick to oppose and even faster to disagree with people who do not agree with their line of thinking. Many believe and others are taught that there are no absolutes. Therefore, no one has the right to determine what is truly right and what is truly wrong by any one standard. This thinking leads individuals to put their trust and confidence in themselves, in their own opinion. This leads to bad fruit and it is an age-old problem. Unlike humans, God cannot be deceived nor mocked.

How do we overcome the negative rejection that the world throws up against Christianity throughout the world? What are we to do? Our heavenly Father reminds us to stand firm. Stand firm on the word of God. God’s word is the source of all truth. God’s word is the source of comfort, encouragement, salvation, and our closeness to God.

We need to remind ourselves that on this great globe called earth we are supposed to labor for the Lord. This world is nothing more than the Lord’s vineyard that he provides for believers to live in, work in, and return fruits of faith to Him who gave them to us. We often think of fruits of faith as money or treasure. It can be, but there are also fruits of faith known as time and talents. God has richly supplied each and every one of us with talents. God does not necessarily need our talents returned to him. But we do and can return our fruits of faith, talents, to God by giving to others. There is no law against showing or returning these fruits of faith

to our fellow man. What a wonderful blessing for those around us to see in us these gifts of God, these talents, overflowing from us unto them!

The tenants knew the servants of the landowner would come for the fruits of the harvest, the rent. But they did not know that the landowner might also send his son. So, when the son arrived, they put out the son from the vineyard and took his life. When Jesus asked what should be done, the people knew, and answered correctly. The chief priests and Pharisees knew this parable was about them, so they sought ways to arrest Jesus. Jesus wanted the crowd and religious leaders to understand this was not just a story. How ironic that the people who knew the correct answer still acted like those who deserved the Lord's judgment. Like the tenants, the religious leaders still wanted Jesus out of the temple. How ironic that still today so many want to get to heaven but live like there is no eternity. When it comes to standing up for the rights of Christianity, we often remain silent. Many feel they deserve heaven. Many feel they have a rightful claim to be at the Savior's side forever in heaven. But on the Last Day there will be a final rejection of the rejecters.

We do not know when the Son will return. But we do know that he will return. For believers, Judgment Day will be a great day of joy and rejoicing for every believer. On that last day we will see the Son face-to-face and be called into eternal glory. All this is ours simply by the free grace of God. This is our closeness to God because of his great love for us. The Last Day is our confident day of salvation.

At times the world does try to distract us. We battle with our own selfish thinking that everything we do and work for is ours and ours alone. But we are always called to remember that in this vineyard that we call earth we are not alone. God loves us so that we might love him. Christ alone is the way, the truth, and the life. This is the foundation of our Christian faith. We belong to God here on earth and forever more.

Believers labor in the Lord's vineyard. This should be of great comfort and encouragement for us. Our plans may fail. We may even fail ourselves. But God has greater plans and God is always faithful. As we live our lives close to God, we are truly blessed to be laborers in the Lord's vineyard. Our labors in the Lord are not in vain, for we are storing up for ourselves heavenly treasure that cannot be destroyed. It is good to look beyond the shortsightedness of this earthly life. We will someday appear with the Lord in glory. Until then we have the blessed privilege of lovingly labor in the Lord's vineyard, for by doing so we will return fruits of faith. We also look forward to the future as we look forward to Jesus' return. Amen.

Benediction:

May the glory of our Creator be ever present with you.

May the peace of Christ become the foundation of your life.

And may the Holy Spirit empower you to keep striving for the ways of Christ.

Go in peace. Amen.