

# The Visitor - October 2020



A Publication of St. James Lutheran Church, 4425 South Jackson Rd. Jackson MI 49201 (517) 782-8297  
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Greetings St. James:

Mark your calendar! On Sunday, October 4<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> we will hold in-person outdoor worship service at 9:30a.m. Here is what you can expect:

- If it is raining, we will cancel and do indoor filming, which can be accessed via our usual Facebook page.
- Sunday School will be held following worship and we will send you the link.



- You may bring a lawn chair and socially distance sit on the front lawn or you may remain in your vehicle. The choice is yours.
- Masks are required.
- No handshaking for peace or no hugs no matter how happy we are to see each other; we love each other enough to protect each other.
- We will have COVID safe Communion. If you chose to participate in Communion, a gloved and masked usher will hand you a personal, individually wrapped Communion kit.

Our plans for Covid safety for indoor worship are still being developed as we learn more from health experts.

This time of pandemic has left us weary, lonely, and mourning for what we had and for the life we long to have back. This has been a hard time for all, but as one body of Christ we hold each other in prayer. See you at Sunday worship.

Be blessed, be safe,

Pastor Martha



10/08	Neil Robb
10/14	Laura Trombley
10/17	Mike Tackett
10/19	Jeffrey Tolonen
10/21	DeAnna McMillin
10/24	Anna Pedrotte

## EDUCATION

### THURSDAY BOOK STUDY

With Susan Thornton

We decided to meet at our regular time via Zoom each month. Our next meeting will be Thursday, October 1st at 1:30 pm, so put it on your calendars. We will be doing a book study with Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others by Barbara Brown Taylor. This will be our schedule for this fall.

October 1st Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2

November 5 Chapters 3 and 4

December 3 Chapters 5 and 6

January 7 Chapters 7 and 8

(Yes, it will be 2021 someday.)

February 4 Chapters 9 and 10

March 4 Chapters 11, 12 and Epilogue

We will meet via Zoom unless there is a vaccination and is comfortable with meeting in person again. I also would invite anyone who would like to join us all they have to do is send me the email so I can send an invitation. I will send a reminder the week before our meeting and an invitation the day before.

Susan

### ADULT BIBLE STUDY

Led by Pastor Martha and Laura Trombley

We will continue our Lectionary Bible Study of the readings for each Sunday. A Microsoft Teams meeting invitation (a link) is being sent out weekly for anyone interested in joining on Sunday mornings at 10:05am, except for outdoor service days which will be at 11am.

Please have your bible handy, and we promise our time for study will remain under 45 minutes. The October study guides are included in this newsletter. If you have missed any of our previous bible studies feel free to go to our FaceBook page and watch them.

## OUTREACH

### CROP WALK

October is world hunger month. During this month the annual CROP walk occurs. We have several families in the congregation that have traditionally taken part in this fundraiser to make awareness for hunger. At this time, we do not know if these families will be participating in the actual walk, but as the body of Christ we still support feeding those who are hungry. If you would like to donate to the CROP walk please indicate so on your donation and we will see that the money goes to support hunger in our area.



### THANKSGIVING BASKETS



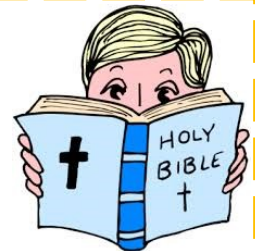
Thanksgiving Food Baskets

Marian Hong will again be in charge of Thanksgiving baskets this year. In addition to non-perishables, we will provide each family a gift certificate to get the perishable food they would like. If you know of someone who could use help during the holiday, please let Marian Hong know their name and contact information as soon as possible. If you are able to make a donation please indicate that you want it to go to the Thanksgiving Baskets.

## WORSHIP

### VIRTUAL READINGS

If you would like to do a virtual bible reading for one of our Sunday services please let Pat Reynolds at PReynolds40@com-cast.net or Pastor Martha at pastor.stjameslutheran.jackson@gmail.com. We will then instruct you on how to record and upload your recording. Thank you for considering being a part of our worship service.



## BIBLE STUDY FOR 10-4-2020

# Daily Discipleship

**Sunday, October 2-8 (A)– Matthew 21:33-46**

**The Challenge of Discipleship:** *Courage*

**Focus Question:** *When in your life have you needed courage?*

*word of life*

**“The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom.”** Matthew 21:43 (NRSV)

Read Matthew 21:33-46

This is the third parable in Matthew 20-21 in which Jesus uses the imagery of the vineyard. This parable closely parallels the Song of the Vineyard found in Isaiah 5:1-7. It would be helpful to read this Old Testament song to note the similarities. The religious leaders to whom Jesus tells the parable would no doubt have been familiar with the passage from Isaiah.

The characters in the Isaiah’s story are clearly identified. God is the owner of the vineyard who lovingly and carefully digs up the soil, clears it of stones, and plants the best vines. A watchtower is made to protect the vineyard, and a wine vat is constructed for the harvest. The vineyard is Israel; Judah is the planting. But despite the owner’s loving care, only wild grapes are found.

1. *Can you relate to the vineyard owner?*
2. *Have you ever worked on a project with disappointing results? How does it feel?*

Likewise, in the parable of the wicked tenants, the same kind of loving care is depicted in the landowner’s actions. The vineyard is entrusted to tenants who refuse the owner the harvest, abuse the owner’s servants, and kill the owner’s son.

3. *What are some possible reasons why the tenants didn’t treat the heir better?*

This leads to the pronouncement of judgment and rejection. The original tenants who confuse ownership with stewardship are replaced by another people (Greek word *ethno*) who will yield fruits of the kingdom (vs. 43) at the harvest time.

4. *How did the chief priests and the Pharisees respond to this parable? (See verses 45- 46)*
5. *How is this parable a picture of or allegory of the history of salvation?*

There are several points to note. Both the heir and Jesus are killed outside the walls. Also, note the Greek word for “time” is not *chronos* (chronological time, e.g., “What time is it?”) but *kairos* (the fullness of time, e.g., an expectant mother saying to the soon-to-be-a-father, “It’s time!”)

This parable has been interpreted to give the early church its legitimacy as the “new tenants” of the vineyard. But its message and its challenge speak to the church of every age. God lovingly, graciously calls us into the vineyard. God plants and equips the vineyard – the church – and then entrusts it to our stewardship. God’s intention is a full, rich harvest of the fruits. The harvest time will come. The question – and the challenge – for us is: “Will we have the courage to be faithful stewards, bearing fruit?”

6. *What role does courage have when it comes to bearing fruit?*
7. *What are examples of the “fruits” of the kingdom? (Look at Paul’s list of the “fruits of the Spirit” in Galatians 5:22-26.) How are those fruits reflected in your congregation?*

## word *among us*

A church was once established – a beautiful, warm church with wonderful facilities to praise its Founder and serve its neighbors. It was blessed with energetic, gifted members who enjoyed one another’s fellowship.

But the Founder went away, and the purpose for its founding was forgotten. The members didn’t always remember the source of their gifts and the calling to be good stewards of the many blessings they had been given. In their forgetfulness, in small acts of faithlessness and neglect, the mission and calling of the Founder was lost.

So, what do you think the Founder will do?

The Founder will see that the mission and calling is fulfilled. The Founder will raise up faithful members who will bear good fruit. And to all the members – the faithful and the faithless – the Founder will send the gift of the Heir, the Son.

Each time the members gather together, they will remember and recall the gift. They will remember how, even in the midst of betrayal and faithlessness, the Heir took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and said, “This is my body, given for you.” The cup will be raised, and they will hear once again the words of the Heir, “This cup is the new covenant between the Founder and the church, given for you – even for you, the faithless tenants - for the forgiveness of sin.”

Each time they eat of the bread and drink from the cup, they proclaim the Good News of the Founder’s gift of the Heir until he comes again. And until the Heir comes, The Founder will continue to care for the members, feed them, and send the Holy Spirit to call and find the members when they get lost.

We who have been blessed with the gift of the Founder’s love are empowered with the gift of the Heir’s life and guided by the gift of the Spirit’s calling.

1. *What do you find challenging in this modern-day parable?*
2. *What is comforting? What is disturbing?*
3. *Think of some examples of when “ownership” and “stewardship” are confused.*
4. *How does either of the parables challenge the modern-day disciple of Jesus?*
5. *In what way does a follower of Jesus today needs to have courage?*

### Prayer

O Christ, help us to be faithful and to bear good fruit!

### Dig Deeper

Galatians 5:22-27

### *last word*

This week, pray for courage to intentionally and boldly bear fruit.



*Daily Discipleship*

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## BIBLE STUDY FOR 10-11-2020

# Daily Discipleship

**Sunday, October 9-15 (A) – Matthew 22:1-14**

**The Challenge of Discipleship:** *Invitation*

**Focus Question:** *When was the last time you invited someone to attend church or to have a conversation related to a faith issue?*

*word of life*

**“Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.”** Matthew 22:9 (NRSV)

Read Matthew 22:1-14

This parable (or parables) of the wedding banquet immediately follows the parable of the wicked tenants (Matthew 21:33-46). Jesus continues to speak to the religious leaders who want to arrest him (Matthew 21:46).

The parable of the wedding banquet of the king’s son has significant political overtones which can be easily overlooked. Think about it ... It would be imperative for those invited to attend the wedding feast of the king’s son, not only to show respect, gratitude and honor for the invitation, but also as an expression of loyalty to the heir to the throne. To turn down such an invitation would not only be socially rude; it would be politically rebellious (and perhaps even politically suicidal). Allegiance is at stake. Excuses would hardly be acceptable; and unlike the parallel parable in Luke’s Gospel (Luke 14:15-24) where a variety of excuses are given, those invited in Matthew’s parable offer none. Instead, they “made light” (the Greek word implies a response of apathy and disregard) of the invitation (vs. 5).

1. *What excuses might have been offered?*

The political rebellion is magnified as the king’s slaves are mistreated and killed by those who were invited to the banquet. In light of such insurrection, the king’s harsh response makes a bit more sense. The gracious invitation of the king to the wedding banquet is then extended to everyone, both good and bad alike (vs. 9-10).

2. *How do you explain the king’s response?*

3. *What accusation for the leaders do you find in the parable?*

The banquet hall is filled. And then the focus of the parable turns to the attire of the wedding guests. Why the concern about dress? There is a scriptural reference to a king providing robes for the invited guests. (See 2 Kings 10:22) In a similar way, many churches provide “proper” robes for choir members, acolytes or assisting ministers. And many times in Paul’s writings, the Christian’s life is described as “putting on” the new life of faith. (See Romans 13:12-14; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 4:24.) The proper garment would indicate not only a willingness to fully join in the king’s celebration but could also represent “putting on” the Christian life, bearing the proper fruit, and receiving the “garment of salvation” (Isaiah 61:10) from God.

4. *If the issue isn’t clothing, what is the point of the parable?*

The imagery of the wedding banquet is a common theme in the Old and New Testament; for example, Isaiah speaks of a promised feast of rich foods which God will provide (Isaiah 25:6-9). Revelation 19 describes the final, victorious banquet with the Lamb. Invitation, apathy, rejection, response – all echo in this parable. Clearly for Matthew, the new community of the church was a strange assortment of people. God acted with a marvelous disregard for the old rules of what was acceptable and bestowed grace overflowing.

5. *Where do we find ourselves in the parable?*

**word among us**

This is a difficult text to be read in congregations in the USA during the week of September 11 with all the memories of that horrific day. Does Jesus intend Christians to forgive the terrorists? How far-reaching is forgiveness?

1. *Does Jesus expect people to forgive the terrorists or others who commit horrific crimes?*
2. *Where does the Christian draw the line concerning forgiveness?*

On the one hand, it would be easy to dismiss this passage by restricting the implications to church members alone. After all, Peter qualified his question to Jesus. He didn't mention terrorists, malicious non-Christians, and others. Maybe forgiveness is just to be extended to other Christians.

On the other hand, we know that isn't true. The images of Jesus hanging on the cross, forgiving those who killed him as well as the thief on the cross are etched in our memories. Jesus forgives Jews and Gentiles, male and female, young and old. Jesus forgives *them*—and us.

3. *What have you learned in your own life about forgiveness?*

Jesus doesn't just forgive us and draw a line. Instead, Jesus extends forgiveness to us again and again. He forgives us seventy-seven times and then, forgives us more. That number *seventy-seven* prods us. It is perfection times perfection. How can we forgive, but by the grace of God?

4. *What role has forgiveness played in your own faith journey?*

Forgiveness is not easy, especially when it comes to the deep wounds of life. It might be done quickly when someone steps on our toes or bumps into us in the hallway; but when we face significant hurt, all good reason stops. We freeze in the trenches of resentment, bitterness and revenge. The only thing is—we lose. *Our* energy is zapped. Hatred and resentment eat away at joy and life-giving activities. Thus, we become victimized again. There is no room or energy to follow Jesus Christ in mission and ministry.

5. *What makes forgiving so difficult?*

Forgiveness does not happen with a snap of the fingers. Sometimes it takes a lifetime to forgive. Forgetting is not proof that forgiveness has or hasn't occurred. We can learn from the past wounds so they are not repeated. Yet, in forgiving, our life is changed. We are not the same. Our relationship with those we forgive, and with those who have forgiven us, is different.

One of the most challenging things for disciples of Jesus Christ is not just to receive forgiveness for ourselves, but also to extend forgiveness to others. By the grace of God, disciples of Jesus are forgiven *and* forgiving.

6. *Who do you need to forgive? (Take a moment for silent prayer.)*

**Prayer**

Forgiving Christ, teach us to forgive. Amen

**Dig Deeper**

Luke 23:32-34

**last word**

This week, make a list of people who are in need of your forgiveness. Ask God to help you forgive them.



*Daily Discipleship*

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## BIBLE STUDY FOR 10-18-2020

# Daily Discipleship

**Sunday, October 16-22 (A) - Matthew 22:15-22**

**The Challenge of Discipleship: *Citizenship***

**Focus Question:** *What does it mean for you to be a Christian citizen?*

**word of life**

**“Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”** Matthew 22:21 (NRSV)

Read Matthew 22:15-22

It isn’t just Jesus who had disciples. In this passage, we read about the *disciples* of the Pharisees, the Jewish leaders of the day. Their disciples were committed to studying the “correct” interpretation of the Torah and the Jewish way of life. It is these disciples who are used by the Pharisees to entrap Jesus. Oddly, they are joined by the Herodians, supporters of the Roman-endorsed Herod and the taxes.

1. *Compare and contrast the disciples of the Pharisees and Jesus.*

At first the interrogators appear sincere, flattering Jesus. Then, they question him about the law and the payment of taxes to Rome, the non-Jewish occupier of their land. Answering “yes” or “no” is bound to get Jesus into trouble with someone. Jesus is aware of the malice in their hearts.

2. *Why are the Pharisees trying to trap Jesus?*

Nevertheless, Jesus offers a classic response: “Give to rulers the things which are the rulers. Give to God the things that are God’s.” Jesus’ answer turns the tables on those who try to trap him. What is not God’s? As the Psalmist says, “The earth is the Lord’s and everything within” (Psalm 24:1). Look around. Is this not God’s world? Are not humans made in the image of God? Wherever humans go, they are God’s. This is true no matter the form of government.

God has created people to live within creation, allowing them to choose to form governments, bring good order to people, and help to provide basic needs. Sometimes these governments are ruled by emperors, councils, or the people themselves. Governments can be good or evil. A government is judged from God’s perspective and can be an expression of goodwill for humanity.

3. *How might a government bring good?*
4. *How might a government bring discord?*

When Jesus looks at the head depicted on the coin, he acknowledges the government of the day. His advice: give the Emperor his coin. Jesus knows God’s rule and throne far exceed any human ruler. Jesus sees the bigger picture, but at the same time, he recognizes the here and now. It is a practical answer. For Jesus to suggest the people not pay taxes would certainly have provoked a riot and rebellion as people tried to usurp the Roman regime.

Thus, Jesus places the question back to the interrogators. Each is to decide the boundary between God and the emperor’s reign. Jesus’ issue is not with the emperor. Instead, he sees the bigger picture, inviting people to follow God. It is God who deserves absolute allegiance.

5. *What is the main message of this passage?*
6. *What vies for your allegiance?*

**word among us**

Find a coin in your pocket or purse. Examine it. Look at both sides of the coin.

*Does Lincoln, Jefferson, or Washington own any of the coins?*

*Do you?*

Although the faces on our coins today are different, the question asked of Jesus still rings true. Do we, as disciples of Jesus, need to pay taxes? If so, are all taxes justified? Why not withhold taxes and give the same amount to the church? Is it OK to fudge on tax returns and give the government less than the law requires?

*Take a moment to reflect on the questions in the above paragraph.*

*What other questions would you raise?*

Jesus doesn't give an easy answer. It's not a clear "yes" or "no". In no way does Jesus say all taxes are right. Nor does Jesus say taxes are wrong. Likewise, Jesus does not affirm or condemn government. Instead, in a simple formula, Jesus reminds the interrogators, and us as well, to give to God what is God's – which is everything. This places any government as secondary to God's rule. Our primary allegiance is to God.

Jesus challenges us to view our government with God's eye. As disciples of Jesus, we try to be good, honest citizens who uphold laws, respecting the rights of others and working for justice for all. If taxes are not fair and balanced for all the citizens, then we, as Christians, work for change. It's not an issue of wheeling and dealing for "my" money and "my" investments. It's all God's anyway.

*Make a list of the top ten things the government provides for you.*

*What is a helpful way to view taxes?*

The dilemma of the modern-day disciples is to not get caught in the consumer cycle, forgetting Jesus in the process. It's all God's. Always has been. Always will be. We seek to be good stewards of our financial resources, generously giving for the work of God's reign. At the same time, we support our government as it works for peace and justice for all, but raise questions when it does not.

*Make a list of the top ten things God has given to you.*

*How do you respond to God's gifts given to you?*

*Why is it so difficult to give to God what is God's?*

*What is the greatest challenge in being a Christian citizen?*

**Prayer**

Giving God, create in us generous hearts, ones overflowing with gratitude to you. Amen

**Dig Deeper**

Psalm 24

**last word**

This week, begin each day listing  
ten things in your life  
for which you can give thanks to God.



*Daily Discipleship*

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## BIBLE STUDY FOR 10-25-2020

# Daily Discipleship

**Sunday, October 23-29 (A) – Matthew 22:34-46**

**The Challenge of Discipleship:** *Love*

**Focus Question:** *When did you first realize God loved you?*

**word of life**

**“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.”** Matthew 22:37 (NSRV)

Read Matthew 22:34-46

Throughout Matthew 22 Jesus has been challenged and questioned by the Pharisees, Herodians, and Sadducees. In this week’s reading, it is a lawyer who poses the question to entrap Jesus. At first glance, the question seems easy. Which is the greatest of the laws? Keep in mind that there were well over 600 laws at the time. So, which of all the many laws is the greatest? Is it possible to select one law above others?

Jesus sees through the question and answers with profound clarity. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37). Even before the lawyer asks a follow-up question, Jesus clarifies the second greatest commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39).

1. *How might the response of Jesus put an end to the debate?*

The debate with this lawyer seems to be over. What more can be said? Who can argue about giving God our full attention and extending love to neighbors? In Luke’s Gospel, the lawyer asks one more question, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus expands the definition of *neighbor* by telling the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Our neighbor is not only the person who lives next door to us or those people we like. Anyone who is in need is our neighbor and is to be loved.

2. *Who are we called upon to love?*
3. *How can you love someone you don’t even like?*

Jesus links two very old commandments: the love for God (Deuteronomy 6:5) and the love of neighbor (Leviticus 19:18). Love becomes the very hinge upon which the law and the prophets are joined (See Romans 13:9-10). In fact, love sums up everything! But love is more than just a warm fuzzy feeling; it is a commitment of heart, soul and mind.

4. *How does love sum up the teachings and life of Jesus?*

Loving God becomes a life-long commitment demanding all of who we are. This love is not completed in a day or week; instead, our love for God calls for our full attention every day, every hour. Our love for God overflows us and rushes out towards others.

Jesus’ answer is very simple. The difficulty – for the lawyer then and for disciples now -- is to live constant love.

5. *What is so challenging about loving God with heart, soul and mind?*
6. *What is so challenging about loving our neighbor?*

**word** *among us*

Dear Aunt Philia,

My boyfriend and I are having problems. We've been together for three years. Do you think going to church will help us?

Love,

Me

1. *How would you respond?*
2. *What connection do you see between God and our relationships?*

Love! That's what it's all about. We spend our time, money and energy seeking and giving love.

Sometimes we love another person, but other times the focus of our love becomes our job, car, sports team, or exercise schedule. The list goes on.

Jesus interrupts and invites us back to the basics. We are to place our full attention and energy on God. Jesus clearly reminds us, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37 NRSV). This is not just a puppy love or a passing fad. We are to re-order our lives with a love directed toward God alone.

3. *What would it mean to re-order our lives so that they are directed fully towards God?*

God has created us with a tremendous capacity to love. God's love in us is not just a warm feeling. It becomes real in our care for others. Jesus instructs us to love others as we love ourselves – not with narcissistic behavior focusing on ourselves alone, but with love overflowing to both friend and stranger.

4. *How do you follow Jesus' instruction to love yourself?*
5. *What makes this so challenging?*

When we fully love the Lord, we treat others and ourselves with respect. Hopefully, we no longer need hundreds of laws to tell us how to treat others; instead our regard for our neighbor as well as our neighbor's well-being is motivated by the love in our hearts. We simply cannot love God without living that love in our care for our neighbor (See 1 John 4:20). We cannot profess our love for God, then follow-up by stealing, killing or wounding our neighbor.

Disciples of every age have recognized the challenge of loving. Daily, we fall short. Daily, we confess our shortcomings to God. We have not loved God, ourselves or our neighbor as God desires. Fortunately, God is gracious, forgiving and loving. God hears our prayer and gives us the opportunity to try again to love as God intended.

6. *This week, how can we love God with our whole heart, mind, and soul?*
7. *This week, how can we love our neighbors as ourselves?*

**Prayer**

Loving Spirit, fill us with love for God, ourselves and our neighbors. Amen

**Dig Deeper**

Luke 10:25-37

***last word***

This week, each morning, noon and night,  
ask God to fill you with  
love for God, yourself and others.



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Jan Lehman and Robin Vogel	Rev. Martha Porter-Reid
Jim Skrocki	Anna Pedrotte
Tim Ernst	Parish Administrator
Organist	Tech Director
Custodians	Pastor

**Staff Listing:**

**Sundays at 9:30 a.m. – Worship Service with Holy Communion**

**Worship with us:**

**“We are a grace-centered family of faith that seeks to know Christ and make Him known.”**

St. James Lutheran Church  
4425 South Jackson Rd.  
Jackson, MI 49201



*We're on the Web!*

*Visit us at:*

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