

The Sixth Sunday of Easter

Mother's Day

May 14, 2023

On Mothers' Day, it is important for us to remember that God has established the family. He has given the gift of mothers. We especially thank God for the gift of Christian mothers who have the wisdom to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Today we remember God's Word in the Fourth Commandment: "Honor your father and your mother." What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and other authorities, but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them.

Rogate

Traditionally, the Sixth Sunday of Easter (The Fifth Sunday after Easter) is known as Rogate or Rogation Sunday. This day is set aside to give special thanks and praise to God for the bountiful blessings of the field. The words Rogate and Rogation come from the Latin *rogare* which means "to ask" or "to pray." The three days preceding Ascension Day are known Rogation Days, that is, days of prayer.

This practice began in France more than 1,500 years ago, when crop failures resulted in famine. The custom soon spread to other countries.

Each year a special Rogation Service is held before Ascension Day (this Thursday). The purpose of Rogation Day is to implore the mercy of God, asking Him to keep us from all evils of body and soul, and to give to the plants of the field an increase. A special focus on prayer is particularly appropriate as the world struggles with the pandemic.

Prayers are a reminder of our frailty. We turn with humility and confidence to the Giver of all good. For it is God alone who gives increase and success to all human endeavors.

While it is important to remember to seek God's blessing upon our crops and harvest, it is ultimately more important to seek salvation from Him. As we continue our Easter celebrations, we focus on one of Luther's most wonderful hymns, "Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice," as our Hymn of the Day. It was written in 1523 and outlines Luther's faith and God's plan of salvation.

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!

Oh, Blest the House

Lutheran Service Book 862, Lutheran Worship 467, The Lutheran Hymnal 625



1 Oh, blest the house, what - e'er be - fall, Where Je - sus
 2 Oh, blest that house where faith is found And all in
 3 Oh, blest the par - ents who give heed Un - to their
 4 Oh, blest that house; it pros - pers well. In peace and
 5 Then here will I and mine to - day A sol - emn



Christ is all in all! A home that is not whol - ly
 hope and love a - bound; They trust their God and serve Him
 chil - dren's fore - most need And wea - ry not of care or
 joy the par - ents dwell, And in their chil - dren's lives is
 prom - ise make and say: Though all the world for - sake His



His— How sad and poor and dark it is!
 still And do in all His ho - ly will!
 cost. May none to them and heav'n be lost!
 shown How rich - ly God can bless His own.
 Word, I and my house will serve the Lord!

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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 119:89–93; antiphon: Psalm 119:105

- L** Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.
- C** **Forever, O Lord, your word
is firmly fixed in the heavens.**
- L** Your faithfulness endures to all generations;
you have established the earth, and it stands fast.
- C** **By your appointment they stand this day,
for all things are your servants.**
- L** If your law had not been my delight,
I would have perished in my affliction.
- C** **I will never forget your precepts,
for by them you have given me life.**
**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** Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.

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, the giver of all that is good, by Your holy inspiration grant that we may think those
things that are right and by Your merciful guiding accomplish them; 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 17:16–31

¹⁶Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city
was full of idols. ¹⁷So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the
marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers
also conversed with him. And some said, “What does this babblers wish to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a

preacher of foreign divinities”—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹And they took hold of him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? ²⁰For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean.” ²¹Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

²²So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. ²³For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, ‘To the unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, ²⁵nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. ²⁶And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, ²⁷that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, ²⁸for

“‘In him we live and move and have our being’;

as even some of your own poets have said,

“‘For we are indeed his offspring.’

²⁹Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. ³⁰The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

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 66:8–20

L ⁸Bless our God, O peoples; let the sound of his praise be heard,

C ⁹who has kept our soul among the living and has not let our feet slip.

L ¹⁰For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried.

C ¹¹You brought us into the net; you laid a crushing burden on our backs;

L ¹²you let men ride over our heads;

we went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance.

C ¹³I will come into your house with burnt offerings; I will perform my vows to you,

L ¹⁴that which my lips uttered and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.

C ¹⁵I will offer to you burnt offerings of fattened animals, with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams;
I will make an offering of bulls and goats.

L ¹⁶Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for my soul.

C ¹⁷I cried to him with my mouth, and high praise was on my tongue.

L ¹⁸If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.

C ¹⁹But truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer.

L ²⁰Blesséd be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me!

1 Peter 3:13–22

¹³Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? ¹⁴But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; ¹⁶yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

¹⁸For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, ²⁰because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. ²¹Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²²who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Verse of the Day Romans 6:9; John 16:33b

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

C Alleluia. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world. Alleluia.

John 14:15-21

L The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 14th chapter.

C Glory to You, O Lord.

¹⁵[Jesus said:] "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

¹⁸"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."

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.

Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice

Lutheran Service Book 633, Lutheran Worship 353, The Lutheran Hymnal 387

Stanzas 1-6



1 Dear Chris-tians, one and all, re-joice, With ex-ul-ta-tion
2 Fast bound in Sa-tan's chains I lay; Death brood-ed dark-ly
3 My own good works all came to naught, No grace or mer-it
4 But God had seen my wretch-ed state Be-fore the world's foun-



spring-ing, And with u-nit-ed heart and voice And ho-ly
o'er me. Sin was my tor-ment night and day; In sin my
gain-ing; Free will a-against God's judg-ment fought, Dead to all
da-tion, And mind-ful of His mer-cies great, He planned for



rap-ture sing-ing, Pro-claim the won-ders God has done, How
moth-er bore me. But dai-ly deep-er still I fell; My
good re-main-ing. My fears in-creased till sheer de-spair Left
my sal-va-tion. He turned to me a fa-ther's heart; He



His right arm the vic-t'ry won. What price our ran-som cost Him!
life be-came a liv-ing hell, So firm-ly sin pos-sessed me.
on-ly death to be my share; The pangs of hell I suf-fered.
did not choose the eas-y part But gave His dear-est trea-sure.

5 God said to His belovèd Son:
"It's time to have compassion.
Then go, bright jewel of My crown,
And bring to all salvation.
From sin and sorrow set them free;
Slay bitter death for them that they
May live with You forever."

6 The Son obeyed His Father's will,
Was born of virgin mother;
And God's good pleasure to fulfill,
He came to be my brother.
His royal pow'r disguised He bore;
A servant's form, like mine, He wore
To lead the devil captive.

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Devotional thoughts:

"M" is for the million things she gave me
"O" means only that she's growing old
"T" is for the tears she shed to save me
"H" is for her heart of purest gold
"E" is for her eyes with love-light shining

“R” means right and right she’ll always be
Put them all together they spell MOTHER,
a word that means the world to me.

These words are from a song written in 1915 titled, “M-O-T-H-E-R,” They were written by Howard Johnson with music by Theodore Morse. Although I suspect that few in the “Alphabet Generations” (Gen X, Y, and Z), will be familiar with this song, it was very popular in its day. (As a footnote, you might be interested to know that Howard Johnson wrote also the song “I Scream, You Scream, We All Scream for Ice Cream.” He died in 1941 and was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1970.)

It may also surprise you to know that Mother’s Day was first established as a worship service at Andrews Methodist Episcopal Church in Grafton, West Virginia in 1908. It came about through the efforts of Anna Jarvis who wanted to honor her mother, Ann Maria Reeves Jarvis who died in 1905.

Anna Maria Reeves Jarvis is probably the most famous woman that you have never heard of. She was born in 1832. Her mother had 11 children but only 4 survived to adulthood. As a result, Anna worked to combat childhood diseases and unsanitary conditions. In 1858, while she was expecting her sixth child, Anna began Mothers' Day Work Clubs to improve health and sanitary conditions,

During the Civil War, she and her clubs nursed the suffering soldiers from both the North and the South. After the war, she worked to eliminate conflict and strife in our divided country. In 1868, she planned a “Mothers Friendship Day” for soldiers from both sides and their families to help the healing process. She shared a message of unity and reconciliation. Bands played “Dixie” and the “Star Spangled Banner” and the event ended with everyone, north and south, joining to sing “Auld Lang Syne.” It was a moving event for everyone present.

Anna was a popular speaker and Sunday School superintendent for 25 years. She worked her whole life to honor and help mothers.

Through the work of her daughter, Anna Jarvis, by 1911 every state observed Mother’s Day and in 1914, Woodrow Wilson signed a proclamation designating Mother's Day as a national holiday. The next year Howard Johnson wrote “M-O-T-H-E-R.” Loving and honoring our mothers became a normal and accepted part of our society in the early years of the twentieth century.

Times have changed. Some in our world today want to replace the word “mother” with “birthing parent.” Redefining words has become a favorite pastime for those who want to redefine our understanding of right and wrong. Love is another word that seems to confuse our pop-culture social influencers.

Jesus said: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

It is possible that our generation is more confused about love than any other generation. It most likely began in the 1960s with slogans such as “Make Love Not War” and the “Summer of Love.” Don’t worry if you are too young to know about these things, contemporary examples are abundant. They all converge on this one precept, “If you do something motivated by love, it can’t be wrong.”

The public morality of our time is predicated on motivation. The outcome is irrelevant as long as the motivation is right. All activities from divorce to euthanasia are justified when love is invoked. A corollary to this is the lyric from an old song, “It can’t be wrong when it feels so right.”

It does not take long to think of examples to prove this axiom false. We all have heard reports of parents who abuse children or spouses who are cruel but are motivated by love. We all know people who are mean and hurtful “for your own good.”

Jesus says, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” Or to turn a modern phrase on its head, “If you do something wrong, it can’t be love.”

The ultimate love is doing what is right. It is not doing whatever you want and calling it love. Breaking one of God’s commandments is never love. Rather God’s commands are the perfect formula for love. They describe for us what it means to love God and love one another.

Loving God means putting Him first, not misusing His name, and faithfully hearing His word and worshipping Him. Loving others means honoring father and mother, not hurting or harming our neighbor, honoring and keeping marriage vows, protecting our neighbor’s property and business, protecting the reputation of others, and living a life of contentment.

So how are you doing on that? I didn't think so. The more we dig deeper into love, the more we learn of our own failures. We can't even succeed in perfectly loving those who are nearest and dearest to us.

Thankfully, there is One who does love perfectly. His love is not just an emotional sentimental feeling but an ultimate commitment of self-sacrifice. His perfect love and sacrifice on the cross paid for every one of our failures to love. John 3:16 is the summary of that love, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

Jesus' love for you meant that He gave His life for yours. You will not perish but have eternal life!

Now you and I can love in deed and in truth. On this side of eternity, our motivation will never be pure and our deeds will never be perfect yet we now truly love because He loved us! (1 John 4:10).

How can we sort out all of our contemporary confusion about love? A wonderful place to start is found on a poster given to me by my wife when we first began to date in 1970. They are the words of 1 Corinthians 13:4-13. These words certainly describe the love that should characterize the relationship between husband and wife. They are often read at weddings. They certainly describe the love that most mothers have for their children. But the Apostle Paul wrote them to explain how we are to live together in the family of God! Among fellow believers, this kind of love shouldn't be rare or exceptional. It is the kind of love that we share together in the household of faith. Paul tells us:

⁴ Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸ Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. ¹² For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

¹³ So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

God's richest blessings to you in Christ.

L Let us pray. Father in heaven, You have shown us Your love through the care of mothers who nurture, guide and raise their children in all things good. Give them wisdom to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and to teach their children to Jesus and His love for them through the cross. Bless them in their calling. Sustain them through weary and difficult times. Remember in compassion all who desire children and yet are childless. Give them Your comfort and peace.

C Amen.

L O Lord, You bless and protect Your people in a world where many false gods, known and unknown, are worshiped. Give Your saints a clear and bold proclamation of Jesus Christ.

C Amen.

L Heavenly Father, Your Son suffered on our behalf to win salvation for us. Grant that we may have the privilege not only of believing in Him but also of enduring suffering for His sake when it is Your will.

C Amen.

L Lord of heaven and earth, You have given the Spirit of truth to dwell in us through Holy Baptism. Grant Your Spirit's steadfast guidance that Your people may not slip into sin and unbelief but live always in praise of Your Name before the world.

C Amen.

L Creator, You made from one man all the nations of the earth, and still You sustain us. Grant good leaders in every land who will seek peace and serve justice. Frustrate the causes of evil, violence and oppression.

C Amen.

L Almighty God, suppress the powers of darkness. Bring an end to war, violence, and terror. Give us leaders who will seek peace and work for the common good. Instill in them a love of righteousness, and guide them in the pursuit of justice for all. Bless all medical and emergency workers; and all members of the armed forces who protect us.

C Amen.

L God of compassion, hear the cries to call to you in time of need. Answer them with grace sufficient for all their needs. Heal the sick according to Your will and grant them comfort in their time of need. Give Your peace to those who are nearing life's end. Remind us that You are our health and strength for this life and the life to come.

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.

Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice

Lutheran Service Book 633, Lutheran Worship 353, The Lutheran Hymnal 387, Stanzas 7-10

7 To me He said: "Stay close to Me,
I am your rock and castle.
Your ransom I Myself will be;
For you I strive and wrestle.
For I am yours, and you are Mine,
And where I am you may remain;
The foe shall not divide us.

8 "Though he will shed My precious blood,
Me of My life bereaving,
All this I suffer for your good;
Be steadfast and believing.
Life will from death the vict'ry win;
My innocence shall bear your sin,
And you are blest forever.

9 "Now to My Father I depart,
From earth to heav'n ascending,
And, heavn'ly wisdom to impart,
The Holy Spirit sending;
In trouble He will comfort you
And teach you always to be true
And into truth shall guide you.

10 "What I on earth have done and taught
Guide all your life and teaching;
So shall the kingdom's work be wrought
And honored in your preaching.
But watch lest foes with base alloy
The heav'nly treasure should destroy;
This final word I leave you."

“Dear Christians, One and All Rejoice” is one the most loved of Luther’s hymns. It has been connected to Luther’s Preface to the New Testament written a few months earlier in 1522. Many consider this hymn to be a confession of faith that stands alongside Luther’s other great Reformation writings that deal with justification as well as Law and Gospel.

About 100 years after Luther, a University of Wittenberg faculty member exclaimed that this hymn is “an excellent and comforting summary of the totality of the evangelical Lutheran foundation of faith. It contains the whole of Theology, Christology, and Anthropology, or what we should know from the word of God about God, about Christ and our wretchedness and its solution in the kingdom of grace through the merit of Christ, as well as the certainty of the eternal joyful kingdom”

It is a commentary on Romans 1-8 in hymn form:

Stanza 1	Romans 1:16-17
Stanzas 2-3	Romans 1:18-3:20
Stanzas 4-6	Romans 3:21-6:23
Stanzas 7-10	Romans 8

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 Sixth Sunday of Easter May 15-20, 2023 Ascension Day, Thursday, May 18

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 meditate on what God has done for you.

Note: For the rogation days of Monday through Wednesday you may wish to use the Litany on page 288 of Lutheran Service Book.

Monday

Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice – 1

Dear Christians, one and all, rejoice,
With exultation springing,
And with united heart and voice
And holy rapture singing,
Proclaim the wonders God has done,
How His right arm the vict'ry won.
What price our ransom cost Him!

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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.

L O Lord,
C have mercy.
L O Christ,
C have mercy.
L O Lord,

- C** have mercy.
- L** O Christ,
- C** hear us.
- L** God the Father in heaven,
- C** have mercy.
- L** God the Son, Redeemer of the world,
- C** have mercy.
- L** God the Holy Spirit,
- C** have mercy.
- L** Be gracious to us.
- C** Spare us, good Lord.
- L** Be gracious to us.
- C** Help us, good Lord.

Verse of the Day - Romans 6:9; John 16:33b

- L** Alleluia. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. Alleluia.
- C** Alleluia. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world. Alleluia.

Introit Psalm 119:89–93; antiphon: Psalm 119:105

- L** Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.
- C** Forever, O Lord, your word
is firmly fixed in the heavens.
- L** Your faithfulness endures to all generations;
you have established the earth, and it stands fast.
- C** By your appointment they stand this day,
for all things are your servants.
- L** If your law had not been my delight,
I would have perished in my affliction.
- C** I will never forget your precepts,
for by them you have given me life.
**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** Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.

Some universal truths are discovered by experience. One such truth is this: If you spend the night on the sofa at a friend's house, there will be a coffee table between you and the bathroom.

Walking through a strange house in the dark can be dangerous. Who knows what you may run into? Who knows the damage you may do to your shins?

It is silly and dangerous to wander in the dark in a strange home at night when lights are available. It is also silly and dangerous to wander in the dark in a strange and hazardous world. Yet this is exactly what many people choose to do by ignoring God's word.

The psalmist tells us that God's "word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." When people struggle through life without God's word they continually injure themselves and others.

None of us have been down life's journey before. The way is unknown to us. We are unaware of the dangers and pitfalls along the way but God's word lights our way.

More than that, in God's word we learn that Jesus himself is The Way. He has been on this journey. He goes with us along the path. He opens up heaven to us and all believers.

It is dangerous to go through life without the light of God's word. It is a disaster to go into eternity

without the light of life—Jesus! (John 1:4-5).

Prayer: Lord God, gracious and merciful Father, because You have promised that You will hear us when we bring You our cares, we implore You not to deal with us according to our sins but according to Your mercy. Send seasonable weather so that in due time the earth may yield her increase. Remind us ever to receive with thanks our daily bread, trusting in You as our gracious God; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Tuesday

Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice – 2

Fast bound in Satan's chains I lay;
Death brooded darkly o'er me.
Sin was my torment night and day;
In sin my mother bore me.
But daily deeper still I fell;
My life became a living hell,
So firmly sin possessed me.

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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.

L O Lord,
C have mercy.

L O Christ,
C have mercy.

L O Lord,
C have mercy.

L O Christ,
C hear us.

L God the Father in heaven,
C have mercy.

L God the Son, Redeemer of the world,
C have mercy.

L God the Holy Spirit,
C have mercy.

L Be gracious to us.
C Spare us, good Lord.

L Be gracious to us.
C Help us, good Lord.

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

C Alleluia. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world. Alleluia.

(Romans 6:9; John 16:33b)

Collect of the Day

L Let us pray. O God, the giver of all that is good, by Your holy inspiration grant that we may think those

things that are right and by Your merciful guiding accomplish them; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen

Countless authors have employed Ralph Waldo Emerson's quote, "You are what you think all day long." While this may be true, it neglects this fact: we only have a limited ability to control our own thoughts. Some eastern religions are so afraid of human thinking that they spend countless hours teaching techniques to clear the mind of all thought. This is not God's way.

Thinking the right things is a gift of God. In the collect for this week, we are reminded that God is the giver of all that is good. One gift we seek from Him is the inspiration to think things that are right. Without God's help, it is futile to try to think right things. Our minds are always distracted by evil.

The Holy Spirit can direct our thoughts when we immerse ourselves in God's word. Psalm 119 tells us the splendor of knowing God's word and will. One gem to remember from Psalm 119 is verse 9, "How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word." Purity of thought and life come from thinking God's thoughts found in His word.

Yet thinking right thoughts is not our only goal. The collect reminds us that our goal is to actually accomplish right things through the merciful guidance of God.

Thanks be to God that Jesus did not come only to teach us right thoughts and urge us to do right things. He came to do the ultimate right thing for us. He won our salvation on the cross.

Without Him, the best I can do brood darkly about my sin and death. With Him, my thoughts turn to the noble, the true, and the eternal. Now I can live life thinking right thoughts as directed 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: Almighty God, You bless the earth to make it fruitful, bringing forth in abundance whatever is needed for the support of our lives. Prosper the work of farmers and all those who labor to bring food to our table. Grant them seasonable weather that they may gather in the fruits of the earth in abundance and proclaim Your goodness with thanksgiving; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Wednesday

Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice – 3

My own good works all came to naught,
No grace or merit gaining;
Free will against God's judgment fought,
Dead to all good remaining.
My fears increased till sheer despair
Left only death to be my share;
The pangs of hell I suffered.

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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.

L O Lord,

C have mercy.
L O Christ,
C have mercy.
L O Lord,
C have mercy.
L O Christ,
C hear us.
L God the Father in heaven,
C have mercy.
L God the Son, Redeemer of the world,
C have mercy.
L God the Holy Spirit,
C have mercy.
L Be gracious to us.
C Spare us, good Lord.
L Be gracious to us.
C Help us, good Lord.

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

C Alleluia. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world. Alleluia.
(Romans 6:9; John 16:33b)

Psalm 66:8-20

L ⁸Bless our God, O peoples; let the sound of his praise be heard,
C ⁹**who has kept our soul among the living and has not let our feet slip.**
L ¹⁰For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried.
C ¹¹**You brought us into the net; you laid a crushing burden on our backs;**
L ¹²you let men ride over our heads;
 we went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance.
C ¹³**I will come into your house with burnt offerings; I will perform my vows to you,**
L ¹⁴that which my lips uttered and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.
C ¹⁵**I will offer to you burnt offerings of fattened animals, with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams;**
I will make an offering of bulls and goats.
L ¹⁶Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for my soul.
C ¹⁷**I cried to him with my mouth, and high praise was on my tongue.**
L ¹⁸If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.
C ¹⁹**But truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer.**
L ²⁰Blesséd be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me!

Many years ago while serving Faith Lutheran Church in Ignace, Ontario and Hope Lutheran Church in Sioux Lookout, Ontario, I attend a meeting in Brainerd, Minnesota with a friend and member of Faith Lutheran Church. In those days, the congregations in Northwestern Minnesota were part of the Minnesota North District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. A quick glance at the map will tell you that we had a long road trip.

This was many years before GPS and Google Maps. Our trip to Brainerd was uneventful. However, on our return home, I elected to doze while my friend occupied the driver's seat. All went well until I awoke an hour or two later.

We were in the middle of "Who-knows-where," Minnesota! Or as once spoken in a popular movie, "You're off the edge of the map, mate. Here there be monsters!"

While I dozed, we had slipped up and missed an important right turn. Neither of us was in familiar territory and many miles passed before passing through a town that we could find on the map. Rather than backtracking, we changed our route home to worried spouses and arrived several hours behind schedule.

One little slip can lead to major problems. Opportunities to slip and fall are all around us. Some of them are obvious such as a slippery poolside. Others sneak up on us.

A slip of the foot can be dangerous. A slip of the soul leads to ruin. A most treacherous slip of the soul is relying on my own good works.

On our trip many years ago, I was able to sleep because my friend was a good driver. I relaxed in confidence. Unfortunately, he missed seeing a sign indicating our turn. One little slip and we were off course.

The same is true with our own good works. They may be mostly good. We may be basically truthful. We might normally be honest. But this is not good enough.

Our holy God requires holiness, a life without blemish (1 Peter 1:15-16). 99% is not good enough.

In God's mercy and grace, we have become holy. Not by our own good works but by Jesus' good works and His sacrifice on the cross (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Through Jesus, God has kept your soul among the living and has not let your foot slip!

BLESSING OF THE SOIL AND THE SEED

- L** The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof,
- C** **the world and those who dwell therein. Psalm 24:1**
- L** O LORD, how manifold are your works!
- C** **In wisdom have you made them all;**
the earth is full of your creatures. Psalm 104:24
- L** While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat,
- C** **summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease. Genesis 8:22**
- L** Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
- C** **for his wondrous works to the children of man! Psalm 107:31**
- L** Unless You bless,
- C** **We labor in vain, merciful Lord. adapt. Psalm 127:1**
- L** He does not deal with us according to our sins,
- C** **nor repay us according to our iniquities. Psalm 103:10**
- L** The LORD is good to all,
- C** **and his mercy is over all that he has made. Psalm 145:9**
- L** The LORD our God be with us, as he was with our fathers.
- C** **May he not leave us or forsake us. 1 Kings 8:57**
- L** Oh, save your people and bless your heritage!
- C** **Be their shepherd and carry them forever. Psalm 28:9**
- L** May God's blessing rest upon soil and seed throughout our land to feed and clothe.
- C** **Amen.**

Thursday

The Feast of the Ascension of Our Lord

Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice – 4

But God had seen my wretched state
Before the world's foundation,
And mindful of His mercies great,
He planned for my salvation.
He turned to me a father's heart;
He did not choose the easy part
But gave His dearest treasure.

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.

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

C Alleluia. Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. Alleluia.

(Romans 6:9; Matthew 28:20b)

Acts 1:1-11

¹In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, ²until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³To them he presented himself alive after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

⁴And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; ⁵for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

⁶So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” ⁹And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

Not too long ago, I sat listening to a discussion that was beyond my comprehension. This trio of conversationalists could have been speaking Russian or Chinese and I wouldn't have understood them less. Yet they were enthralled with every minute detail of their topic: new video games!

Has this ever happened to you? I mean being on the other side of such a dialogue? You are enthralled and excited about some event or experience and the people you are speaking with haven't a clue about the reason for your excitement.

This happens to me whenever I try to recount the breathtaking experience of singing “Crown Him with Many Crowns” during our Ascension Day Service while the choir sings a descant. My spine literally tingles at the thrill.

I always counted it a shame that so few Christians take time to remember the Ascension of our Lord. Since Jesus' ascension happened 40 days after Easter, we observe it on a Thursday. I suppose that's the problem. Some pastors have transferred their Ascension Day service to Sunday so that more people will be aware.

Jesus' ascension into heaven is equivalent to His “Mission Accomplished Parade.” This is the day that He is welcomed back to His eternal home in paradise to sit at the Father's right hand. Everything that He sought to do has been done. God sent His Only-begotten Son so that we would not perish but have eternal life. What a day to celebrate!

Now He rules the world for the sake of the Church! We read in Ephesians 1:22-23, “And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Prayer: Almighty God, as Your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, ascended into the heavens, so may we also ascend in heart and mind and continually dwell there with Him, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Crown Him with Many Crowns

Lutheran Service Book 525, Lutheran Worship 278, The Lutheran Hymnal 341



1 Crown Him with man - y crowns, The Lamb up - on His throne;
2 Crown Him the vir - gin's Son, The God in - car - nate born,
3 Crown Him the Lord of love. Be - hold His hands and side,
4 Crown Him the Lord of life, Who tri - umphed o'er the grave



7 Hark how the heav'n-ly an - them drowns All mu - sic but its own.
Whose arm those crim - son tro - phies won Which now His brow a - dorn:
Rich wounds, yet vis - i - ble a - bove, In beau - ty glo - ri - fied.
And rose vic - to - rious in the strife For those He came to save.



A - wake, my soul, and sing Of Him who died for thee, And
Fruit of the mys - tic rose, Yet of that rose the stem, The
No an - gels in the sky Can ful - ly bear that sight, But
His glo - ries now we sing, Who died and rose on high, Who



hail Him as thy match-less king Through all e - ter - ni - ty.
root whence mer - cy ev - er flows, The babe of Beth - le - hem.
down - ward bend their won-d'ring eyes At mys - ter - ies so bright.
died e - ter - nal life to bring And lives that death may die.

5 Crown Him the Lord of heav'n,
Enthroned in worlds above,
Crown Him the king to whom is giv'n
The wondrous name of Love.
Crown Him with many crowns
As thrones before Him fall;
Crown Him, ye kings, with many crowns,
For He is king of all.

Friday

Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice – 5, 6, 7

5 God said to His beloved Son:
“It’s time to have compassion.
Then go, bright jewel of My crown,
And bring to all salvation.
From sin and sorrow set them free;
Slay bitter death for them that they
May live with You forever.”

6 The Son obeyed His Father’s will,
Was born of virgin mother;
And God’s good pleasure to fulfill,
He came to be my brother.
His royal pow’r disguised He bore;
A servant’s form, like mine, He wore
To lead the devil captive.

7 To me He said: “Stay close to Me,
I am your rock and castle.
Your ransom I Myself will be;
For you I strive and wrestle.
For I am yours, and you are Mine,
And where I am you may remain;
The foe shall not divide us.!

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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.

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

C Alleluia. Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. Alleluia.

(Romans 6:9; Matthew 28:20b)

1 Peter 3:13-22

¹³Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? ¹⁴But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; ¹⁶yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil.

¹⁸For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, ²⁰because they formerly did not obey, when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. ²¹Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²²who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

I was confirmed 58 years ago this month. Before I retired, this coming Sunday would be Confirmation Day at Christ Lutheran. I have many wonderful memories of teaching confirmation classes to 7th and 8th grade students. (I do have to admit that it took me about 10 years of ministry to learn to appreciate this experience.)

Confirmation instruction includes memorizing Bible passages. In the years I studied for confirmation, the

passages we memorized were from the King James Version of the Bible. I still recall many of those passages in the words of that translation.

One of those passages is 1 Peter 3:21, “baptism doth also now save us.” Many passages of the Bible connect Baptism with forgiveness and salvation but none more clearly than this. In fact, in the Greek the words “save” and “baptism” are positioned right next to each other without any intervening words! Unfortunately, some modern translations muddle that connection.

As we go through the difficulties of life, we need to rely on the promises of God. Sometimes we are tempted to doubt our salvation. In those times, it is good to look back to the promises that God gives us in baptism and exclaim, “I am baptized!”

Baptism washes away our sin, connects us to Jesus’ death and resurrection, and makes us children of the Heavenly Father. Thanks be to God!

Prayer: Lord God, heavenly Father, in Holy Baptism You began Your good work in our lives, and You have blessed our training in Your Word. We implore You to pour out Your Holy Spirit on our hearts and minds so that we will truly love and revere You confessing our faith with joy and boldness. Grant that we may live according to Your commandments, and praise and glorify You as our faithful God and Lord, for the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Saturday

Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice – 8, 9

8 “Though he will shed My precious blood,
Me of My life bereaving,
All this I suffer for your good;
Be steadfast and believing.
Life will from death the vict’ry win;
My innocence shall bear your sin,
And you are blest forever.

9 “Now to My Father I depart,
From earth to heav’n ascending,
And, heavn’ly wisdom to impart,
The Holy Spirit sending;
In trouble He will comfort you
And teach you always to be true
And into truth shall guide you.

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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.

L Alleluia. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. Alleluia.
C Alleluia. Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. Alleluia.

(Romans 6:9; Matthew 28:20b)

Gradual

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.

(adapt. from Matt. 28:7; Heb. 2:7; Ps. 8:6)

I hope that this week, you were able to ponder Luther’s hymn, “Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice.” It does what all the great hymns do. It teaches! In this hymn, Luther sets before us in a deeply personal way the outline of salvation as presented in Holy Scripture.

When we are honest with ourselves, without Jesus, we are tormented by our sins and failings. Try as we

might to satisfy a holy God with our own goodness, we always fail. But thanks be to God, He did not allow us to remain lost forever in the condemnation we deserve because of our sin. He planned for our salvation!

His plan was a difficult plan. It meant that He must send His own Beloved Son to destroy death for us and grant us life forever in with Him.

Jesus did exactly what His father asked. He humbled Himself to be born of a virgin and live a life of a lowly servant for us. He ultimately died and shed his precious blood on the cross to give us victory over the grave.

When His mission of salvation was complete, Jesus ascended into heaven but did not leave us alone. He sent the Holy Spirit to bring us comfort and truth.

Prayer: O Lord God, our heavenly Father, grant that we may be faithful to all Jesus has done and taught. May His word guide our lives, in His name we pray. Amen.

Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice – 10

“What I on earth have done and taught
Guide all your life and teaching;
So shall the kingdom’s work be wrought
And honored in your preaching.
But watch lest foes with base alloy
The heav’nly treasure should destroy;
This final word I leave you.”!

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