

**Sunday, October 11<sup>th</sup> 2026**

**Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost**



**Mailing Address:**

**Epiphany Lutheran Church  
489 Agnes  
Suite 112, Box 117  
Bastrop, TX 78602**

**Physical Address:**

**Epiphany Lutheran Church  
124 Three Oaks Lane  
Bastrop, TX 78602**

**Rev. E. B. Holschuh – Pastor  
(512) 798-3682 (Voicemail/Text)  
[pastor@epiphanybastrop.org](mailto:pastor@epiphanybastrop.org)**

**[church@epiphanybastrop.org](mailto:church@epiphanybastrop.org)  
[epiphanybastrop.org/](http://epiphanybastrop.org/)  
[facebook.com/epiphanybastrop](https://facebook.com/epiphanybastrop)**

## WELCOME TO EPIPHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH!

“How lovely is Your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!”  
(Psalm 84:1) We are thankful that God has brought you here with us this morning to hear His Word and receive His gifts! You’ll find everything you need for the worship service in this bulletin and in *Lutheran Service Book*, our hymnal. If you have any questions about our worship service, our congregation, or what we believe, please ask our pastor or any of our members.

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### OUR COMMUNION POLICY:

The Lord’s Supper is celebrated at this congregation by baptized believers in the confession and glad confidence that, as he says, our Lord gives into our mouths not only bread and wine but his very body and blood to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of sins and to strengthen our union with him and with one another. Our Lord invites to his table those who trust his words, repent of all sin, and set aside any refusal to forgive and love as he forgives and loves us, that they may show forth his death until he comes.

**If you are not a member of a congregation in The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod**, and yet desire to receive Communion, we kindly request that you first speak with our pastor.

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### SERVANTS DURING WORSHIP THIS MORNING:

Pastor – Rev. E.B. Holschuh  
Lay Reader – Rosie Cabrera  
Assisting Elder – Ryan Robb  
Usher – Rosie Cabrera  
Acolyte – E.J. Clontz

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We are using the Church Music Solutions Church Organist Service, an iPad application that provides us with accompaniment for our worship service. **There is a brief introduction to the musical parts of the liturgy unless otherwise noted.**

## **AS WE PREPARE FOR WORSHIP THIS MORNING:**

### ***Clothed in the Righteousness of Christ, We Partake of His Wedding Feast***

By His cross and resurrection, the Lord has swallowed up death forever, and by His Gospel He *“will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth”* (Is. 25:8). Therefore, *“let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation”* (Is. 25:9). On the mountain of the Lord of hosts — in His Church on earth, as in the kingdom of heaven — He has made *“for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine”* (Is. 25:6). It is the royal *“wedding feast”* of the Son of God, *“and everything is ready”* (Matt. 22:1, 4). Thus, His servants are sent into the highways and byways to invite and gather as many as they find, *“both good and bad,”* to fill the wedding hall with guests (Matt. 22:8–10). In Holy Baptism, He clothes them all in the *“wedding garment”* of His own perfect righteousness (Matt. 22:11). Therefore, *“do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God,”* and *“rejoice in the Lord always”* (Phil. 4:4–6).

## **DIVINE SERVICE SETTING FOUR**

**Prelude**

Selected Music

**Welcome and Greeting**

Pastor

**Announcements**

**Opening Hymn**

*“The Bridegroom Soon Will Call Us”*

LSB 514

*(stand)*

## **CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION**

*The sign of the cross ✠ may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.*

**P** In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C Amen.**

*Matthew 28:19b; [18:20]*

**P** Our help is in the name of the Lord,

**C** who made heaven and earth.

*Psalm 124:8*

**P** If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?

**C** But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared. *Ps. 130:3-4*

**P** Since we are gathered to hear God's Word, call upon Him in prayer and praise, and receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in the fellowship of this altar, let us first consider our unworthiness and confess before God and one another that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and that we cannot free ourselves from our sinful condition. Together as His people let us take refuge in the infinite mercy of God, our heavenly Father, seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, and saying: God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

*[Luke 18:13]*

**C** Almighty God, have mercy upon us, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

**P** Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✝ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C** Amen.

*[John 20:19-23]*

## SERVICE OF THE WORD

**Introit**

**Psalm 61:10**

**P** I will greatly rejoice in the LORD;  
my soul shall exult in my God,  
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;

**C** he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,  
as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful  
headdress,  
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning,  
is now, and will be forever. Amen.*

## Kyrie

Mark 10:47



**C** Lord, have mer - cy; Christ, have mer - cy; Lord, have mer - cy.

## Gloria in Excelsis (no intro)

Luke 2:14; John 1:29



**C** 1 To God on high be glo - ry And peace to all the earth;  
2 To You, O sole - be - got - ten, The Fa - ther's Son, we pray;  
3 For You a - lone are ho - ly; You on - ly are the Lord.



Good-will from God in heav - en Pro - claimed at Je - sus' birth!  
O Lamb of God, our Sav - ior, You take our sins a - way.  
For - ev - er and for - ev - er, Be wor - shiped and a - dored;



We praise and bless You, Fa - ther; Your ho - ly name, we sing—  
Have mer - cy on us, Je - sus; Re - ceive our heart - felt cry,  
You with the Ho - ly Spir - it A - lone are Lord Most High,



Our thanks for Your great glo - ry, Lord God, our heav'n - ly King.  
Where You in pow'r are seat - ed At God's right hand on high—  
In God the Fa - ther's glo - ry. "A - men!" our glad re - ply.

## Salutation and Collect of the Day

**P** The Lord be with you.

*2 Timothy 4:22*

**C** And also with you.

**P** Let us pray.

Almighty God, You invite us to trust in You for our salvation. Deal with us not in the severity of Your judgment but by the greatness of Your mercy; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C** Amen.

*(sit)*

## Old Testament Reading

Isaiah 25:6-9

<sup>6</sup>On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples  
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine,  
of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.

<sup>7</sup>And he will swallow up on this mountain  
the covering that is cast over all peoples,  
the veil that is spread over all nations.

<sup>8</sup>He will swallow up death forever;  
and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces,  
and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth,  
for the LORD has spoken.

<sup>9</sup>It will be said on that day,  
“Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us.  
This is the LORD; we have waited for him;  
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

**A** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

## Epistle Reading

Philippians 4:4-13

<sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup>Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; <sup>6</sup>do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup>Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. <sup>9</sup>What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

<sup>10</sup>I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. <sup>11</sup>Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. <sup>12</sup>I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. <sup>13</sup>I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

**A** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

*(stand)*

### Alleluia and Verse



**C** Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.



**C** These things are writ - ten that you may be - lieve that



Je - sus is the Christ, the Son of God.

*John 20:31*



**C** Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

**P** The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the twenty-second chapter.

**C** **Glory to You, O Lord.**

<sup>1</sup>Again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, <sup>2</sup>“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, <sup>3</sup>and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. <sup>4</sup>Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.’ <sup>5</sup>But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, <sup>6</sup>while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. <sup>7</sup>The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. <sup>8</sup>Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. <sup>9</sup>Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.’ <sup>10</sup>And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.

<sup>11</sup>“But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. <sup>12</sup>And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. <sup>13</sup>Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ <sup>14</sup>For many are called, but few are chosen.”

**P** This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**C** **Praise to You, O Christ.**

*(sit)*

**Hymn of the Day**    *“A Multitude Comes from the East and the West”*    LSB 510

**Sermon**                      *“Tie him up and ship him to hell.”*                      Matthew 22:1-14

*(stand)*

## Apostles' Creed

**C** I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried.  
He descended into hell.  
The third day He rose again from the dead.  
He ascended into heaven  
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.  
From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy Christian Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life ✝ everlasting. Amen.

## Passing of the Peace

*(sit)*

## Prayer of the Church

**P** Lord, in Your mercy

**C** hear our prayer.

## Offering

Usher

*(stand)*

## SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT

### Preface

**P** The Lord be with you.

*2 Timothy 4:22*

**C** And also with you.

**P** Lift up your hearts.

**C** We lift them to the Lord.

*[Colossians 3:1]*

**P** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**C** It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

*[Psalm 136]*

**P** It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who on this day overcame death and the grave and by His glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:

### Sanctus (no intro)

*Isaiah 6:3; Matthew 21:9*



**C** Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of Sab - a - oth a - dored;



Heav'n and earth with full ac-claim shout the glo-ry of Your name.



Sing ho - san-na in the high-est, sing ho-san - na to the Lord;



## Prayer of Thanksgiving

- P** Blessed are You, O Lord our God, king of all creation, for You have had mercy on us and given Your only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed. By His death, He has redeemed us from bondage to sin and death, and by His resurrection, He has delivered us into new life in Him.

Grant us to keep the Feast in sincerity and truth, faithfully eating His body given into death and drinking His life's blood poured out for our salvation until we pass through death to the promised land of life eternal.

Hear us as we pray in His name and as He has taught us:

## Lord's Prayer

*Matthew 6:9-13*

- C** 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 trespasses  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For Thine is the kingdom  
and the power and the glory  
forever and ever. Amen.

## The Words of Our Lord

*Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24  
Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25*

**P** Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My ✠ body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me."

**P** In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new covenant in My ✠ blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

## Pax Domini

*John 20:19*

**P** The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**C** Amen.

## Agnus Dei

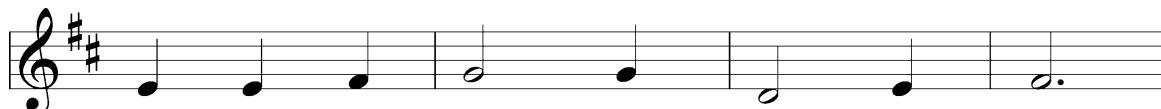
*John 1:29*



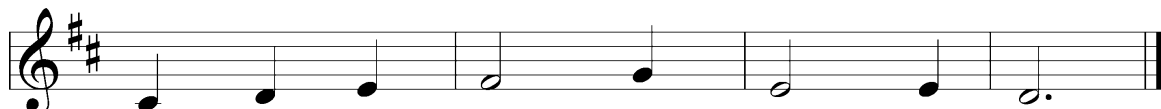
**C** 1 O Je - sus Christ, true Lamb of God,  
2 O Je - sus Christ, true Lamb of God,



You take the sin of the world a - way;  
You take the sin of the world a - way;



O Je - sus Christ, true Lamb of God,  
Have mer - cy on us, Je - sus Christ,



Have mer - cy on us, Lord, we pray.  
And grant us peace, O Lord, we pray.

*(sit)*

## Distribution Hymns

*"Soul, Adorn Yourself with Gladness"*  
*"Thine the Amen, Thine the Praise"*

LSB 636

LSB 680

*(stand)*

## Nunc Dimittis

*Luke 2:29-32*

1 O Lord, now let Your ser - vant De -  
2 All glo - ry to the the Fa - ther, All  
part in heav'n - ly peace, For I have seen the  
glo - ry to the Son, All glo - ry to the  
glo - ry Of Your re - deem - ing grace:  
Spir - it, For - ev - er Three in One;  
A light to lead the Gen - tiles Un -  
For as in the be - gin - ning, Is  
to Your ho - ly hill, The glo - ry of Your  
now, shall ev - er be, God's tri - une name re -  
peo - ple, Your cho - sen Is - ra - el.  
sound - ing Through all e - ter - ni - ty.

## Post-Communion Collect

**P** Let us pray.

We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C** Amen.

## Benedicamus and Benediction

**P** Let us bless the Lord.

*[Psalm 103:1]*

**C** Thanks be to God.

**P** The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.

*Numbers 6:24-26*

**C** Amen.

*(sit)*

**Closing Hymn**

*“Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying”*

LSB 516

**P** Go in Peace!

**C** Serve the Lord!

**Postlude**

Selected Music

*Initial and ongoing funding for Epiphany Lutheran Church has been received through a grant made possible by the Roy D. and Ingaborg G. Randolph Memorial Endowment Fund.*

## SERMON NOTES: Matthew 22:1-14

### *“Tie him up and ship him to hell”*

1. Our church teaches that it is possible for a true \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The \_\_\_\_\_ of eternal damnation is man's \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ in Christ's atoning work.
3. Paul reminded the Galatian church that everyone who is \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_.
4. “For many are called, but few are chosen.” is probably best interpreted as “\_\_\_\_\_ are called, but not \_\_\_\_\_ are \_\_\_\_\_.”
5. The Father has preordained His \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ as the regular means and instruments for \_\_\_\_\_ people to Himself.
6. You are chosen and you are saved, by God's Grace \_\_\_\_\_ through His gift of Faith \_\_\_\_\_ in Christ \_\_\_\_\_ !

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### INTERESTED IN BECOMING A MEMBER?

The first step to becoming a member of our congregation is to speak with our pastor.

We believe, teach, and confess that we are all broken sinners in need of God's salvation, which He freely gives through His Word and Sacrament. Church is not a club for the sinless— it's a hospital for sinners!

You may become a member of Epiphany Lutheran Church by transferring your membership from a sister congregation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) or you may receive instruction from the pastor and become a communicant member of Epiphany and the LCMS through Adult Instruction Class or through a profession of faith.

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Epiphany Lutheran Church has a podcast! Our ***Peace Be With You*** podcast is available on popular podcast apps, but you can always find it at [peacebewithyou.podbean.com](http://peacebewithyou.podbean.com) (or just scan the QR code).



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**Epiphany Events Calendar:** Our congregation calendar is on our website ([epiphanybastrop.org](http://epiphanybastrop.org)); to add an event, please email [secretary@epiphanybastrop.org](mailto:secretary@epiphanybastrop.org).

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**Offering:** Should you wish to make your regular tithe or offering online, you may do so at <https://secure.myvanco.com/L-ZKYH/home> or scan this QR code.



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**Epiphany Lutheran Church Sunday School Challenge:** Join us at 9am for *Sustaining Connections: Living Life in Community*. We'll save a seat for you—come and join the conversation!

After we complete this Sunday school series, we'll gather for a **Reformation/Okttoberfest Rally Sunday on October 25!** There will be no regular Sunday school that morning. After our 10:30am worship service, we'll gather for food, fellowship, and fun—BBQ and potluck (sign-up sheet in the kitchen area), quality time together, and maybe some cornhole, horseshoes, or other activities. If you have any questions, requests, or would like to help put this special day together, please contact Fred or Carita Botha.

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**Wednesday 6:30pm video study at Three Oaks** - Join us this week for the 6<sup>th</sup> and final session of *Tame Your Thoughts*, a video study led by Max Lucado.

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Want to carry Sunday's message with you into the week? ***Seeing the Light*** is a weekly self-study and discussion guide designed to help you dig a little deeper into the Scripture and sermon, reflect on what God's Word means for your daily life, and put your faith into practice. Pick up a copy as you come through the door each Sunday for yourself, to use with your family, or share with a friend. Don't just hear the Word on Sunday—keep growing in it all week long!

A reminder that we have an **Online Epiphany Church Directory**. Go to [members.InstantChurchDirectory.com](https://members.InstantChurchDirectory.com) and follow the prompts under “Sign In” to “Create a login now.” Please remember, you must confirm your email address before you can sign in. There’s also a free mobile app available—simply search for “Instant Church Directory” to get the download. You will need to use your email address as listed in our directory to create a log-in the first time you use the directory online and via the mobile app. If you need help or have questions, contact Tom Rosser.

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**Lutheran Radio:** Hear The Lutheran Hour each Sunday on station KBUK-FM 104.9 at 7:00 a.m. or on station KANJ-FM 91.5 at 12:30 p.m. or go to [lhm.org](https://lhm.org) for a link to listen to the Lutheran Hour live. You can also listen to The Lutheran Hour on the local Austin station KLBJ (590 AM or 99.7 FM) at 7am on Sunday.

**KFUO Radio**, the broadcast voice of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, shares Christ for you anytime, anywhere on **KFUO.org** via worship services, Bible and theology studies, practical talk programs, and sacred music. Find programs on demand at [kfuo.org](https://kfuo.org) and wherever you get your podcasts! Find us on social: @KFUOradio on [Facebook](https://facebook.com/kfuoradio), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/kfuoradio), and [Instagram](https://instagram.com/kfuoradio).

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**RightNow Media:** Every person in our Epiphany family has (and can share) free access to over 25,000 biblical video series for adults, youth, and kids—**RightNow Media** has a free app that’s available on all major streaming devices so you and your family can access content anywhere, anytime. Visit [app.rightnowmedia.org/join/elcb](https://app.rightnowmedia.org/join/elcb) or scan the QR code.



**ChristianBook Giveback Program:** Did you know that your purchases at Christianbook can help fund our congregation? Just visit [christianbook.com/apps/giveback](https://christianbook.com/apps/giveback) and enter the Giveback ID for Epiphany Lutheran Church: JQWHTN. After this one-time signup, we’ll be eligible to receive 4% cashback on your purchases.

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**The Lutheran Witness Subscription:** Our congregation pays for each member household to receive a subscription to *The Lutheran Witness*, the monthly magazine of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, plus the *Texas Messenger* (monthly Texas District insert). Current subscriptions will be renewed next month for 2027. Each subscription costs \$32.00; if you would like to pay for your household’s subscription or aren’t a member and would like to purchase a subscription, please contact Margie Clifton ([margie.clifton@epiphanybastrop.org](mailto:margie.clifton@epiphanybastrop.org)) no later than Sunday, October 25.

## THIS WEEK AT EPIPHANY:

### Sunday, October 11<sup>th</sup>

- 9:00am – Children’s Sunday School
- 9:00am – Adult Sunday School
- 10:00am – Fellowship / Coffee Time
- 10:30am – Worship Service with Communion

### Tuesday, October 13<sup>th</sup>

- 6:20pm – Elders Meeting

### Wednesday, October 14<sup>th</sup>

- 6:30pm – Bible Study: *Tame Your Thoughts*

### Thursday, October 15<sup>th</sup>

- 3:00pm – Devotional at Argent Court

### Sunday, October 18<sup>th</sup>

- 9:00am – Children’s Sunday School
- 9:00am – Adult Sunday School
- 10:00am – Fellowship / Coffee Time
- 10:30am – Worship Service with Communion

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## PRAYERS AT EPIPHANY

**PRAYER REQUESTS:** Please share any prayer request on the Prayer Requests sheet as you enter on Sunday. You may also email a prayer request, as well as a request to become a part of Epiphany’s prayer chain, to [secretary@epiphanybastrop.org](mailto:secretary@epiphanybastrop.org).

Please continue to pray for...

- Andrew and Noel Schaff – missionaries serving as middle school teachers in Taiwan
- Francis Eschberger, Elaine Ottinger, Gert Schriner, and all the residents at Argent Court Assisted Living in Bastrop
- Rex Mayfield – Rosie Cabrera’s Neighbor
- Lisa Clontz

Answers to Sermon Notes:  
1. An understanding of Original Sin and Vicarious Atonement can help *explain the problem of evil* rather than beginning life spiritually and morally *untouched*.  
2. Original Sin describes this shared inheritance: we are *born* into a *fallen* human condition rather than beginning life spiritually and morally *untouched*.  
3. Just as the *sins* of the guilty can *harm* the innocent so the sufferings and virtue of the innocent can help *redeem* the guilty.  
4. Jesus was literally our *brother*, and his suffering *saved* his whole *family*.  
5. *God’s* patience for *evil* will *run* out, clearly indicated in the Parable of the Wicked Tenants.  
6. *Faith* in Jesus’ atoning sacrifice is the only *answer* to the real problem of *evil*.



## Christ and His Bride

When Jesus was questioned about marriage, he went all the way back to creation: "He who created them from the beginning made them male and female" (Matthew 19:4). Marriage was not simply a human custom that developed over time. God designed it: a man and a woman joined together as "one flesh" in a lifelong covenant of faithfulness.

But Scripture reveals something even greater. God designed marriage not only for the relationship between husband and wife. Marriage also points beyond itself to the relationship between Christ and His Church.

We see this theme throughout all four Gospels. In Matthew 9:15, Mark 2:19–20, and Luke 5:34–35, Jesus identifies himself as the Bridegroom. In John's Gospel, John the Baptist says of Jesus, "The one who has the bride is the bridegroom" (John 3:29). John describes himself simply as the Bridegroom's friend, rejoicing that the Bridegroom has arrived. That is why John immediately adds, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

This language has deep roots in the Old Testament, where God describes Himself as the husband of His people: "Your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name" (Isaiah 54:5). When the Gospels identify Jesus as the Bridegroom, then, they are saying something remarkable about who he is. In Jesus Christ, God Himself has come for His Bride.

And what kind of Bridegroom is He? Paul gives us the answer: "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25). Jesus does not love his Bride because she is already spotless, faithful, and perfect. We are sinners. Yet the Bridegroom gives Himself for His Bride. At the cross, Christ bears her sins and pays the price for her redemption.

Paul then uses beautiful baptismal language. Christ cleanses His Church "by the washing of water with the word" (Ephesians 5:26). Christ does not wait for His

Bride to make herself worthy of Him. He makes her His own. He washes her. He forgives her. He makes her holy.

Marriage involves love, companionship, family, and mutual support, but it is also meant to be a living picture of something greater. The faithfulness of husband and wife points toward the perfect faithfulness of Christ. Forgiveness within marriage points toward Christ's forgiveness of sinners. Sacrificial love within marriage reflects the love of the Bridegroom who gave His life for His Bride.

Human marriages will never display that picture perfectly. Husbands and wives are sinners who need forgiveness from Christ—and from one another. But the One to whom marriage ultimately points is perfect.

Jesus Christ is the faithful Bridegroom. His love does not fail. His promises do not change. By His death and resurrection, His Word and Baptism, He has made us His own.

The Church belongs to Christ. And the Bridegroom will never abandon His Bride.

