

The Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 22, 2022

The Hymn of the Day for the Sixth Sunday of Easter is “**Dear Christians One and All, Rejoice.**” This was the first congregational hymn written by Martin Luther (following the ballad, “A New Song We Raise” written by Luther upon hearing the news of the first Lutheran Martyrs, Johann Esch and Heinrich Voes, who were executed by Roman Catholic authorities for their adherence to Reformation teaching. They were burned at the stake in Brussels on July 1, 1523.)

“**Dear Christians One and All, Rejoice**” appeared in the first Lutheran Hymnal published in 1524. In this hymnal it was titled, “*A Christian hymn of Dr. Martin Luther, setting forth the unspeakable grace of God and the true faith.*” An early Lutheran Pastor exclaimed that many hundreds of Christians had been brought to faith through the noble, precious words of this hymn.

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!

Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice

Lutheran Service Book 556, Lutheran Worship 353, The Lutheran Hymnal 387

Stanzas 1-5



1 Dear Chris-tians, one and all, re-joyce, 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 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."

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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 55:4, 16–18; antiphon Psalm 55:22

- L** Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you;
he will never permit the righteous to be moved.
C My heart is in anguish within me;
the terrors of death have fallen upon me.
L But I call to God,
and the Lord will save me.
C Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan,
and he hears my voice.
L He redeems my soul in safety from the battle that I wage,
for many are arrayed against me.
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 Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you;
he will never permit the righteous to be moved.

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 16:9–15

⁹A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” ¹⁰And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

¹¹So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, ¹²and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days. ¹³And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. ¹⁴One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. ¹⁵And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us.

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 67

L ¹May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us,
C ²that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.
L ³Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!
C ⁴Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth.
L ⁵Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!
C ⁶The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, shall bless us.
L ⁷God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him!

Revelation 21:9–14, 21–27

⁹Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” ¹⁰And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹having

the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. ¹²It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed— ¹³on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. ¹⁴And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. . . .

²¹And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass.

²²And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, ²⁵and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. ²⁶They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. ²⁷But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

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

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

John 16:23–33

L The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 16th chapter.

C Glory to You, O Lord.

²³[Jesus said:] “In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. ²⁴Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

²⁵“I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father. ²⁶In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; ²⁷for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. ²⁸I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father.”

²⁹His disciples said, “Ah, now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech! ³⁰Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God.” ³¹Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? ³²Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. ³³I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

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 556, Lutheran Worship 353, The Lutheran Hymnal 387
Stanzas 6-10

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.

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, heav'n'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."

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Devotional thoughts:

Four of us sat there eating breakfast. We were all strangers but somehow we began to discuss religion. (Imagine that) But that is a story for another day.

Directly across from me was a man with a long, immaculately groomed, black beard. It covered his neck completely. After a few minutes, he ordered eggs over easy.

In the middle of our breakfast and our theological discussion, I looked across the aisle at this gentleman. Stretching from his lips to his chest on the center of his beard was a single long strand of egg yolk! What would you do? At that moment, I completely understood the expression "egg on my face."

I was reminded of that expression in a more personal way last week. I walked into a situation and waited my turn to speak. As I waited, I listened to a woman lecturing the pastor. Having been the focus of such lectures before, I jumped in and defended the pastor against this unwarranted attack.

Unfortunately, I then discovered that I had egg on my face. If I had displayed more patience and listened a little longer, I would have realized that the woman was complementing the pastor, not criticizing him! Oopsie! It's easy to get egg on your face when you jump to conclusions without learning all the facts!

As I read the Gospel lesson for this week, these events came to mind. The lesson begins, "In that day you will ask nothing of me." The temptation was for me to rush in and write a few thoughts on this lesson without asking myself the question, "What day is that day?" But I knew that if I did that, I may end up with "egg on my face (beard).

Our lesson begins with the very next verse that follows last week's Gospel lesson. It comes in the middle of a section that the ESV translation labels, "Your Sorrow Will Turn into Joy."

That day, when sorrow turns to joy, is the day of resurrection. Following Jesus' arrest, crucifixion, and death, the disciples had no joy. They only experienced disappointment, confusion, and sadness while Jesus was in the tomb. But on the third day, they were overcome with gladness because Jesus rose from the dead.

It is in this day of joy, this day of resurrection, that the disciples will ask no more questions. They will fully understand Jesus' mission to save sinners and participate in that mission by sharing the Gospel. The word Jesus used for "ask" in John 16:23 is a word used to indicate an inquiry for facts. They won't need to ask Him about why He did the things He did. Their eyes will be opened and they will understand (Luke 24:13-35).

Next, Jesus says, "Whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you." This is a different word for ask. This time it means a request or prayer.

We have no intrinsic right to go to God in prayer. We have forfeited that right because of our sin. Yet, we may pray because Jesus has taken away our sins. He has restored us to a right relationship with the Father. We can now make our requests known to the Father because we ask in Jesus' name! He answers us for Jesus' sake! We no longer have "egg on our face" when we come to God. We come to Him as His redeemed and forgiven children.

Now our joy is full. We understand Jesus' mission to save sinners. Our joy is full because God the Father hears our prayers for Jesus' sake. Our joy is full because the Father answers our prayers according to His will in a way that brings us blessings.

Since we live in the day when our sorrow has turned to joy and our joy is full, the Apostle Paul is able to write to the Thessalonians, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Martin Luther says it this way:

Dear Christians, one and all, rejoice,
With exultation springing,

Fast bound in Satan's chains I lay;
Death brooded darkly o'er me.

My own good works all came to naught,
No grace or merit gaining;

But God had seen my wretched state
Before the world's foundation,
And mindful of His mercies great,
He planned for my salvation.

God said to His beloved Son:
"It's time to have compassion.
Then go, bright jewel of My crown,
And bring to all salvation.

Today is a day to celebrate prayer. Since we are redeemed by Jesus, we have the privilege to pray in His Name. God has promised to hear and answer.

We may pray for whatever is on our hearts. We pray for things that bring God glory and benefit our neighbors. We pray for our enemies. The Holy Spirit helps us in our prayers, sometimes in ways that cannot be expressed in words (Romans 8:26). God hears our prayers and answers in His own way and at His own time. In our prayers, we thank and praise God for who He is and all He has done for us, especially the salvation that is ours in Christ.

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).

L Lord, our heavenly Father, You never refuse hear the cries of Your children. In the name of our Lord Jesus, we ask for Your help and protection and for our families, our neighbors and friends.

C Amen.

L Lord God, Your Church is a place of prayer. In prayer, we ask You to give us open hearts to hear Your Gospel message, lips to offer prayers in faith and readiness to give of ourselves for Your sake.

C Amen.

L Almighty God, govern the kingdoms of this world according to Your holy and gracious will. Protect those in harm's way because of the war in Ukraine that continues to cause innocent men, women, and children to suffer. Curb what is evil and promote what is good among us wherever we live in this fallen world.

C Amen.

L Almighty God, send Your holy angels to watch over all of our loved ones, especially those who live in distant places. We thank You for the protection granted to all who have attended to our needs during this pandemic. As we are experiencing an increase in the number of new infections, continue to strengthen all those who serve us in the medical field. Give Your comfort and peace to all who are suffering from this illness or others. Be with those who mourn. Grant to them the hope and assurance of a blessed reunion in heaven.

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.

Savior, Again to Thy Dear Name We Raise

Lutheran Service Book 917, Lutheran Worship 221, The Lutheran Hymnal 47



1 Sav - ior, a - gain to Thy dear name we raise
2 Grant us Thy peace up - on our home - ward way;
3 Grant us Thy peace, Lord, through the com - ing night;
4 Grant us Thy peace through - out our earth - ly life,



With one ac - cord our part - ing hymn of praise;
With Thee be - gan, with Thee shall end, the day.
Turn Thou for us its dark - ness in - to light.
Our balm in sor - row and our stay in strife;



Once more we bless Thee ere our wor - ship cease,
Guard Thou the lips from sin, the hearts from shame,
From harm and dan - ger keep Thy chil - dren free;
Then, when Thy voice shall bid our con - flict cease,



Then, low - ly bend - ing, wait Thy word of peace.
That in this house have called up - on Thy name.
For dark and light are both a - like to Thee.
Call us, O Lord, to Thine e - ter - nal peace.

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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 Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 23 – May 28, 2022

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.

Monday

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

Introit Psalm 55:4, 16–18; antiphon Psalm 55:22

- L** Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you;
he will never permit the righteous to be moved.
- C** **My heart is in anguish within me;**
the terrors of death have fallen upon me.
- L** But I call to God,
and the Lord will save me.
- C** **Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan,**
and he hears my voice.
- L** He redeems my soul in safety from the battle that I wage,
for many are arrayed against me.
- 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** Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you;
he will never permit the righteous to be moved.

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

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

Kyrie

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

“How are you?”

“Fine.”

Have you ever had that exchange? I’m sure you have. It’s such a common greeting and response that we usually say it without thinking. It’s become our version of the Hawaiian “Aloha” or the Hebrew “Shalom.” It has meaning but we don’t think about it very often.

A few years ago, I met my doctoral advisor at a Reformation service where he was preaching. When I saw him, he asked, “How are you?” I said, ‘Fine.’

Then I paused and said, “Not really.” I was dealing with some major issues in my congregation. Then he took a moment and listened to me summarize the really devastating things that were happening. Because I already had a close relationship with him, I knew that I could trust him and he would listen sympathetically to the recounting of my problems.

I thought about that exchange when I read verses 4 and 17 from Psalm 55 in our introit for this week:

My heart is in anguish within me;
the terrors of death have fallen upon me.
Evening and morning and at noon
I utter my complaint and moan,
and he hears my voice.

Some Christians always seem to be happy and bubbly. They never have a care in the world. In fact, some Christians and churches make you feel that if you aren’t happy and bubbly all the time then maybe you aren’t a real Christian. Maybe you don’t really have faith.

Fortunately, God has preserved these words of David for us in the psalms. David pours out his heart to God. Everything is not “fine” for him. He is filled with anguish and terror. But he knows that God is always ready and willing to hear his complaining, morning, noon, and night! He is always ready to listen to you, too!

Never fear being honest with God. He already knows everything about you. He knows everything that you are experiencing. When you call to God, He will save you (Psalm 55:16).

What should you do when you are not “fine?” David answers that question in Psalm 55:4, “Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you.”

He has taken our greatest burden upon Himself. On the cross, Jesus bore all of our sins and conquered death. Now, He is always with us. He will never leave or forsake us. Cast your burden on Him!

Let us pray. O Lord thank You for the privilege of bringing our burdens to You in prayer. Grant us the peace that passes understanding when we cast our cares upon You knowing that You care for us through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Tuesday

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

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

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

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

Kyrie

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

L Let us pray: O God, 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.

Do you control your thoughts or do your thoughts control you? There are at least four books by different authors on Amazon titled, "You Are What You Think." They are playing off the more common contemporary expression, "You are what you eat." Without having read them, I would assume that the authors did some research for their books and realize that they have paraphrased a quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson, "You become what you think about all day long." But Emerson wasn't the first. Many individuals have said similar things throughout history. Marcus Aurelius, the Roman Emperor and Stoic philosopher wrote, "A man's life is what his thoughts make of it;"

Of course, these great thinkers were only echoing things that were already said in the Bible. Proverbs 23:7 in the King James Version says, "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Our collect for this week recognizes how difficult it is to control your thoughts. Sometimes certain thoughts will occupy your mind no matter how hard you try to avoid them. This is why we pray for God to inspire us to think those things that are right! Without God's help, we cannot control our thoughts.

The Apostle Paul says, "Put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:20-24). It is only by God's grace and the working of the Holy Spirit that we are able to change our thoughts and the actions that follow.

Daily Bible reading and devotions are a great way to control your thoughts. For people struggling with anxiety, one pastor suggests reading the 23rd Psalm five times a day for two weeks. His prescription is to read it immediately when you wake up, then at breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and finally right before bed. He reports that those who have done this faithfully for two weeks have experienced amazing results.

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. Amen.

Wednesday

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

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

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

Psalm 67

- L** ¹May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us,
C ²**that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.**
L ³Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!
C ⁴**Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth.**
L ⁵Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!
C ⁶**The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, shall bless us.**
L ⁷God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him!

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.**

Does Psalm 67:1 sound familiar? I've heard or said very similar words almost every Sunday of my entire life. Psalm 67:1 is a remembrance of Numbers 6:24-26:

- ²⁴ The Lord bless you and keep you;
²⁵ the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
²⁶ the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

This is the blessing that the Lord gave Moses for Aaron to speak to the people of Israel. In this way, Aaron was to put the Lord's name on the people of Israel and God would bless them.

For centuries, these were the final words of blessing heard by God's people from the pastor on Sunday morning. The people left the church with these Gospel words of grace and peace ringing in their ears.

In the last few years, an unfortunate fad has taken root. Many pastors no longer feel that it is adequate for God's people to leave with a final word of Gospel. Now they insist that God's law would be the last thing we hear. The Aaronic Benediction has been relegated to a secondary position by, "Go in peace and serve the Lord."

Pardon the interruption. Back to our regularly scheduled meditation.

Psalm 67 gives a very interesting commentary on the words of the Aaronic Benediction. The psalmist explains that God's grace and blessing have a purpose greater than we might first suppose. The purpose is that God's way may be known on earth, that His saving power would be known among all nations!

When God's blessing is active in our lives, we will share the message of salvation with all the people of the world! They will join us in praising God!

When God blesses us, all the ends of the earth learn about Jesus and the salvation that He won for us on the cross!

Let us pray. O Lord, thank You for Your grace and blessing. Thank You for shining Your face upon us. Grant that Your blessings would spread to the nations of the world so that everyone would know of the salvation that was won for us by Jesus on the cross. Amen.

Thursday

The Ascension of our Lord

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

Introit Psalm 110:1, 4–5; antiphon: Psalm 47:5

- L** God has gone up with a shout,
the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.
- C** **The Lord says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand,
until I make your enemies your footstool.”**
- L** The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind,
“You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”
- C** **The Lord is at your right hand;
he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath.**
- 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** God has gone up with a shout,
the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.

Kyrie

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

Acts 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.”

Psalm 47

- L** ¹Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy!
- C** ²**For the LORD, the Most High, is to be feared, a great king over all the earth.**
- L** ³He subdued peoples under us, and nations under our feet.
- C** ⁴**He chose our heritage for us, the pride of Jacob whom he loves.**
- L** ⁵God has gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.
- C** ⁶**Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!**
- L** ⁷For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm!
- C** ⁸**God reigns over the nations; God sits on his holy throne.**
- L** ⁹The princes of the peoples gather as the people of the God of Abraham.
- C** **For the shields of the earth belong to God; he is highly exalted!**

Ephesians 1:15–23

¹⁵For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²²And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Luke 24:44–53

⁴⁴Then [Jesus] said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

⁵⁰Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. ⁵¹While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵²And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³and were continually in the temple blessing God.

I found a bottle of brandy in my mother’s cupboard while cleaning out her house. The more I thought about it, the more I began to realize that Ascension Day might be the brandy of Church Year Festivals. Let me explain.

History tells us that brandy was first distilled from wine in France sometime around 1313. It was considered such a remarkable medicine that it was given the name “water of life!”

It is often reported that brandy became popular in the Middle Ages because wine was taxed by volume. Enterprising merchants distilled wine to decrease the volume. Because of this, it was cheaper to transport and was subject to a lower tax. They planned to add water later to reconstitute the wine. However, they soon discovered that the distillation process concentrated and improved the flavor. And as they say, the rest is history.

So why is Ascension Day like brandy? Our Easter celebration could be compared to a bottle of fine wine. It was wonderful to gather in a church filled with the people of God and celebrate Jesus’ triumph over death and the grave. However, now it is forty days later. The church is no longer filled. The fine wine of our Easter celebration has been distilled to the brandy of Ascension Day. The congregation is no longer diluted with the curious or those forced to attend because of family obligations. Those who remain are those who are determined to be faithful to the Lord and His Church. The distillation process has concentrated and improved the flavor of those who have chosen to gather and celebrate the Ascension of our Lord!

Actually, there is another, more significant reason to compare Jesus’ Ascension to brandy. For us to thoroughly grasp the significance of Ascension Day, we have to distill details about it from many different portions of Scripture, from the Psalms to Revelation! The account of Jesus’ Ascension is recorded in Mark, Luke, and Acts. Our reading from Ephesians explains one important aspect of it. But there is much more.

Acts is the “go-to” description of the Ascension. However, Luke provides an important detail and starting point for considering Jesus’ Ascension. He tells us, “Lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven” (Luke 24:51-52). The first thing we must understand is that Jesus’ Ascension into heaven is a blessing for us in many ways!

In ten more days, we will celebrate Pentecost and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus told His disciples that His Ascension into heaven was necessary so that He could send the Holy Spirit to them. In John 16:7, He said,

“Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.” Without Jesus’ Ascension, there would be no Pentecost!

In the Old Testament, the Gospel is often spoken of in terms of the time when God reigns. Psalm 47 is an ode to that time when God reigns. We will experience the fullness of God’s reign in heaven and in the resurrection of the dead. However, we experience it in part already now because Jesus ascended into heaven. Ephesians 1:20-22 tells us that Jesus is raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of God, “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church.” Jesus is ruling the world today from the right hand of God for the benefit of His people, the Church!

The Bible tells us that in addition to being our king, Jesus is also our prophet and priest. During His earthly ministry, Jesus filled the office of prophet by speaking God’s word to us. Our Ascended Lord continues to speak God’s word to us today through His gift of pastors and teachers. Ephesians 4 explains it this way:

⁸ Therefore it says,

“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives,
and he gave gifts to men.”

⁹ (In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) ¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. (Ephesians 4:8-14).

As our high priest, Jesus offered the complete and final sacrifice for sin. That sacrifice never has to be repeated. However, priests have another function. They pray for the people. As our Ascended High Priest, Jesus continues to pray for you today! 1 John 2:1 (NIV) tells us, “We have one who speaks to the Father in our defense Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.”

While there is much more to say about the blessing of Jesus’ Ascension, let me share this one final thought. Because Jesus ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, He hears our prayers. Whatever we experience, whatever our need, He is understanding and sympathetic to us. He hears our prayers and every concern. Hebrews 4:14-16 tells us:

¹⁴ Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Let us always rejoice in the blessings of Jesus’ Ascension into heaven as we wait for the day that He returns the same way He ascended to take us to be with Him forever.

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.

Friday

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

C Amen.

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

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

Kyrie

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

Revelation 21:9–14, 21–27

⁹Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” ¹⁰And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. ¹²It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed— ¹³on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. ¹⁴And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. . . .

²¹And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass.

²²And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, ²⁵and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. ²⁶They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. ²⁷But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

Revelation 21 gives us a grand picture of heaven, the New Jerusalem! Like the rest of Revelation, it is filled with picture language and symbolism. Many commentators have chosen to write on the Book of Revelation. I am one of them.

I was once given this advice by Pastor Eldor Haake. He told me to write something of my own every year. Following his suggestion, one of the first things I wrote was a Bible study on the Book of Revelation in the mid-1980s. From that experience, I would recommend Martin H Franzmann’s little book, *The Revelation to John*, as the best place to start a serious study of Revelation. It may be the only book you need. It offers insights not available in other resources and corrects a lot of misinformation. He also wrote the New Testament portion of the *Concordia Self-Study Commentary*. You can find an abridged version of his comments there.

Although the picture language and symbolism of Revelation can be difficult for us, Franzmann tells us, “Much in the book that puzzles us today was familiar to John’s first readers.” He goes on to say, “No other New Testament book can compare with it in the number of allusions to the Old Testament; Revelation is saturated with the Old Testament.” This little section of Revelation from the twenty-first chapter is a case in point in reference to both of those comments. For example, the twelve gates have the names of the twelve tribes of Old Testament Israel.

Nevertheless, even without an extensive study of symbolism and the Old Testament, Revelation 21 still reveals to us the most important fact about heaven. God will live with His people there!

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”—(1 Corinthians 2:9).

Revelation 21 helps us to understand “What no eye has seen” with a description of the most wonderful place we could ever imagine. It will be wonderful because in that place we will live with God. Jesus, through His death on the cross, opened heaven to us. At His ascension into heaven, He has gone to prepare a place for us. This is what He said in John 14:1-3

^{14:1} “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ² In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for the vision of heaven, the New Jerusalem, that You revealed to Your servant, John. Grant us faith to trust in Jesus that one day You will take us to live with you in this wonderful place. Amen.

Saturday

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

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

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

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

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

Kyrie

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

Acts 16:9–15

⁹A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” ¹⁰And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

¹¹So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, ¹²and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days. ¹³And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. ¹⁴One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. ¹⁵And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us.

I live near I-94 not too far from the mouth of the St. Joseph River in southwest Michigan. People traveling between Chicago and Detroit use I-94. If you have taken that trip, you have passed nearby.

Before roads were as well constructed as they are now, the harbor was the destination of countless travelers visiting from Chicago. In 1669, the French explorer La Salle built a fort at the mouth of the St. Joseph River as a base for his western explorations.

These thoughts came to mind because Philippi was located in a comparable location in Macedonia. It was on an east-west Roman road named the Via Egnatia. The Via Egnatia was a major road linking Rome with Byzantium (later it became Constantinople and is now Istanbul.).

Paul left Asia and set sail on a ship from the port city of Troas. He was on his way to bring the Gospel to Europe (possibly for the first time). His first stop was the small island of Samothrace. The next day, he sailed the remaining 60 miles to Neapolis. Neapolis is located at the end of a narrow pass that allows access through the mountains to the inland plain. From there, he walked ten more miles on the Via Egnatia to Philippi. Philippi was a good place to plant the Gospel in Macedonia because of all the traffic that passed by on a “interstate highway” of the day.

If you are familiar with Paul’s missionary pattern, you know that it was his custom to begin by visiting the synagogue on the Sabbath Day. But he didn’t do that in Philippi. It must have been that there weren’t enough Jewish families to establish a synagogue in this Roman colony. So on the Sabbath day, he went to the river where he found a group of women who had come together for prayer.

There he met Lydia, who (as far as we know) became the first Christian to be baptized in Europe. She prevailed upon Paul and Silas to stay at her home while they were in Philippi.

I took the time to examine this account in detail because this is a perfect example of how God uses the mundane and practical to accomplish the spectacular. Paul and Silas went to a strange place. There was no synagogue. They could have decided to move on because Philippi was a poor place to plant a mission. But they trusted God to bless their efforts and He did. Before long a thriving and supportive congregation was established in Philippi. Take a few minutes to read through Paul’s letter to the Philippians. You will learn how close Paul came to the church in Philippi and the love that they shared.

You may not live in a big city where great and wonderful things are happening. You may not be a media superstar. But God can use and bless the ordinary and practical things you do to share the message of salvation through faith in Jesus. Never underestimate what God can do.

Prayer: O Lord, thank you for those who have brought the Gospel of salvation to the place where we live. Grant us the wisdom and grace to share the love of Jesus with people around us no matter where you send us. Amen.

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