

The Third Sunday of Easter

April 19, 2026

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!**

This Joyful Eastertide

Lutheran Service Book 482, Lutheran Worship 140, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a

1 This joy - ful Eas - ter - tide A - way with sin and
2 Death's flood has lost its chill Since Je - sus crossed the
3 My flesh in hope shall rest And for a sea - son

sor - row! My love, the Cru - ci - fied,
riv - er; Lov - er of souls, from ill
slum - ber Till trump from east to west

Has sprung to life this mor - row:
My pass - ing soul de - liv - er:
Shall wake the dead in num - ber:

Refrain

Had Christ, who once was slain, Not burst His three-day pris - on,
 Our faith had been in vain: But now has Christ a - ris - en, a -
 ris - en, a - ris - en; But now has Christ a - ris - en!

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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 133; antiphon: Psalm 133:1

L Behold, how good and pleasant it is
 when brothers dwell in unity!

C It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron,
 running down on the collar of his robes!

L It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion!
 For there the Lord has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.

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 Behold, how good and pleasant it is
 when brothers dwell in unity!

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.

Gloria in Excelsis ~ Glory to God in the Highest

L Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

C Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father: We worship You, we give You thanks, and we praise You for Your glory.

L Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, You are Lord and God, You are the Lamb of God:

C Lord Jesus Christ, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.

L Lord Jesus Christ, You are seated at the right hand of the Father; and we ask you to graciously receive our prayer.

C For You alone are the Holy One,
You alone are the Lord,
You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Collect of the Day

L Let us pray: O God, through the humiliation of Your Son You raised up the fallen world. Grant to Your faithful people, rescued from the peril of everlasting death, perpetual gladness and eternal joys; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Acts 2:14a, 36–41

¹⁴But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, ³⁶“Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

³⁷Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” ³⁸And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” ⁴⁰And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” ⁴¹So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Gradual adapted 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.

1 Peter 1:17–25

¹⁷And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, ¹⁸knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. ²⁰He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for your sake, ²¹who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

²²Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, ²³since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; ²⁴for

“All flesh is like grass
and all its glory like the flower of grass.
The grass withers,
and the flower falls,
²⁵but the word of the Lord remains forever.”

And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Verse of the Day Romans 6:9; Luke 24:32

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

C **Alleluia. Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures? Alleluia.**

Luke 24:13–35

L The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 24th chapter.

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

¹³That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, “What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?” And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” ¹⁹And he said to them, “What things?” And they said to him, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. ²¹But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. ²²Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. ²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.” ²⁵And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” ²⁷And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

²⁸So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, ²⁹but they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.” So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. ³¹And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. ³²They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” ³³And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, ³⁴saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

L This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to You, O Christ.

The 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

Come, You Faithful, Raise the Strain

Lutheran Service Book 487, Lutheran Worship 141, The Lutheran Hymnal 204

Note: This is one of the oldest Easter hymns in the Christian Church
written by St. John of Damascus (675-754).



1 Come, you faith-ful, raise the strain Of tri - um-phant glad-ness!
2 'Tis the spring of souls to - day: Christ has burst His pris - on
3 Now the queen of sea - sons, bright With the day of splen - dor,
4 For to - day a-mong His own Christ ap - peared, be - stow - ing



God has brought His Is - ra - el In - to joy from sad - ness,
And from three days' sleep in death As a sun has ris - en;
With the roy - al feast of feasts Comes its joy to ren - der;
His deep peace, which ev - er-more Pass - es hu - man know - ing.



Loosed from Pha-raoh's bit - ter yoke Ja - cob's sons and daugh - ters,
All the win - ter of our sins, Long and dark, is fly - ing
Comes to glad - den faith-ful hearts Which with true af - fec - tion
Nei - ther could the gates of death Nor the tomb's dark por - tal



Led them with un-moist-ened foot Through the Red Sea wa - ters.
From His light, to whom is giv'n Laud and praise un - dy - ing.
Wel - come in un - wea - ried strain Je - sus' res - ur - rec - tion!
Nor the watch-ers nor the seal Hold Him as a mor - tal.

5 Alleluia! Now we cry
To our King immortal,
Who, triumphant, burst the bars
Of the tomb's dark portal.
Come, you faithful, raise the strain
Of triumphant gladness!
God has brought His Israel
Into joy from sadness!

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Devotional thoughts:

Once, while waiting for dinner to be served, a young boy treated me to a joyful and exuberant rendition of “Patty cake, patty cake, baker’s man. Bake me a cake as fast as you can. Roll it, pat it, and mark it with a B. Put it in the oven for Baby and me” It might surprise you to learn that the first known version of this rhyme dates to 1698. It originally began with the phrase, “Pat a cake.” The next time it appeared was in 1765. This time it began “Patty Cake, Patty Cake, Baker's Man.” It’s nice to know that parents today are continuing this time-honored tradition with their children.

What do you think of when you hear, “Patty cake?” I think of playing with my children and grandchildren but more often than not, I also think of Bing Crosby and Bob Hope!

Movie buffs and seasoned citizens will remember the “Patty Cake” routine that they used in their “Road to ...” film series. For the uninitiated, Bing Crosby and Bob Hope starred in seven comedy films in which they traveled to far-away, exotic places. The first film in the series was titled, “Road to Singapore” and was released in 1940. The final film was “The Road to Hong Kong.”

At some point in most of the films, Bing Crosby and Bob Hope would get into a jam with their captors. When this happened the duo would turn to each other and play Patty Cake. Together they would recite, “Patty cake, patty cake, baker’s man. Bake me a cake as fast as you can.” At that point, they both would turn quickly and throw a punch and make a hasty escape.

Alas, Bing Crosby and Bob Hope never made a movie titled, “The Road to Emmaus.” But if they had, I wonder if Patty Cake would have been part of it.

Whenever Bing Crosby and Bob Hope went on a road trip something unexpected was bound to happen. Today, we encounter two disciples on the road to Emmaus and something unexpected, startling, and wonderful happened to them!

The account of Jesus walking with the disciples on the road to Emmaus is also the Gospel reading for Easter Monday. This event has fascinated Christians throughout the centuries.

We learn a number of important details from Luke’s report. The events surrounding Jesus’ suffering and death were the subject of conversation for the entire city. The disciple named Cleopas asked Jesus, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

By the time of His crucifixion, Jesus was not an “obscure itinerate preacher” as some modern skeptics would have you believe. He was the talk of the town, so much so that the disciples were amazed when the stranger they encountered along the road was unaware of the events of the preceding week. Indeed, Jesus had been causing a stir in Jerusalem since early in His ministry. Immediately following His first miracle, John informs us that Jesus went to Jerusalem and drove the merchants and money changers from the temple.

Luke also reveals to us what the general population thought about Jesus. The two disciples explained, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.”

It is no wonder that the chief priests and rulers were in a panic over Jesus. All the people recognized Him as a mighty prophet. They had hoped that he would be the one to “redeem Israel.”

From these words, the false expectations of the people come to mind. They were looking for a political redeemer, not a savior from sin, death, and the devil.

For some people, politics is all that matters. Political wrangling has become the national pastime. Everyone seems to be enraged with people who have the opposite political persuasion.

I suppose we should not be surprised when politicians are unable to set aside their differences, it’s in their nature, but what about the rest of us? Unfortunately, we live in a time when everyone is a critic and finds it necessary to put a spin on every news report.

Social media is awash with dreadful comments (and often lies) about people who hold a different political view. Even some of those who have learned the eighth commandment from Luther’s Small Catechism seem hard-pressed to remember Luther’s explanation:

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, slander him, or hurt his reputation, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way.

No one remembers that we are to defend, speak well of, and explain everything in the kindest way. How sad this is?

The words of the disciples on the road to Emmaus ought to prompt us to move our focus from politics and economics to Christ and eternity.

It is also amazing to learn that these disciples have already heard the reports of the resurrection. They even knew about the angel’s message that Jesus was alive. Yet as Jesus pointed out, they were slow to believe.

Over and over again, we learn of people in the Bible who were slow to believe. Last week, we focused on Thomas. This week it is these two disciples but they are not alone. Paul was a persecutor. Peter was a denier. The Apostles were terrified. We must constantly echo the prayer of the father in Mark 9:24 (KJV), “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”

One of the most important things to learn from this encounter with Jesus on the road to Emmaus is the value of Scripture. Something called “An Emmaus Walk” has become fashionable in recent years. This can take a variety of forms involving self-reflection and spiritual conversation. Unfortunately, these “Emmaus Walks” sometimes neglect Scripture. In the real “Emmaus Walk” the disciples encounter Jesus and Jesus “interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” Spiritual disciplines and even prayer retreats that are not focused on Scripture will always be less than adequate.

As the day soon became “far spent” and the disciples reached their destination in Emmaus, they urged Jesus to stay with them. This was a noble gesture by these two disciples, to welcome a stranger. Unfortunately, many see this as the main focus of this text. Sermons are preached on welcoming strangers, immigration, and other social issues rather than Jesus’ resurrection. This becomes simply another way to take our focus off of the spiritual and back on to politics.

So what is the ultimate point of this account? It is to have eyes opened to see the resurrected Christ. In our natural state, no one will believe. We all “were dead in the trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). But thanks be to God, He did not allow us to stay in that dreadful condition. The Holy Spirit “has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith” (Luther’s Small Catechism, explanation” to the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed).

In 1601 the Italian artist, Caravaggio, captured the amazing moment when the disciples’ eyes were opened in Emmaus.



Supper at Emmaus by Caravaggio, 1601

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Maybe you remember the amazing moment when that happened to you or maybe God has granted you the opportunity to witness this event happening to someone else.

Many years ago I sat in a Bible study next to a woman. While the pastor (not me) was examining a Bible passage, he noticed tears welling up in the eyes of this woman. He asked her what was wrong and she responded. “So this means we don’t have to do anything to earn our salvation!”

That was her Emmaus moment. I am sure that Caravaggio could have painted that instant with the same dramatic flair. It is certainly a moment that I will never forget and will cherish for the rest of my life.

On this Third Sunday of Easter, let us not be distracted from our risen Savior. May we never be accused of playing “Patty Cake” while a dying world waits to hear about the gift of eternal life through faith in Jesus.

I pray that your eyes have been opened to Jesus’ resurrection. I pray that you will be able to share the wonderful message of salvation through faith in Christ and exclaim with the disciples, “The Lord has risen indeed!”

God’s richest blessings to you in Christ.

“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).

Prayers

L O Father of our Risen Savior, in Jesus' appearance to the Emmaus disciples, He explained the Scriptures and revealed Himself to them in the breaking of the bread. Grant us grace that we, too, may recognize Him as our Savior through His Word and rejoice to receive Him as the bread of life for the salvation of our souls. By Word and Sacrament, renew our faith and hope during this Easter season, that we may grow in the grace and knowledge of our Savior.

C Amen.

L Lord of all, Your Spirit opens the Holy Scriptures to the hearts of Your people. Enlighten us by the light of Your word that never fades that our hearts may burn in faith toward You.

C Amen.

L Lord God, You have poured out Your Spirit upon us, that we might believe Your truth and raise our sons and daughters in it. Bless all parents, that they may faithfully teach their children Your Word

C Amen.

L Lord, guide and give wisdom to our nation and its leaders, and to all judges and magistrates. Protect those who serve us as firefighters, police, disaster workers and medical personnel. Protect those in harm's way because of the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East that cause innocent men, women, and children to suffer. Grant that the newly found cease fire would be sustained.

C Amen.

L Visit us in Your compassion, O Lord. Deliver the sick from their infirmity, the troubled from their afflictions, the grieving from their sorrow, and the dying from their fear. May all who cry to You receive grace according to Your will. Help each of us to bear our crosses with patience and grace.

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.

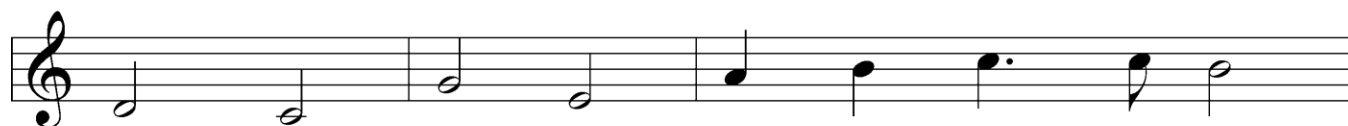
C Amen.

Jesus Lives! The Victory's Won

Lutheran Service Book 490, Lutheran Worship 139, The Lutheran Hymnal 201



1 Je - sus lives! The vic - t'ry's won! Death no long - er can ap -
2 Je - sus lives! To Him the throne High a - bove all things is
3 Je - sus lives! For me He died, Hence will I, to Je - sus
4 Je - sus lives! I know full well Noth - ing me from Him shall



pall me; Je - sus lives! Death's reign is done!
giv - en. I shall go where He is gone,
liv - ing, Pure in heart and act a - bide,
sev - er. Nei - ther death nor pow'rs of hell



From the grave will Christ re - call me. Bright - er
Live and reign with Him in heav - en. God is
Praise to Him and glo - ry giv - ing. All I
Part me now from Christ for - ev - er. God will



scenes will then com - mence; This shall be my con - fi - dence.
faith - ful; doubt - ings, hence! This shall be my con - fi - dence.
need God will dis - pense; This shall be my con - fi - dence.
be my sure de - fense; This shall be my con - fi - dence.

5 Jesus lives! And now is death
But the gate of life immortal;
This shall calm my trembling breath
When I pass its gloomy portal.
Faith shall cry, as fails each sense:
Jesus is my confidence!

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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 Week of The Third Sunday of Easter April 20—25, 2026

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

Christ the Lord Is Risen Today – 1

“Christ the Lord is ris'n today!”
Saints on earth and angels say;
Raise your joys and triumphs high;
Sing, ye heav'ns, and earth, reply.

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- L** Christ is Risen!
- C** He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

- 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; Luke 24:32

- L** Alleluia. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.
- C** Alleluia. Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures? Alleluia.

Introit Psalm 133; antiphon: Psalm 133:1

- L** Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!
- C** **It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes!**
- L** It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion!
For there the Lord has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.
- 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** Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!

Psalm 133 is only three verses long. It is one of fifteen psalms with the title, Psalm of Ascents. This particular psalm also says “of David.”

The Psalms of Ascents were sung by pilgrims climbing the long road up to Jerusalem and/or by priests climbing the fifteen steps up to the temple in Jerusalem as well as other times.



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Sometimes they are called Gradual Psalms since they are sung while going up steps similar to the Gradual in our services.

The Psalms of Ascent are characterized by hopefulness and/or cheerfulness. These are wonderful Psalms to be sung during the Easter season.

Psalm 133 speaks of the joys of dwelling in unity. It seems to me that Christmas and Easter are two times of the year when Christians more clearly express the unity of their faith. This is a wonderful gift given to us by God. This is a time when we can rejoice that we are in the “one holy Christian and apostolic Church” with all believers around the world.

Unfortunately, we live in a sinful fallen world. Our God given unity of faith is often disrupted by false teachings and sinful practices. Christians in this world live in the tension of being faithful to the truth of God’s word and expressing the unity of faith that we share with other Christians around the world.

Closer to home, you might recall living under a “stay at home order” during the Covid19 pandemic. For some, it put a real strain on family unity. When we are in continuous close proximity to one another, it becomes more and more difficult to ignore or hide foibles, failings, frustrations, fears, and sin! What are we to do? The self-righteous will blame others for their problems. The self-righteous will refuse to repent. The self-righteous have no need for forgiveness. There is a little Pharisee in all of us.

Times of close contact can be a beautiful time to remember the Christian grace of confession and forgiveness. Indeed, I am “a poor miserable sinner.” I need forgiveness from God and from the people around me. Thankfully, God grants that forgiveness to me through faith in Christ who paid for my sins on the cross. Now I am free to forgive those I live with even “70 times 7 times” per day, all the while rejoicing in God’s grace. In this way, we can experience the pleasant unity discussed in Psalm 133.

It is good for us to remember the directions given to us by the Apostle Paul in Philippians 4:8-9:

⁸ 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. ⁹ What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Prayer: Lord God, heavenly Father, thank you for the unity of faith that we have with Christians around the world. Grant that we may rejoice in this unity while not compromising the truth of Your holy word. When we find it difficult to live in continuous close contact with friends and family grant us the spiritual wisdom to practice confession and forgiveness with those around us through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Tuesday

Christ the Lord Is Risen Today – 2

Love's redeeming work is done,
Fought the fight, the battle won;
Lo! Our Sun's eclipse is o'er;
Lo! He sets in blood no more.

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- L** Christ is Risen!
- C** His is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

- 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; Luke 24:32

- L** Alleluia. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.
- C** Alleluia. Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures? Alleluia.

Collect of the Day

- L** Let us pray. O God, through the humiliation of Your Son You raised up the fallen world. Grant to Your faithful people, rescued from the peril of everlasting death, perpetual gladness and eternal joys; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C** Amen

Humiliation is an interesting word. Modern English speakers generally think of embarrassment or shame when they read the word humiliation. However, that is not the meaning of this word in the Collect of the Day. The fallen world was not raised up by Jesus' embarrassment. Humiliation in its most basic meaning is the state of being humbled. We are saved because Jesus humbled himself to be born of a virgin, suffer, and die for the sins of the world. When we remember that the Son of God left the spender of heaven to live in our world just as we do, we can begin to appreciate the extent of His humility. And He did it all to raise up the fallen world.

Because Jesus humbled Himself in this way, we are rescued from everlasting death and granted eternal joy. When we ponder this truth, it is no wonder that we sing so many alleluias!

Let Our Gladness Have No End – 1

Let our gladness have no end, alleluia!
For to earth did Christ descend, alleluia!
On this day God gave us
Christ, His Son, to save us;
Christ, His Son, to save us.

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Prayer: Almighty God, help us to remember that our joy and gladness came at a cost. Let us never forget that Jesus humbled Himself for us. Grant that we may also learn humility in service to others especially during this time of national distress through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Wednesday

Christ the Lord Is Risen Today – 3

Vain the stone, the watch, the seal;
Christ hath burst the gates of hell.
Death in vain forbids His rise;
Christ has opened paradise.

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- L** Christ is Risen!
- C** He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

- 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; Luke 24:32

- L** Alleluia. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.
- C** Alleluia. Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures? Alleluia.

Psalm 116

- L** ¹I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy.
- C** ²Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.
- L** ³The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish.
- C** ⁴Then I called on the name of the LORD: “O LORD, I pray, deliver my soul!”
- L** ⁵Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; our God is merciful.
- C** ⁶The LORD preserves the simple; when I was brought low, he saved me.
- L** ⁷Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.
- C** ⁸For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling;
- L** ⁹I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.
- C** ¹⁰I believed, even when I spoke, “I am greatly afflicted”;
- L** ¹¹I said in my alarm, “All mankind are liars.”
- C** ¹²What shall I render to the LORD for all his benefits to me?
- L** ¹³I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD,

C ¹⁴**I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.
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.**

It is impossible to imagine Christianity without mercy. It is one of the most prevalent concepts in all of Scripture!

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Matthew 5:7.

Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. Matthew 9:13.

And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, "Have mercy on us, Son of David." Matthew 9:27.

And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you? Matthew 18:33.

And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!" Matthew 20:30.

The Bible tells us that Jesus never once denied a plea for mercy! How wonderful it is to know that God hears our cries for mercy and answers them. He may not always answer them in the way that we would like but He always answers them in the right way.

Our greatest cry for mercy comes when we join the Psalmist with the sincere supplication, "O LORD, I pray, deliver my soul!" And thanks be to God, He has delivered our souls. Jesus' entire life has one goal! It is to answer your plea for mercy and deliver your soul. This is what makes Jesus' passion and resurrection so wonderful.

Since God has in such a generous way answered our plea for mercy, how could we ever refuse to offer mercy to those who request it from us?

Prayer: O Lord, we thank you that you have heard our pleas for mercy and sent Your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ to deliver our souls from sin, death and the devil. Grant that we may be as merciful to others as You have been to us through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Thursday

Christ the Lord Is Risen Today – 4

Lives again our glorious King!
Where, O death, is now thy sting?
Once He died our souls to save;
Where thy victory, O grave?

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L Christ is Risen!

C **He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!**

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; Luke 24:32

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

☐ Alleluia. Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures? Alleluia.

Acts 2:14a, 36-41

¹⁴But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, ³⁶“Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

³⁷Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” ³⁸And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” ⁴⁰And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” ⁴¹So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

You may have noticed that throughout the Easter season, the first Scripture reading of the day is not an Old Testament lesson but rather a reading from the Book of Acts (The Acts of the Apostles). Our reading today is an excerpt from Peter’s sermon delivered on the day of Pentecost.

Those who heard this sermon “were cut to the heart” when they realized that they were responsible for Jesus’ crucifixion. For us to really appreciate Holy Week and Easter, we, too, must be “cut to the heart.” Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection are not just an interesting footnote to history. Jesus was not just another political leader of His day. Jesus was not just a good man with good teachings. Jesus was not just a misguided preacher. Jesus was not an inconvenient speaker of truth to power. Jesus was and is the long promised savior of the world who went to the cross because of our sin.

While visiting the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (also known by its original Greek name, the Church of the Anastasis [Resurrection]), I witnessed a young Russian woman sobbing on her knees as she contemplated Jesus’ death on the cross. She was surely “cut to the heart” as she poured out her emotions near the place of Jesus’ sacrifice. She was as aware of her need for a savior as I ought to be.

The people who heard Peter’s sermon cried out, “What shall we do?” To this Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

When we are “cut to the heart,” we repent and for those of us who are already baptized, we return to our baptism. God’s promise fulfilled in Jesus is for all! It is even those of us who are far off—far, far distant in time and space from the place of Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection.

We may live in a difficult time and place. Distress and danger are all around. But we have the long promised savior who rose from the dead. He grants peace and life to us who have been cut to the heart.

Prayer: Almighty God, the same Peter who trembled in fear when confronted by a servant girl also stood up boldly and proclaimed salvation through repentance and faith in Jesus. Grant that when we are cut to the heart by the devastating truth of Your holy law that we would find true comfort in the salvation won for us on the cross and guaranteed by Jesus’ resurrection through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Friday

Christ the Lord Is Risen Today – 5

Soar we now where Christ has led;
Foll’wing our exalted Head.
Made like Him, like Him we rise;
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies.

- L** Christ is Risen!
- C** He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

- 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; Luke 24:32

- L** Alleluia. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.
- C** Alleluia. Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures? Alleluia.

1 Peter 1:17-25

¹⁷And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, ¹⁸knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. ²⁰He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for your sake, ²¹who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

²²Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, ²³since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; ²⁴for

“All flesh is like grass
and all its glory like the flower of grass.
The grass withers,
and the flower falls,
²⁵but the word of the Lord remains forever.”

And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

People unfamiliar with Luther, Lutherans, and Luther's Large and Small Catechisms are often quick to make statements such as these, “We don't follow Luther. We follow Jesus.” “We don't need the Catechism. We have the Bible.”

We can excuse the ignorance of these statements from people who don't know much about Lutherans, Luther and his Catechisms. These statements are much harder to excuse when they are made by Lutherans.

Of course Luther at first didn't want people to call themselves Lutherans. He rightly pointed out that Luther did not die for us. Eventually, he relented and allowed people to call themselves Lutherans because by this they meant that they were people who also believed what Luther had rediscovered in the Bible. From the Bible alone, Luther learned that we are saved by grace alone through faith in Jesus alone. This is the very foundation of the Christian faith but it had been thoroughly obscured by the time of Reformation.

By 1529 Luther had become dismayed at how little people and even pastors knew about the Bible and the Christian faith. To help people learn the Biblical truths of salvation through faith in Jesus, he wrote both of his Catechisms that year.

While I was a vicar at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Moline, Illinois, Pastor Eldor Haake hosted a weekly study for pastors. Every Monday we would gather. During the year I was there, we studied Luther's Large Catechism. The main focus of the study was discovering the multiple Bible passages that applied to each paragraph of the Large Catechism. I was thoroughly amazed to learn how saturated the Large Catechism is with Scripture. To this day, I have a copy of the Large Catechism with multiple Bible references penciled into the margins next to each paragraph.

This memory comes to mind today because of Peter's words in his first epistle. "You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot." These words inspired Luther to write in the explanation to the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed a truth that has been memorized by Lutherans throughout the generations:

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord,
who **has redeemed me**, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; **not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death**,
that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness,
just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity.
This is most certainly true.

With Peter and Luther, let us never forget the precious sacrifice Jesus made for us on the cross. Our human bodies wither and parish like dried grass but the promise of salvation revealed in God's word remains true forever.

Prayer: Almighty God, without you our ways are futile. We give you thanks that we have been ransomed from death by Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Grant we may live with pure hearts in the faith and hope of the eternal life granted to us by Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Saturday

Christ the Lord Is Risen Today – 6

Hail the Lord of earth and heav'n!
Praise to Thee by both be giv'n!
Thee we greet triumphant now:
Hail, the resurrection, Thou!

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- L** Christ is Risen!
- C** **He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!**

- 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; Luke 24:32

- L** Alleluia. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.
- C** **Alleluia. Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures? Alleluia.**

Gradual adapted 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.**

Each day this week we have begun our meditation with a stanza from the great Easter hymn, Christ the Lord Is Risen Today, written by Charles Wesley in 1739. (Our hymnal includes another hymn by this name in which each line ends with “Alleluia.” That hymn is attributed to Wipo of Burgundy in the year A.D. 1050.) Charles Wesley wrote an incredible number of hymns. Some have counted 8,989! Nine of his hymns appear in Lutheran Service Book.

Charles Wesley was born in 1707. He assisted his older brother John in founding the Methodist movement which eventually developed into the variety of Methodist denominations we have today. However, Charles was ordained in the Church of England and never left the Anglican Church.

The singing of Easter hymns reminds us that the resurrection of Jesus is absolutely central to the Christian faith. On Easter, Lutherans join with Methodists, Catholics, Baptists, Presbyterians, and so called “non-denominational” Christians along with every other kind of Christian to celebrate the victory of Jesus over death and the grave. It would be impossible to call a church “Christian” if it did not teach and celebrate the Easter truth of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead.

Charles Wesley reminds us of this universal joy in the first stanza, “Christ the Lord is ris’n today!” Saints on earth and angels say.” Not only do we on earth rejoice at this marvelous truth, but all of heaven joins in this never ending praise.

He continues in the second stanza, “Love’s redeeming work is done, Fought the fight, the battle won.” Easter is a time to be reminded that we have done nothing to save ourselves. The gift of salvation was won for us by Jesus on the cross.

The fifth stanza explains the ultimate outcome of Easter. We will join Jesus and all the saints in eternity.

Soar we now where Christ has led;
Foll’wing our exalted Head.
Made like Him, like Him we rise;
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies.

Tomorrow, we continue the Easter season with Good Shepherd Sunday. As our annual celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord drifts into the past, it is important to remember that every Sunday is a celebration of Easter. Every Sunday is a reminder of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Every Sunday is a pause to contemplate the gift of salvation won on the cross and proclaimed by Jesus’ triumph over the grave.

Prayer: Almighty God, thank you for the vast fellowship of believers in the Church Militant who join with the saints in the Church triumphant to sing Your praises forever more. Grant that during this time of national discord that we would not be robbed of the joy of our salvation. Let us show that joy to those who may become discouraged and downcast through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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