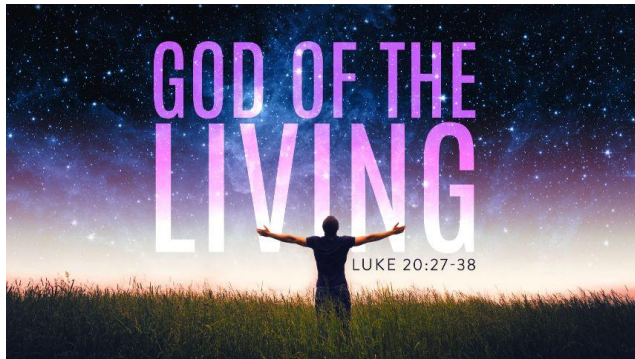


SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2025
TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER
PENTECOST – YEAR C
LUKE 20:27-38 | “GOD OF THE LIVING”



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(NCH) New Century Hymnal - CCLI LICENSE #11164431
Unless otherwise noted, all scripture texts
are from the **Common English Bible (CEB)**
*Please stand if comfortably able
and respond with words in **bold** print

SUMMARY OF SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Haggai 1:15b-2:9 In contrast to the rather harsh prophetic words from previous readings, this text speaks of the abiding Spirit of God and the splendor of the new temple. It is a vision of hope propelling us into the future.

Psalms 145 extols the greatness and splendor of God, who is depicted as close and responsive to the cries of the worshipers.

2 Thessalonians 21:1-5, 13-17 This text addresses the confusion arising from eschatological (*end times*) misunderstanding, yet concludes with the confident expectation that God will bring the salvation of believers to full fruition.

Luke 20:27-38 Luke’s version of Jesus’ dispute with the Sadducees about the resurrection and his teaching about what life will be in the age to come.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS:

THE BELL IS RUNG:

PRELUDE: “Take Time to Be Holy” Lloyd Larson

PENNIES FOR MISSION: Open and Affirming Coalition

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**

(Inspired by Psalm 17)

One: Guard me as the apple of your eye, O God.

Many: You wondrously show us your steadfast peace

One: Hide me in the shadow of your wings, Divine Spirit.

Many: You wondrously show us your steadfast strength.

One: I behold your face in righteousness, Christ of Hope.

Many: You wondrously show us your steadfast love.

***INVOCATION:**

God of Love, Divine Traveler,

We see only a fraction of your presence, God. We know you only in part, as we experience this world with our senses, our experiences, and what is tangibly in front of us. How does the sacredness of each earthly breath draw us closer to your presence on this side of Heaven? May we grasp the beauty of this world, even on the gloomy days. May we cherish our relationships here on earth even when times are challenging. May we know that God is forever present with us and will care for us as we arrive at our eternal home on the other side of Heaven. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN: 499 “In All Our Living”**

***UNISON PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE:**

**God of the Heavenly Winds and Earthy Air,
So often, we concern ourselves about the afterlife. We
wonder who will be there, what we need to believe,**

and more. Yet, on this side of heaven, in your earthly Realm, there are many still hurting from the pains accumulated in this life. From illnesses to poverty, and from the lack of kindness to the overwhelming injustices, we overlook the needs of our siblings. Open our hearts to the gaps happening in our world. Allow us to be more compassionate and less judgmental about our neighbors who need additional help. Help us to set aside our worries about the afterlife as we know you will care for us there and then. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE:**

Even when we are overwhelmed by our thoughts of life after death, God shares hope. May God’s grace transform us here in this world as we build the Realm of God here on earth. Amen.

***GLORIA: Glory to the Creator,
and the Christ and the Spirit so near.
As it was from the start so it shall be forever,
One God always here. (Repeat two more times.)
(end) One God always here. One God always here.**

**SCRIPTURE LESSON: Haggai 1:15b-2:9
From “The Message”**

¹⁴⁻¹⁵ This is how God got Zerubbabel, Joshua, and all the people moving—got them working on the Temple

of God-of-the-Angel-Armies. This happened on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month in the second year of King Darius.

This Temple Will End Up Better Than It Started Out

2 ¹⁻³ On the twenty-first day of the seventh month, the Word of God came through the prophet Haggai: “Tell Governor Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and High Priest Joshua son of Jehozadak and all the people: ‘Is there anyone here who saw the Temple the way it used to be, all glorious? And what do you see now? Not much, right?’

⁴⁻⁵ ““So get to work, Zerubbabel!’—God is speaking.

““Get to work, Joshua son of Jehozadak—high priest!’

““Get to work, all you people!’—God is speaking.

““Yes, get to work! For I am with you.’ The God-of-the-Angel-Armies is speaking! ‘Put into action the word I covenanted with you when you left Egypt. I’m living and breathing among you right now. Don’t be timid. Don’t hold back.’

⁶⁻⁷ “This is what God-of-the-Angel-Armies said: ‘Before you know it, I will shake up sky and earth, ocean and fields. And I’ll shake down all the godless nations. They’ll bring bushels of wealth and I will fill this Temple with splendor.’ God-of-the-Angel-Armies says so.

⁸ ‘I own the silver, I own the gold.’

Decree of God-of-the-Angel-Armies.

⁹ ““This Temple is going to end up far better than it started out, a glorious beginning but an even more

glorious finish: a place in which I will hand out wholeness and holiness.’ Decree of God-of-the-Angel-Armies.”

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 145:1-5, 17-21

Page 718-719

EPISTLE LESSON: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17 (CEB)

2 Brothers and sisters, we have a request for you concerning our Lord Jesus Christ’s coming and when we are gathered together to be with him. ² We don’t want you to be easily confused in your mind or upset if you hear that the day of the Lord is already here, whether you hear it through some spirit, a message, or a letter supposedly from us. ³ Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way. That day won’t come unless the rebellion comes first and the person who is lawless is revealed, who is headed for destruction. ⁴ He is the opponent of every so-called god or object of worship and promotes himself over them. So he sits in God’s temple, displaying himself to show that he is God. ⁵ You remember that I used to tell you these things while I was with you, don’t you?

Prayer of thanks and encouragement

¹³ But we always must thank God for you, brothers and sisters who are loved by God. This is because he chose you from the beginning to be the first crop of the harvest. This brought salvation, through your dedication

to God by the Spirit and through your belief in the truth. ¹⁴ God called all of you through our good news so you could possess the honor of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold on to the traditions we taught you, whether we taught you in person or through our letter. ¹⁶ Our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and a good hope. ¹⁷ May he encourage your hearts and give you strength in every good thing you do or say.

***GOSPEL: Luke 20:27-38 (CEB)**

Question about the resurrection

²⁷ Some Sadducees, who deny that there's a resurrection, came to Jesus and asked, ²⁸ "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that *if a man's brother dies leaving a widow but no children, the brother must marry the widow and raise up children for his brother*. ²⁹ Now there were seven brothers. The first man married a woman and then died childless. ³⁰ The second ³¹ and then the third brother married her. Eventually all seven married her, and they all died without leaving any children. ³² Finally, the woman died too. ³³ In the resurrection, whose wife will she be? All seven were married to her."

³⁴ Jesus said to them, "People who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage. ³⁵ But those who are considered worthy to participate in that age, that is, in

the age of the resurrection from the dead, won't marry nor will they be given in marriage. ³⁶ They can no longer die, because they are like angels and are God's children since they share in the resurrection. ³⁷ Even Moses demonstrated that the dead are raised—in the passage about the burning bush, when he speaks of the Lord as *the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*. ³⁸ He isn't the God of the dead but of the living. To him they are all alive."

These are the ancient words revealed to us anew.

Thanks be to God. Amen

MESSAGE: "Questions???"

Because much has transpired in the career of Jesus since last week's scripture text, we first need to set the context for today's lesson. Jesus is now in Jerusalem, he has already cleansed the temple and he is now engaged in a series of controversies with Jewish leaders. Two questions have already been put to Jesus; the source of his authority (20:1-8) and the matter of paying tribute to Caesar (20:20-26). The question about the resurrection of the dead, our text for today, in Luke is the third and final question before Jesus puts to his interrogators a question concerning the Christ as David's son (20:41-44).

It is important in understanding today's passage to keep in mind that the question posed about the

resurrection came not from a family mourning the death of a loved one and seeking hope, or from believers searching for more clarity on the doctrine. Rather, Jesus is being interrogated by persons who already were fixed in their position that there was no resurrection of the dead. Jesus is being questioned by the Sadducees.

Now it is time for us to have a question. Who or what were the Sadducees? The Sadducees were a sect of Jews active in Judea during the Second Temple period, from the second century BCE to the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. The Sadducees are described in contemporary literary sources in contrast to the two other major sects at the time, the Pharisees and the Essenes. (*We know who the Pharisees were. I'll tell you about the Essenes at another time.*)

The Sadducees are associated with the upper echelons of Judean society. As a whole, they fulfilled various political, social, and religious roles, including maintaining the Temple in Jerusalem. The Sadducees were theologically conservative; and they regarded as normative in their religion only the five books of Moses. What was not found in the first five books of the Old Testament was not authoritative.

On the other hand the Pharisees believed there was an oral as well as a written tradition from Moses and within that oral tradition was the basis for belief in the resurrection. It was a subject of heated debate between

the two parties; the Sadducees sometimes baited their opponents with impossible “what if” questions. Such is the game played here with Jesus. Have you ever been a target for religious questions raised by persons who had no intention of being influenced by the answers you give? It’s very frustrating in the no-win situation like this.

Jesus, however, does not respond to the attitude but to the question. His answer is twofold. The first part simply points to the inappropriateness of the question given fundamental difference between life in this age and in the age to come. Marriage is appropriate for this age. The fact of mortality necessitates a means for perpetuating life. That’s why having children was so important in those days. In the age to come, all of us will live forever so we don’t need to worry about having children to carry on our legacy. Marriage isn’t necessary.

Now things get a little “sticky.” Personally, I believe in resurrection but I have trouble explaining what it means. So, I searched for help with this. Here is what Rev. N.T. Wright says.

“When first-century Jews thought of “the resurrection”, they had in mind a particular story, a set of pictures; the story of Israel, from Abraham (or even Adam) to their own time, and on into the future when God would raise all Israel, perhaps even all humans, from the dead, and create a new world for them to live in.

“This hope was not about what we think of as ‘life after death’, a non-bodily state in which people simply went on existing in some form or other. It was about a future event that had not yet happened, as a result of which the dead would be alive again in a way they weren’t at present, and all the wrongs of the world would be made right. That’s what the first-century Jews thought of ‘the resurrection.’”

This was what the Sadducees denied. If someone else can right wrongs, the Sadducees would lose power, something of course they did not want to do. They also thought that all of God’s promises were null and void after you died. Whereas Jesus preached that God’s promises last forever whether you are dead or alive.

N.T. Wright continues, “In reply, Jesus makes two basic points. First, resurrection life will not be exactly the same as the present one. Death will be abolished. Those who are raised will therefore be ‘equal to angels’; not in the sense that they will become angels (as folk-religion belief sometimes suggests), but in the sense that they will live in a deathless, immortal state. Jesus is not here suggesting that the resurrection will not be bodily; merely that the bodies of the raised will be, in significant ways, quite unlike our present ones. Those whom God counts worthy of ‘the age to come’, as opposed to ‘the present age’, will have bodies appropriate for the new world in which death will be no more.”

Jesus’ second answer. Since the Sadducees believed only what was in the first five books of Moses, Jesus pointed out a quote from the book of Exodus. The book describes God as “the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” The patriarchs are still “alive to God.” This doesn’t mean they are already “raised from the dead”. Any first-century Jew would have known that was not the case. It means that they are alive in God’s presence, awaiting their final resurrection.

In Sharon H. Ringe’s commentary on Luke, she writes, “Jesus speaks to the nature of the resurrected life in verses 34-36. Without engaging in speculation about the architecture of heaven or the anatomy of angels, he simply affirms that the resurrected life will not mirror life here: Resurrection is not simply the resuscitation of corpses to the same human dilemmas further complicated by wings and white robes.” Rev. Ringe concludes her comments about this passage by writing, “Jesus’ questioners – and we today – might be left still wondering how, where, and in what form resurrection happens, but no further explanation is given concerning what resurrected life is. Resurrection is simply part of who God is,” replies Rev. Ringe.

Whew! I know that was a long lesson to explore. I hope this discussion helped a little bit in our understanding of the resurrection for us. We can never run out of

questions to ask about God and Jesus. Thanks be to God for giving us the opportunity to question, doubt, and mull over points like these. Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC: “Let All Things Now Living” (Ash Grove)
Video

PASTORAL PRAYER:

God of love and peace, when will we mortals learn that love and peace are more important than what we see around us. Everyone has opinions and they insist that they are always correct. We should be concentrating on what YOU dear God, know and want to share with us. YOU are the only one who is always correct. Violence is not the answer to anything.

The UCC General Minister, Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson offers these words.

“Bring us back from the edge, O Lord, the edge where our humanity frays. Draw us closer to your everlasting light, as our lives are impacted again by the violence that pulses around us. Grant us wisdom to lower the guns and to eliminate the rhetoric which has become a relentless stream of violence. Provide us with words of hope where hope feels elusive and our desire for change seems long in coming.

“Cleanse from us the toxic hate which fills our media, oozes into our town halls and public squares, and seeps

into our schools and faith communities. May your love find us in new ways as we wrestle with the anger and animosity surrounding us.

“We know that your light still shines, your path of peace remains close by, your Spirit is ever ready to guide us beyond the edge and into your love. Open our hearts to seek, find, and follow you. End the violence. Bring us back from the edge, O Lord we pray.

We congregants of St. John UCC pray for all those affected by violence and natural disasters such as the hurricane that hit Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and other areas in the southeast. Send your helpers, dear Gd, to give those people relief.

We pray for all those suffering from physical and mental illnesses and injuries. We pray for those who may not have food to feed their family. May those in charge of our country find it in their hearts to help others instead of bickering over who is right. We pray all these things in the name of your Son, Jesus .

..

OUR LORD’S PRAYER:

PRAYER RESPONSE: 775 “Eagle’s Wings”

**And God will raise you up on eagle’s wings,
bear you on the breath of dawn,
make you to shine like the sun,
and hold you in the palm of God’s hand.**

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:

We have our minds set to our time after this life. Yet God is calling us to care for our communities and churches here on this side of Heaven. May we name the ways we can create Heaven on earth for our neighbors. By using our talents, treasures, and time, may we seek to build safety and sanctuary for all of God's children.

OFFERTORY: "Standing on the Promises" R. Kelso Carter

***DOXOLOGY:**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above you heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen

***UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION:**

God of Infinite Love,
Through our gifts, we create glimmers here on this side of Heaven. Through our treasures, time, and talents, we nurture your Realm. We provide for our neighbors who lack basic necessities and who look for inclusion of their souls. May Heaven be a place that we can experience throughout our lives as we breathe the invigorating air of your Spirit. With gratitude, we celebrate our gifts from you and dedicate our gifts to bring peace to this earth. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN:**

442 "I'm Pressing On the Upward Way"

***BENEDICTION:**

As we abide together on this side of Heaven,
May the Christ of Hope lead us to righteousness and justice,
May the Spirit of Strength fill our hearts with courage,
May God, our Joyful Creator, graciously settle our hearts with peace.
May we find ourselves on journeys seeking glimmers of paradise and the presence of the Divine among us.
Amen.

BENEDICTION RESPONSE:

"Let There Be Peace on Earth"

THE BELL IS RUNG:

POSTLUDE: "Alla Marcia" Stephen Otis

PRAYER LIST: Ingrid Alexiou, Becky Ballard, Mary Lou and Urban Baum, Ronald Bopp, Geralyn Gammon, Neal Holiday, Marilyn Paul, Pam Safriet, Syd Safriet, Yvonne Weber, Sue and Dave in Florida, Marine Ben Boyle.