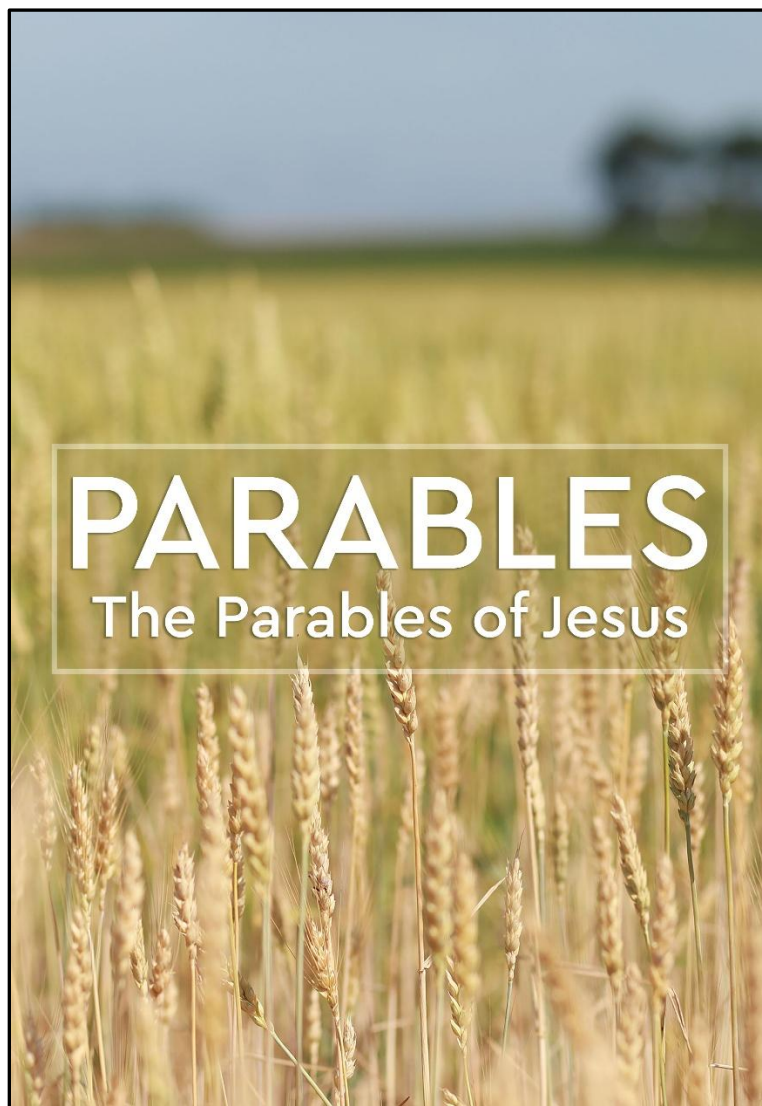


**First Congregational
United Church of Christ
River Falls, Wisconsin**

July 26, 2026



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

July 26, 2026

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

9:30 am

Gathering

Some people, in order to discover God, read books. But there is a great book, the very appearance of created things. Look above you! Look below you! Note it. Read it. God, whom you want to discover, never wrote that book with ink. Instead God set before your eyes the things that God had made. Can you ask for a louder voice than that?

- Augustine of Hippo, 5th century

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.**

PRELUDE

Speak, O Lord

Getty-Townend

Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

arr. Rouse

Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee

arr. Raney

Sarah Plum, Piano and Dennis Alfveby, Organ

WELCOME AND RINGING OF THE BELL

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: We gather as God's people:

P: **To seek direction in the living of our lives.**

L: We gather as God's people:

P: **To be still and hear what God would have us do.**

L: We gather as God's people:

P: **To be renewed, restored and recreated.**

L: We rejoice that we are God's people:

P: **To serve, to love and to sing God's praise.**

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

***HYMN**

God of the Ages, Who with Sure Command

Black #592

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

L: O Lord our God, you are wise;

P: **You know our thoughts before we reveal them to you.**

L: O Lord our God, you are compassionate;
P: You know our joys and fears before we name them to you.
 L: O Lord our God, you are just;
P: You offer us mercy while we cringe at the expectation of judgment and punishment.
 L: O Lord our God, you welcome every one of us;
P: In spite of our weaknesses, our failures, our doubts, you invite each one of us into your presence.
All: O God, when we stumble, help us up. When we wander, lead us home. When we sin, forgive us and make us one with you. Amen.

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

L: In Christ, God is at work in our world redeeming the sins of the past.
P: In Christ, God is at work in our lives, making a new and beautiful future.
 L: In Christ we are forgiven.
P: Thanks be to God. 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)

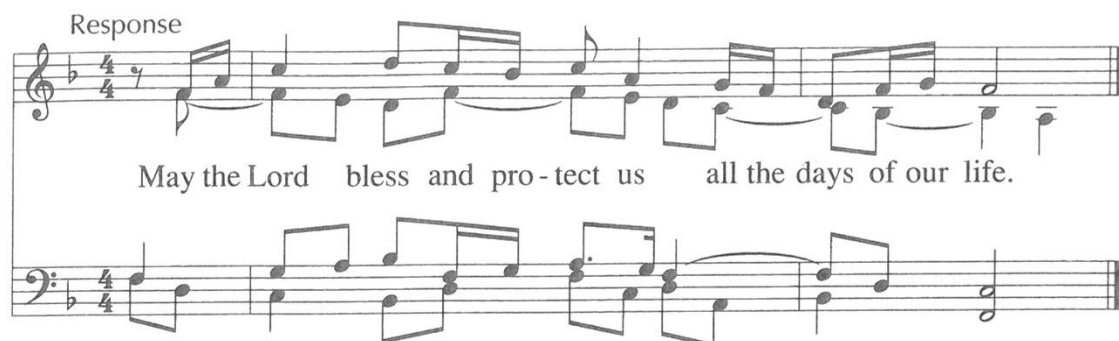
***GLORIA (Sung twice)** *Amen* (Led by the Choir)
Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Romans 8:31-39

PSALM 128 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)



L: Happy are those who revere the LORD, who walk in God's ways.
P: You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be happy, and it shall go well with you.

- L: Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table.
- P: **Thus shall we be blessed who revere the LORD.**
- L: The LORD bless you from Zion. May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life.
- P: **May you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel! R**

Proclaiming the Word

GOSPEL LESSON

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

O God, Our Help in Ages Past

Blue #84

***STATEMENT OF FAITH – from the Iona Ecumenical Community in Scotland**

- L: Let us affirm our faith.
- P: **We believe in Jesus Christ, Son of the One God, maker and sustainer of earth, sea and sky. Born of Mary, faithful to the God of Abraham and Sarah, Jesus healed the sick, served the poor, and proclaimed heaven on earth. Condemned by the religious, crucified by the state, He died but transformed even death and rose to life everlasting. He blessed the disciples with his Holy Spirit and sent them forth, east and west, north and south. We commit ourselves to Jesus, to one another as brothers and sisters and to the grace of the Holy Spirit. 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.

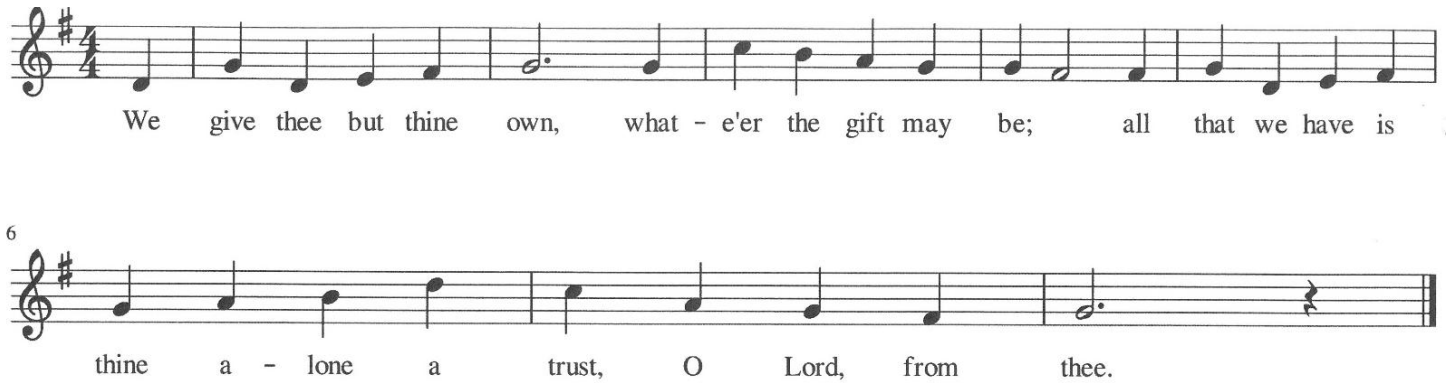
GATHERING OUR GIFTS – Summer Choir

We Are Not Alone
Chopin



*OFFERTORY

We Give Thee but Thine Own



*OFFERTORY PRAYER

O God, we dedicate these gifts to you in hope – a hope which begins now, yet stretches further than human eye can see. Show us, we pray, how our own behavior may give your caring love more scope. May our divided minds be more and more absorbed in your single purpose, so that we may live as your faithful disciples, this day and every day. 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: Sisters and Brothers in Christ, this is the table where our Savior Jesus Christ wants to feed us on the bread of life. Let us feast on his grace that forgives us. Let us feast on his peace that calms us. Let us feast on his love that frees us. Come just as you are and be fed by him.

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:

Jesus, Joy of Our Desiring

1. Je - sus, joy of our de - sir-ing, ho - ly wis - dom,
2. Through the way where hope is guid-ing, hark, what peace - ful

love most bright; drawn by thee, our souls as - pir-ing soar to
mu - sic rings; where the flock, in thee con - fid-ing, drink of

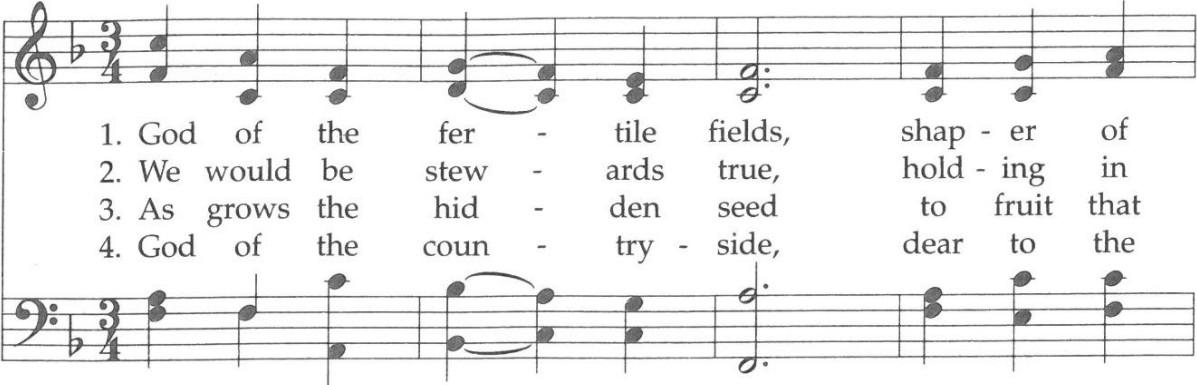
un - cre - at - ed light. Word of God, our flesh that fashioned,
joy from death - less springs. Theirs is beau - ty's fair - est plea-sure;

with the fire of life im - pas-sioned, striv-ing still to
theirs is wis - dom's ho - liest trea-sure. Thou dost ev - er

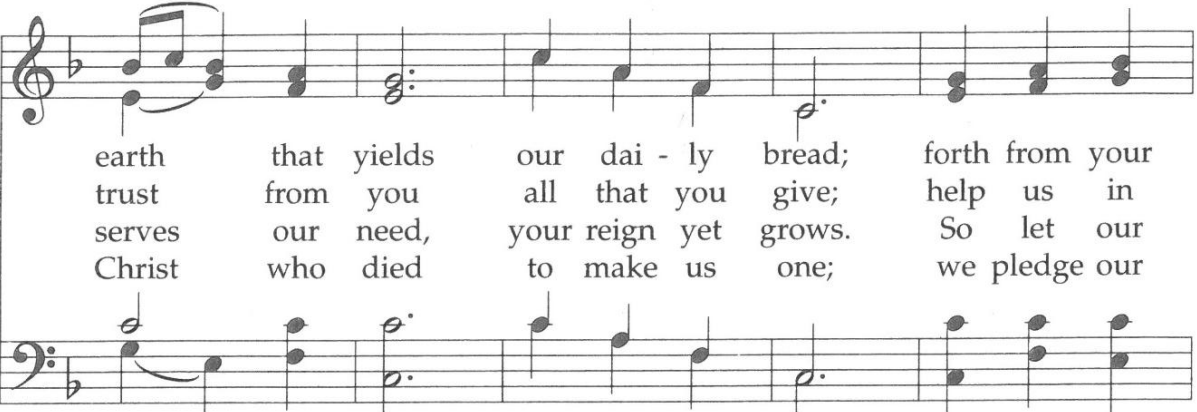
truth un - known, soar - ing, dy - ing round thy throne.
lead thine own in the love of joys un - known.

The musical score is written for two staves, Treble and Bass, in 3/4 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is primarily in the Treble staff, while the bass line provides harmonic support in the Bass staff. The lyrics are arranged in two columns, corresponding to the two verses. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and bar lines, and ends with a double bar line.

God of the Fertile Fields



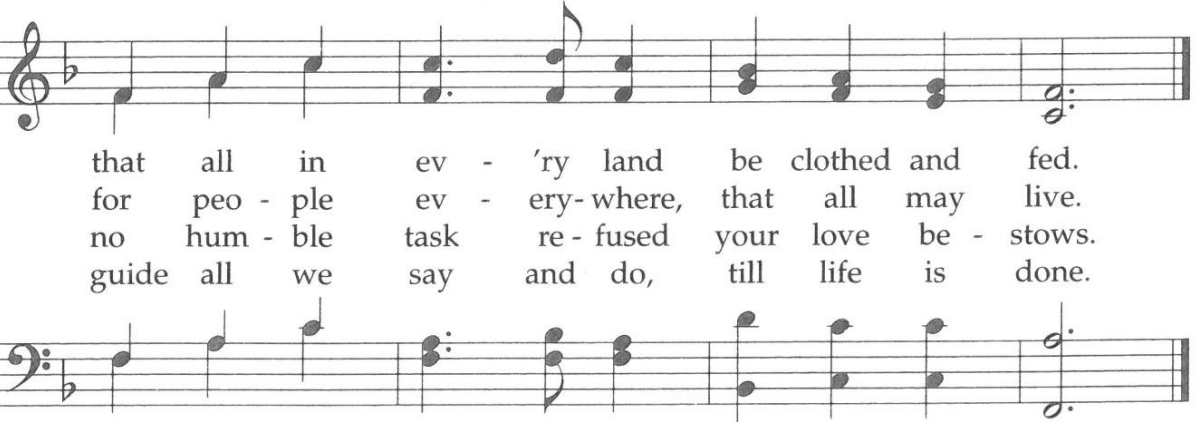
1. God of the fer - tile fields, shap - er of
2. We would be stew - ards true, hold - ing in
3. As grows the hid - den seed to fruit that
4. God of the coun - try - side, dear to the



earth that yields our dai - ly bread; forth from your
trust from you all that you give; help us in
serves our need, your reign yet grows. So let our
Christ who died to make us one; we pledge our



boun - teous hand come gifts your love has planned,
love to share, teach us like you to care
toil be used, no gift of yours a - busied,
lives a - new in faith - ful love to you;



that all in ev - 'ry land be clothed and fed.
for peo - ple ev - ery - where, that all may live.
no hum - ble task re - fused your love be - stows.
guide all we say and do, till life is done.

Breathe on Me, Breath of God

Blue #461

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**

Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

Blue #501

***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty

Manz

Reprinted music used by permission under the following licenses:
OneLicense.net A-703731; CCLI License 2892021

It's time to place your order for the delicious



Washington State Peaches!



1 single-layer box for \$27.00

2 or more single-layer boxes for \$26.00 each

**The peaches should be arriving around August 7th
at First Congregational Church**

110 North Third Street, River Falls, WI

We will contact you when pick up begins.

3 WAYS TO ORDER:

- 1. Email: office@firstchurchrf.org**
- 2. Sign up on website (under Connect):
www.firstchurchrf.org**
- 3. Call: 715-425-2052 – order Mon-Thurs from 9:00 am
to 3:00 pm or leave a message**

ORDER DEADLINE IS JULY 27

When placing an order, please provide your name, phone number and the number of boxes you would like to order.

Thank you for your support!

SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Stacy Johnson Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Jean Smith
Deacons: Lance Lueck, Brian Miller,
Liz Swank, Melissa Oscanyan
Organist: Dennis Alfveby
Nursery: Diane Olson
Welcomers: Jean Smith
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Trustee: Mike Danielson
Coffee
Fellowship: Mike and Sue Danielson
Counters: Jean Smith, Vicki Sippel
*Altar table flowers are given by Cindy
Gandrud in memory of her parents Ron and
Liz Gandrud.*

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 19, 2026</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 11,099	\$ 333,288
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 11,308	\$ 327,932

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'

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.

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), Marlene (friend of Lu Lueck), Ron Freimark (friend of Roger Kampstra), Kathy (relative of Ann Nelson) Ryan Cottrell (friend of the Koechers), Jeff (brother of Steve Healy), Diana (friend of Janice Healy), Greg (friend of Ron Ruhnke), Rose Rude, Nolan

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 singing on our summer choir dates (July 26 and August 16) thank you for sharing your gifts!
- For our 2026 VBS program 'Peace Be With You' which runs July 27-30, may it kindle the peace of Christ
- For our 2026 Youth Musical 'The Rockslinger', August 10-13, may it be a fun and faith-filled week!
- For Lyle Woods who turned 100 on June 17th, congratulations on this amazing accomplishment!
- For our church softball team as they gather each Monday at Hoffman Park, have a fun and fan-filled year!

Prayers for our World:

- For those affected by forest fires in northern Minnesota and Canada, 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
- 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 Bobbie Kuhn who celebrates her 80th birthday on Thursday, August 27, may you enjoy many more!
- For our Garden Geeks who tend our church garden and our Lawn Team who keep everything looking great, God bless you all!
- For those helping out with VBS this week with snacks, crafts, teaching, serving, God bless you all!
- For the gift of summer, may we savor every bit of it
- For those who gave blood at our last blood drive on Wednesday, July 22, may it bring life

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For the families of Glenn Hansen, Ann Gustafson, Gary Pieffer (cousin of Rose Rude), Joyce Kampstra, 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.





PEACE
BE WITH
YOU

Vacation Bible School

All are welcome! No Charge
Age 3 - Completed Grade 5
July 27-30th 9-11:30 AM
110 N 3rd St. River Falls, WI | 715-425-2052



First Congregational UCC
Scan QR code to register
or visit: www.firstchurchrf.org

**THE
ROCK SLINGER
& HIS GREATEST HITS**

CHILDREN'S MUSICAL
August 10 -13, 2026 from 9-noon
Directed by Emma Cruciani, accompanied by Marsha Pearson
Dinner & Performance Aug. 13th, 6:00 PM
Completed Kindergarten-Grade 6



ALL ARE WELCOME ⚡ NO CHARGE
First Congregational UCC
110 N 3rd St. River Falls, WI | 715-425-2052
Scan QR code to register or visit: www.firstchurchrf.org



Designed by Magnific www.magnific.com

SCHOOL SUPPLY DONATIONS

We welcome all school supply donations, but
especially need:

- *Quality Backpacks
(Need to last all year-Nike, Adidas, Lands End, High Sierra)
- *Ticonderoga Pencils
- *Dry Erase Markers
- *Pencil Top Erasers
- *Large Glue Sticks
- *Wide Ruled Composition Notebooks
- *TI-30XIIS Scientific Calculators



**We are so thankful for all
your support - we couldn't
do it without you!**



SCRIPTURE LESSON: Romans 8:31-39

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written,

'For your sake we are being killed all day long;
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.'

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

He put before them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.'

He told them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.'

'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.'

'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.'

'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

'Have you understood all this?' They answered, 'Yes.' And he said to them, 'Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.'