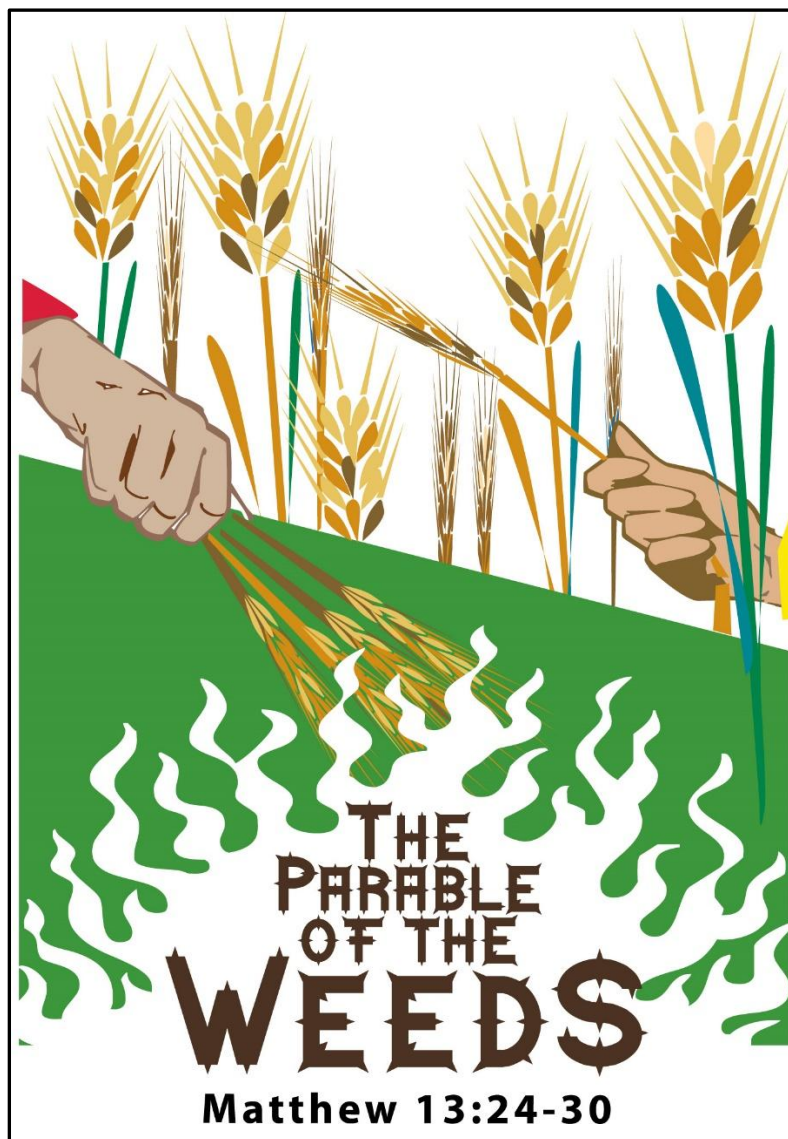


**First Congregational
United Church of Christ
River Falls, Wisconsin**

July 19, 2026



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

July 19, 2026

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

9:30 am

Gathering

Dennis Alfveby is celebrating his 51st year as a church musician; he is presently director of music at Trinity Lutheran Church in Lindstrom, Minnesota, and is in his 25th year as accompanist for the River Falls High School Choir.

Welcome to our guests who are visiting with us today! - Activity bags are available for children. - Large print bulletins are available. - Visitors please stop at the welcome booth. - Please stand when noted by the * - Congregation responses are in bold. - Please note our worship service is livestreamed.	Our Mission is to Love God and Serve People. Everyone is Welcome Because Everyone Matters.
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PRELUDE

Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart

arr. Ham

The Doxology

arr. Hayes

God of Grace and God of Glory

arr. Manz

WELCOME AND RINGING OF THE BELL

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: We come with gratitude for the wonders of this warm and sunny season.

P: **Let us praise the God of the harvest.**

L: We come with anticipation for all that lies ahead at home, at church, and in our community.

P: **Let us praise the God of the banquet.**

L: We come with joy in the knowledge that the Spirit remains constant through the seasons of life.

P: **Let us praise the God of the seasons.**

All: **Come let us sing our praise!**

***HYMN**

All Creatures of Our God and King

Blue #23

Verses 1, 3, 4 and 5

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Loving God, you call us to love you with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. We try. But we fall short. We are too easily distracted from you. Our schedules are packed. We don't make time for you in our lives. We don't sit still and listen for you in the silence. We turn our back on you, even when we want to follow you. Forgive us, we pray. Help us to live in your light and to walk on your pathway. Today. Tomorrow. This week. Always. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

L: God hears our prayer. God forgives our waywardness and beckons us home.

P: **Thanks be to God!**

L: God embraces us even in our wandering ways.

P: **Thanks be to God!!**

L: God forgives us and gives us strength to turn our lives around.

P: **Thanks be to God!**

All: **Alleluia! Amen and amen!**

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

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Galatians 5:16-26

PSALM 126 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R



The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.

- L: When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.
P: **Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, 'The LORD has done great things for them.'**
L: The LORD has done great things for us, and we rejoiced.
P: **Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like the watercourses in the Negeb.**
L: May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.
P: **Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves. R**

Proclaiming the Word

GOSPEL LESSON

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

For All the Saints

Blue #529

Verses 1, 3 and 5

***STATEMENT OF FAITH – United Church of Christ**

We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit, God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God, and to your deeds we testify:

You call the worlds into being, create persons in your own image, and set before each one the ways of life and death.

You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.

You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues and races.

You call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your servants in the service of others, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

You promise to all who trust you forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your realm which has no end. Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you. Amen.

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.



MISSION MOMENT – Judy Sambs – Habitat for Humanity

GATHERING OUR GIFTS

Toccata Giocoso
arr. Martin

*OFFERTORY

O God Beyond All Praising



O - God be-yond all prais-ing, we wor-ship you to - day and - sing the love a - maz - ing that
songs can - not re - pay; for we can on - ly won - der at - ev - 'vry gift you send, at —
bless - ings with - out num - ber and mer - cies with - out end: we lift our hearts be - fore - you and
wait up - on your word, we hon - or and a - dore you, our great and might - y Lord.

***OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Holy and Loving God **accept these gifts. Given with our thanks and love, may these gifts do the work of your church in many places, with many people, with many communities. May they spread your love, your grace, your welcome, your justice. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.**

Celebrating the Meal

All Christians are welcome at the Lord's table. The bread is gluten-free. The cup is alcohol-free.
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 and everywhere to give thanks...

The Words of Institution

L: We praise your name as we proclaim 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:

Fairest Lord Jesus

Blue #123

God is Here

Blue #1

Let Us Break Bread Together

Blue #699

Let us break bread together on our knees;

Let us break bread together on our knees;

**Refrain: *When I fall on my knees, with my face to the rising sun,
O Lord, have mercy on me.***

Let us drink wine together on our knees;

Let us drink wine together on our knees; Refrain

Let us praise God together on our knees;

Let us praise God together on our knees; Refrain

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**

Rejoice, the Lord Is King!

Blue #342

***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

Fanfare in D Major

arr. Lemmens

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Chris Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Steve Koecher
Deacons: Heidi Cavaness, Liz Swank,
Laura Anderson, Becky Pajac
Organist: Dennis Alfveby
Nursery: Diane Olson
Welcomers: Jan Johnson, Marg Downing
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Trustee: Andy Krueger
Coffee
Fellowship: Luedtke Family
Counters: Marie Roe, Dennis Linder

CHURCH STAFF

Pastor: Christopher Myers
Education Pastor: Stacy Johnson Myers
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: Marie Roe
Office Administrator: Missy Luedtke
Nursery Attendant: Kahla Fuller
Custodians: Farnum Fuller,
Troy Zakrzewski

Treasurer's Report

	<u>July 12, 2026</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 1,550	\$ 309,934
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 11,308	\$ 316,624

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:

Eric (friend of Liz Swank), Steve and Janice Withers (father and mother of Erik Withers), Sam Morrisette, Nathaniel (friend of the Kruegers), Bruce (father of Melissa Oscanyan), Ron Freimark (friend of Roger Kampstra), Kathy Deiss (aunt of Ann Nelson), Wes (son of Dave and Patti Phillipps)

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For the 10,936 (yes, we counted them!) diapers given to local families by our church community to the River Falls Food Pantry, Our Neighbors' Place and Turningpoint, may they be signs of God's love
- For those who will be singing on summer choir dates (July 26 and August 16), thank you for sharing your gifts!
- For those who helped and attended our River Falls Days Bluegrass Concert on the church front lawn, it was awesome!
- For our church softball team as they gather each Monday at Hoffman Park, have a fun and fan filled year!

Prayers for our World:

- As teams are gathering for the World Cup, may the 'beautiful game' unite us on this one earth
- For those affected by recent devastating earthquakes in Venezuela, may help come quickly
- For those struggling to afford basic necessities - food, rent, childcare, healthcare - that God would provide for them through caring communities, compassionate assistance, meaningful work, and generous hearts
- For those in our armed forces and their families, may we support them and may God watch over them
- As we celebrate the 250th anniversary of our nation's founding, may we be given courage on the quest to become a more perfect union
- For farmers, especially small family farms, struggling to stay viable with so many economic challenges
- For stability and peace in Sudan, Iran, Gaza and Ukraine
- For those living with dementia and families trying to care for them, may they all be given strength, grace and help along the way

Prayers of Thanksgiving:

- For our Garden Geeks who tend our church garden and who keep everything looking great, God bless you all!
- For our church mowing team who this year includes Laura and Mark Anderson, Randy Welsh, Roger Kapping and Lee Lueck, thanks for keeping our church lawn looking so great!
- For all those who have been given the gift of fatherhood, may you continue to grow into this wonderful gift
- For the gift of summer, may we savor every bit of it
- For those giving blood at our next blood drive on Wednesday, July 22, may it bring life

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For family and friends of Jake Wagner, who died unexpectedly recently, may they be strengthened during this difficult time
- For the family of Glenn Hansen, who died recently, may they be comforted
- For the families of Ann Gustafson, Gary Pieffer (cousin of Rose Rude), Joyce Kampstra, Ally Fox, Seth Pipho and Karsten Greenchurch, may they grieve in hope

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

Sunday, July 19, 2026

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!

Loving Neighbor

Grace Place Picnic Meal Volunteers Needed: Our church will serve a picnic style meal at Grace Place. The date is **Wednesday, July 29**. We cook the meal in our church kitchen then serve it in New Richmond. Please use the sign-up sheet at church to help with this needed mission opportunity. Church interns receive intern credit for this mission.

Summer Nursery Volunteers Needed: During the summer months our church nursery is staffed by volunteers while our weekly, faithful nursery worker Kahla Fuller enjoys some time off. Please sign up for a Sunday to staff the nursery. Thank you! Use the sign-up sheet at church or online.

First Church Companions: Are you interested in being a companion to someone in our church connecting with them at least once a month with a call or visit? Or would you like to have someone for a companion. Please use the sign-up sheet to be a companion or request someone to visit you.

Grace Place Donations: Needed items: New adult undergarments (underwear up to size XXL), new bras, new or like-new sweatpants up to size 4X, new or like-new T-shirts up to size 4X, new shoes (adult men and female), belts, adult socks, good buys. There is a bin at church for donations.

Empty Pill Bottles (Prescription Only): The River Falls Lions Club is collecting empty pill bottles, only the clear prescription bottles that are filled by our pharmacists, to send to Africa where there is an urgent need. The bottles will be washed, and the labels soaked off before they are shipped. A tub is in the gathering area.

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 & Facebook. It is held at church **Tuesdays & Thursdays 9am to 3pm**.

Loving Self

Summer Choir is low stress and low commitment. We simply meet an hour before the service and sing a familiar song. The next dates will be **July 26 and August 16**. Please consider joining us!

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 & lively conversation. Our next meetings are **July 21 & Aug 4**.

Women's Group: Interested in fellowship & community with other women? You are invited to join the group at noon every 2nd & 4th Tuesday. Please bring a lunch. The next meetings will be **July 28 & Aug 11**.

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/Craft Together: Join us on **Thursdays at 10:00 am**. We meet at **Sycamore on the first Thursday of each month & the Fellowship Hall the other Thursdays**. We have a great time sharing our projects & enjoying each other's company. For more info, contact Marie Roe at 715-781-2103 or firstroe@gmail.com

Game Day Sunday: Game Day is held on the third Sunday of the month. Our next Game Days are **TODAY July 19 and August 16 at 11:45 am**. Join us!

WISE Team: NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Family Support Group meets on the 2nd & 4th Thursdays at 6:30 pm at 113 East Elm St. & Peer Support Group meets the same evenings at the church at 6:30 pm. For mental health issues, please call 988. For info, call Marg Downing at 715-307-5905.

Community Life

Softball News: We are back in the winning category. Due to a forfeit, not the way we wanted to win, our record is 4:3. Our next two games are **July 20 at 6:15 pm and July 27 at 6:15 pm** both games at Hoffman Park. Come cheer us on! We play every Monday at Hoffman Park throughout the summer until August 24th. We are the team in the red shirts. Any questions, contact Deb Hoffman at (612)308-4945, debhoffman234b@gmail.com.

Red Cross Blood Drive: The next Red Cross Blood Drive held at the church is on **Wed, July 22, from 11:00 am–5:00 pm**. See the flyer for more info. Call 1-800-733-2767 or go to www.redcrossblood.org to schedule an appointment.

VBS Volunteers Needed: VBS requires many adult and teen volunteers. Please join the excitement by volunteering to help. VBS will be July 27-30, 9:00–11:30 am. Please sign up at church or online.

VBS Fused Glass for Adults: Adults are invited to come to the VBS village on **Wed, July 29, 1:00–2:30 pm** to make a square fused glass piece. It is a lovely, fun project, and participants will be able to make their own designs. The cost is \$15.00. Please sign up at church or online.

Peaches: It's time to place your order for the delicious Washington State Peaches! One single-layer box is \$27.00; 2 or more single-layer boxes are \$26.00 each. **Orders must be placed by July 27 for pick up around August 7.** There are 3 ways to order: 1. Email: office@firstchurchrf.org; 2. Sign up at church or online; 3. Call: 715-425-2052 – Mon-Thurs from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm or leave a message with name, phone, and number of boxes. This is an annual fundraiser for our youth. Thank you for your support!

Annual Ice Cream Social: Held at the Kinnickinnic Historical Church, 1276 County Road J, RF, on **Sun, August 2 from 1:00 to 5:00 pm**. There will be entertainment, ice cream, pie, cake and tours of the Kinnickinnic Cemetery. Please see the flyer for more information. To volunteer or donate a pie, please contact Patti Phillipps at 715-977-0354

Night of Dinner/Theater: You are invited to a night of dinner and a show on **Thurs, August 13**. Dinner will be served starting at **6:00 pm**, followed by the main feature: the musical *Rock Slinger and His Greatest Hit*. It is the story of David and Goliath. The show has fun music and clever lines. Please come to support the young people in the congregation. Sign up at church or online.

Tools for School: Once again, we are collecting school supplies for local families. As you are out shopping, please start collecting everything students might need this fall. The School Supply Event will be on **August 17 & 18** here at church. Typically, we serve about 300 students. Thank you for your generous support of this needed local ministry. Please also sign up to help sort and distribute items.

Name Tags: We encourage you to wear your name tags so that everyone can call you by name. It would also help the deacons when you take communion. If you do not have one, please let Missy in the church office know at missy@firstchurchrf.org. In appreciation, the Welcoming Committee.

Youth Events

VBS and Summer Children's Musical: Dates for the 2026 children's summer programs are:

VBS: July 27-30, 9:00 to 11:30 am. Theme is: My Peace I Give to You

Children's Musical: August 10-13, 9:00 am to Noon. The show will be *Rock Slinger and His Greatest Hits*.

VBS is for children age 3 to completed grade 5. The musical is for children who have completed kindergarten through completed grade 6. Emma Cruciani will be the director. We will need adult and teen volunteers for VBS. Please save the dates! Registration forms are online and at church. Please invite friends and neighbors.

Summer Youth Group Events: **Wed, July 29 - Conquer Ninja / Top Golf Combo** – Depart church around 1:00 pm. Top Golf at 1:30 pm and Conquer Ninja (obstacle course) open gym at 3:00 pm. Alex expects this to cost \$15-20 per person and the church will cover the rest. Please email Alex at rfyouthgroup@gmail.com to confirm going!

Mon, August 3 – Activate – Alex has flexibility to schedule this any time before 5:00 pm and will reserve the 90-minute experience around the group's availability! Cost is \$10 per person, and friends are welcome with advanced notice. (Alex must reserve tickets for the exact group size.) Please email Alex at rfyouthgroup@gmail.com to confirm going!

Tues, August 4 - Main Event – Main Event is a brand new space that is opening in Woodbury featuring bowling, virtual reality, laser tag, billiards, arcade games, gravity ropes, human crane, and more! Once Alex has a group, he will reach out and make reservations. He is expecting it to be \$10-15 a person. Friends are welcome with advanced notice as Alex likely needs to reserve exact numbers. Please email Alex at rfyouthgroup@gmail.com to confirm going!

Sun, August 16 - Kayaking the Kinni – Join us for kayaking the Kinni! The group will decide if we are kayaking the upper or lower. When you sign up, please let me know if you have your own kayaks or will need to borrow one. Please email Alex at rfyouthgroup@gmail.com to confirm going!

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Galatians 5:16-26

Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.

GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

He put before them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, "Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?" He answered, "An enemy has done this." The slaves said to him, "Then do you want us to go and gather them?" But he replied, "No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, 'Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.' He answered, 'The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!