

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt  
Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost - Year A  
St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
Consecration Sunday  
Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32  
Psalm 25:1-9  
Philippians 2:1-13  
Matthew 21:23-32  
10/01/2023

### **Gospel**

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew:

23When [Jesus] entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" 24Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. 25Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?" And they argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' 26But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet." 27So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things. 28"What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' 29He answered, 'I will not'; but later he changed his mind and went. 30The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, 'I go, sir'; but he did not go. 31Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the

prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. 32For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.”

The Gospel of Our Lord

### **Prayer**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

### **Consecration Sunday**

Good morning! What a way to jump back into preaching after 12 days away. Consecration Sunday, EVERYONE’S favorite Sunday! This is the day where we return our estimates of giving, or pledge cards, and bless them for the coming year. Now we need all your gifts at the church, not just your money. We need your time and your skills to do the many things that happen here. Whether that be your ability to help lead worship, or your time when we start collecting things for the yard sale. We need it all. But of those many gifts, money is by far the most touchy and considered by many to be the most precious. And so, I will spend the bulk of this sermon discussing the need for your financial gifts.

We don’t like to talk about money, it’s taboo. It’s supposed to be some secret. But this isn’t true, in a Christian community we should be willing to share everything, including our spending habits. This is why when I started at St. Paul’s I made the decision to tell the congregation every Consecration Sunday what I planned on giving for the next year. For 2024 Megan and I are pledging \$500 a month to the ministry of St. Paul’s. So, if you look at the ministry spending plan you now know what I make, and what we’re

giving. I share this because change has to start somewhere. If I want this to be a place of honesty, I need to be honest too.

Giving has always been such a complicated thing in congregations. But I would argue that it stems from a place of fear. Let me explain. Years ago when I was in confirmation, my church participated in something called “The Hopeful City Project.” The goal was to bring congregations together from different denominations to affect change in Wheeling, WV. Now I’ll leave others to be the judge of how successful we were. But my pastor gave a sermon during the time that has stuck with me ever since.

The world will try to convince you that you should be afraid. Fear will tell you many things. That you’re not strong enough, that you can’t possibly handle the challenge. Fear will try to convince you to hoard resources. To take more and more. Fear will tell you that you don’t have enough, that giving anything will be a mistake. Fear will convince you that we can’t possibly make a difference. Fear will have you frozen, so afraid to take any step that you retreat and tell yourself that it’s someone else’s problems.

But I am here to tell you that fear is lying to you. God has called us together, here in Hampton, VA, right here to St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, because we CAN do something. That our strength together can truly make a difference.

How do I know this? Because 2,000 years ago a man sacrificed himself on a cross and changed the world. One little peasant from the Galilean countryside stood up to the combined might of the whole Roman Empire and saved the whole of creation.

Now, I’m not telling you to give in a way that isn’t responsible. Be smart, take care of yourself. But I am asking that we stop and look into our hearts and ask ourselves if we answer out of fear or out of hope. Because it

is hope that continues to change the world. It's hope that brings us here today, and it's hope that keeps us going. And it's God's hope that has saved a world that never stops showing the beauty and wonder with which God created it. So, as you prepare for the future, regardless of where it is, don't choose fear. Choose hope. Amen.