

*WELCOMING IN CHRIST*  
**Monthly Devotional Reflections**  
**for the St. Paul's Anniversary Campaign**

NOVEMBER 2018

**Season after Pentecost** with the expanding mission and influence of the church  
St. Paul's sixty years of programs achieving both growth and outreach; welcoming St. Paul's future

**TEXTS:**

**Psalm 126**

*When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.  
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."  
The LORD has done great things for us, and we rejoiced.  
Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like the watercourses in the Negeb.  
May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.  
Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.*

**Mark 12:28-34**

*One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other'; and 'to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbor as oneself,' --this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that no one dared to ask him any question.*

**REFLECTIONS:** The old gospel song, "Bringing in the Sheaves" was fun to sing, even when we didn't know what a "sheave" might be. Do you remember? "We shall come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves!" Psalm 126 is a reminder that *The LORD has done great things for us*. Other folks have noticed! It is amazing, almost like a dream. Our community of faith is laughing out loud, shouting joyfully. What was your favorite highlight at the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Worship service on October 16? The celebration included the holy sacraments, glorious instrumental and vocal music, thoughtful reflections from earlier generations of St. Paul's parish (who experienced some "sowing in tears") upon whose work and vision the church has grown, the crowd of children processing joyfully around the sanctuary following the Bible-bearer, and (almost) "shouts of joy" with the launch of "*Welcoming in Christ!*" announcement of early gift support, and distribution of the Anniversary Campaign materials. Worship was followed by the

fine fellowship of a shared meal—indoors and outdoors, welcoming all ages. Week in and week out over the years, St. Paul’s brings in the sheaves and serves lobster, too!

Reading the gospels, you may have noticed that Jesus was not in the habit of passing out compliments. But Mark recalls a certain scribe who engaged Jesus in conversation and who observed what is most important about the greatest commandments: loving God completely and loving your neighbor as yourself; not the technicalities of pious practices. Jesus says to him: *You are not far from the kingdom of God.* Life together in the family of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church is about faithful worship, thoughtful learning, and generous service in God’s Name. *Welcoming in Christ!* invites everyone to join in, gather resources, and celebrate God’s bountiful harvest with generous financial commitments making important goals and great dreams possible, moving us and others closer to the Kingdom of God.

**PRAYERS:** Let us give thanks for all that we give and receive. Let us learn to love God not only in mind and heart but also in purpose and action, that we may love the children of the earth.

***Redeeming Sustainer, visit your people and pour out your strength and courage upon us, that we may hurry to make you welcome not only in our concern for others, but by serving them generously and faithfully in your name. Amen.***



*Harvest in Provence, 1888; Arles, Bouches-du-Rhône, by Vincent van Gogh, from the Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel*

**ART:** Late 19<sup>th</sup> century artists like Vincent van Gogh used thin brush strokes, vivid color and light to bring energy to ordinary scenes and subjects. As a Protestant missionary before he began to paint, Van Gogh observed: "What the germinating force is in a grain of wheat, love is in us." How are we planting in faith? Is ours good soil? What will be the harvest? Who will be fed?

**ACTION:** Make your pledges to *Welcoming in Christ!* and the annual campaign today. Affirm the vestry, clergy and all those who have worked so faithfully over the past year shaping this important mission endeavor of St. Paul’s church. Rejoice and give thanks!

Please see <https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/daily.php?year=B> for daily scripture readings