

The Time of Richness

Service Prayers for the Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost

Stewardship Sunday

November 13

Zephaniah 1:7, 12–18, Psalm 90:1–8[9–11] 12, 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11, Matthew 25:14–30

CALL

One: Sing the new day
All: **O God, we come.**

One: Sing a new song
All: **Awakened, we come.**

One: Sing to the light
All: **So beckoned, we come.**

GATHERING PRAYER

There is a richness here –
a richness that greets and grows and holds and challenges and keeps.
There is a richness here –
a richness that surrounds and brings and delivers and gives.
The richness holds us in our weakness,
fills us in our hunger,
finds us when we're lost.
So here, richly blessed, we have come, and we have been found.
Let this time together inspire us in richness and grace. **Amen.**

CONFESSION

There is a richness here – a gorgeous, flowing richness of unending abundance.
But that doesn't mean that it guides us.
Our ways – within and beyond our control –
speak of something different:
of lack,
of fear,
of something other than
an acknowledgement of
God's endless and beautiful
river of grace.

**But how do we step into that river?
Do we step into it with trust?
Do we trust the current of God's generous gifts?**

Or do we run from the river?
For when we run,
when we turn away from God's gifts in distrust,
We lose the refreshment and joy of that richness...
And something else reigns.

Then, what's left?

Now is the time – now is the time to consider just how we distrust God's abundance.
Now is the time – now is the time to begin something new.
Now is the time – now is the time to trust ... differently.

Silence

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Let us pray:
We haven't always trusted, God.
But now we do.

**We acknowledge the richness of your blessings
We see your flowing river of love
And we wade into your grace.**

There is a richness – a richness that says “yes” – eternally –
even in the face of our behavioral “no”s.
There is a richness that penetrates distrust and offers so much more.
This richness forgives and gives even more.

**We know this forgiveness.
And we thank you, God.**

INVITATION TO OFFERING

Consider making the invitation from in front of the altar, and, if you do not already, inviting people forward to bring their gifts. If this isn't a practice at your church (or perhaps even if it is), try writing a piece based on the themes of this liturgy (richness and blessing, living into the light) and encourage people to get excited about this opportunity to try something new in their giving so that this invitation isn't a total surprise.

Children of the light – richness and blessings are ours.

Now, the time is ours – isn't it exciting?

Met by God in the holiness of this space,
inspired by God's word, God's gifts, God's love
Encouraged by the presence and commitment of everyone else around us –
Let's do something!

Let's try something new!
We've given before, we've given to the church.
Let's keep giving. But let's give something new.
Maybe it means that we add a few dollars to our usual pledge.
Maybe it means that we add a pledge of time that we haven't included before.
Maybe it means that we make a commitment of giving for the first time ever.

Now is the time to do something new about God's abundant gifts to us.

Let us give joyfully. Let us be so joyful that we even come forward to make our gifts, right here at the altar, right at the table of ultimate giving.

Let us come.

DEDICATION

Let us pray.

**O God, we have come, and what a delight it has been!
We have come before your table with gifts –
gifts of ourselves, gifts of risk, gifts of newness, gifts of trust.
We thank you for the chance to give,
and pray that we and all whom our gifts bless will never be the same.
Through our greatest gift, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.**

BENEDICTION

Go now as children of the light:

**Ready to serve,
Eager to give,
Delighted to love.**

And may God's blessing:
+ Source, Word and Spirit, One,
keep, lead and mold you, now and forever. **Amen.**

The Time of Richness: Service Prayers for the Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost was written by the Rev. Kaji R. Spellman, a United Church of Christ Pastor who serves as a pastor of Saint Peter's Lutheran Church in New York City.



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