

The Fifth Sunday of Easter May 2, 2021

“I am the vine. You are the branches... apart from me you can do nothing.” Jesus could hardly make it any clearer. We need Him! We need His word and Sacraments. We need His call to repentance. We need His cross. We need His resurrection. We need His word of forgiveness. This is exactly what His Church provides.

An Easter Salutation

adapted from 2 Timothy 1:10 & Psalm 118

L Christ is risen! Alleluia!

C Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

L Christ has destroyed death. Alleluia!

C And has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. Alleluia!

L The Lord is my strength and my song. Alleluia!

C He has become my salvation. Alleluia!

L I will not die, but live. Alleluia!

C I will proclaim what the Lord has done. Alleluia!

L Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;

C as it was in the beginning is now and will be forever. Amen.

L I will not die, but live. Alleluia!

C I will proclaim what the Lord has done. Alleluia!

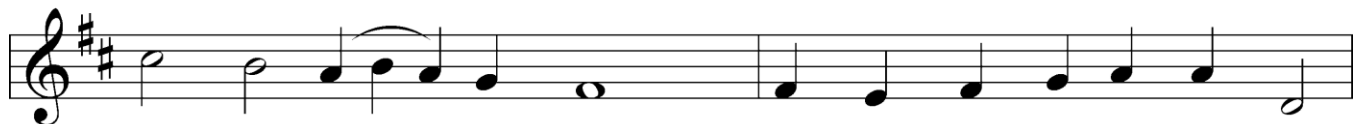
L Christ is risen! Alleluia!

C Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing Lutheran Service Book 633, Lutheran Worship 126, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a Stanzas 1-4



1 At the Lamb's high feast we sing Praise to
2 Praise we Him, whose love di - vine Gives His
3 Where the pas - chal blood is poured, Death's dread
4 Praise we Christ, whose blood was shed, Pas - chal



our vic - to - rious King, Who has washed us in the tide
sa - cred blood for wine, Gives His bod - y for the feast—
an - gel sheathes the sword; Is - rael's hosts tri - um - phant go
vic - tim, pas - chal bread; With sin - cer - i - ty and love



Flow - ing from His pierc - ed side. Al - le - lu - ia!
Christ the vic - tim, Christ the priest. Al - le - lu - ia!
Through the wave that drowns the foe. Al - le - lu - ia!
Eat we man - na from a - bove. Al - le - lu - ia!

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L In the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

L Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C who made heaven and earth. (*Psalm 124:8*)

L Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults.

C Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. (*Psalm 19:12, 13*)

L 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. (*Psalm 130:3–4*)

L Let us, confess before God that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and as His people let us take refuge in His infinite mercy seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, saying:

C God, be merciful to me, a sinner, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

(*Luke 18:13*)

L Almighty God, merciful Father, in Your holy Church, You daily and richly forgive us our sins and grant us new life through Your Spirit. Be in our midst, enliven our faith, and graciously receive our prayer and praise; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C Amen.

Introit Psalm 145:1–2, 8, 10, 21; antiphon John 16:16

L A little while, and you will see me no longer;
and again a little while, and you will see me.

C I will extol you, my God and King,
and bless your name forever and ever.

L Every day I will bless you
and praise your name forever and ever.

C The Lord is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

L All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord,
and all your saints shall bless you!

C My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord,
and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.

C 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.

L A little while, and you will see me no longer;
and again a little while, and you will see me.

Kyrie

L	O Lord,	C	Have Mercy on us.
L	O Christ,	C	Have Mercy on us.
L	O Lord,	C	Have Mercy on us.

Collect of the Day

L Let us pray: O God, You make the minds of Your faithful to be of one will. Grant that we may love what You have commanded and desire what You promise, that among the many changes of this world our hearts may be fixed where true joys are found; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Acts 8:26–40

²⁶Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is a desert place. ²⁷And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹And the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.” ³⁰So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” ³¹And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ³²Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this:

“Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter
and like a lamb before its shearer is silent,
so he opens not his mouth.

³³In his humiliation justice was denied him.
Who can describe his generation?
For his life is taken away from the earth.”

³⁴And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” ³⁵Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” ³⁸And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. ³⁹And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

L This is the Word of the Lord.
C Thanks be to God.

Gradual adapt. from Matthew 28:7; Hebrews 2:7; Psalm 8:6

L Christ has risen from the dead.
C God the Father has crowned him with glory and honor,
L He has given him dominion over the works of his hands;
C He has put all things under his feet.

Psalm 150

- L** ¹Praise the LORD!
Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens!
- C** ²**Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness!**
- L** ³Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp!
- C** ⁴**Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe!**
- L** ⁵Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!
- C** ⁶**Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!**

1 John 4:1–11

¹Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. ⁴Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. ⁵They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

⁷Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

- L** This is the Word of the Lord.
- C** **Thanks be to God.**

Verse of the Day: Romans 6:9; John 14:23

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. Alleluia.
- C** **Alleluia, Alleluia. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Alleluia.**

John 15:1–8

- L** The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 15th chapter.
- C** **Glory to You, O Lord.**

¹[Jesus said:] “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ²Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.”

- L** This is the Gospel of the Lord.
- C** **Praise to You, O Christ.**

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.

At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing Lutheran Service Book 633, Lutheran Worship 126, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a
Stanzas 6-8

5 Mighty Victim from the sky,
Hell's fierce pow'rs beneath You lie;
You have conquered in the fight,
You have brought us life and light.
Alleluia!

6 Now no more can death appall,
Now no more the grave enthrall;
You have opened paradise,
And Your saints in You shall rise.
Alleluia!

7 Easter triumph, Easter joy!
This alone can sin destroy;
From sin's pow'r, Lord, set us free,
Newborn souls in You to be.
Alleluia!

8 Father, who the crown shall give,
Savior, by whose death we live,
Spirit, guide through all our days:
Three in One, Your name we praise.
Alleluia!

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Devotional thoughts:

I live in a most magical and wonderful place. Apple blossoms, cherry blossoms, pear blossoms, and peach blossoms are painting the orchards and filling the countryside with overwhelming beauty. It's a magical time of year. For more than a century, our county has been known as "The Heart of the Fruit Belt" of Michigan. Soon, strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, and cherries will fill the roadside stands. They will be joined by peaches, pears, and plums. Next, there will be red apples, yellow apples, sweet apples, and tart apples.

Finally, in September and October, when the beaches are empty and tourists have returned to their homes in the city, the air will be filled with the most amazing and remarkable fragrance of ripening grapes! I grew up here but for about 15 years, I lived in places with no vineyards. We moved back to Michigan late one summer. I was unprepared for the incredible perfume of ripening grapes that greeted me that first autumn back from exile.

Jesus also grew up in a magical and wonderful place, Galilee. It is a lush and green region of northern Israel. It has apple orchards and pomegranates. You will find olive trees and avocados. He grew up watching the annual cycle of blossom to harvest. A short walk from His childhood home in Nazareth, you will find a terraced vineyard from the time of Jesus. Although He was the son of a carpenter, Jesus knew all about grapes! He witnessed the development of the sumptuous bunches. He drank in the aroma of the ripening clusters. He observed the careful pressing of grapes into juice and fermenting into wine.

Once the corn is harvested in the fall and the ground is covered in snow, interesting things begin to happen in the vineyards of Michigan. Driving by, you will notice cars parked by the side of the road and hardy individuals walking among the vines. In a little while, you start to notice piles of branches littering the ground. To enable a fuller and richer harvest next year, they are trimming (or what the rest of the world calls pruning) the grapes.

No doubt, Jesus, too, witnessed such annual rituals. He certainly experienced the yearly burning of these discarded branches. In the Gospel lesson for today, He uses these rich experiences to explain our relationship to Him.

In this metaphor, Jesus is the vine and we are the branches like the ones in the vineyard He has so often observed throughout His life. God, the Father, is the loving and caring vinedresser. He walks through the vineyard and examines every branch. He finds two kinds. Some are useless and fruitless. Those He removes for disposal in the fire. Others bear fruit but they need to be carefully pruned so that they can continue to be abundant in their production.

Branches only live when they are connected to the vine. No branch can be a self-sufficient, independent agent. They are either connected and live or disconnected and die!

Jesus' words are intensely significant today. We live in a time of "disconnected" Christianity. Individuals are proud to be "spiritual but not religious." Congregations boldly proclaim that they are "non-denominational" as if that is a virtue.

Jesus expects us to be connected to Him and one another. What is bearing fruit other than helping those around us, especially our brothers and sisters in Christ (Galatians 6:10)?

Throughout most of history, Christians were keenly aware that there is One Church! The Bible uses many names for this one Church. We are the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-26, Romans 7:4, Romans 12:5, Colossians 3:15, Ephesians 4:4-6.) We are a spiritual house built of living stones (1 Peter 2:4-5). We are God's family (1 Thessalonians 4:10, Ephesians 2:19, 1 Peter 2:17).

Jesus calls us to abide in Him and His word! We have no other choice.

So, what if you don't abide in Jesus? What if you have separated yourself from the Family of God? God in His mercy can graft you back into the True Vine (Romans 11:17)!

During this Easter season, we rejoice that Jesus came to turn death into life. He came to find lost sinners and give them life and salvation through the forgiveness that He won for us on the cross.

Spring is a time when we see the world blossom and bloom. Faith in Christ gives us the ability to blossom and bloom and to bear more fruit. Pray for God to use your connection to the True Vine to provide the vigor required to serve the Lord and one another in love.

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

God's richest blessings to you in Christ.

L Heavenly Father, You have grafted us onto the vine of Your Son. Prune us and cut off from us all sin and dead works, that we may always draw life from Your Son and produce the fruits of faith and good works.

C Amen.

L Lord God, Your only Son came in the flesh to bear our sin and be our Savior. Protect us from all false teaching that we may always confess Christ to be our only true God and remain faithful to Him.

C Amen.

L Almighty God, send Your holy angels to watch over all of our loved ones, especially those who live in distant places. Protect all who attend to our needs during this time of national emergency and pandemic. We ask that you would quickly grant relief according to Your will.

C Amen.

C I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

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.

L Let us bless the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

L The Lord bless us, defend us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

C Amen.

All Who Believe and Are Baptized Lutheran Service Book 601, Lutheran Worship 225, The Lutheran Hymnal 301



1 All who be - lieve and are bap-tized Shall see the Lord's sal - va - tion;
2 With one ac - cord, O God, we pray: Grant us Your Ho - ly Spir - it.



Bap-tized in - to the death of Christ, They are a new cre - a - tion.
Help us in our in - fir - mi - ty Through Je - sus' blood and mer - it.



Through Christ's re-demp-tion they shall stand A - mong the glo-rious,
Grant us to grow in grace each day That by this sac - ra -



heav'n - ly band Of ev - 'ry tribe and na - tion.
ment we may E - ter - nal life in - her - it.

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Service Notes:

One person may serve as Leader or this may be shared with a number of individuals.

Read one or more of the lessons. Hymns may be sung or read. Use as much or little of this service as you would like.

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Enhancing Your Worship

Meditating on God's Word and Works

I will meditate on your wondrous works. Psalm 119:27
My eyes are awake through the night watches,
That I may meditate on Your word. Psalm 119:148 NKJV

The Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 3 – May 8, 2021

Introduction

Most modern forms of mediation turn a person inward. Biblical meditation turns a person outward toward what God has said and done especially what He has said and done through Jesus for our salvation.

Each Sunday has its own special theme directing us to meditate on God's word and actions. This theme is found in the Propers of the Day (the parts of the service that change week to week). From Advent through the Easter season these themes focus our attention on the life of Jesus from His birth to His death and resurrection. There is always much more in the propers than can be covered in any Sunday service. God willing, I will use the propers for Sunday to provide you with a devotion each day to help you mediate on what God has done for you.

Monday

- L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C Amen.

Introit Psalm 145:1–2, 8, 10, 21; antiphon John 16:16

- L** A little while, and you will see me no longer;
and again a little while, and you will see me.
C I will extol you, my God and King,
and bless your name forever and ever.
L Every day I will bless you
and praise your name forever and ever.
C The Lord is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
L All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord,
and all your saints shall bless you!
C My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord,
and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.
C 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.
L A little while, and you will see me no longer;
and again a little while, and you will see me.

Kyrie

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| L O Lord, | C Have Mercy on us. |
| L O Christ, | C Have Mercy on us. |
| L O Lord, | C Have Mercy on us. |

Psalm 145 is a psalm of praise! It is an excellent partner to Psalm 150, our Psalm of the Day for this week. It is rich in describing the praise we offer to God for all of His goodness to us.

Here are some of the verses from Psalm 145 not included in our introit:

- ³ Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised,
and his greatness is unsearchable.
- ⁴ One generation shall commend your works to another,
and shall declare your mighty acts.
- ⁵ On the glorious splendor of your majesty,
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.
- ⁶ They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds,
and I will declare your greatness.
- ⁷ They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.
- ⁸ The Lord is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
- ⁹ The Lord is good to all,
and his mercy is over all that he has made.
- ¹⁴ The Lord upholds all who are falling
and raises up all who are bowed down.
- ¹⁵ The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.
- ¹⁶ You open your hand;
you satisfy the desire of every living thing.

We have so many things to praise God for. The most important of these is when He lifts us up when we are falling!

There is an old saying, “Life is difficult!” We all stumble and fall. We find ourselves in the pit of despair. There is no help in sight. It is then that God in His mercy reaches down with the love of Jesus and lifts us up to new and eternal life. His goodness and mercy are new every day!

L Let us pray. Lord, thank You for Your daily mercy and the grace that falls upon us like manna from heaven. Grant that we would be sincere in our praise and commend Your works to each coming generation through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

C Amen

Tuesday

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Romans 6:9; John 14:23

L Alleluia, Alleluia. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Alleluia.

Kyrie

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.
L O Christ, **C** Have Mercy on us.
L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L Let us pray: O God, You make the minds of Your faithful to be of one will. Grant that we may love what You have commanded and desire what You promise, that among the many changes of this world our hearts may be fixed where true joys are found; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
C Amen.

Our collect this week reminds us of God's desire for us to be of one will! This "one will" should be to love what God has commanded and to desire what He has promised. The greatest cause of division in the Church is a departure from God's commands and His holy word. Conflict always comes when humanity believes that it is smarter than God. This began in the garden and continues to this very day. Unfortunately, it also affects believers.

The world may change but God's word never changes. One denomination has adopted the marketing slogan, "God Is Still Speaking." We can all agree with that. However, He is saying what He has always said in Holy Scripture. We should never forget what He says in Malachi 3:6 KJV, "I am the Lord, I change not."

God still condemns sin and sinners. He still offers forgiveness and salvation to those who repent and turn to Jesus and His cross.

Let us pray: O God, You make the minds of Your faithful to be of one will. Grant that we may love what You have commanded and desire what You promise, that among the many changes of this world our hearts may be fixed where true joys are found; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Wednesday

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Romans 6:9; John 14:23

L Alleluia, Alleluia. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Alleluia.

Psalms 150

L ¹Praise the LORD!
Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens!
C ²Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness!
L ³Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp!
C ⁴Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe!
L ⁵Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!
C ⁶Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!

Kyrie

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| L | O Lord, | C | Have Mercy on us. |
| L | O Christ, | C | Have Mercy on us. |
| L | O Lord, | C | Have Mercy on us. |

Psalm 150 is the last psalm in the Bible. It is also known as the last “Hallelujah Psalm.” In Hebrew, the last five psalms begin and end with the word “Hallelujah” (-).

Hallelujah is our great Easter Anthem! Praise the Lord! Psalm 150 reminds us to Praise the Lord with trumpet, lute, harp, tambourine, strings and pipe. We praise him with cymbals (especially loud clashing cymbals!) We praise Him with dance and every breath that we take. We praise the Lord with all our being.

What inspires such praise? Is it beautiful sunsets? Or purple mountains majesty? Or amber waves of grain? Is it warm weather and peach blossoms? Is it a new sports car or fancy jewelry? These are all nice things. But we are inspired to tireless praise by only one thing: The salvation won for us by Jesus! “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1 Timothy 1:15). Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for the gift of salvation through faith in Christ. Grant that we would never tire of hearing Your holy word and praising Your name, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Thursday

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| L | In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. |
| C | Amen. |

Verse of the Day: Romans 6:9; John 14:23

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|----------|---|
| L | Alleluia, Alleluia. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. Alleluia. |
| C | Alleluia, Alleluia. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Alleluia. |

Kyrie

- | | | | |
|----------|-----------|----------|--------------------------|
| L | O Lord, | C | Have Mercy on us. |
| L | O Christ, | C | Have Mercy on us. |
| L | O Lord, | C | Have Mercy on us. |

Acts 8:26–40

²⁶Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is a desert place. ²⁷And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹And the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.” ³⁰So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” ³¹And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ³²Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this:

“Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter
and like a lamb before its shearer is silent,
so he opens not his mouth.

³³In his humiliation justice was denied him.
Who can describe his generation?

For his life is taken away from the earth.”

³⁴And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” ³⁵Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” ³⁸And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. ³⁹And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

I ask for your understanding. This text has much to say and much that shouldn’t be ignored but today, I will spend a little time on a short side trip.

I particularly like this section of Acts. I must confess that part of the reason is that I share my name with the evangelist (who as you will note, spells his name with one “L” ;-).

Here we find an Ethiopian official reading Scripture but not understanding. As is so often the case, he failed to see the Savior in what he read. God used Philip to explain to him that the Old Testament is about Jesus. Acts 8:35 reads, “Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.” When the Ethiopian finally understood Scripture, he desired to be baptized. So it always is with Christians.

Here is the point when we leave the beaten path and go on our out-of-the-way journey. Some Protestant denominations insist that baptism equals immersion even though it is easy to demonstrate otherwise. Here is a rather obscure but important countermeasure to one of their weaker arguments.

Those who hold that opinion will sometimes point to Matthew 3:16 which says, “when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water.” They will then declare, “If Jesus came up out of the water, He must have been under the water.” This is a false conclusion. It may mean this but it also may simply mean that He stepped onto the shore after standing in the water. If they insist on their interpretation, simply point them to Acts 8:39 which says, “when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away.” Now, if they were to insist that Matthew shows that only immersion is proper baptism because it says, Jesus “came up out of the water” (KJV). Then Acts 8 tells us that proper baptism only occurs when both the one baptized and the baptizer are immersed because it says, “THEY came up out of the water.”

Again, I thank you for this slight diversion but I hope that you found it helpful.

Prayer: O Lord, thank for the gift of baptism and the washing way of sin. Grant that I would return daily to my baptism in repentance and receive again the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.

Friday

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Romans 6:9; John 14:23

L Alleluia, Alleluia. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Alleluia.

Kyrie

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L O Christ, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

1 John 4:1–6

¹Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. ⁴Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. ⁵They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

When I was small, I remember my pastor regularly warning me and the congregation against false doctrine. That kind of preaching has long fallen out of favor. The mood of society and Christianity, in general, is “to each, his own.” They will often say things such as, “Who do you think you are?” “There is no one right interpretation of Scripture.”

John tells us that such thinking is the spirit of the antichrist. It is antichristian to declare that there is no such thing as truth or that truth is undiscoverable.

It is never God’s will for us to deny the truth or to compromise with falsehood. Jesus prays in His High Priestly Prayer, “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth” (John 17:17).

Christians should never apologize for speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Instead, we should “no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes” (Ephesians 4:14).

The truth of God’s word teaches us that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:23-24).

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for the love that is ours in Christ Jesus as revealed to us in Holy Scripture. Grant that we would never compromise on the truth of Your holy word, through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Saturday

- L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- C** Amen.

Gradual adapt. from Matthew 28:7; Hebrews 2:7; Psalm 8:6

- L** Christ has risen from the dead.
- C** God the Father has crowned him with glory and honor,
- L** He has given him dominion over the works of his hands;
- C** He has put all things under his feet.

Verse of the Day: Romans 6:9; John 14:23

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. Alleluia.
- C** Alleluia, Alleluia. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Alleluia.

Kyrie

L	O Lord,	C	Have Mercy on us.
L	O Christ,	C	Have Mercy on us.
L	O Lord,	C	Have Mercy on us.

1 John 4:7–11

⁷Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹In this love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

It is interesting to note that Saint John follows up his warning against false prophets with these wonderful words about love. It is never a loving action to agree with false teaching!

Here is the truth that we must never forget: “This is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

God’s love for us in Jesus is the love that enables us to love one another. May we gauge all of our activities by the love shown to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for the love that is ours in Your only Son, Jesus Christ. Grant that we would never grow weary in loving one another through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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