



**ANOTHER YEAR TO
BEAR FRUIT**



IN THE NAME OF JESUS

THE THEME OF OUR WORSHIP:

What do Big Lots, Joann's, Red Lobster, Spirit Airlines, True Value, and Tupperware all have in common? They all declared bankruptcy in 2024. They were not producing like they needed to produce and they had to file Chapter 11. They should have been done for. Yet some bankrupt companies will continue to operate in 2025 due to new ownership or restructuring. The Lord decides when business begins and ends for each person. In spite of our failures, the Lord has given us 2024. He is demanding, yet also merciful and generous. 2025 is Another Year to Produce Fruit for Him.

WELCOME! Thank you for joining us for worship this New Year's Eve. At St. Paul's, you will find a worship service designed to praise God and increase people's faith. While all styles of worship take some getting used to, we hope you will find that the main message – the unconditional love Jesus has for us – comes through clearly.

PARTICIPATE. Many parts of our worship service are interactive. Feel free to sing along with the hymns and songs. There are also times in the service when Pastor and congregation speak back and forth. Please join together as you feel comfortable.

PARAMENTS. In Lutheran churches you often see paraments. These are the colored cloths with symbols on them hanging from the altar and pulpit. They change with the church seasons and celebrations as a visual reminder of what we are celebrating in our worship. The color for the Christmas season is white...a symbol of purity and joy. For this reason, the paraments, religious ornaments (Chrismons), and lights on the tree are white. You will also notice the gold trim which stands for royalty, riches and victory.

PERSONAL CONVENIENCES. For your convenience, restrooms are located in the southwest corner of the narthex across from the entrance into the sanctuary...feel free to ask for directions. Cell phones should be turned off or put on vibrate mode so as not to disrupt others during the service. Thank you for your cooperation.

To help you focus while you join us for worship, take the time to eliminate as many distractions around you as possible. We may be separated by in-person or livestream worship, but we can connect with each other here for Christian support and encouragement.

WORSHIP NOTES

THE FESTIVAL OF THE NATIVITY

Nativus is Latin for “birth”. By the 4th century, the early Christian Church had set December 25th as the day to celebrate the birth of Christ. Along with Easter...it quickly became one of the major celebrations in the Church Year. It always included celebration of the Lord’s Supper. This is seen in the word *Christmas*, which is simply short for “Christ’s Mass”.

THE SEASON OF CHRISTMAS—TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

You are probably familiar with the carol *The Twelve Days of Christmas*. While that carol isn’t religious...its title does capture the fact that on Christmas Day the Christian Church begins a twelve-day celebration.



Historically, the celebration of Christmas didn’t begin until Christmas Eve. That was the night homes were decorated with trees and tinsel. (It is the secularization of Christmas and the desire to have a longer shopping season that has pushed the “beginning” of Christmas back into November.) Christmas Eve often consisted of a vigil...either at church or in the home...that was quiet and muted. Then...come Christmas Day...all Christians would gather in church as a joyous celebration began. Families would continue to worship (and, yes, give gifts) for twelve straight days. The celebration of Christmas would end with the Festival of the Epiphany...marking the appearance of the Wise Men.

NEW YEAR’S EVE/DAY

The observances of New Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day are special church traditions...each of which has a rich history. In many places...New Year’s Eve is celebrated as a time when God’s people gather together in church to express thankfulness for the year and ask God’s blessing on the year about to begin. New Year’s Day...the 8th day of Christmas...is observed as the time of the Circumcision of Our Lord...a time that previewed and prefigured that day when his sacred blood would be most fully poured out on the cross. One theme that unites the two observances is the theme of light. New Year’s Eve celebrates the time of the returning of the light to the world after the shortest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere. New Year’s Day celebrates that Jesus...the Light of the World...has come in human form to bring the light of salvation to the darkened world. As you gather for worship...you celebrate that Jesus is your light and your Redeemer.

OPENING HYMN

Across the Sky the Shades of Night | 367



1 A - cross the sky the shades of night this New Year's Eve are
 2 Be - fore the cross, sub - dued, we bow, to you our prayers ad -
 3 We now re - mem - ber, as we pray, our dear ones in your
 4 Then, gra - cious God, in years to come, we pray your hand may



fleet - ing. We deck your al - tar, Lord, with light, in sol - emn
 dress - ing, re - count - ing all your mer - cies now and all our
 car - ing who bright - ly shine in end - less day, past death and
 guide us, and, on - ward through our jour - ney home, your mer - cy



wor - ship meet - ing; and, as the year's last hours go by, we
 sins con - fess - ing. We ask you, Lord, this com - ing year to
 all de - spair - ing. When ends our life, Lord, as your own, bring
 walk be - side us un - til at last our ran - somed life is



raise to you our ear - nest cry, once more your love en - treat - ing.
 keep us in your faith and fear and crown us with your bless - ing.
 us with them a - round your throne, the joys of heav - en shar - ing.
 safe from per - il, toil, and strife when heav'n it - self shall hide us.

Text (sts. 1-2, 4): James Hamilton, 1819-1896, alt.; (st. 3): Gregory J. Wismar, b. 1946
 Tune: adapt. Nicolaus Dichtus, c. 1485-after 1546; plainsong, 10th cent.
 Text (st. 3): © 2006 Concordia Publishing House. Used by permission: OneLicense no. 722076
 Text (sts. 1-2, 4) and tune: Public domain

INVOCATION AND RESPONSES

from Psalm 90

In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.
Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.

Yet you sweep people away in the sleep of death—they are like the new grass of the morning.

Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures;
Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION

Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you

**in our thoughts, in our words, in our deeds,
and in all that we have not done.**

Forgive us in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Deliver and restore us, that we may rest in peace.

Silence for confessing sins privately to the Lord.

By the mercy of God we are redeemed by Jesus Christ, and in him we are forgiven. Let us rest in his peace until the rising of the sun, when we shall serve him in newness of life.

Amen.

SONG OF PRAISE Let Us All with Gladsome Voice | 332:1,2,4



1 Let us all with glad-some voice praise the God of heav - en,
2 To this vale of tears he comes, here to serve in sad - ness,
4 Christ, our Lord and Sav - ior dear, bless us and be near us.



who, to bid our hearts re - joice, his own Son has giv - en.
that with him in heav'n's fair homes we may reign in glad - ness.
Grant us now a glad new year. A - men, Je - sus, hear us.

Text: tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827-1878, alt.; German, 17th cent
Tune: Ander Theil Des Dresdenischen GesangBuchs, Dresden, 1632, alt.
Text and tune: Public domain

PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Let us pray.
Eternal God,
we commit to your mercy and forgiveness the year now ending
and commend to your blessing and love the times to come.
In the new year, abide among us with your Holy Spirit
that we may always trust in the saving name of your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

THE WORD

FIRST READING

Ecclesiastes 12:1-7

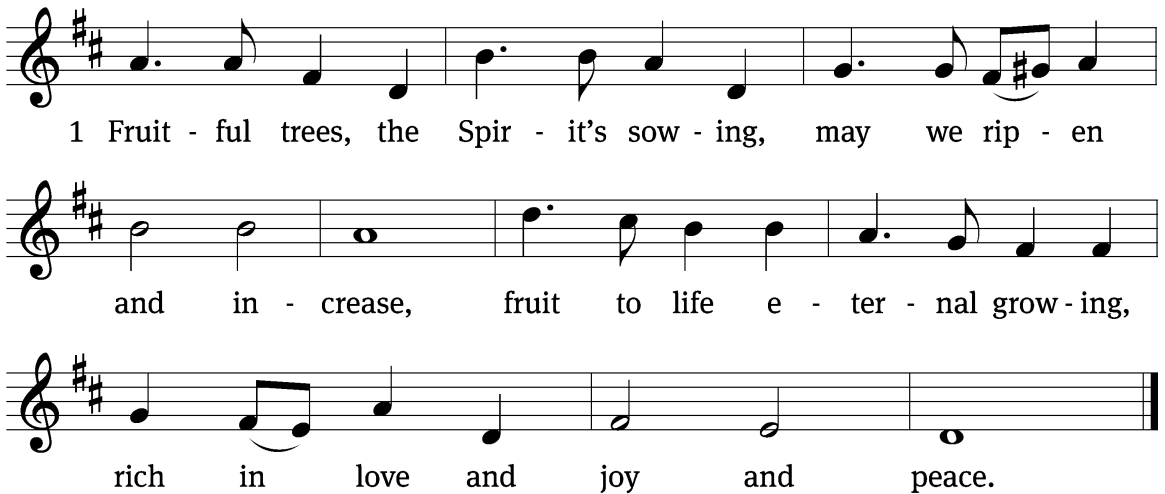
Remember your Creator now with your strength and service before you return to the ground.

¹Remember your Creator
in the days of your youth,
before the days of trouble come
and the years approach when you will say,
“I find no pleasure in them”—
²before the sun and the light
and the moon and the stars grow dark,
and the clouds return after the rain;
³when the keepers of the house tremble,
and the strong men stoop,
when the grinders cease because they are few,
and those looking through the windows grow dim;
⁴when the doors to the street are closed
and the sound of grinding fades;
when people rise up at the sound of birds,
but all their songs grow faint;
⁵when people are afraid of heights
and of dangers in the streets;
when the almond tree blossoms
and the grasshopper drags itself along
and desire no longer is stirred.
Then people go to their eternal home
and mourners go about the streets.
⁶Remember him—before the silver cord is severed,
and the golden bowl is broken;
before the pitcher is shattered at the spring,
and the wheel broken at the well,

⁷and the dust returns to the ground it came from,
and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

HYMN RESPONSE Fruitful Trees, the Spirit's Sowing | 595:1



1 Fruit - ful trees, the Spir - it's sow - ing, may we rip - en
and in - crease, fruit to life e - ter - nal grow - ing,
rich in love and joy and peace.

Text: Timothy Dudley-Smith, b. 1926
Tune: Ralph C. Schultz, b. 1932
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SECOND READING

1 Peter 1:22-25

Now that you have germinated from the imperishable seed of God's Word, bear fruit in love for each other.

²²Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. ²³For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. ²⁴For,

“All people are like grass,
and all their glory is like the flowers of the field;

the grass withers and the flowers fall,
25but the word of the Lord endures forever.”

And this is the word that was preached to you.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

HYMN RESPONSE Fruitful Trees, the Spirit’s Sowing | 595:3

3 Root - ed deep in Christ our Mas - ter, Christ our pat - tern
and our goal, teach us, as the years fly fast - er,
good - ness, faith, and self - con - trol.

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GOSPEL

Luke 13:6-9

The Lord in his mercy gives us time to be tended and bear fruit for him.

6Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. 7So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, ‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’

8“ ‘Sir,’ the man replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it. 9If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.’ ”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ!

HYMN OF THE DAY

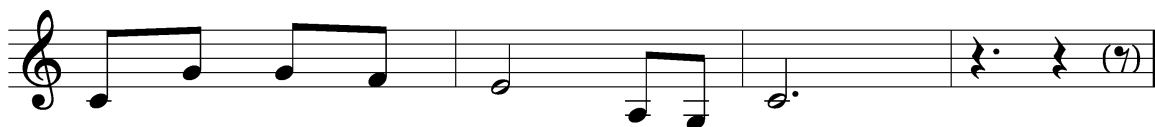
My Worth Is Not in What I Own | 753



1 My worth is not in what I own, not
 2 My worth is not in skill or name, in
 3 As sum - mer flow'rs we fade and die; fame,



in the strength of flesh and bone, but in the
 win or lose, in pride or shame, but in the
 youth, and beau - ty hur - ry by. But life e -



cost - ly wounds of love at the cross. v. 2
 blood of Christ that flowed at the cross. Refrain
 ter - nal calls to us at the cross. v. 4

Refrain



I re-joice in my Re - deem - er— great - est trea - sure,

well-spring of my soul. I will trust in him, no oth - er; my
soul is sat - is - fied in him a - lone.

4 I will not boast in wealth or might,
or human wisdom's fleeting light.
But I will boast in knowing Christ
at the cross. (Refrain)

5 Two wonders here that I confess:
my worth and my unworthiness.
My value fixed—my ransom paid
at the cross. (Refrain)

Text: Graham Kendrick, b. 1950; Kristyn Getty, b. 1980; Keith Getty, b. 1974
Tune: Graham Kendrick, b. 1950; Kristyn Getty, b. 1980; Keith Getty, b. 1974
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SERMON

Ecclesiastes 12

*Remember Your Creator Now
Delightful – Simple – Unavoidable*

NICENE CREED

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is,
seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one being with the Father.**

Through him all things were made.

**For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,
and became truly human.**

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate.

He suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

We believe in the Holy Spirit,

the Lord, the giver of life,

who proceeds from the Father and the Son,

who in unity with the Father and the Son

is worshiped and glorified,

who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead

and the life of the world to come. Amen.

CONNECT

We would kindly ask everyone to fill out a *Connect Card* now. If you are worshipping with us virtually, we kindly ask that you also fill out a digital *Connect Card*. What will be the “next steps” you can take as a response to the message you have heard today? You can also let us know how we can pray for you or ask for more information on one of the ministries or programs we are offering. Thank you!



OFFERING

If you're visiting today...we're glad to have you as our guest. Please don't feel any obligation to participate in this part of the service. In fact...we hope you'll consider this service our gift to you! This offering is an opportunity for those of us who are regular attenders to invest tangibly in what God is doing here. If you do wish to give an offering...please feel free to do so.

Giving Options:

- ◆ Scan the QR code to the right.
- ◆ give your gift [online](#).
- ◆ via text message: text "GIVE" to 877.492.5452 and follow the text instructions.



THE LORD'S PRAYER

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those
who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

THE SACRAMENT

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my + body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my + blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The peace of the Lord be with you always.



C: A - men.

DISTRIBUTION

Through the Apostle Paul Jesus tells us that celebrating the Lord's Supper is an expression of our unity with him and with the others who partake in this meal (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). He also says, "So then, whoever eats of the bread and drinks of the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves" (1 Corinthians 11:27-29). For these reasons, St. Paul's practices close communion with those united to us in beliefs and church membership. We welcome confirmed members of the WELS and ELS to the Lord's Table. We ask that you speak with one of our pastors before taking the Lord's Supper. They are eager to meet with you. We thank you kindly. And greatly look forward to celebrating the Lord's Supper with you. In preparation for communing today...you may use the questions found on pp.295-296 in the blue hymnal.

DISTRIBUTION HYMN

Abide with Me | 783



1 A - bide with me, fast falls the e - ven - tide.
2 Swift to its close ebbs out life's lit - tle day;
3 Come not in ter - rors, as the King of kings,
4 Thou on my head in ear - ly youth didst smile,



The dark - ness deep - ens; Lord, with me a - bide.
earth's joys grow dim, its glo - ries pass a - way;
but kind and good, with heal - ing in thy wings,
and though re - bel - lious and per - verse mean - while,



When oth - er help - ers fail and com - forts flee,
change and de - cay in all a - round I see;
tears for all woes, a heart for ev - 'ry plea;
thou hast not left me oft as I left thee;



help of the help - less, O a - bide with me.
O thou who chang - est not, a - bide with me.
come, Friend of sin - ners, thus a - bide with me.
on to the close, O Lord, a - bide with me.

- 5 I need thy presence ev'ry passing hour;
what but thy grace can foil the tempter's pow'r?
Who like thyself my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me!
- 6 I fear no foe with thee at hand to bless;
ills have no weight and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still if thou abide with me.
- 7 Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes;
shine through the gloom and point me to the skies.
Heav'n's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
in life, in death, O Lord, abide with me!

Text: Henry F. Lyte, 1793-1847, alt.
Tune: William H. Monk, 1823-1889
Text and tune: Public domain

PRAYER

We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet you have given us in this Sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith, nourished our hope, and strengthened our love. By your Spirit, help us to live as your holy people until that day when you will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

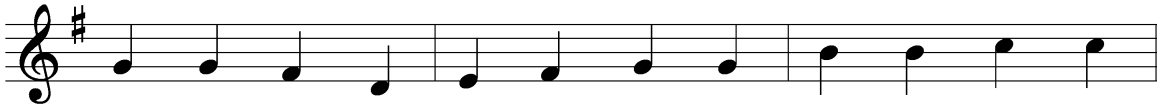
Amen.

BLESSING

The almighty and merciful Lord –
the Father, the † Son, and the Holy Spirit –
bless us and keep us.

Amen.

HYMN OF DEPARTURE All Men Living Are But Mortal | 840:1-3



1 All men liv - ing are but mor - tal and will sure - ly
2 There - fore, when my God shall choose it, will - ing - ly I'll
3 Je - sus for my sake de - scend - ed my sal - va - tion



fade as grass; on - ly thro' death's gloom - y por - tal
yield my life, nor will grieve that I should lose it,
to ob - tain: death and hell for me are end - ed,



to e - ter - nal life we pass. When this bod - y here has
with its sor - row, pain, and strife. In my dear Re - deem - er's
peace and hope are now my gain. With great joy I leave earth's



per - ished, then will heav'n - ly joys be cher - ished where the
mer - it peace has found my trou - bled spir - it, and in
sad - ness for the home of heav'n - ly glad - ness, where I



saints, in glo - rious dress, live and reign in right - eous - ness.
death my com - fort this: Je - sus' death my source of bliss.
shall for - ev - er see God, the Ho - ly Trin - i - ty.

Text: tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827-1878, alt.; J. G. Albinus, 1624-1679
Tune: Das grosse Cantional, Darmstadt, 1687
Text and tune: Public domain

SERVING JESUS WITH HEARTS OF LOVE:

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