

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2025
TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
LUKE 18:9-14 | "HUMBLED OR EXALTED"
REFORMATION SUNDAY



ST. JOHN
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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

Joel 2:23-32 – The prophet promises that good times will compensate for hard times with the promise of the outpouring of God's Spirit.

2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18 – A mood of somber farewell is expressed, yet the passage expresses the words of a soldier who has fought hard, a runner who has run well.

Luke 18:9-14 – In a parable Jesus teaches us how and how not to pray; one of Luke's favorite themes – divine reversal.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS:

THE BELL IS RUNG:

PRELUDE: "O Stor Gud" (How Great Thou Art) Jerry Ray

PENNIES FOR MISSION: Neighbors in Need

Why do we celebrate Reformation Sunday? If it wasn't for Martin Luther we would all be Catholics and I wouldn't be your pastor. Reformation Sunday brings to mind both the power of tradition and the need for renewal. It was on 31 October 1517, that a 33-year-old Augustinian monk, sent a list of 95 propositions to Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz challenging the Catholic Church's practice of selling indulgences and calling for theological debate on repentance and grace.

Luther's act of conscience challenging church doctrine led to his eventual excommunication by Pope Leo X

(1513-1521) after his refusal to recant his positions at a meeting known as the Diet of Worms four years after his initial actions. Further, he was declared a heretic and outlaw by Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, meaning anyone could legally capture or kill him without consequence.

It's important to realize that Luther did not set out to break with Roman Catholicism. In fact, one can argue that he saw his actions as returning the Church to its ancient roots. Luther taught that salvation comes not through effort or merit, but through faith alone—a gift initiated by God, not earned by humans. We can summarize Luther's theology with the following phrases: **Sola Fide** (*faith alone*), **Sola Scriptura** (*scripture alone*), **Sola Gratia** (*grace alone*), **Solus Christus** (*Christ alone*), and **Soli Deo Gloria** (*To God alone be the glory*). There is one more thing I think is important that Martin Luther did; he and some other scholars at the time, translated the Greek/Hebrew Bible into German so the Bible was open to everyone, not just priests or monks. Even if the ordinary people could not read, they could hear the Bible read in church in a language they could understand.

That's why I believe the name of Martin Luther is important to be recognized and celebrated.

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**

(Inspired by Psalm 65)

One: God moves with us throughout this earth and nurtures the soil,

Many: Our neighbors are awed by God's works.

One: God's river flows with water, and the fields are blessed by the Spirit,

Many: Our neighbors are awed by God's gifts.

One: God's wilderness fields overflow with joy.

Many: Our neighbors are awed by God's grace.

INVOCATION:

God of Love, Divine Friend,

Our hearts are open to you. If a thought crosses our minds, you are present and are ready to hold it for us. There is no emotion radiating from our souls that is too heavy or painful for you. Your Spirit encourages our dreams as we seek to find ways to build your Realm here on earth. May we work side-by-side, co-creating a world of possibilities where all experience your love and joy. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN: 439 "A Mighty Fortress is Our God"**

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

God of the Mountains and Canyons,

The range of emotions that wash through us are often

triggers for the ways we hold ourselves. At times, we seek humility, but often find ourselves believing we do not deserve your love. Other times, as we search for confidence, we believe we are your favorites and find ourselves in moments of comparison, contrast, and judgment. Are we better than our neighbors? How can we relate to siblings in Christ when their lives are not like ours and they stand out when visiting our spaces? We are misguided as we give thanks that our lives are not as chaotic and unkempt as theirs. Yet you ask us to seek humility and know that each of your children are loved equally. Help us to extend mercy to our neighbors, and fill their minds with words of encouragement. May each of us know our value in your Realm and experience your love in its fullness. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE:**

God fully shares mercy and grace no matter where we sit in our churches or what our power is in this world. May we know your radical love when we rarely experience it. May your light and kindness seep from our souls so that our neighbors will understand your grace even when the harsh winds surround them. No matter how chaotic or serene our lives may be, may we all know your steadfast love. Amen.

SCRIPTURE LESSONS: Joel 2:23-32 From “The Message”

The Trees Are Bearing Fruit Again

²¹⁻²⁴ Fear not, Earth! Be glad and celebrate! God has done great things. Fear not, wild animals! The fields and meadows are greening up. The trees are bearing fruit again: a bumper crop of fig trees and vines!

Children of Zion, celebrate! Be glad in your God.

He’s giving you a teacher to train you how to live right—Teaching, like rain out of heaven, showers of words to refresh and nourish your soul, just as he used to do.

And plenty of food for your body—silos full of grain, casks of wine and barrels of olive oil.

²⁵⁻²⁷ “I’ll make up for the years of the locust, the great locust devastation— Locusts savage, locusts deadly, fierce locusts, locusts of doom, That great locust invasion I sent your way. You’ll eat your fill of good food. You’ll be full of praises to your God, The God who has set you back on your heels in wonder.

Never again will my people be despised. You’ll know without question that I’m in the thick of life with Israel, That I’m your God, yes, *your* God, the one and only real God. Never again will my people be despised.

The Sun Turning Black and the Moon Blood-Red

²⁸⁻³² “And that’s just the beginning: After that—“I will pour out my Spirit on every kind of people: Your sons will prophesy, also your daughters.

Your old men will dream, your young men will see visions. I’ll even pour out my Spirit on the servants, men

and women both.
I'll set wonders in the sky above and signs on the earth below: Blood and fire and billowing smoke, the sun turning black and the moon blood-red,
Before the Judgment Day of God, the Day tremendous and awesome. Whoever calls, 'Help, God!' gets help.
On Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be a great rescue—just as God said. Included in the survivors are those that God calls.”

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 65 Page 661

EPISTLE LESSON: 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

⁶I'm already being poured out like a sacrifice to God, and the time of my death is near. ⁷I have fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith. ⁸At last the champion's wreath that is awarded for righteousness is waiting for me. The Lord, who is the righteous judge, is going to give it to me on that day. He's giving it not only to me but also to all those who have set their heart on waiting for his appearance.

¹⁶No one took my side at my first court hearing. Everyone deserted me. I hope that God doesn't hold it against them! ¹⁷But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that the entire message would be preached through me and so all the nations could hear it. I was also rescued from the lion's mouth! ¹⁸The Lord will

rescue me from every evil action and will save me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and always. Amen.

***GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 18:9-14**

The Pharisee and the tax collector

⁹Jesus told this parable to certain people who had convinced themselves that they were righteous and who looked on everyone else with disgust: ¹⁰“Two people went up to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood and prayed about himself with these words, ‘God, I thank you that I’m not like everyone else—crooks, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week. I give a tenth of everything I receive.’ ¹³But the tax collector stood at a distance. He wouldn’t even lift his eyes to look toward heaven. Rather, he struck his chest and said, ‘God, show mercy to me, a sinner.’ ¹⁴I tell you, this person went down to his home justified rather than the Pharisee. All who lift themselves up will be brought low, and those who make themselves low will be lifted up.”

MESSAGE: “The Reversed Roles of Humble and Proud”

The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector conveys in story form the doctrine of God's justification of sinners and judgment on the efforts of those who try to

establish their own righteousness. These two accents, last week's Widow and Judge parable, and this week's Pharisee and tax collector parable, are usually associated with the Apostle Paul, especially his Roman and Galatian Letters. However, in fact these themes are as old as the Garden of Eden, the tower of Babel, and Jonah's mission to Nineveh.

The following is how Rev. Fred Craddock describes this passage, with my comments in *italics*.

"The parable makes its point by means of the reversal of stations so familiar in the Gospel of Luke when dealing with the self-righteous and the humble, the strong and the weak, the haves and the have-nots.

(By the way, Martin Luther dealt with the same thing. The popes and high priests did not want to give up their high status by hearing Luther's suggestions for reforming, so they excommunicated him. I think there is another man who will come up against the same thing around Easter.) The clear statement in the parable we heard today was addressed to those who trust in themselves, thinking they are righteous, and who despise others.

Years ago wasn't there a quiz show on TV called "Who do you trust? That's something to think about. When we have a problem, do we trust God to help us or do we say, "Oh God is busy. I'll take care of this myself. I trust I know what to do." Hmmm.

"Unfortunately, few parables have been subjected to more distortion than this one. For example, one common error is painting the Pharisee as a villain and the tax collector as a hero, and in so doing, each gets what he deserves. But that is exactly the opposite of the parable's message.

"The Pharisee is not a villain but rather represents complete dedication to observing the law of Moses. In fact, his recitation of his performance is that of a person exceeding the law's demands. His prayer is a common rabbinic expression of thanksgiving prefaced by the claim of the psalmist with reference to a personal behavior as mentioned in Psalm 17:3-5.

"Nor is the tax collector a hero. In fact, as a tax collector working for Rome collecting taxes from his own people, he is a reprehensible character, religiously unclean and politically a traitor. Although his prayer is according to Psalm 51, his life is offensive. To miss this fact is to rob the parable of its radicality. God justifies the ungodly, a truth blurred by popular caricatures that present the Pharisee as a hollow hypocrite but the tax collector as as generous Joe the bartender or honest Albert the atheist, both to be admired for their rejection of organized religion. Cheap novels that play on these themes do not understand that God justifies sinners who confess and rely on grace. *(Isn't that Martin Luther's point?)*

The difference here is that the Pharisees trusts in himself; the tax collector trusts in God: that's the difference. All of us should be careful not to leave the sanctuary today thankful that we aren't like the Pharisee or that we aren't like the tax collector. If we do, we've missed Luke's point. It's all about who do we trust? Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC: "Love Lifted Me" Video

PASTORAL PRAYER:

Heavenly teacher, you have given us much to think about this week. We are grateful that you continue to find ways to open our eyes, ears, and hearts to wisdom and justice for all people. Yes we are stubborn and stiff-necked people who don't like change. We'd be happy just to sit in our recliners in our living rooms or in our same pews at church, to stay the same and be rewarded for being in worship. But we know there is more to being a Christian than staying the same. God, you are calling to action at times and to meditation at other times. And we are grateful that you don't give up on us.

We are trying to always think about others as we pray for their healing, their well-being, their health, and their safety. We pray that all injustice cease, gun fire cease, starvation cease, and that all wars cease. We feel helpless in this chaotic world. We don't know how to help, but we do know how to pray and so we will

continue to pray fervently and passionately for all your people in the world.

All these prayers we send to you, dearest God, and lay at your feet, in earnest trust that you care.

Let us pray together with one voice. . .

OUR LORD'S PRAYER:

PRAYER RESPONSE: 773 "Remember Me"

Remember me, remember me, O Jesus, remember me.

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:

We are given holy opportunities to share our gifts no matter who we are or where we are on life's journey. May we embrace joy instead of judgment as we discern where God is calling us to utilize our gifts.

OFFERTORY: "Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior"

John M. Rasley

***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:**

Holy God, Source of Goodness and Grace,

We thank you today for all you have given to us. When we bear more power and privilege, we are called to

share more of our talents, time, and treasures. In our efforts to seek humility and balance, may we soberly evaluate our gifts and understand the healthiest ways to apportion them to strengthen your Realm and love your children. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN: 419 “Now Thank We All Our God”**

***BENEDICTION:**

God of love moves us to seek holy balance in our lives.
The Christ of faith moves us to share our gifts to create
God’s Realm on earth.

The Spirit of Joy moves us to dream in new ways and co-
create with the Divine.

Whether we are on mountaintops or in canyons, may we
envision meeting your children on the plains with Jesus
the Christ at the center and the Spirit emboldening us in
our journeys. Amen.

***BENEDICTION RESPONSE:**

“Let There Be Peace on Earth”

THE BELL IS RUNG:

POSTLUDE: “God Is Our Salvation” Chester Nordman