

The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany January 28, 2024

There are two ways to go through life. One is to believe that we are the master of our fate. Every one of us is born with this desire. Unfortunately, our moral judgment is colored by self-interest rather than the eternal truth of God's holy word. We make choices that help ourselves at the expense of others.

Another way to go through life is to recognize Jesus as the Holy One of God. It changes who we are and how we live. It leads us to live under the cross in view of the resurrection. Recognizing Jesus as the Holy One of God means that we make our choices based on His will for us and the people around us.

O God, My Faithful God

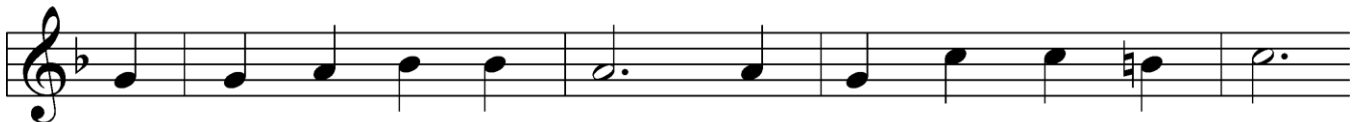
Lutheran Service Book 696, Lutheran Worship 371, The Lutheran Hymnal 395



1 O God, my faith - ful God, True foun-tain ev - er flow - ing,
2 Grant me the strength to do With read - y heart and will - ing
3 Keep me from say - ing words That lat - er need re - call - ing;
4 Lord, let me win my foes With kind - ly words and ac - tions,



With - out whom noth - ing is, All per - fect gifts be - stow - ing:
What - ev - er You com - mand, My call - ing here ful - fill - ing;
Guard me lest i - dle speech May from my lips be fall - ing;
And let me find good friends For coun - sel and cor - rec - tion.



Give me a health - y frame, And may I have with - in
That I do what I should While trust - ing You to bless
But when with - in my place I must and ought to speak,
Help me, as You have taught, To love both great and small



A con-science free from blame, A soul un - stained by sin.
The out - come for my good, For You must give suc - cess.
Then to my words give grace Lest I of - fend the weak.
And by Your Spir - it's might To live in peace with all.

5 Let me depart this life
Confiding in my Savior;
By grace receive my soul
That it may live forever;
And let my body have
A quiet resting place
Within a Christian grave;
And let it sleep in peace.

6 And on that final day
When all the dead are waking,
Stretch out Your mighty hand,
My deathly slumber breaking.
Then let me hear Your voice,
Redeem this earthly frame,
And bid me to rejoice
With those who love Your name.

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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 32:1–2, 5–7; antiphon Psalm 32:10

L Many are the sorrows of the wicked,
but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord.

C Blessèd is the one whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.

L Blessèd is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

C I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity;
I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,” and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

L Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;
surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.

C You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts of deliverance.

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 Many are the sorrows of the wicked,
but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord.

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: Almighty God, You know we live in the midst of so many dangers that in our frailty we cannot stand upright. Grant strength and protection to support us in all dangers and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
C Amen.

Deuteronomy 18:15–20

¹⁵“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—¹⁶just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.’¹⁷ And the LORD said to me, ‘They are right in what they have spoken. ¹⁸I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. ¹⁹And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. ²⁰But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.”

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

Gradual Psalm 117:1–2a; 96:8

- L** Praise the LORD, all nations!
C Extol him, all peoples!
L For great is his steadfast love toward us,
C and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever.
L Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;
C bring an offering, and come into his courts!

Psalm 111

- L** ¹Praise the LORD!
I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.
- C** ²**Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them.**
- L** ³Full of splendor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever.
- C** ⁴**He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered; the Lord is gracious and merciful.**
- L** ⁵He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever.
- C** ⁶**He has shown his people the power of his works, in giving them the inheritance of the nations.**
- L** ⁷The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy;
- C** ⁸**they are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.**
- L** ⁹He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever.
Holy and awesome is his name!
- C** ¹⁰**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;
all those who practice it have a good understanding.
His praise endures forever!**

1 Corinthians 8:1–13

¹Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” This “knowledge” puffs up, but love builds up. ²If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. ³But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.

⁴Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “an idol has no real existence,” and that “there is no God but one.” ⁵For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”—⁶yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

⁷However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. ⁸Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. ⁹But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. ¹⁰For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol’s temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? ¹¹And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. ¹²Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. ¹³Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

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

Verse of the Day: Mark 1:22a

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, They were astonished at his teaching, Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia, For he taught them as one who had authority. Alleluia.

Mark 1:21–28

- L** The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 1st chapter.
C Glory to You, O Lord.

²¹And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath [Jesus] entered the synagogue and was teaching. ²²And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. ²³And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, ²⁴“What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the

Holy One of God.”²⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!”²⁶ And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him.²⁷ And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.”²⁸ And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

L This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to You, O Christ.

The Apostles' Creed

C I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven

and sits at the right hand of God the Father
Almighty.

From thence He will come to judge the living
and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen

Son of God, Eternal Savior

Lutheran Service Book 842, Lutheran Worship 394, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a



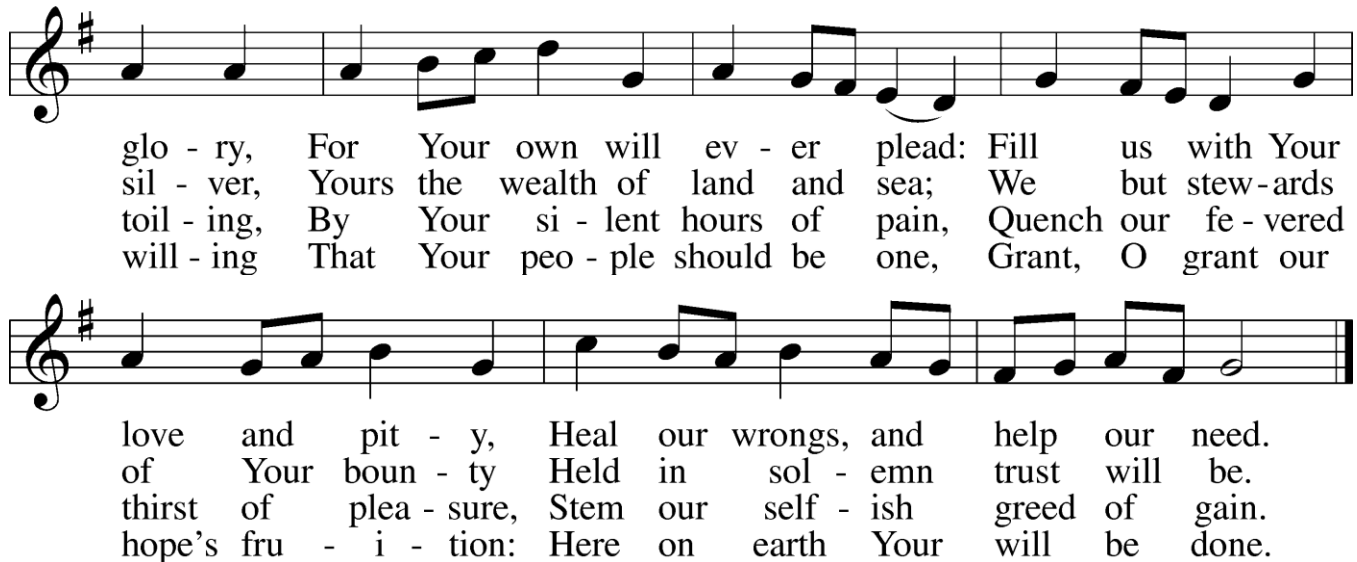
1 Son of God, e - ter - nal Sav - ior, Source of life and
2 As You, Lord, have lived for oth - ers, So may we for
3 Come, O Christ, and reign a - mong us, King of love and
4 Son of God, e - ter - nal Sav - ior, Source of life and



truth and grace, Word made flesh, whose birth a - mong us
oth - ers live. Free - ly have Your gifts been grant - ed;
Prince of Peace; Hush the storm of strife and pas - sion,
truth and grace, Word made flesh, whose birth a - mong us



Hal - lows all our hu - man race, You our Head, who, throned in
Free-ly may Your ser - vants give. Yours the gold and Yours the
Bid its cru - el dis - cords cease. By Your pa - tient years of
Hal - lows all our hu - man race: By Your pray - ing, by Your



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Devotional thoughts:

This evening at 6:30 p.m. the Detroit Lions will play the San Francisco 49ers in the National Football Conference championship game of the NFL. [The game will be broadcast on Fox channel 22-2 in South Bend].

I imagine that quite a few sermons in Michigan today will mention the Lions and their spectacular season. However, instead, I would like to bring the 49ers, and particularly Brock Purdy, their quarterback, to your attention.

Brock Purdy played quarterback for four years at Iowa State at Iowa State University. While he was there it was the first time the school's football program had seen four consecutive winning seasons since 1923–1927.

Despite his success, he was almost overlooked by the NFL. Two years ago he was the final pick (262nd overall) of the 2022 NFL Draft which earned him the nickname, Mr. Irrelevant. Mr. Irrelevant is the nickname given to the player who is drafted with the very last overall pick in the NFL Draft. Often a player chosen with this pick is released from the team that drafted him before the preseason or training camps begin.

But Brock Purdy turned out to be a treasure for the 49ers. Last year, Purdy started the season as the third-string quarterback. Because of injuries to the first and second-string quarterbacks, he became the first rookie quarterback to start and win a playoff game! Purdy is a highly skilled and important player in the NFL and he was almost completely overlooked.

The story of Brock Purdy came to my mind as I was thinking about the Epiphany Season. It is one of the most important seasons of the Church Year but many Christians either overlook it completely or let it pass as irrelevant. It comes between Christmas and Lent during the doldrums of winter. For many, it is the Ho-hum season. But in reality, it is one of the most compelling and forceful seasons of the year. During the season of Epiphany, we learn about who Jesus is and what He does. We are reminded that he is God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven.

Today is one of those Sundays where we see this again most clearly.

In 1986, during a time of very low water levels in the Sea of Galilee, two brothers walking along its shore recognized pieces of wood pushing up from the mud. Archeologists soon discovered that these were the remains of an ancient boat. Using carbon dating, they found that this boat came from the time when Jesus sailed upon the Sea of Galilee with His disciples. Although we don't know if Jesus ever saw this boat, it soon became known as the "Jesus Boat." It gives us great insight into the type of boat that was used in Jesus' day.

Valerie and I had the opportunity to attend a dinner where the featured speaker was one of the primary archeologists who supervised the recovery of the "Jesus Boat." We didn't know anyone else in attendance so

we chose a table near the front of the room where we would have a good view of the presentation. But first, dinner was served.

Several couples were at our table and one single gentleman sat next to me. As dinner was served and conversation commenced, I learned that our table consisted of pastors and their spouses who hoped one day to visit the Holy Land and see this boat in person. Finally, the last to identify himself was the single gentleman sitting on my right. Much to our surprise and amazement, this gentleman was the archeologist we had traveled to hear! The remainder of the dinner was a personalized presentation on his amazing discovery and the land of Israel!

This story came to mind as I pondered the Sabbath day at the synagogue in Capernaum recalled by Mark in the Gospel lesson for today. I can imagine members of the congregation waking and going through their morning routine on that day. Arriving at the synagogue, they were surprised by an astonishing teacher. A stranger had come to town and was teaching with authority.

Who was this man? No one knew. Imagine the buzz going around the room.

You can visit the remains of a synagogue today built over the foundation of the very same synagogue where Jesus taught. It's a very large building. The commotion of conversation in the congregation must have been substantial as each one turned to another and asked, "Who is this?"

Ironically, the only one to recognize Jesus for who He is was a man with an unclean spirit. He called out, "I know who you are—the Holy One of God."

Like me on the day I sat in ignorance next to the very man I had come to hear, everyone in the synagogue that day sat in ignorance as the very Son of God came to teach them in person! And so it is when it comes to Jesus. Everyone has eyes that are blinded by sin. Through our powers of observation and human reason, Jesus appears to be just another man. He is an amazing and astonishing man to be sure but just a man in the eyes of the world.

Epiphany is the season of the Church Year when we thank God that He has revealed Jesus to us as His only-begotten Son, the savior of the world! You cannot discover this on your own. But the Holy Spirit working through God's word and sacraments has thrown back the curtain of darkness and opened your eyes to see Jesus for who He is, the Holy One of God!

The Evangelist Mark wrote his Gospel with this very purpose in mind. He begins this way, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1).

Amazing but true! "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

In two weeks, Epiphany will end with the celebration of Jesus' transfiguration. We will hear God the Father declare, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him" (Mark 9:7). May this epiphany continue to ring in our ears until the day when we see God face to face.

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

God's richest blessings to you in Christ.

Prayers

L Lord God, heavenly Father, You gave to Moses the promise of a coming Prophet who would speak Your word. In this Epiphany season, by the working of the Holy Spirit move us to recognize Your Son, Jesus, to be this long-promised Prophet and listen to Him and the word of life that He brings.

C Amen.

L Heavenly Father, help us to reject all forms of idolatry and. recognize that there is no god but the one True God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Give us the grace never to wound the weak consciences of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

C Amen.

L Lord God, when Jesus taught in the synagogue in Capernaum, the people were astonished. Yet the man with an unclean spirit recognized Him as the Holy One of God. Let us always recognize Jesus as the very Son of God and our Savior. Keep us firmly in faith until the day that He brings us home to live with You for all eternity.

C Amen.

L Gracious Lord, we pray for all who suffer from loneliness. Comfort them with the sure and certain knowledge that You will never forsake them. Give them family and friends within the household of faith with whom they can find loving companionship.

C Amen.

L O God of peace, during this time of war in the ancient land of Jesus' birth and in Ukraine, we pray that You would grant a swift end to the conflict and lasting peace, that right and justice would prevail, and that You would grant Your mighty hand of protection to the innocent and helpless.

C Amen.

L Holy God, mighty Lord, bless our president, Congress, governor, and all our leaders, that justice may prevail and Your people would be free to live at peace with all. Guard those who protect us, especially our armed forces, police, and firefighters.

C Amen.

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

C Amen.

L All these things and whatever else You know that we need, grant us, Father, for the sake of Him who died and rose again and now lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God forever.

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.

O God of God, O Light of Light

Lutheran Service Book 810, Lutheran Worship 83, The Lutheran Hymnal 132



1 O God of God, O Light of Light, O Prince of Peace and
2 For deep in proph-ets' sa-cred page, And grand in po-ets'
3 That life of truth, those deeds of love, That death so steeped in
4 Then raise to Christ a might-y song, And shout His name, His



King of kings: To You in heav-en's glo-ry bright The song of
wing-ed word, Slow-ly in type, from age to age The na-tions
hate and scorn— These all are past, and now a-bove He reigns, our
mer-cies tell! Sing, heav'n-ly host, your praise pro-long, And all on



praise for - ev - er rings. To Him who sits up - on the throne,
saw their com - ing Lord; Till through the deep Ju - de - an night
King once crowned with thorn. Lift up your heads, O might-y gates!
earth, your an - them swell! All hail, O Lamb for sin - ners slain!

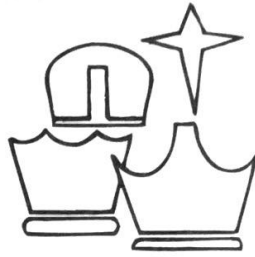


The Lamb once slain but raised a - gain, Be all the glo - ry
Rang out the song, "Good-will to men!" Sung once by first-born
So sang that host be - yond our ken. Lift up your heads, your
For - ev - er let the song as - cend! Wor - thy the Lamb, en -



He has won, All thanks and praise! A - men, a - men.
sons of light, It ech - oes now, "Good - will!" A - men.
King a - waits. We lift them up. A - men, a - men.
throned to reign, All glo - ry, pow'r! A - men, a - men.

THE EPIPHANY SEASON



Epiphany is one of the oldest seasons in the Christian church year, second only to the Easter season. This Season of Lights emphasizes Jesus' manifestation (the Greek word is *epiphany*) as God and man.

The earliest Christians called the festival of the Epiphany the *Theophany* (revelation of God). Later, Western Christians emphasized the revelation of God to the Wise Men or Magi (Matthew 2:1-12). In the first century of Christianity, the church used Epiphany as a celebration of the birth and baptism of Jesus.

Epiphany may include as many as nine Sundays, depending on the date of Easter. The season begins with the Baptism of Our Lord. Included in Epiphany is Jesus' first miracle, the changing of water into wine at the wedding at Cana, which John reports in his Gospel: "He thus revealed His glory, and His disciples put their faith in Him" (John 2:11).

The season ends with the Festival of the Transfiguration, which is a significant and uniquely Lutheran contribution to the Christian calendar and is now celebrated by several Protestant denominations. This festival commemorates the moment on the Mount of Transfiguration when three of Jesus' disciples glimpsed their Lord in divine splendor, seeing Him as the center of the Law (Moses) and the Prophets (Elijah). Thus Jesus was manifested fully to His chosen disciples before He went to Jerusalem for the Passover.

Johannes Bugenhagen, Luther's pastor and colleague, introduced Transfiguration Sunday to the Lutheran community in the sixteenth century.

Adapted from
Gathered Guests: A Guide to Worship in the Lutheran Church
by Timothy H. Maschke, page 55.

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 Fourth Sunday after Epiphany January 29 - February 3, 2024

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.

Verse of the Day: Mark 1:22a

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, They were astonished at his teaching, Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia, For he taught them as one who had authority. Alleluia.

Introit Psalm 32:1–2, 5–7; antiphon Psalm 32:10

- L** Many are the sorrows of the wicked,
but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord.
C Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.
L Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.
C I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity;
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.
L Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;
surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.
C You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts of deliverance.
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 Many are the sorrows of the wicked,
but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord.

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.

When I grew up and in the early years of my ministry, we worshiped every Sunday using page 5 or 15 in the Lutheran Hymnal as our order of service. With that in mind, allow me to recall this story.

Teaching junior high children can be a challenge. I have to admit that it took me about ten years to become comfortable with them. Eventually, teaching these young people became one of the more rewarding parts of my ministry.

One of the challenges of working with children in their early teens is learning to understand the world from their perspective. This was brought home to me when I had the following encounter.

After several weeks of getting to know me at the beginning of confirmation instruction in the fall, a seventh-grade boy was bold enough to ask me this question. He queried, "Pastor, why are you mad at us every Sunday?"

I must admit, I was taken aback by his probing. I certainly didn't feel anger towards the congregation on Sunday morning. Why would this young man ask me such a question? I asked him to explain why he thought I was mad.

He told me, "Every Sunday you say, 'I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord.'" His response needed further investigation.

Maybe you have figured it out. To help with your thought process, let me tell you that I have a rather loud voice and that in the front of most congregations, I do not need a microphone.

He went on to explain to me that when he was slow in obeying his mother's requests, she would repeat them more loudly, prefacing her comments with a very loud, "I said!"

In my enthusiasm for Psalm 32:5, I had inadvertently communicated anger rather than joy to this budding theologian. Oops!

Psalm 32 was written by King David following his encounter with Nathan the prophet. Nathan had confronted David with his sin and pronounced God's judgment upon him. In response, David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." And Nathan said to David, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die" (2 Samuel 12:13. You can read the full account of this encounter in 2 Samuel 12.)

In joy, David penned Psalm 32, a hymn celebrating forgiveness. The order of service reflects that joy by including verse 5: "I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and you forgave the iniquity of my sin."

It is a wonderful thing to know that for Christ's sake, confession leads to forgiveness. God restores us and gives us life.

L Let us pray. Thank You, Lord, for not counting our iniquity against us and forgiving our transgressions. Move us always to come to You confessing our sins and receiving Your grace, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C Amen

Tuesday

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

Verse of the Day: Mark 1:22a

L Alleluia, Alleluia, They were astonished at his teaching, Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia, For he taught them as one who had authority. 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: Almighty God, You know we live in the midst of so many dangers that in our frailty we cannot stand upright. Grant strength and protection to support us in all dangers and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen

The Covid-19 virus continues to be a great danger for each of us, for our country, and for everyone in the world. We each face other untold dangers every day. Yet we often don't recognize the greatest danger of all, the danger of falling into sin.

Most of us have become numb or blind to the sinfulness around us. The world makes sin seem attractive and wholesome. The devil wants us to believe that right is wrong and wrong is right. He often succeeds.

Foul language is accepted and taught to our young people. Violence is celebrated in popular culture and music. Sexual immorality and the destruction of marriage vows are thought to be normal. The list goes on.

Religious leaders and clergy have sometimes been at the forefront of redefining morals and virtue. God's word is thought to be old-fashioned. Our itching ears are happy to believe that our sinful desires should be encouraged.

These are the dangerous temptations that confront us every day. We pray in the collect this week for God to grant us strength and protection against such dangers.

In His temptation, Jesus was able to recognize how Satan can twist Scripture. We pray that the Holy Spirit would grant us the same wisdom and strength to resist.

Yet in our human condition of weakness, we still often stumble and fall into sin. When this happens, God is always there to hear our confession and restore us for Christ's sake. May Jesus' words from the cross ring in our ears, "Father, forgive them."

Let us pray: Almighty God, You know we live in the midst of so many dangers that in our frailty we cannot stand upright. Grant strength and protection to support us in all dangers and carry us through all temptations; 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: Mark 1:22a

L Alleluia, Alleluia, They were astonished at his teaching, Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia, For he taught them as one who had authority. 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.

Psalm 111

- L** ¹Praise the LORD!
I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.
- C** ²**Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them.**
- L** ³Full of splendor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever.
- C** ⁴**He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered; the Lord is gracious and merciful.**
- L** ⁵He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever.
- C** ⁶**He has shown his people the power of his works, in giving them the inheritance of the nations.**
- L** ⁷The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy;
- C** ⁸**they are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.**
- L** ⁹He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever.
Holy and awesome is his name!
- C** ¹⁰**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;
all those who practice it have a good understanding.
His praise endures forever!**

Psalm 111:10 contains these famous words, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.” Those unfamiliar with the concept of “The fear of the LORD” may be taken aback by these words. They may say, “We shouldn’t be afraid of God. God is love.”

There are a variety of answers to this misunderstanding. First, the word fear can also be understood as awe. We are all called to stand in awe of the Lord.

Second, indeed sinful people ought to be afraid of God. Our sin has alienated us from the creator of the universe. Nevertheless, as the father welcomed home the prodigal son, so also does God welcome us back into His loving arms when we come to Him in repentance.

A third explanation for understanding “the Fear of the LORD” is to recognize that this is an expression that means to live in faith and a right relationship with God. Those who “fear the Lord” are those who recognize Him as God and want to be part of His family by faith. They call Him Father and seek to live according to His precepts. This is the beginning of wisdom!

If you have access to *The Lutheran Study Bible*, you may wish to read the article about “The Fear of the Lord” found on page 1001. There you will discover this magnificent insight, “When we fear God, there is nothing to be afraid of!” To make the point, we are directed to Psalm 34:4, 7, 9, “I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears;” “The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them;” “Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack!”

Prayer: O Lord, grant us wisdom to know You rightly and to trust in Your promises. Amen.

Thursday

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

Verse of the Day: Mark 1:22a

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, They were astonished at his teaching, Alleluia.
- C** Alleluia, Alleluia, For he taught them as one who had authority. Alleluia.

Deuteronomy 18:15–20

¹⁵“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—¹⁶just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when

you said, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.’ ¹⁷ And the LORD said to me, ‘They are right in what they have spoken. ¹⁸ I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. ¹⁹ And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. ²⁰ But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.”

These verses from Deuteronomy should be known by all Christians but admittedly few of us are aware of them. In these words, Moses says that one day there will be another prophet “like me from among you, from your brothers.”

The people of the Old Testament kept looking for this prophet who would be like Moses. We know Him in the person of Jesus.

Moses led God’s people out of bondage in Egypt through the waters of the Red Sea. He led them as they sojourned in the wilderness until they reached the Promised Land.

Jesus brings us out of bondage to sin through the waters of baptism. He leads us on our pilgrimage through this wilderness until we reach the Promised Land of eternal life in heaven with Him.

Moses received God’s law on the top of Mount Sinai. Jesus fulfilled God’s law for us and paid for our sin on Mount Calvary.

Much more has been written about Jesus being the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 18:15. God used Moses to save the children of Israel. Jesus, God’s Son, saves us and takes away the sin of the world.

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for Jesus, our Prophet, Priest, and King. Grant that we would always listen to Him and receive the life and salvation that He won for us on Calvary’s cross. Amen.

Friday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Mark 1:22a

L Alleluia, Alleluia, They were astonished at his teaching, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia, For he taught them as one who had authority. Alleluia.

Kyrie

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

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

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

1 Corinthians 8:1–13

¹Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” This “knowledge” puffs up, but love builds up. ²If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know.

³But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.

⁴Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “an idol has no real existence,” and that “there is no God but one.” ⁵For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”—⁶yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

⁷However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. ⁸Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. ⁹But take care that this right of yours does not

somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. ¹⁰For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? ¹¹And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. ¹²Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. ¹³Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

People have observed that much of what we experience today is more akin to the ancient pagan world than it has been for hundreds of years. No longer is Christian morality the accepted norm. In fact, in some circles, Christians are considered the enemy of modern "morality" and "culture."

If you find yourself in such circumstances, the Apostle Paul has much to say. In his world, Christian morality and ideals weren't even a blip on the radar of popular culture.

The Church in Corinth was inundated by pagan culture and false religion. Some of the members of the congregation had recently left idolatry and they hadn't fully come to understand that "there is no God but one."

How Paul directs them to be treated should help us in our pluralistic society. These early Christians were directed to live a life of love. They were to care especially for those who were weak in faith. We would do well to listen to him.

Each of us has been deceived in one way or another by the sinful world. We all have come before the Lord in repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

When we see others around us who have been deceived by false notions, our response should be one of love. These brothers and sisters, although they may be weak, are those for whom Christ died. May God grant us grace to bear their burdens until by the working of the Holy Spirit, they are strengthened in faith.

Prayer: O Lord, we live in a world that would deceive us and to sin our souls allure. Grant us love and compassion for those around us who stumble. Help us to bear them up until we reach our home above. Amen.

Saturday

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

C Amen.

Gradual Psalm 117:1–2a; 96:8

L Praise the LORD, all nations!

C Extol him, all peoples!

L For great is his steadfast love toward us,

C and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever.

L Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;

C bring an offering, and come into his courts!

Verse of the Day: Mark 1:22a

L Alleluia, Alleluia, They were astonished at his teaching, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia, For he taught them as one who had authority. 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.

The people of Capernaum were astonished at Jesus' teaching. Why was it astonishing? Mark reports that it is because He taught with authority.

When I turned in the first draft of my dissertation to my adviser, it came back marked in red. Many of the markings were places where I hadn't fully documented some fact or assertion.

In one place I made note that Martin Luther had referenced a certain Bible passage a number of times. I knew this because I had looked them all up, counted them, and categorized each reference. My adviser asked that I document this research. I was able to do this but it led to an eleven-page appendix to my paper.

Jesus is not required to document His authority although He did often use the Old Testament to prove His teaching. Jesus is God's Son. When He speaks, it is the word of God.

It would have been a privilege to be in the synagogue on that day when Jesus taught and to hear His words. On the other hand, I can't speak Hebrew or Aramaic so maybe it wouldn't have turned out so well.

Thanks be to God, I can hear Jesus speak today in my own language. I hear Him speak every time I open the Bible and read His words. He speaks words of law and gospel. He speaks words of comfort and forgiveness. He tells me that I am His friend and that He has laid down His life for me so that I can live forever. Astonishing but true! Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief!

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for the work of salvation. Grant that I may hear Your voice in the words of Scripture Amen.

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