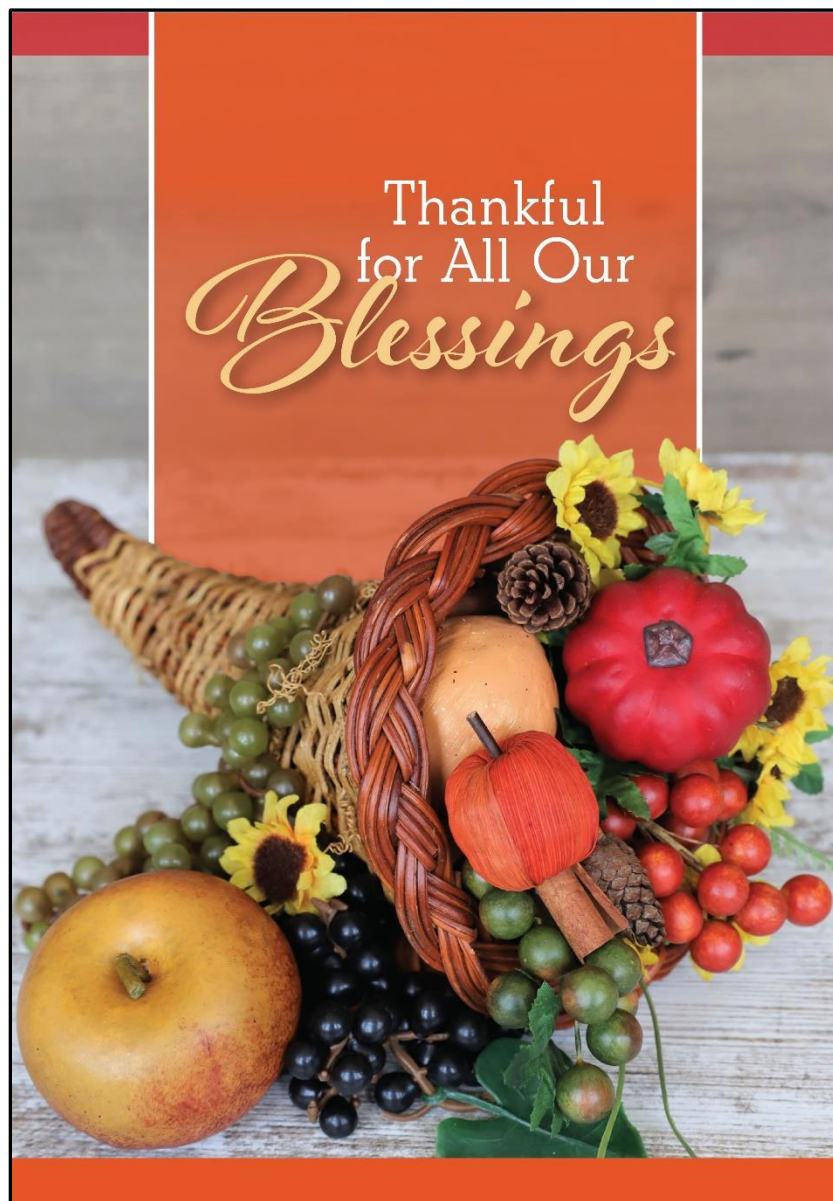


**First Congregational  
United Church of Christ  
River Falls, Wisconsin**

**November 17, 2024**



**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN**

November 17, 2024

*Twenty-Sixth Sunday after Pentecost*

10:00 am

**Gathering**

When it comes to gratitude, we who are older have an advantage.  
We have more good gifts to remember and therefore more opportunities  
to be grateful for them.  
- Lew Smedes

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.

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

- Please stop at the welcome station for a gift.
- Please note our worship service is  
livestreamed.

**GATHERING MUSIC**

**WELCOME AND RINGING OF THE BELL**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

L: Give thanks to God,

**P: For God's creation is amazing.**

L: The sun warms our day,

**P: The moon lights our nighttime way.**

L: The earth is filled with bounty,

**P: A cornucopia of plenty.**

L: Give thanks to God,

**P: For God's love is everlasting;**

L: A constant source of comfort,

**P: A companion in hard times.**

L: Come let us join our hearts and mouths in praise!

**All: Come let us worship the God who leads us into life!**

**\*PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

L: Caring God, in our anxiousness, we cling tightly to familiar people.

**P: Afraid to extend our hand, we bind up our gifts, fearing we won't have enough for ourselves.**

**All: Forgive us, Caring God.**

L: Loving Jesus, lacking trust in you, we clutch our possessions as if they are the meaning of life.

**P: Our hesitancy to share stops the flow of your compassion.**

**All: Renew us, Loving Jesus.**

L: Gracious Spirit, when we discount our ability and talents, we miss what is possible when Christ blesses our offering.

**P: Loosen our closed hands and tight hearts that we may offer the gift we are and the gifts we have, to touch the bruised world.**

**All: Release us, Holy Spirit. Amen.**

**\*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

L: Our God is a living God who seeks to bless us and send us forth to bless others.

**P: With faith in this truth, let us live as God's forgiven people called to be a blessing to others.**

L: This is good news!

**All: 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 (Sung twice)**

*Halle, Halle, Halle – lu – jah, Halle, Halle, Halle – lu – jah  
Halle, Halle, Halle – lu – jah, Hallelujah, Hal-le-lu-jah*

**OFFERTORY (During the offertory, members of the church are invited to bring their tithes and pledges for the coming year as well as their weekly offering and place them on the communion table.)**

***Where Your Treasure Is***

Where your treas - ure is, there your  
heart shall be. All that you pos - sess will nev - er set you  
free. Seek the things that last; come and  
learn from me. Where your  
treas - ure is, your heart shall be.

The musical score is written on five staves in G minor (three flats) and 4/4 time. The melody is simple and hymn-like, with lyrics printed below the notes. The score includes various note values such as quarter, eighth, and half notes, as well as rests. The piece concludes with a final whole note on the fifth staff.

**PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

**L:** Let us give God thanks...

**P:** **For homes that are warm and bellies that are full.**

**L:** Let us give God thanks...

**P:** **For the people we love today and for those who now rest from their labors.**

**L:** Let us give God thanks...

**P:** **For opportunities to grow in faith, love and service.**

**All:** **Bless, O God, the gifts we offer this day for the coming year. Together may we be your courageous disciples who worship faithfully, welcome openly, grow spiritually, care passionately and serve generously. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.**

## Hearing the Word

### SCRIPTURE LESSON

Habakkuk 3:17-19

### PSALM 136:1-9 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

**R**

Give thanks to the Lord for He is good, His love nev-er fails. O, give  
thanks to the Lord for He is good His Love, His love it nev-er fails.

- L: O give thanks to the LORD, for God is good, God's steadfast love endures forever.  
P: **O give thanks to the God of gods, for God's steadfast love endures forever.**  
L: O give thanks to the Lord of lords, for God's steadfast love endures forever;  
P: **Who alone does great wonders, for God's steadfast love endures forever;**  
L: Who by understanding made the heavens, for God's steadfast love endures forever;  
P: **Who spread out the earth on the waters, for God's steadfast love endures forever;**  
L: Who made the great lights, for God's steadfast love endures forever;  
P: **The sun to rule over the day, for God's steadfast love endures forever; the moon and stars to rule over the night, for God's steadfast love endures forever. R**

## 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: Come you thankful, come.  
P: **Come and eat the bread of life!**  
L: Come and drink the cup of blessing!  
P: **Come and gather around Christ's table as friends and family.**  
L: Together let us thank the God of abundance and let us take our place as God's thankful people.

### *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:*

### **Here I Am Lord**

*Congregation join on refrain:*

***Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard you  
calling in the night. I will go, Lord, if you lead me.  
I will hold your people in my heart.***

### **Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us**

*Arr. Susan Geschke*

### **Jubilee Ringers**


### **Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness**

**Blue #326**

### **You Are Mine**

*Congregation join on refrain:*

Refrain



Do not be a - fraid, I am with you. I have called you



each by name. Come and fol-low me, I will bring you



home; I love you and you are mine. **D.C.**

*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.

**Proclaiming the Word**

**PRESENTATION OF SERVANT GIFTS TO CONFIRMANDS**

**TIME WITH CHILDREN**

**Rev. Chris Myers**

**SONG** (Children preschool through grade 8 leave for Sunday School.)

*Rise and shine and give God the glory, glory.*

*Rise and shine and give God the glory, glory.*

*Rise and shine and give God the glory, glory; Children of the Lord.*

**GOSPEL LESSON**

**Matthew 6:25-33**

**SERMON**

**Rev. Chris Myers**

**\*HYMN**

*Praise and Thanksgiving*

**Blue #722**

**\*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.

**DISCIPLESHIP MOMENT – Among Friends**

**Marshall Skule**

**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.

# Sending

**\*HYMN**

*We Praise You, O God*

**Blue #726**

**\*BLESSING**

**POSTLUDE**

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## **SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS**

Preacher: Chris Myers  
Celebrant: Stacy Johnson Myers  
Cantor: David Reilly  
Liturgist: Steve Koecher  
Deacons: Lance Lueck, Karen Lloyd,  
Becky Pajac, Kathy Tomlinson,  
Laura Anderson  
Organist: Terry Mithun  
Nursery: Kahla Fuller  
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman  
Trustee: Louie Filkins  
Welcomers: Susan Walden, JoAnn Lentz  
Coffee  
Fellowship: Giving Thanks Meal  
Counters: Diane Welsh, Mark Anderson  
*Altar table flowers are given by the Pfeiffer family.*

## **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

## **Treasurer's Report**

	<u>Nov 10, 2024</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 11,661	\$ 460,414
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,463	\$ 470,835

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'



Please remember the following in your prayers this week:

**Those who are ill or recovering:**

Sue Taylor, Jeff (brother-in-law of Janice Healy), Rev. Kurt Katzmar, Barbara de Souza, Mike (friend of Mark Hudnall), Larry Bauer, Kevin (friend of Tanya Larsen), Crissy (daughter of Brad Williams), Dave Mountain

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

- For the Krueger Clan and their team who are serving the Giving Thanks Meal on Sunday, November 17th, that we may all stop and give God thanks
- For Pastor Deb as she retires from her church position to spend more time with family and as we celebrate her two-year ministry here on her last Sunday, December 1st, may God grant her rest and renewal in this next stage of her life
- For our Discipleship Team as they work to secure pledges to fully fund our church ministry for 2025 as we dedicate our financial pledges on Sunday, November 17th, may we be blessed with generous hearts
- For those who attended the latest Learning Community on Tuesday, November 12th on the Anxious Generation book which seeks to find ways to better help and support our young people, may we find better ways to minister to our young people

**Prayers for our World:**

- For a safe and fruitful hunting season
- For lasting peace in the Middle East that brings justice and security to all people and for those working for a lasting peace in the Middle East, may God's Spirit be present
- For all of us as we work to better care for the gift of God's good creation and reduce the effects of climate change

**Prayers of Thanksgiving:**

- For Don and Ginny Larson who celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary on November 20th, may God continue to bless you both! Wow!
- For Tom and Maxine Sitz who celebrated their 50th anniversary on November 9th, may you be blessed with warm memories and many more years together
- For Church White who celebrated his 96th birthday on Sunday, November 10, congratulations!
- For all those who will help cook, serve, set up and enjoy our big all church Giving Thanks Meal on Sunday, November 17th, God bless you!

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

- For the family of Richard Paulson, brother of Merle, and the family of Jean Hector, mother of Kathryn, both of whom died suddenly last week, may their families be strengthened at this difficult time
- For the saints of First Congregational as we remembered them on All Saints Sunday, November 3rd: Susan Koosmann, Bill Olson, Fred Volkmann, Sheila Peterson, Dahn Carrison, Dorothy Sorenson, Dick Alexander, Neal Prochnow, Harold Fosmo, Richard Wells, Ron Truesdill, Janice Charpentier

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!

**Inquirer's Class:** New to church? Want to know more about our life and ministry? Join us for the Inquirer's Class on **Tues, Dec 3 from 6:30 to 8:00 pm** in the Fellowship Hall. At this 90-minute gathering, you will meet church leaders, other new folks and learn more about First Congregational Church. Dessert and childcare are provided. Please sign up.

**Advent Evening Prayer Returns:** Each Wednesday in Advent, we gather for worship using the Holden Evening Prayer Service of simple songs, scripture and stories. Join us on **Wed, Dec 4, 11 and 18 at 6:30 pm** in the sanctuary for the absolutely lovely thirty-minute worship service. Youth Groups, Confirmation Classes & Interns, will all start in worship and then move to class afterward. Join us!

**Christmas Eve Worship Changes:** This year, we will again offer our 4:00 pm Christmas Eve family worship with candlelight, communion & a story for children of all ages. The late service this Christmas Eve will move to 10:00 pm, an hour earlier than previous years. It will again include the choir, communion & candlelight. Please join us at either service this Christmas Eve as we again welcome the Christ child into our world & lives and consider inviting a friend to join you.

**Sunday Morning Text Study:** Please join us on Sunday mornings to discuss the Bible passages used in worship. The group meets from **9:00–9:50** Sunday mornings in the Youth Room. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

**Adult Bible Study:** Wednesday afternoon Adult Bible Study meets from **1:00–2:30 pm**. The group is discussing *Signs and Wonders*, by Amy-Jill Levine. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

### Loving Neighbor

**Poinsettias for Christmas Eve:** Poinsettia sales in honor or memory of someone special have begun. The order forms are on the sign-up table. The cost is \$15.00 each. Please return the order form with payment by **Dec 15**. The plants will be on display for the Christmas Eve services. You may pick your plants up after the 10pm service on Christmas Eve. Proceeds of the sales go toward youth activities.

**Christmas Shoebox:** The drive for donations for Christmas Shoebox items for the gentlemen at Kinnic Falls Alcohol & Drug Abuse Services has begun. The items we collect are so very much appreciated by them. If you would rather donate cash, just designate it for the Christmas Shoebox. The list of items needed is on the gathering table.

**Sharing Families Giving Tree:** If you would like to help some children have a better Christmas this year, please select an ornament from the tree and purchase a gift from their wish list. The unwrapped gift with the ornament needs to be at the church **no later than noon Thurs, Dec 12**. Please give the gift cards to someone in the church office. If you would like to make a cash donation instead, please put "Sharing Families" in the memo line. Thank you for your generosity. If you have questions, please contact Diane Welsh (651-334-3128 or 715-386-6620) or the church office.

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

**Simpson Shelter Donations:** Please note that all donations to the Simpson Shelter need to be **new** items. They will not take anything that is used. Thank you.

### Loving Self

**Family Meals:** On Wednesday nights, we offer a home-cooked meal in the Fellowship Hall. The cost is \$9 per person with a family max of \$30. **Meals are served from 5:15 to 6:00 pm**. You can get your meal to go if you go through the line (indicate when you sign up). **Reservations must be placed by noon on Tuesdays**. You can make a reservation online, at church or by calling. Menu for Nov 20: Boneless BBQ ribs, mac & cheese, baked potatoes, veggie & rolls.

**Cribbage Night:** The cribbage group meets the second Monday. Players are asked to donate \$2 & the group decides which charity. Playing time is **7:00 pm**. All players & abilities welcome. The next game is **Dec 9**.

**Merry Widows:** They will meet on **Wed, Nov 20 at 1:00 pm at Culver's**. All widows are welcome to join us for lunch and conversation! See JoAnn Lentz for more information.

**Men's Group:** Our church men's group meets **every other Tuesday from 9:00-10:00 am** in the Youth Room. All men are welcome to join us for coffee, donuts and lively conversation. Our next gatherings are **Nov 26 & Dec 10**. Join us!

**Women's Group:** Interested in fellowship & community with other women? Pastor Deb invites you to join her at Noon every 2nd & 4th Tuesday. Please bring a sack lunch. The next meeting will be **Nov 26**.

**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.

**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**. We meet at **The Sycamore on the first Thursday of each month and in the Fellowship Hall the other Thursdays**. We have a great time sharing our projects & enjoying each other's company. Any questions, contact Marie Roe at 715-781-2103 or [firstroe@gmail.com](mailto:firstroe@gmail.com)

**WISE Corner:** NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Family Support Group is held the **2nd & 4th Thursdays at 6:30 pm at the River Falls Public Library**. For more info, call Marg Downing 715-307-5905.

### **Community Life**

**Pastor Deb Retirement Gathering:** After two years serving as our Minister for Community and Outreach, Pastor Deb Meyer is retiring so she can spend more time with her family. Her last Sunday will be **Sunday, December 1**. Join us during the Coffee Fellowship that day as we honor her time here and send her off into retirement with cake and cookies.

**Ornament Sale Fundraiser:** The Music Committee has been blessed with wonderful wooden ornaments made by Bob Johnson to sell for this Christmas season. Prices will vary depending on the size & detail. Some of the ornaments are made to stand on the shelf while others are for hanging. 100% of the proceeds go to the Music Committee for future concerts & events. The ornament sale will begin today in the gathering area and will continue each Sunday. These ornaments will go fast and make great Christmas gifts. Thank you in advance from the Music Committee.

**The Art of Sadao Watanabe:** The fine art exhibit in the Fellowship Hall is called *Witness to Faith: The Biblical Art of Sadao Watanabe*. It features twenty works by Japan's foremost Christian artist of the 20th century. We will hold a repeat of the initial discussion of Watanabe's work on **Monday, November 25 at 6:30 pm**. Friends from HOPE Lutheran Church will join us that evening. Please come! This art is not to be missed. Please sign up online or at church.

**The Advent Workshop:** The 2024 Advent Workshop for families will be in the Fellowship Hall following Sunday School on **December 8**, the Second Sunday in Advent. The event includes making a variety of Christmas ornaments. If you have friends or neighbors considering participation in a church family, invite them to join you! Please sign up.

**Annual Christmas Luncheon:** You are invited to attend a Christmas Luncheon on **Tues, Dec 10, at noon**. The menu features Norwegian meatballs and a beautiful collection of Christmas cookies. Please come! The cost is \$10.00 per person. Please make a reservation at church or online. Please let the office know if you need a ride.

**Volunteers Needed for the Christmas Luncheon:** Please volunteer to help with the Christmas luncheon. We need cooks, kitchen workers, and cookie bakers. Please indicate your willingness to help by signing up at church.

**Building Peace & Justice in Palestine/Israel - Tues, Nov 19 at 6:45 pm - YouTube Channel from Christ Presbyterian Church, Madison, WI:** Palestinian & Israeli peace activists Osama Iliwat & Rotem Levin discuss the reality on the ground & a path toward collective safety & liberation. Join us as they share their transformative journeys of trying to change the reality in Palestine & Israel, about humanity in times of dehumanization & war, & about their hope & the courage to share this hope publicly. *"We are for humanity. No one will be free if the others live under occupation. No one will be safe unless everyone is safe."* Please sign up.

### **Youth Events**

**Children's Advent Musical:** Sunday School children in pre-school through grade 5 will begin rehearsing the 2024 Advent Musical on November 10 during Sunday School. The dress rehearsal will be on Saturday, December 21, 10:00-12:00 noon. The musical will be presented during worship on Sunday, December 22. It is important for all children to regularly attend Sunday School and be present for these rehearsals.

**SCRIPTURE LESSON: Habakkuk 3:17-19**

Though the fig tree does not blossom,  
and no fruit is on the vines;  
though the produce of the olive fails  
and the fields yield no food;  
though the flock is cut off from the fold  
and there is no herd in the stalls,  
yet I will rejoice in the LORD;  
I will exult in the God of my salvation.  
GOD, the Lord, is my strength;  
he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,  
and makes me tread upon the heights.

**GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 6:25-33**

‘Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, “What will we eat?” or “What will we drink?” or “What will we wear?” For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.