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**Proper 24**  
**Holy Eucharist Rite Two**  
Sunday, October 18, 2020

## **PRELUDE**

*Prelude IX in E Major J.S. Bach*

## The Word of God

**ENTRANCE HYMN** *Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation* **H 390**

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation;  
O my soul, praise him, for he is thy health and salvation:  
join the great throng,  
psaltery, organ, and song,  
sounding in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord; over all things he gloriously reigneth:  
borne as on eagle-wings, safely his saints he sustaineth.  
Hast thou not seen  
how all thou needest hath been  
granted in what he ordaineth?

Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy way and defend thee;  
surely his goodness and mercy shall ever attend thee;  
ponder anew  
what the Almighty can do,  
who with his love doth befriend thee.

Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!  
All that hath life and breath come now with praises before him!  
Let the amen  
sound from his people again;  
gladly for ever adore him.

*Celebrant* Blessed be the one, holy, and living God.  
*People* Glory to God for ever and ever.

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Glory to you, Lord God of our elders;  
you are worthy of praise; glory to you.  
Glory to you for the radiance of your holy Name;  
we will praise you and highly exalt you for ever.

Glory to you in the splendor of your temple;  
on the throne of your majesty, glory to you.  
Glory to you, seated between the Cherubim;  
we will praise you and highly exalt you for ever.

Glory to you, beholding the depths;  
in the high vault of heaven, glory to you.  
Glory to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;  
we will praise you and highly exalt you for ever.  
*Amen.*

*Celebrant* God be with you.  
*People* And also with you.  
*Celebrant* Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting God, in Christ you have revealed your glory among the nations: Preserve the works of your mercy, that your Church throughout the world may persevere with steadfast faith in the confession of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## The Lessons

### FIRST READING:

A Reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus,  
whose right hand I have grasped  
to subdue nations before him  
and strip kings of their robes,  
to open doors before him—  
and the gates shall not be closed:  
“I will go before you  
and level the mountains,  
I will break in pieces the doors of bronze  
and cut through the bars of iron,  
I will give you the treasures of darkness  
and riches hidden in secret places,  
so that you may know that it is I, the LORD,  
the God of Israel, who call you by your name.  
For the sake of my servant Jacob,  
and Israel my chosen,  
I call you by your name,  
I surname you, though you do not know me.  
I am the LORD, and there is no other;  
besides me there is no god.  
I arm you, though you do not know me,  
so that they may know, from the rising of the sun  
and from the west, that there is no one besides me;  
I am the LORD, and there is no other.  
I form light and create darkness,  
I make weal and create woe;  
I the LORD do all these things.”

*Reader*        The Word of the Lord.  
*People*        Thanks be to God.

## **PSALM**

Psalm 96:1-13

<sup>1</sup>Sing to God a new song; \*  
sing to God, all the whole earth.

<sup>2</sup>Sing to and bless God's Name; \*  
proclaim the good news of salvation from day to day.

<sup>3</sup>Declare God's glory among the nations, \*  
God's wonders among all peoples.

<sup>4</sup>For God is great and greatly to be praised; \*  
more to be feared than all gods.

<sup>5</sup>As for all the gods of the nations, they are but idols; \*  
but it is God who made the heavens.

<sup>6</sup>Oh, the majesty and magnificence of God's presence! \*  
Oh, the power and the splendor of God's sanctuary!

<sup>7</sup>Ascribe to God, you families of the peoples; \*  
ascribe to God honor and power.

<sup>8</sup>Ascribe due honor due God's holy Name; \*  
bring offerings and come into God's courts.

<sup>9</sup>Worship the Most High in the beauty of holiness; \*  
let the whole earth tremble before God.

<sup>10</sup>Tell it out among the nations that God reigns! \*  
God has made the world so firm that it cannot be moved;  
and will judge the peoples with equity.”

<sup>11</sup>Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;  
let the sea thunder and all that is in it; \*  
let the field be joyful and all that is therein.

<sup>12</sup>Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy  
before God who will come, \*  
who will come to judge the earth.

<sup>13</sup>God will judge the world with righteousness \*  
and the peoples with truth.

## **SECOND READING:**

A Reading from Paul's First letter to the Church in Thessalonika.

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

Grace to you and peace.

We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly <sup>3</sup>remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. For the people of those regions report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

*Reader*        The Word of the Lord.

*People*        Thanks be to God.

## **SEQUENCE HYMN**

*Special Music* Carole Seitz, piano & Ricardo Amador, violin

## **GOSPEL:**

*Deacon*        The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

*People*        Glory to you, Lord Christ.

Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap [Jesus] in what he said. So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?” But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, “Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin used for the tax.” And they brought him a denarius. Then he said to them, “Whose head is this, and whose title?” They answered, “The emperor’s.” Then he said to them, “Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

*Deacon*        The Gospel of the Lord.

*People*        Praise to you, Lord Christ.

## **THE SERMON**



## **THE CREED**

We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father.  
Through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven:  
by the power of the Holy Spirit  
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,  
and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.  
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.  
He has spoken through the Prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

## **THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

With all our heart and with all our mind, let us pray to the Lord, saying, “Lord, have mercy.”

For the peace from above, for the loving kindness of God, and for the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord.

*Lord, have mercy.*

For the peace of the world, for the welfare of the holy Church of God, and for the unity of all peoples, let us pray to the Lord.

*Lord, have mercy.*

For our Bishop, Scott, and for all the clergy and people, let us pray to the Lord.

*Lord, have mercy.*

For our President, for the leaders of the nations, and for all in authority, let us pray to the Lord.

*Lord, have mercy.*

For this city, for every city and community, and for those who live in them, let us pray to the Lord.

*Lord, have mercy.*

For seasonable weather, and for an abundance of the fruits of the earth, let us pray to the Lord.

*Lord, have mercy.*

For the good earth which God has given us, and for the wisdom and will to conserve it, let us pray to the Lord.

*Lord, have mercy.*

For the aged and infirm, for the widowed and orphans, and for the sick and the suffering, let us pray to the Lord.

*Lord, have mercy.*

For those in our hearts, especially Connie, Jamie, Kobe, Hayden, Dick, Pat G., Pat S., Amy, Paige, Nancy, Bailey, Norma, Byron, Sharon, JoEY, Helen, Jim, Danielle, Susan, Devon, Bill, Harold, Heather, Amelia, Melissa, David, Karen, Ellie, Tom, Maggie, Sandra, Logan, Jean, Heidi, Mark, Abby, Paul, Carolyn, Ginny, Linda, Joe, Shirley, Sharon, Norm, Joey, and Tom. Are there any others who need our prayers?

let us pray to the Lord.

*Lord, have mercy.*

For the poor and the oppressed, for the unemployed and the destitute, for prisoners and captives, and for all who remember and care for them, let us pray to the Lord.

*Lord, have mercy.*

For all who have died in the hope of the resurrection, and for all the departed, let us pray to the Lord.

*Lord, have mercy.*

For deliverance from all danger, violence, oppression, and degradation, let us pray to the Lord.

*Lord, have mercy.*

That we may end our lives in faith and hope, without suffering and without reproach, let us pray to the Lord.

*Lord, have mercy.*

Defend us, deliver us, and in thy compassion protect us, O Lord, by thy grace.

*Lord, have mercy.*

In the communion of St. Augustine of Canterbury and of all the saints,  
let us commend ourselves, and one another, and all our life, to Christ our  
God.

*To thee, O Lord our God.*

## **CONFESSION OF SIN**

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

Most merciful God,  
we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed,  
by what we have done,  
and by what we have left undone.  
We have not loved you with our whole heart;  
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.  
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
have mercy on us and forgive us;  
that we may delight in your will,  
and walk in your ways,  
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our  
Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of  
the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. *Amen.*

## **THE PEACE**

*Celebrant*        The peace of the Lord be always with you.

*People*            And also with you.

**Birthdays:** Dottie Brown, Abi Heller, Luke Cudly, Brayden Pickett and Brody Twerdochilb

**Anniversaries:** Kathy & Bill Lake and Peg & Jim Pearson

O God, our times are in your hand: Look with favor, we pray, on your servants as they begin another year. Grant that they may grow in wisdom and grace, and strengthen their trust in your goodness all the days of their life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

## The Holy Communion

### **OFFERTORY SENTENCE**

Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and make good your vows to the Most High. *Psalm 50:14*

**OFFERTORY HYMN**     *Shepherd Of Love*

Verse 1

Shepherd of love  
You knew I had lost my way  
Shepherd of love  
You cared that I'd gone astray  
You sought and found me placed around me  
Strong arms that carried me home  
No foe can harm me or alarm me  
Never again will I roam  
Shepherd of love  
Savior and Lord and Guide  
Shepherd of love  
Forever I'll stay by Your side

Verse 2

Shepherd of love  
Contentment at last is mine  
Deep in my heart  
There's peace and a joy divine  
The future's brighter burden's lighter  
My cup runs over each day  
Your grace supplied me now provides me  
All that I need for the way  
Shepherd of love  
Savior and Lord and Guide  
Shepherd of love  
Forever I'll stay by Your side

CCLI Song # 2870

John W. Peterson

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## **The Great Thanksgiving**

*Celebrant*      God be with you.  
*People*          And also with you.  
*Celebrant*      Lift up your hearts.  
*People*          We lift them to the Lord.  
*Celebrant*      Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
*People*          It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth.

For by water and the Holy Spirit you have made us a new people in Jesus Christ our Lord, to show forth your glory in all the world.

Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Holy and gracious God: In your infinite love you made us for yourself; and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and maker of all.

He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, Almighty God, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty God, now and for ever. *AMEN.*



## **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy Name,

thy kingdom come,

thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,

and the power, and the glory,

forever and ever. Amen.

## **The Breaking of the Bread**

Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;

*Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.*

The Gifts of God for the People of God.

## **DISTRIBUTION**

*The Celebrant says*

The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ keep you in everlasting life.

*At this point all may remove their mask together briefly to receive the host.*

## COMMUNION HYMN

### *Just A Closer Walk With Thee*

#### Verse 1

I am weak but Thou art strong  
Jesus keep me from all wrong  
I'll be satisfied as long  
As I walk let me walk close to Thee

#### Chorus

Just a closer walk with thee  
Grant it Jesus is my plea  
Daily walking close to Thee  
Let it be dear Lord let it be

#### Verse 2

Through this world of toil and snares  
If I falter Lord who cares  
Who with me my burden shares  
None but Thee dear Lord none but Thee

#### Verse 3

When my feeble life is o'er  
Time for me will be no more  
Guide me gently safely o'er  
To Thy kingdom shore to Thy shore

CCLI Song # 28263

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Let us pray.

Almighty and everliving God,  
we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food  
of the most precious Body and Blood  
of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ;  
and for assuring us in these holy mysteries  
that we are living members of the Body of Christ,  
and heirs of your eternal kingdom.

And now, send us out  
to do the work you have given us to do,  
to love and serve you  
as faithful witnesses of Christ our Savior.  
To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit,  
be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

### **BLESSING**

The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you, and remain with you always. *Amen.*

### **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.  
*People* Thanks be to God.

## **POSTLUDE**

### ***Shine Jesus Shine***

#### Chorus

Shine Jesus shine  
Fill this land  
With the Father's glory  
Blaze Spirit blaze  
Set our hearts on fire  
Flow river flow  
Flood the nations  
With grace and mercy  
Send forth Your word Lord  
And let there be light

#### Verse 1

Lord the light of Your love is shining  
In the midst of the darkness shining  
Jesus Light of the world shine upon us  
Set us free by the truth You now bring us  
Shine on me shine on me

#### Verse 2

Lord I come to Your awesome presence  
From the shadows into Your radiance  
By the blood I may enter Your brightness  
Search me try me consume all my darkness  
Shine on me shine on me

### Verse 3

As we gaze on Your kingly brightness  
So our faces display Your likeness  
Ever changing from glory to glory  
Mirrored here may our lives tell Your story  
Shine on me shine on me

CCLI Song # 30426

Graham Kendrick

CCLI License # 1759835

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **Pod Pickup Party!**

After Sunday worship this coming weekend, we want to invite everyone who can to stay after and bring a pair of gloves and/or a rake! We will form a big “cleanup line” and simply walk the front green space from the construction fence to the sidewalk, picking up the large seedpods that our beautiful trees drop. St A’s will provide yard waste bags to deposit them in. As our line advances, you’re welcome to stay and do some quick raking-up as well. Many hands make light work, and this should be a fun and socially-distanced way to spend ten or fifteen minutes taking care of our church home together. This is a great and easy job for kids and youth, too!

### **Online Coffee Fellowship**

Join members of the St. A’s family on Zoom **Today at 11:30 am (following this service)** for an interactive online social hour.

### **Save the Date for Trunk or Treat**

Because we aren't able to celebrate our annual Boo Bash this year, we are planning a trunk or treat instead. We will have a contest for best trunk, as well as a costume contest, an outdoor short movie and of course, s'mores! We encourage anyone who would enjoy participating to join us on this fun evening **Wednesday, October 28 from 5:30-7:00 PM**. In an overabundance of caution, we will not hand out candy at each trunk, but if you would like to bring wrapped candy or non-food treats to be added to gift bags for the kids, please bring them to the church by **Sunday October 18**.

### **MARK YOUR CALENDAR!**

We will be coming together at **10:30AM on Sunday, November 8** to celebrate the Eucharist (weather permitting). Please note the later start time!

### **Outreach Collection**

The Outreach Committee invites you to support the **Downtown Episcopal Outreach (DEO)** at Trinity Cathedral during the month of October. DEO has traditionally served a hot, home-made lunch on Wednesday afternoons from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. with the help of volunteers from Episcopal churches throughout Omaha. This year the meal has changed to offer the diners and volunteers safety from COVID19. A sack lunch has been prepared and provided outdoors since early March, 2020. The meal is free of charge and open to the public, without qualification. Checks to support this vital ministry can be made out to St. Augustine's with DEO listed in the memo. **Thank you for your support of our food-insecure and homeless neighbors in Omaha...**

### **Elaine Randall Book Club**

October's selection is The Keeper of Lost Causes by Jussi Adler. Books are available for pickup from the book bag located in the narthex. Don't forget to return your October book early next week!

### **Got Cotton Fabric?**

Daughters of the King are offering to help you lighten the load by donating cotton fabric that may be taking up space in your home! This fabric will be lovingly sewn into quilts. Please drop off at church (M-Th. 10:30AM - Noon). Thank you!!

## **Inclusivity Opportunities**

Here are some opportunities coming up at St Augustine's:

### **Sacred Ground Small Group Invitation 10 Sessions, Fall 2020, timing TBD**

The Episcopal Church has created a curriculum of short videos, readings, and discussion guides for those interested in discussing inclusion and identity more deeply. Fr. Ben will be leading a weekly group for those interested during a weekend or evening time slot this coming fall. This will be a group for those interested in a deeper and committed study using the Sacred Ground material to connect our faith foundations to our commitments to inclusion and care. More information can be found

here: <https://episcopalchurch.org/sacred-ground/about>

Please contact Fr Ben with interest

### **Balancing the Scales of Justice:**

Our diocese has a “Balancing the Scales of Justice” task force that was established in response to a General Convention resolution in 2018. This group is specifically focused on issues of criminal justice, bearing witness to the complexities and needs of our system in ways similar to those of the *Just Mercy* film. Rebecca Smith, who has led a ministry called “Read Me a Story” that records current inmates reading birthday books to their children as a way of keeping family connection strong and orienting people back to family life after a sentence, serves on the Task Force. This group meets online to discuss and plan their work, and those interested can e-mail Fr Ben and task force chair Kaitlin Reece ([kaitlinreece@gmail.com](mailto:kaitlinreece@gmail.com)) for information.



## CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

### Update for October 15

We've made some good progress since last week, and our architects at RDG seem to be making headway with the involved city planning teams about the numbers involved. It looks like they'll be able to accept the parking numbers "as-designed," so we're hoping to make up some speed by getting approvals concluded quickly. These conversations are updating daily, so it's difficult to report-out to our full parish in "real time," but we're very optimistic about getting to a resolution, and working very hard on making some timetable back.

We still have some other small questions to review with the city's team, but we're working hard to resolve it all as quickly as possible, now that the questions have been officially raised and can be addressed. Meanwhile, our contractor is working hard to make sure we're as ready to go as can be pre-permit, so we've seen some additional fencing protection and site preparation going up around the church.

Otherwise we remain in our "hurry up and wait" holding pattern! This means that when we DO receive word that we can proceed into demolition with a permit, we'll go fast. That probably means that we will have a very quick window to communicate out to St Augustine's about what we're doing, so please keep an eye on your e-mail and our parish Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/st.augustine.omaha>) to make sure you see when we get the green light, in case you want to come by and see the big changes!

Fr Ben is always available for questions or information by his e-mail at [rector@sainta.net](mailto:rector@sainta.net).

## RECTOR'S REFLECTION

*Weekly Reflection for October 15, 2020*

All the Leaves are Brown

One of the joys of home ownership arrives with gusto each fall as I watch leaves start to gather in the yard.

The first volley usually feels like a happy challenge – an excuse to stand forth in the crisp weather that I so love, snap open a yard waste bag, and go to. It's an excuse to put on a podcast or audiobook and have an hour of mental leisure and physical labor. I always enjoy how the lawn looks afterwards: green (or at any rate, faded green). If not exactly “fun,” there's a sense of strength and accomplishment to raking the leaves away: I've done my job and taken care of something.

The next morning I can usually chuckle. “Look, a few more leaves crept in.” No worries, of course – I can find some time to head back out in the next few days. I've probably got more of that audiobook I can listen to. By afternoon, I might be noticing that there are more leaves, and maybe I'd better get out there sooner than later. Which I can do, of course – it's just that I had other plans. Still, I know how to handle my yard, so I can get that done.

Day three brings a windy front through, and even though I've just raked up, I really need to again, or the leaves are going to collect in the gutter across the street.

Within a few weeks, my cheerful autumnal adventure has become a chore. Even the “break” of my audiobook project feels a bit flat and cheerless. I'm sick of raking leaves. Can't the tree hurry up and shake everything off so I can get done with this and back to my normal life?

I also start getting annoyed with my neighbors. If they don't rake, their leaves blow onto my lawn. Now their lack of responsibility is my problem. It's not that I mind a couple extra sweeps with the rake; it's that it feels disrespectful: surely they know this is what happens next? And we all live in this neighborhood together, where what one does can affect everyone. And if the sewer line clogs up, that's a serious issue for everyone. So I “overfunction” and rake more than my share, because I want clean lawns and clear sewers around here.

And so it is that this year, I arrive with the preacher's constant companion: a metaphor from life, for life.

When the coronavirus arrived, I suppose there was a bit of heroism to opposing it. There were some real fears, yes, especially for those who have other health needs to factor. But I also saw plenty of people laughing, saying, "Well, our grandparents had to go fight Nazis to save the world; we just have to sit on our couch and binge watch tv."

It was even a chance for projects – the joke has become the "sourdough bread starter I've been meaning to try." We had a common sense that we're in it together, that this was something we'd all go through. It even had some "good exercise" to it – say, in holding our household to better discipline about not eating out as often and cooking more meals at home, for a bit of better health and saved money.

But the rest of the metaphor holds, too. As it became clear that this wasn't a "rake-once" job, it's been harder to feel heroic about doing the work. It's been more frustrating to watch neighbors not take up their share of the common responsibility. It's been hard to enjoy the indoor or solitary projects and hobbies that this time has pushed us into by necessity. It's just been hard.

There have been other hard seasons for our world, and the traditions we remember as Americans, or especially as Christians. This country suffered through church closures in the Spanish flu pandemic in 1918. This country suffered through wartime common purpose during World War II, which called on everyone to do their part, even though we joined the work of the rest of the world late.

But to my mind, the stronger journeys to remember are those of God's people through flooding and wilderness in Genesis and Exodus. God gave Noah particular foresight to protect his family and all the world. Even though so many were destroyed, there was hope, and wisdom about how to stay safe as the flooding came.

Moses had the other problem: he dealt with our human fatigue. As the people went forward, even having seen the great power of God overcome Pharaoh, they hated journeying in the wilderness, with no end in sight. They made an idol of the Egyptian cow goddess of the sky – something they could see in the wilderness – abandoning God's slow, patient purpose to gamble on something quick and easy. They complained about the hard conditions, even

though God was giving them what they needed. They questioned Moses's ability to lead them through.

Now, I'm no Moses. I feel more like one of the people in the camp. I don't like the wilderness any more than anyone else, and I grumble as much as anyone about where exactly our leaders are heading, and whether there's a plan at all.

But if we have an example of the need for patience and trust in God from those oldest of our stories, God has also given us an easier assignment.

It isn't just that what is asked of us can be done in a degree of comfort – home amenities, delivery services, a medical safety net that exists, even if strained. And even where we give up the most, which is our fellowship with one another, we have the “bubble” method of cautious gathering, the significant-if-imperfect protection of masks and distancing, and (although we're all fatigued with it), the presence of online interconnection ... things that our nation didn't have when surviving the flu 100 years ago!

But more than that, we have roadmaps that Moses and his people did not. Doctors and the field of medicine are working constantly, working at everything from studying existing drugs for results, to finding new ways to care for and turn patients, to seeking after a vaccine that can form a much stronger safety net for our world. We have the hope of seeing other countries take serious precautions and lower, or even end, new case rise. Although the task is different for our large and interconnected nation, to see it done is humbling and inspiring.

And, I hope, we have our faith. The knowledge that God never abandons the world, that human beings are given gifts to offer real service and healing to one another, and that no crisis endures forever. Faith teaches us how to mourn real loss and how to hope for real healing. Faith teaches us to understand the eternal significance of our days by facing the reality of our mortality. Faith reminds us that we truly do need a savior in Jesus, and in his Gospel of love, which can overcome all fear and give us the bravery and the strength we need to work together.

I will pick up my rake again. I will open another bag. I will add more leaves, even as others are blowing down the road. I know you're raking, too. And although we may yet have winter ahead, spring will come.