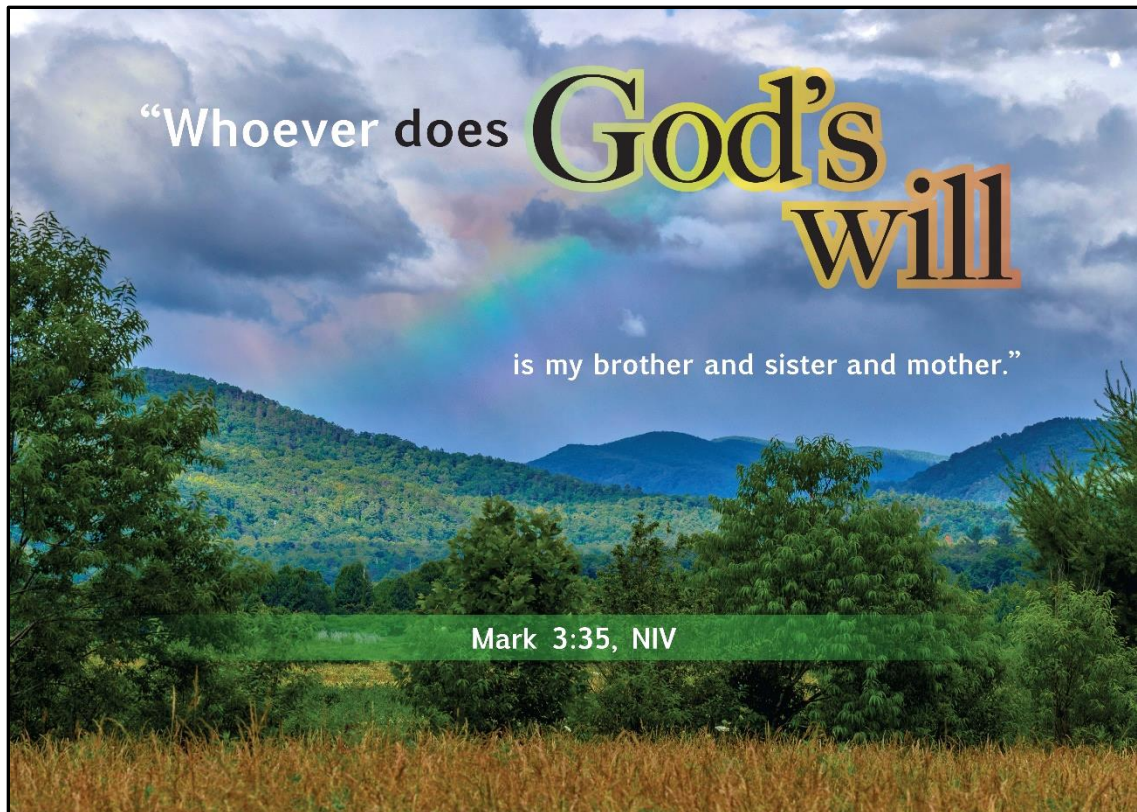


**First Congregational  
United Church of Christ  
River Falls, Wisconsin**

**June 9, 2024**



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN

June 9, 2024

Third Sunday after Pentecost

9:30 am

Gathering

*What's certain here is this: the reign of God Jesus keeps talking about is certainly not going to be about maintaining business as usual.*

*- Matt Skinner*

Welcome to our guests who are visiting with us today!

- Activity bags are available for children.
- Large print bulletins are available from the ushers.
- Please stand when noted by the \*
- Congregation responses are in bold.
- Please stop at the welcome station for a gift.
- Please note our worship service is livestreamed.

*No matter who you are. No matter where you are on your spiritual journey, you are welcome here!*

*As Jesus' courageous disciples, living God's grace, we strive to:*

- *Worship faithfully*
- *Welcome openly*
- *Grow spiritually*
- *Care passionately*
- *Serve generously*

**GATHERING MUSIC**

**WELCOME AND RINGING OF THE BELL**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

**L:** Trust in God at all times! God is our refuge and our strength, especially in a world of great uncertainty and loss.

**P:** **God has always been present in this world. God has always been present with us. God is with us at this moment and in all our lives!**

**L:** In all times God has been with us and with all God's peoples, calling us forward, lifting us, guiding us.

**P:** **God has always been with us! In good times and in difficult times, in times of joy and in times of turmoil, God is with us all the time!**

**L:** On this lovely spring day we lift our voices in song and praise and prayer to God who dwells among us!

**All:** **Thanks be to God! With great joy let us worship!**

*We Sing to You, O God*

1. We sing to you, O God, the Rock who gave us  
 2. We wan-dered far from home out in a des-ert  
 3. You bear us through the world, an ea-gle to her  
 4. O God, e-ter-nal God, we hide with-in your

birth, let our re-joic-ing sing your name in  
 land, you shield-ed with your love our fear-ful  
 young, who ris-es on her wings and bears us  
 wings, the ev-er-last-ing arms to whom our

all the earth. To you, O God, let  
 pil-grim band. You kept us safe with-  
 toward the sun. We ride the vaults of  
 prais-es ring. Your word is true, your

songs be raised, in joy-ful hymns, our feast of praise.  
 in your arms and shel-tered us a-gainst the storm.  
 light and air and trust in your un-fail-ing care.  
 way is just, you are the God in whom we trust.

## \*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Creator God, once again the beauty of summer is upon us. Forgive us if we do not embrace its glory and joy. The world too often weighs heavy on us these days. Wars rage, storms strike, differences divide. Some days our faith is unsure. Some days we wonder where you are.

Be with us Holy God. Be with all the human family. Open our hearts to the wonder of your presence everywhere. Amen.

## \*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

L: God is with us! God is ever-present!

P: **God's love is everlasting from our first breath to our last.**

L: Day by day we live in God's embrace and God's forgiveness, even when we forget to give our thanks, our lives to the One who creates and sustains us.

P: **Thanks be to God!**

L: May the peace of the Lord be with you all.

P: **And also with you.**

## \*PASSING OF THE PEACE

(Please greet one another with signs of peace)

## \*GLORIA

*Come, All You People*

*Come, all you people, come and praise the Most High,  
Come, all you people, come and praise the Most High,  
Come, all you people, come and praise the Most High,  
Come now and worship the Lord.*

*Come, all you people, come and praise the Savior,  
Come, all you people, come and praise the Savior,  
Come, all you people, come and praise the Savior,  
Come now and worship the Lord.*

Hearing the Word
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## SCRIPTURE LESSON

2 Corinthians 4:16-5:1

PSALM 84:1-5 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

*R To you, O God, all creatures sing, and all creation, every thing,  
sing your praises, alleluia, alleluia*

L: How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!

P: **My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord.**

L: My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.

**P:** Even the sparrow finds a home and the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young at your altars,  
**L:** Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise.  
**All:** Happy are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion. *R*

<b>Proclaiming the Word</b>
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**GOSPEL LESSON**

**Mark 3:20-35**

**SERMON**

*New Pathways...*

**Rev. Dave Ostendorf**

**\*HYMN**

*Renew Your Church*

**Black #311**

**\*STATEMENT OF FAITH – United Church of Canada**

**L:** We are not alone, we live in God's world.

**P:** We believe in God: who has created and is creating, who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh, to reconcile and make new, who works in us and others by the Spirit. We trust in God. We are called to be the Church: to celebrate God's presence, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope. In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

**THE PRAYERS & LORD'S PRAYER (debts/debtors)**

Lord in your mercy... Hear our prayer.

...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 debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

**GATHERING OUR GIFTS**

*Du Bist wie eine Blume*

**Jamie Mills**

*(You are Like a Flower)*

*by Schumann*

**\*DOXOLOGY**

*We Praise You, O God*

*We praise you, O God, our Redeemer, Creator;*

*In grateful devotion our tribute we bring.*

*We lay it before you, we kneel and adore you;*

*We bless your holy name, glad praises we sing.*

**\*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

God, giver of all life, we offer these gifts and we offer our lives to you, with deepest thanks. Bless all our gifts to the work of your community of faith throughout the world. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

## Celebrating the Meal

(All Christians are welcome at the table of our Lord. The bread is gluten-free. Red wine and white grape juice are offered. Those choosing not to commune may receive a blessing from the servers.)

### *The Invitation to the Meal*

L: This table is for all of us, near and far, rich and poor, young and old. This table is for all of us, as we gather from the east and west, the north and the south. It is not our table. It is God's table, set that we might again remember Jesus' call to be people of love and grace, hope and peace. So come and take your place at the table. Come and be fed at the table of our Lord as together we share this holy meal.

### *The Great Thanksgiving*

L: The Lord be with you.

P: **And also with you.**

L: Lift up your hearts.

P: **We lift them up to the Lord.**

L: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

P: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

L: It is right and good always to give thanks...

### *The Words of Institution*

L: We praise your name as we remember the mystery of faith...

All: **Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

### *Prayer of Consecration*

### *Distribution of the Elements*

*Hymns during the distribution of the elements:*

### *Come to the Table of Grace*



1 Come to the ta-ble of grace. Come to the ta-ble of



grace. This is God's ta - ble; it's not yours or



mine. Come to the ta - ble of grace.

ADDITIONAL VERSES: 2. PEACE, 3. LOVE, 4. JOY, 5. HOPE

## You Are Near

Congregation join on refrain:

Refrain



Yah-weh, I know you are near, stand-ing al - ways  
at my side. You guard me from the foe, and you  
lead me in ways ev - er - last - ing.

The image shows three staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are: 'Yah-weh, I know you are near, stand-ing al - ways'. The second staff continues the melody with lyrics: 'at my side. You guard me from the foe, and you'. The third staff concludes the phrase with lyrics: 'lead me in ways ev - er - last - ing.' The music consists of quarter and eighth notes, with some rests.

## This is the Body of Christ

*This is the body of Christ, broken that we may be whole;  
This cup, as promised by God, true to his word, cradles our Lord;  
Food for the good of the soul.*

## *Prayer of Thanksgiving*

**All:** We give you thanks, Almighty God, that you have refreshed us at your table by granting us the presence of Jesus Christ. Strengthen our faith, increase our love for one another, and send us forth into the world in courage and peace, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Sending

\*HYMN

*Sing a New Church*

Blue #577

\*BLESSING

POSTLUDE

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**SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS**

Preacher: Dave Ostendorf  
Celebrant: Dave Ostendorf  
Cantor: David Reilly  
Liturgist: Kristin Andes  
Deacons: Lance Lueck, Brian Miller,  
Cindy Gandrud  
Organist: Marsha Pearson  
Live Stream: Ryan Luedtke  
Trustee: Rick Price  
Coffee  
Fellowship: JoAnn Lentz, Barb Mahoney  
Welcomers: JoAnn Lentz, Barb Mahoney  
Counters: Janice Healy, Jane Truesdill

**CHURCH STAFF**

Pastor: Christopher Myers  
Education Pastor: Stacy Johnson Myers  
Community &  
Outreach Pastor: Deb Meyer  
Youth Minister: Alex Plum  
Music Coordinator &  
Bell Director: Jamie Mills  
Choir Director: Sarah Plum  
Organists: Terry Mithun,  
Marsha Pearson  
Building Manager: Timothy Bylander  
Church Moderator: Kathy Rausch  
Office Administrator: Missy Luedtke  
Nursery Attendant: Kahla Fuller  
Custodian: Farnum Fuller

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**Treasurer's Report**

	<u>June 2, 2024</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 5,373	\$ 246,002
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,463	\$ 230,186

A full accounting of all income and expenses is available in the church office.

\*Includes annual and monthly gifts.

**Offering QR Code**

1. On your mobile device, open your Camera app or QR Code app
2. Point your camera at the QR Code
3. Click the tab 'Give Online'

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Thanks to Pastors Dave Ostendorf and Deb Meyer who are leading worship while Pastor Chris travels with his wife Stacy on her sabbatical trip. He will be leading worship on Sunday, July 14, which is also River Falls Days weekend and will be back just in time for the Thursday concert on the church lawn. Pray for a safe and restful trip.



Please remember the following in your prayers this week:

**Those who are ill or recovering:**

Carsten (grandson of Duane Church), Sue Taylor, Melissa Oscanyan (friend of Ann Nelson), Glenn Kees, Linda (daughter of Chuck White), Jeff (brother-in-law of Janice Healy), Joe (Christina Krueger's brother), Doris (sister-in-law of Bonnie Jones Witthuhn)

**Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:**

- For local families who will receive diapers as we end our Diaper Drive on Father's Day, June 16, may they be signs of God's many blessings
- For our Wisconsin Conference UCC who will gather for their annual meeting June 7-9 in Green Lake, that along with our delegates Pastor Deb and Carol Merriman, they may grow in love, justice and grace
- For our Music Committee gearing up for the Bluegrass concert on the church lawn as part of River Falls Days on Thursday, July 11 from 6-8pm, let the good times roll!
- For Habitat for Humanity as it breaks ground on a house in River Falls on West Maple, may God bless the new family owners
- For our Among Friends ministry to families with dementia as they expand to welcome guests on Tuesday and Thursdays starting June 6, may they be an oasis of grace
- For Pastor Stacy as she continues her sabbatical, may it feed her in body, mind and soul

**Prayers for our World:**

- For those called to be fathers as we celebrate Father's Day on Sunday, June 16, may they be given strength, courage and wisdom
- For the FMSC mobile packing event coming to River Falls on September 11-12, that our community may be bound together and demonstrate the love of Jesus in word and action
- For ANYONE who has to cross the I-94 bridge in Hudson, especially commuters, may they be given patience beyond their own ability
- For civilians caught in bloody conflict in Israel and Gaza who are always the ones who suffer in times of war, may a new way forward be found to bring lasting peace
- For those working to care for the gift of God's good creation

**Prayers of Thanksgiving:**

- For those graduating from high school and college, may you look for God's guidance as new opportunities arise
- For those celebrating graduation parties, may you be graced with many friends, lots of food and good weather!
- For Joyce and Roger Kampstra who celebrate their 60th anniversary on July 11, may your love continue to grow!
- For our baptism boom which is now at 9 children of God in 5 months including Evie Pearson (Mike and Justine) baptized January 14, Hope Withers (Erik and Vanessa) baptized February 25, Laney Sitz (Heather and Dan) baptized March 3, Nora Koecher (Dan and Mari) baptized March 10, and four Thompson children (Talia, Orion, Oliver, Tova) baptized May 5, and Dean Wilhelmy (Heidi and Mason) baptized May 19, may they all grow in love and faith!

**For those grieving the loss of loved ones:**

- For the Knutson family mourning Debbie, the Carrison family mourning Dahn, the Rausch family mourning Bill, the Fosmo family mourning Harold, the Prochnow family mourning Neal, may you be strengthened through the care of others

If you have people you wish to include on our prayer list, please contact the church office or one of the pastors.

## Announcements

*No matter who you are. No matter where you are on your spiritual journey, you are welcome here!*

### Loving God

**New to Church:** Are you a first-time visitor? Please stop at the welcome table in the gathering area to receive a special welcome gift from us!

**The Lord's Prayer Bible Study:** You know it. Maybe memorized it. But have you ever really thought about what it means? Or how it can impact your prayer life? On **Tuesdays, June 4, 11, 18 and 25, from 6:30 to 8:00 pm**, Pastor Deb will lead a four-part interactive study on The Lord's Prayer, based on the book "Praying the Lord's Prayer" by Elmer L. Towns. Deepen your personal experience of The Lord's Prayer by joining us!

### Loving Neighbor

**Diaper Drive:** Each Sunday between Mother's Day & Father's Day, we are collecting diapers and wipes for local families in need. Last year folks in our church donated over 5,100 diapers and as of today we have 5,224. What a wonderful way to honor our parents, support those in need locally, and be vehicles of God's grace and compassion.

**Simpson Shelter Meal Volunteers Needed:** It's time for our summer picnic meal at the Simpson Shelter. The date is **Wednesday, July 17**. A sign-up sheet is on the gathering table. Please sign up to help prepare food in our kitchen or serve at the shelter. Thank you!

**Save The Date!** Feed My Starving Children is coming to River Falls! Thanks to a wonderful partnership of churches, individuals and businesses, including First Congregational Church, please mark your calendars for **Wednesday and Thursday, September 11 and 12**, when our community will pack 100,000 meals at Tattersall. Sign-ups will begin the end of July. Thank you to our Endowment Grant Team who granted \$3,000 to help pay for the \$30,000 cost of packing these meals. Exciting!

**Scarves, Mittens, & Hats:** Join our knitting group by making scarves, mittens and/or hats for school age children. We are supporting Basics for Local Kids in Pierce & St. Croix counties. You can make items at home from yarn, fleece or wool or join us on Thursdays at 10 am. If you have questions, contact Marie Roe at 715-781-2103.

**First Church Companions:** The "**Companions**" meet quarterly to support each other, help new companions, and discuss questions. If you are willing to visit with someone in our church community and connect at least once a month with a call or visit, please sign-up. If you are interested in receiving regular visits, there is also a line on the same sign-up sheet for "**Buddies.**" Contact Pastor Deb or Lu Lueck with questions.

**Among Friends** is a community-based social respite program serving adults who have memory loss who reside in Pierce and St. Croix Counties. For more information, contact them at (715) 293-2561. Check out the website: [amongfriendsrf.com](http://amongfriendsrf.com) and Facebook page. It is held at the church on **Tuesdays and Thursdays 9am to 3pm**.

### Loving Self

**Summer Celebration for Hope For Earth and Mike Noreen:** Hope for Earth is a group of River Falls churches who join together to care for the gift of God's good creation. They invite you to a Summer Social at Glen Park Pavilion on **June 13 at 6:00 pm**. Part of this year's celebration will be an opportunity to thank Mike Noreen for his service to the city. Come out and enjoy the good creation and the good work Mike has done for the past 10 plus years in our community!

**Birthday Celebration:** Marge Faulks will be turning 101 on June 14th. Her family is hosting a party for her on **June 16th from 1-4 pm at St Croix Lanes** in River Falls. Please come and help her celebrate! (No gifts, please.)

**Game Day Sunday** will be **June 23** following Coffee Fellowship. Please sign up.

**Young Families Gathering:** Attention young families who are interested in getting connected with each other! The church is hosting a young families and kids dinner on **Wednesday, June 26 at 5:30 pm!** A child-friendly menu will be catered and families can eat and connect with each other! Cost is \$10/family. Kids will have opportunities to play with each other with church supervision so our young parents can connect as a group! Please sign up at church or online.

**Summer Choir:** The UCC Chancel Choir will be performing 3 Sundays this summer: **June 16, July 21, and August 25!** If you're interested in a low-stakes singing opportunity, please join us! This is your chance to sing without committing to the year's schedule. We rehearse one hour before the service! All are welcome!

**Softball News:** Our next few games are June 10 at 6:30 pm vs St. Bridget Church and June 17 at 6:30 pm vs. Luther Memorial. Come join in the fun, laughs, and family togetherness whether you are playing or cheering for the team. If you have questions, contact Sarah Plum at (715) 418-9393 or Deb Hoffman at (612) 308-4945.

**WISE Corner:** NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Family Support Group will be held **Thursdays at 6:30 pm at the River Falls Public Library**. For more information, call Marg Downing 715-307-5905.

**River Falls Days Kick-Off Concert:** On **Thurs, July 11, from 6:00-8:00 pm**, join us out on the lawn for a concert with the Slapdash Bluegrass Band! There will also be the Rollin' River Food Truck with food to purchase. In case of bad weather, it will move inside the Fellowship Hall. Join us as we kick off River Falls Days weekend!

**VBS Backdrop Painting:** Please volunteer to help paint the backdrops for VBS. The big painting day with the artist will be **Tuesday, July 16, starting at 6:00 pm**. Excellent artistic skills are *not* required. Rather, the ability to paint inside the lines is the name of the game. Please sign up.

**VBS Volunteers:** Thanks to everyone who has volunteered to help with VBS 2024. We do still need a large number of additional adult and teen workers. VBS will be July 29–August 1, 9:00–11:30 am. To volunteer, please sign up.

**VBS Cookie Bakers Needed:** Homemade cookies are a special part of the VBS snack, so we need volunteers to make some. Each volunteer is asked to bring four dozen cookies. A sign-up list is available on the table.

**Merry Widows:** They will meet on **Wed, June 19 at 1:00 pm at Azul Tequila in Hudson**. All widows are welcome to join us for lunch and conversation! See JoAnn Lentz for more information.

**Women's Group:** Interested in fellowship and community with other women? Pastor Deb invites you to join her at noon every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month. Please bring a sack lunch. The next meetings will be **June 11 and 25**.

**Let's Knit Together:** Calling all who knit, crochet, or have a craft that can be brought to church. Join us on **Thursdays at 10:00 am in the Fellowship Hall**. We have a great time sharing our current projects and enjoying each other's company. Any questions, contact Marie Roe at 715-781-2103 or [firstroe@gmail.com](mailto:firstroe@gmail.com)

**Church Yoga:** The church yoga group meets on **Tuesdays and Thursdays** in the church Fellowship Hall from **9:00-10:00 am** and via Zoom. Please contact the church office to receive the Zoom link.

### **Youth Events**

**Day Trip to the Cities for Grades 6-12:** Alex is planning a fun-filled day in the Twin Cities visiting various locations based on group interest! You are welcome to invite a friend or two as we will travel in style in our church van. Dates will be determined based on group availability. Please fill out the Day Trip to the City Interest form online or email/text Alex at [rfyouthgroup@gmail.com](mailto:rfyouthgroup@gmail.com) or 612-224-5894.

**Late Summer Youth Retreat for Grades 6-12:** Alex is planning a Retreat to the Metropolis Resort and Action City! Our goal is to find two days between July 26-Aug 10. Once we have a strong group signed up, we will make reservations and plan around the group's interests! You are welcome to invite a friend! Male & female parents/chaperones are requested. Pricing will be determined soon but will be reduced for church members with the youth fund. Please fill out the Interest form online or email/text Alex at [rfyouthgroup@gmail.com](mailto:rfyouthgroup@gmail.com) or 612-224-5894.

**Vacation Bible School:** Children age 3 through completed grade 5 are invited to Vacation Bible School. The theme is *Christian Art: Stop, Look, Listen* and will feature Bible study, children's literature, Christian art and architecture, music, and an engaging variety of art projects from painting to felting. VBS is free and open to all community children. Registration forms are online or at church. Dates are **July 29–August 1, 9:00–11:30 am**.

**Summer Children's Musical:** Children who have completed grades 1-6 are invited to produce the musical *Rescue in the Night: The Story of Daniel in the Lions' Den*. Rehearsals include singing, learning lines, and working on the set and props. The show will be Thursday evening. All are welcome & there is no charge. Registration forms are online or at church. Dates: **Aug 19-22, 9:00 am–Noon for Rehearsals & Aug 22, 6:30 pm for Dinner & the Show**.

**SCRIPTURE LESSON: 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:1**

So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

**GOSPEL LESSON: Mark 3:20-35**

And the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, 'He has gone out of his mind.' And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, 'He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons.' And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, 'How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.

'Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin'— for they had said, 'He has an unclean spirit.'

Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, 'Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you.' And he replied, 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' And looking at those who sat around him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.'