

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

taking[†] faith home

We want to know Christ Jesus.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

Sunday	Matthew 21:33-46	Parable of the vineyard tenants
Monday	Isaiah 5:1-7	A song about a vineyard
Tuesday	Philippians 3:4b-14	To know Christ
Wednesday	Exodus 20:1-20	The Ten Commandments
Thursday	Psalms 19	The wonders of God
Friday	1 Peter 2:1-10	A chosen people
Saturday	Psalms 80:7-15	Prayer for Israel's deliverance
Sunday	Matthew 22:1-14	Parable of the wedding feast

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death.

Philippians 3:10 (NRSV)

PRAYERS AND BLESSING

A Prayer for the Week:

Almighty God, help us to trust that in your death there is eternal life and in suffering there is the power of love through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mealtime Prayer:

Nurturing God, we thank you for this food; help us to use food wisely so that others may have enough to eat. Amen.

A Blessing to Give:

May God bless you to know Christ and the power of his resurrection. (Philippians 3:10)



HYMN OF THE WEEK

Come and Fill Our Hearts



WEEKLY MILESTONES



Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

CARING CONVERSATIONS



Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- Describe or think about what you feel are the characteristics of a good friend.
- Are you a good friend? How would others describe you?
- How does your faith in Jesus free you to care for—even feel the pain of—others?

DEVOTIONS



Read: Philippians 3:4b-14.

We don't get it. According to research on American religious views, we want to be saved by God because we are "good people." We prefer to rely on our own merits rather than trust the power of Christ's death and resurrection that conquers our sin. Perhaps this is part of the sinful self-centeredness that Christ comes to cleanse us of. Paul writes to the church at Philippi and points out that if anyone has a claim to self-righteousness based on the law that measures our goodness, Paul would be pretty unbeatable; he would be "blameless" (v. 6). But he counts all of his religious success as "loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (v. 8). The truly amazing part of his testimony is that knowing Christ does not free him from suffering; he is not concerned about why "bad things happen to good people." Paul announces his freedom to suffer with Christ. This "theology of the cross" sees life in death, sees joy in suffering and sees hope in despair. Paul presses "on to make it my own" (v. 12). He is announcing a view of life, and this way of life sees Christ as the source of all our hopes of salvation. How is freedom from judging our own goodness important to our salvation?

Pray: **Dear God, help us to know Jesus; may we focus our attention on the needs of others and to care for them through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

SERVICE



Grapevines and vineyards are written about more than any other plant in the Bible. They were important in Biblical times and part of the culture. They were often used as symbols of producing fruit. In this context, fruit means one's actions that come from the heart. Place grapes in a bowl and as you eat them, think about what it means for you to produce good fruits (take positive actions). What positive actions can you take to care for others?

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS



In Philippians 3, Paul talks about pressing towards the goal to reach the prize of knowing Christ Jesus. Think about a time you tried to reach a goal. What happened? Whether we reach the goal or not, God is always with us. *Pray:* **Lord, help us to keep our eye on the goal, the prize of the "heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus." Amen.**

