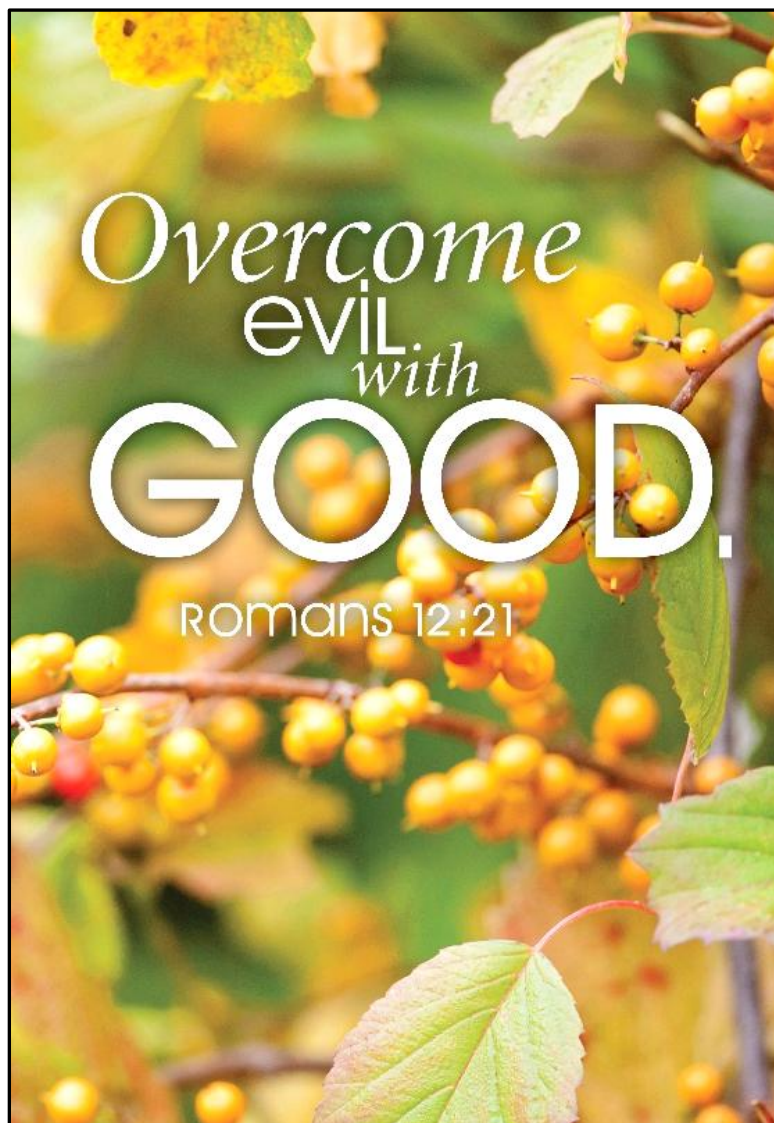


**First Congregational
United Church of Christ
River Falls, Wisconsin**

August 30, 2026



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

August 30, 2026

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

9:30 am

Gathering

"I have read in Plato and Cicero sayings that are wise and very beautiful; but I have never read in either of them: Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden."

- Saint Augustine

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.
--	--

GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME AND RINGING OF THE BELL

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: We are gathered for worship.

P: **There is much to do in the world, for the hungry cry to be fed, the homeless to be housed. We live in the midst of a world in need of peace and a people in need of hope.**

L: We are gathered for worship.

P: **There is much to do in our lives. There are commitments to fulfill, jobs to do. We must care for our children, our parents, our homes.**

L: The problems of this world call for energy and vision.

P: **In worship we seek God's vision of hope and meet the Holy Spirit who gives strength to the weary.**

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

***HYMN**

Morning Has Broken

Blue #35

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Gracious God, if we fail to see the beauty all around us, if we never stop to feel the sun on our faces, if we neglect to listen to the music of birds or laughter of children, forgive us. Open our hearts to the grace and truth that surrounds and fills the ordinary days of our lives. Remind us again, and again, and again of your constant presence and ability to bring new life to our world. Amen.

*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

L: God is merciful and gracious,

P: **Slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**

L: In Christ we are forgiven.

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

We are singing, for the Lord is our light, we are singing for the Lord is our light.

We are singing, for the Lord is our light, we are singing for the Lord is our light.

We are singing, oh, we are singing for the Lord is our light.

We are singing, oh, we are singing for the Lord is our light.

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Romans 12:9-21

Paul expands on how love or agapé should be exhibited in the lives of the Christians in Rome.

PSALM 26:1-8 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

Response

Antiphon: Elaine Kirkland, 1994

The musical notation is for a two-part setting of the antiphon. The top part is in treble clef and the bottom part is in bass clef. Both are in 2/2 time and D major. The melody is simple and hymn-like. The lyrics are written below the notes.

Your steadfast love is before my eyes.

L: Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering.

P: **Prove me, O LORD, and try me; test my heart and mind.**

L: For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in faithfulness to you.

P: **I do not sit with the worthless, nor do I consort with hypocrites; I hate the company of evildoers, and will not sit with the wicked.**

L: I wash my hands in innocence, and go around your altar, O LORD, singing aloud a song of thanksgiving, and telling all your wondrous deeds.

P: **O LORD, I love the house in which you dwell, and the place where your glory abides. R**

Proclaiming the Word

GOSPEL LESSON

Matthew 16:21-28

Jesus' prediction of his own death astounds the disbelieving disciples.

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

*HYMN

Come and Follow Me

Blue #350

*STATEMENT OF FAITH (World Council of Churches)

I believe in the living God, the Maker of all humankind who creates and sustains the universe in power and in love.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God incarnate on earth, who showed us by his words and work, suffering with others, conquest of death, what human life ought to be and what God is like.

I believe that the Spirit of God is present with us now and always, and can be experienced in prayer, in forgiveness, in the Word, the Sacraments, the community of the Church and all that we do. 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 – Jamie Mills

*DOXOLOGY

***Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, ye heavenly host:
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.***



***OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Praise God! **You are the God who creates us, the Christ who redeems us, the Holy Spirit who fills us with hope. May we and our gifts be instruments of your purpose here on earth. 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: 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 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:

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.

The musical notation is in 3/4 time, key of B-flat major. It consists of three staves. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The melody is: G4 (quarter), A4-B4 (eighths), G4 (quarter), F4 (half), E4 (quarter), D4 (half), C4 (quarter), B3 (half), A3 (quarter), G3 (half). The lyrics are: "1 Come to the ta-ble of grace. Come to the ta-ble of". The second staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The melody is: G4 (quarter), A4-B4 (eighths), G4 (quarter), F4 (half), E4 (quarter), D4 (half), C4 (quarter), B3 (half), A3 (quarter), G3 (half). The lyrics are: "grace. This is God's ta - ble; it's not yours or". The third staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The melody is: G4 (quarter), A4-B4 (eighths), G4 (quarter), F4 (half), E4 (quarter), D4 (half), C4 (quarter), B3 (half), A3 (quarter), G3 (half). The lyrics are: "mine. Come to the ta - ble of grace."

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

They'll Know We Are Christians

Blue #595

Make Me a Channel of Your Peace

Blue #587

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**

You Servants of God

Blue #112

***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

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

SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Chris Myers
Cantor: Jamie Mills
Liturgist: Traci Hagberg
Deacons: Melissa Oscanyan, Ann Nelson,
Heidi Cavaness, Becky Pajac
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Nursery: Diane Olson
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Trustee: Andy Krueger
Coffee
Fellowship:
Counters: Jean Smith, Vicki Sippel

*Altar table flowers are given by Bobbie Kuhn
in celebration of her birthday.*

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>Aug 23, 2026</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 5,836	\$ 384,178
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 11,308	\$ 384,472

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), Ryan Cottrell (friend of the Koechers), Jeff (brother of Steve Healy), Diana (friend of Janice Healy), Greg (friend of Ron Ruhnke), Nolan, Kelly (sister-in-law of Cindy Gandrud), Jill (daughter of JoAnn Mathews), Connie Pajac (sister of Jeff Pajac), Dave Woeste, Lu Lueck

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For the Tools for School program at our church which recently provided over 350 River Falls kids school supplies, may this help them and their families have a great school year
- For our summer youth musical "The Rock Slinger," the story of David and Goliath which 16 of our kids presented recently, what amazing things you can do in a week with some help, thank you!
- For our 2026 VBS program 'Peace Be With You' which ran recently with over 50 kids, what a great week!
- For all those who bought, unloaded and will eat peaches as part of our youth fundraiser, enjoy them!
- For our church softball team as they played their final games of the season, thanks for a fun filled year!

Prayers for our World:

- For all those getting ready for school, teachers, students, staff and college students moving in, may you have a great and fruitful year
- For peace in our world, our communities and our own hearts
- For those affected by recent tornadoes in Appleton, Neenah and Menasha, and for those in our church who contributed \$5000 to help them rebuild, with the help of good neighbors may they recover 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 our Among Friends program as they seek more board members (see Norma Revels or Marshall Skule for details), and may their program continue to grow and provide support to families with dementia

Prayers of Thanksgiving:

- For the gift of music, especially the harp music shared by Kristin Andes this past week and enjoyed by many in our Fellowship Hall, may it kindle gratitude in us
- For the gift of the Minnesota State Fair, let the good times (and food!) roll!
- For Bobbie Kuhn who celebrated her 80th birthday on Thursday, August 27, may you enjoy many more!
- For our Garden Geeks who tend our church garden and our Lawn Mowing Team who keep everything looking great, God bless you all!
- For the \$3136 raised from peaches that will go to our Youth Fund, thank you!
- For the gift of summer, may we savor every last bit of it
- For those who will give blood at our next blood drive on Monday, September 28, may it bring life

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For the family of Terry Mills, father of Tim Mills, who died this past week, may his family be comforted
- For the family of Kathy Deiss (relative of Ann Nelson) who died peacefully surrounded by family and whose funeral will be September 4th in Ellsworth, may she join the saints in light
- For the families of Robert (Bob) Peterson (brother of Larry Peterson), Krisan Shaw, Glenn Hansen, Ann Gustafson, 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.

Announcements

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!

One More Sunday School Teacher Needed: Many thanks to the 14 people who have volunteered to teach Sunday School this year. **We need one more person to fill out the teaching teams.** Please volunteer! The need is for our younger class as we have so many young kids. All teachers are part of a team and typically teach once every three Sundays. For more information, please contact Pastor Stacy. To volunteer, please sign up at church or online.

Sunday School Teachers' Meeting: Sunday School teachers are asked to attend a meeting on **Thurs, Sept 10, 6:30 pm**. This meeting is a chance to get organized for the new Sunday School year. The meeting will conclude by 7:30 pm.

Rally Day: Sunday School, Sunday Morning Bible Study, choir and bells resume, resume on **Rally Day, Sept 13**. All children who are three years old (and toilet-trained) are welcome in Sunday School. Previously registered students do not need to register again. New students should register. Registration forms are available at church or online.

Fall Worship Series: Faith In Our Heads, Hearts and Hands: What does it mean to have faith? Is faith something we believe, something we feel, or something we do? The answer is yes! Join us **Sept 13, 20 & 27** for a three-week worship series exploring Faith: Head, Heart & Hands. Just as we each have different ways of expressing love, we may also have a natural "faith language." Some of us connect with God through questions, learning, and ideas; others through prayer, worship, and experience; and still others through serving, helping, and putting faith into action. Over these 3 Sundays, we'll explore our own faith language while also discovering how God may be inviting us to grow in the other two - because a vibrant, growing faith needs head, heart, and hands.

Sunday Morning Bible Study: Sunday morning Bible study groups resumes on Rally Day, **September 13**. The group discusses the Bible passages used in worship. The group meets at **9:00-9:50** Sunday mornings in the Youth Room. Please join us! For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

Wednesday Afternoon Bible Study: The Wednesday Afternoon Bible Study will resume on **Wed, Sept 16, 1:00-2:30**. The group will study Revelation. Copies of the discussion book are available in the office for \$20.00 each. The fall is a terrific time to being participating in Bible Study. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

Wednesday School Workers Needed: Wednesday School begins on **October 7**. We need volunteers to provide snacks on a rotating basis and adult and teen volunteers to help with the children. Please sign the list on the sign-up table or volunteer on the website.

Loving Neighbor

Summer Nursery Volunteers Needed: During the summer months our church nursery is staffed by volunteers. Please sign up for a Sunday to staff the nursery. Thank you! Use the sign-up sheet at church or online.

Journey House: (Ecumenical young adult outreach) is getting ready for the new school year! If you're interested in contributing, here are some ideas: **A Welcome to School Care Kit & Goody Bag**. We are asking for a donation of \$25. The bags will be handed out to students; **A suggested donation of \$30 to help sponsor our weekly gathering, Journey Nights; Amazon Wish List**. We created and plan on keeping up with an Amazon Wish List.

Among Friends Volunteers Needed: The program meets two days a week and has 12 active guests. Training is provided & the rewards are phenomenal! They are particularly in need of male volunteers but are willing to receive all. Contact them at amongfriendsrf@gmail.com

Among Friends Board Members Needed: They need board members. They meet on the second Monday of each month at 4:00 pm. Please see Norma Revels for details.

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

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 **Sept 1 & 15.**

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 **Sept 8 & 22.**

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 Day is **Sept 20 at 11:45 am.**

Merry Widows: They will meet on **Wed, Sept 16 at 1:00 pm at Mariachi Loco in River Falls.** All widows are welcome to join us for dinner and conversation! See Linda Morrow for more information.

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

Side by Side Choir: For people living with memory or thinking changes, their care partners, family, friends & community volunteers who enjoy helping others. It is a welcoming choir where people gather here at the church to connect & thrive by sharing music, joy & laughter! Join us weekly on **Mondays at 10:00 am** for our fall season. **Rehearsals start on Sept 14,** and will conclude with a **concert on Sat, Dec 5 at 10:30 am.** To learn more or sign-up contact: Norma Revels at 651-416-9530 or sidebysidechoir@gmail.com

Red Cross Blood Drive: The next Blood Drive held here is on **Mon, Sept 28, 11:00 am–5:00 pm.** See the flyer for more info. Call 1-800-733-2767 or go to www.redcrossblood.org and enter: firstcongregationalrf to schedule.

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

Fall Confirmation Orientation: The Confirmation Orientation for grades 6–8 will be following worship on Sun, Sept 13. This meeting is **required** for all confirmands & their parents. The Orientation for High School Confirmands (grade 9) & Church Interns will be Sun, Sept 20. This meeting is **required** for all confirmands & their parents.

Wednesday School: All children who will be in kindergarten through Grade 5 in the fall are invited to participate in Wednesday School. Elementary students in River Falls are picked up at the four elementary schools in town at the end of the school day and it concludes at 5:15. Registration and permission forms are available at church and online. Wednesday School begins **October 7.** Please contact Pastor Stacy with questions.



Rally Day – Sunday, September 13

On Rally Day, Sunday School, Sunday Morning Bible Study, Choir and Bells resume. All children who are three years old through grade 8 are welcome in Sunday School.

Our schedule for that day will be:

- 9:00 am Choir Rehearsal
- 9:00 am Sunday Morning Bible Study
- 10:00 am Worship with Choir
- 10:15 am Children (Pre-School – Grade 8) Leave for
 Sunday School
- 11:00 am Coffee Fellowship with Root Beer Floats
- 11:15 am Confirmation Orientation for Grades 6 – 8 and
 Parents

(The Orientation for High School Students is Sunday, Sept 20)



SCRIPTURE LESSON: Romans 12:9-21

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' No, 'if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 16:21-28

From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.' But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?

'For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.'