

The Sixth Sunday after Epiphany February 12, 2023

Holy Spirit, Light Divine

Lutheran Service Book 496, Lutheran Worship 166, The Lutheran Hymnal 234



1 Ho - ly Spir - it, light di - vine, Shine up - on this heart of mine;
2 Let me see my Sav - ior's face, Let me all His beau - ties trace;
3 Ho - ly Spir - it, pow'r di - vine, Cleanse this guilt - y heart of mine;
4 Ho - ly Spir - it, joy di - vine, Cheer this sad - dened heart of mine;
5 Ho - ly Spir - it, all di - vine, Dwell with - in this heart of mine;



Chase the shades of night a - way, Turn the dark - ness in - to day.
Show those glo - rious truths to me Which are on - ly known to Thee.
In Thy mer - cy pit - y me, From sin's bond - age set me free.
Yield a sa - cred, set - tled peace, Let it grow and still in - crease.
Cast down ev - 'ry i - dol throne, Reign su - preme, and reign a - lone.

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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 98:7–9; antiphon Psalm 98:2

- L** The Lord has made known his salvation;
he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations.
- C** **Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
the world and those who dwell in it!**
- L** Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together before the Lord,
for he comes to judge the earth.
- C** **He will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with equity.**
- 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** The Lord has made known his salvation;
he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations.

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 Lord, graciously hear the prayers of Your people that we who justly suffer the
consequence of our sin may be mercifully delivered by Your goodness to the glory of Your name;
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 30:15–20

¹⁵“See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. ¹⁶If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his just decrees, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. ¹⁷But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse.

Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, ²⁰loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

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 119:1–8

L ¹Blessèd are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD!

C ²Blessèd are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart,

L ³who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways!

C ⁴You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently.

L ⁵Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes!

C ⁶Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments.

L ⁷I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules.

C ⁸I will keep your statutes; do not utterly forsake me!

1 Corinthians 3:1–9

¹But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. ²I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, ³for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? ⁴For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not being merely human?

⁵What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ⁸He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. ⁹For we are God’s fellow workers. You are God’s field, God’s building.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Verse of the Day: Ephesians 5:2

L Alleluia, Alleluia, Walk in love, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia, As Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Alleluia.

Matthew 5:21–37

L The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 5th chapter.

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

²¹[Jesus said:] “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ ²²But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire. ²³So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. ²⁶Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

²⁷“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. ³⁰And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

³¹“It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ ³²But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

³³“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’ ³⁴But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.

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.**

Songs of Thankfulness and Praise

Lutheran Service Book 394, Lutheran Worship 88, The Lutheran Hymnal 134



1 Songs of thank - ful - ness and praise, Je - sus, Lord, to Thee we raise,
2 Man - i - fest at Jor-dan's stream, Proph-et, Priest, and King su-preme;
3 Man - i - fest in mak-ing whole Pal - sied limbs and faint - ing soul;
4 Sun and moon shall dark-ened be, Stars shall fall, the heav'ns shall flee;
5 Grant us grace to see Thee, Lord, Pres - ent in Thy ho - ly Word—



Man - i - fest - ed by the star To the sa - ges from a - far,
And at Ca - na wed - ding guest In Thy God-head man - i - fest;
Man - i - fest in val - iant fight, Quell-ing all the dev - il's might;
Christ will then like light - ning shine, All will see His glo - rious sign;
Grace to im - i - tate Thee now And be pure, as pure art Thou;



Branch of roy - al Da - vid's stem In Thy birth at Beth - le - hem:
Man - i - fest in pow'r di - vine, Chang - ing wa - ter in - to wine;
Man - i - fest in gra - cious will, Ev - er bring-ing good from ill;
All will then the trum - pet hear, All will see the Judge ap - pear;
That we might be - come like Thee At Thy great e - piph - a - ny



An - thems be to Thee ad-dressed, God in man made man - i - fest.
An - thems be to Thee ad-dressed, God in man made man - i - fest.
An - thems be to Thee ad-dressed, God in man made man - i - fest.
Thou by all wilt be con-fessed, God in man made man - i - fest.
And may praise Thee, ev - er blest, God in man made man - i - fest.

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Devotional thoughts:

Murder! Anger! Lust! This sounds like an advertisement for the latest R-rated film. It was produced to thrill audiences on the big screen. But no, these are the topics that Jesus addresses in today's portion of the His Sermon on the Mount.

One of my many flaws is that I don't know when to keep my mouth shut! On more than one occasion, I should have remembered the old maxim, "Silence is golden."

A couple of years ago, I heard an outstanding speaker at a Pastors' Conference. Following his talk, I walked up to the podium to thank him for his message. A woman was animatedly speaking to him. From what I heard, I thought that she was criticizing him unfairly. Because I enjoyed the presentation, I jumped to the

speaker's defense. Boy, did I have egg on my face! I soon learned that she wasn't criticizing him but praising him. I learned my lesson (at least temporarily) to make sure that I get the whole story before I jump to conclusions.

That warning applies to our Gospel lesson for today. We are in the middle of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. To properly understand the context of what Jesus is saying today, we need to go back three weeks to the Third Sunday after Epiphany as Jesus began His ministry. Matthew 4:17 records Jesus' first message. It says, "From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"

The Bible tells us that repentance was far from the minds of many Pharisees. You might recall the parable that Jesus told about the Pharisee and the Tax-Collector. One day, they were both at the temple. The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying and said, "God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax-collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income." But the tax-collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" Only one of these two was justified. Let me give you a hint. It wasn't the Pharisee who didn't believe that he was a sinner! Jesus said this about the tax collector, "I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted" (Luke 18:9-14).

Our Gospel lesson for today is aimed squarely at people who believe that they need no repentance. It is aimed squarely at the self-righteous. It is aimed squarely at us!

You've learned the Ten Commandments. You know that the Fifth Commandment states, "You shall not murder." We all know that murder is a serious crime. I'm guessing that in your entire life, you haven't met many murderers. As far as I know, I've only met two.

But not so fast, before we join the ranks of the Pharisees and declare, "God, I'm glad that I am not a murderer," pause and hear what Jesus has to say. He doesn't just condemn murderers. He declares, "I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire."

Was Jesus just using hyperbole or did he mean what he said? I heard him say that those who are angry are held accountable in the same way as murderers. Insulting and calling names are just as reprehensible! These sins, like every sin, deserve the judgment of hell fire!

We walk on dangerous ground if we believe that we do not need repentance. When you read the Sermon on the Mount and take Jesus seriously at His word you cannot help but join with the tax collector at the temple and say, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!"

Our human nature wants to downplay sin. Like the Pharisee at the temple, we look around and find people who appear to be worse than we are. Many people go through life thinking, "I'm not so bad. Look at all those rotten people in the world. I've lived a good life. I'm not bad enough to deserve God's judgment. God owes me eternal life in heaven" Jesus' Sermon on the Mount serves as an antidote to such dangerous thinking.

Uneducated and unspiritual people will read through the Ten Commandments and like the Rich Young Man say, "I have kept all these since my youth" (Mark 10:40). No one can come to this conclusion after listening to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

Lest some people believe that their words and actions are totally pious, Jesus went on to point out that God also judges our thoughts! God requires us to keep the Sixth Commandment by what we do, say, and think! He explained, "Everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

Unfortunately, this year, we will not hear the harshest words from Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. If Easter was one week later, our Gospel lesson for next Sunday would complete Matthew 5, where we would hear Jesus say, "Turn the other cheek" (Matthew 5:39), "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44), and "You must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

Never be deceived into thinking that the Sermon on the Mount is the formula for earning your way into heaven. Rather, it is Jesus' way of telling us that it can't be done!

When we let the full effect of Jesus' words sink in, every notion of self-righteousness is washed away. No one can save themselves!

A few years ago, one of these trendy “No Name” churches popped up nearby. I couldn’t tell if they were Lutheran, Baptist, Pentecostal, Holiness, or what by their name so I checked out their website to find out what they believed.

Most of what I read was encouraging. They had clear statements of sin and grace and salvation through faith in Jesus. Then I came across this alarming statement, “You have the assurance of salvation as long as you continue to lead a Christian life.”

My heart sank. Like, Martin Luther, I’ve never managed to perfectly live the Christian life for twenty-four hours. In his evening prayer, he prayed every night, “Forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong.” In his explanation of the Fifth Petition of the Lord’s Prayer, he writes:

And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

What does this mean? We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look at our sins, or deny our prayer because of them. We are neither worthy of the things for which we pray, nor have we deserved them, but we ask that He would give them all to us by grace, for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment. So we too will sincerely forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us.

Martin Luther knew that Jesus was serious when He preached the Sermon on the Mount. He knew that “We daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment.”

But there is also hope in the Sermon on the Mount. It explains the perfection required by God’s law. The Sermon on the Mount brings us to our knees in repentance. But it also describes how amazing it is to think that Jesus’ kept the demands of the law perfectly for us.

Jesus explained it this way in our Gospel lesson from last week, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them” (Matthew 5:17). When you read what we might consider to be the impossible demands of the law in the Sermon on the Mount, we are reading a description of Jesus’ life. He kept every one of the law’s demands perfectly for us in thought, word, and deed!

You and I have become perfect in God’s eyes through what Jesus did for us in His life, death, and resurrection. You and I are assured of our salvation not because of our own righteousness. They are nothing more than filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). We are assured of our salvation because of Jesus’ blood and righteousness. He has saved us from sin, death, and the devil.

When sin and your own failings lead you to despair and doubt your salvation, pause and recall Luther’s explanation of the Third Article of the Creed:

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.

In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers.

On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.

This is most certainly true.

“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** Almighty God, the seas roar and the rivers clap their hands because You come to judge the earth. Receive our thanks that You declare us righteous by water and the Word, and grant that we would live in that faith until You come in glory.
- C** Amen.
- L** Almighty God, You condemn unrighteous anger with the same judgment as those who break your commandment, "You shall not murder." You have punished Your Son on the cross, that we might be reconciled to You. Where there is division, move us to repent and seek reconciliation with one another so that we might live in peace with one another.
- C** Amen.
- L** O God, You are the Author of truth. You have commanded us not to swear falsely. Give us faith to acknowledge Your Word and the strength to do what You command. Where we have failed, grant us forgiveness for Jesus sake.
- C** Amen.
- L** Almighty God, give our leaders wisdom for the challenges ahead. Send Your holy angels to watch over all of our loved ones, especially those who live in distant places. Grant healing according to Your will to those who suffer any injury or disease.
- 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.

On What Has Now Been Sown

Lutheran Service Book 921, Lutheran Worship 217, The Lutheran Hymnal 45



1 On what has now been sown Thy bless - ing, Lord, be - stow;
2 To Thee our wants are known, From Thee are all our pow'rs;
3 O grant that each of us, Now met be - fore Thee here,



The pow'r is Thine a - lone To make it sprout and grow. Do Thou
Ac - cept what is Thine own And par - don what is ours. Our prais -
May meet to - geth - er thus When Thou and Thine ap - pear And fol -



in grace the har - vest raise, And Thou a - lone shalt have the praise!
es, Lord, and prayers re - ceive, And to Thy Word a bless - ing give.
low Thee to heav'n, our home. E'en so, a - men, Lord Je - sus, come!

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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 after Epiphany

February 13 – 18, 2023

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 98:7–9; antiphon Psalm 98:2

- L** The Lord has made known his salvation;
he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations.
- C** **Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
the world and those who dwell in it!**
- L** Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together before the Lord,
for he comes to judge the earth.
- C** **He will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with equity.**
- 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** The Lord has made known his salvation;
he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations.

Verse of the Day: Ephesians 5:2

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, Walk in love, Alleluia.
- C** **Alleluia, Alleluia, As Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. 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 98:1 tells us that the Lord has done marvelous things. The most marvelous thing that He has done is to make known His salvation! His salvation in Christ is not only for the Jews but for all people of all nations. This is marvelous beyond words!

To fully express how marvelous this is, the seas roar, the rivers clap their hands, and the hills sing for joy. We unite our voices in a new song with the entire world in praising God for His gift of eternal life through faith in Jesus. His righteousness has now become our righteousness.

- L** Let us pray. Most merciful God, You desire everyone to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Grant that by the proclamation of Your Gospel we may be given the wisdom and faith that leads to salvation. By the working of Your Holy Spirit keep us attentive to all the teachings of Your Word.
- 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: Ephesians 5:2

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, Walk in love, Alleluia.
- C** Alleluia, Alleluia, As Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. 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 Lord, graciously hear the prayers of Your people that we who justly suffer the consequence of our sin may be mercifully delivered by Your goodness to the glory of Your name; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C** Amen.

Every day, I read headlines about people who fail to live up to our new cultural standards. Some people will go to extreme lengths to uncover inappropriate behavior that may have happened decades ago during an intemperate time of youth.

However, none of these people seem willing to admit their own shortcomings and failures to be our contemporary demands of pop culture purity. While no one is immune to the dangers of self-righteousness, we should never be so foolish as to believe that we are sinless. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount will put to rest any such false notion.

Christians know that they are not sinless. We also know that we deserve God's punishment for our sins but He has had mercy on us for Jesus' sake. His steadfast love endures forever and He delivers us from the ultimate consequence of our sins. Instead, He grants us eternal life.

Prayer: O Lord, graciously hear the prayers of Your people that we who justly suffer the consequence of our sin may be mercifully delivered by Your goodness to the glory of Your name; 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: Ephesians 5:2

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, Walk in love, Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia, As Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Alleluia.

Psalm 119:1–8

- L** ¹Blessèd are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD!
C ²Blessèd are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart,
L ³who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways!
C ⁴You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently.
L ⁵Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes!
C ⁶Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments.
L ⁷I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules.
C ⁸I will keep your statutes; do not utterly forsake me!

Kyrie

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

Let's start at the very beginning
A very good place to start

So begins the famous “Do-Re-Mi” song sung by Julie Andrews in the film “The Sound of Music.” The film was released in 1965 and became the highest-grossing film of the year. By November 1996, it was the highest-grossing film of all time. Around the world, it set box office records in twenty-nine countries.

But that is not the beginning of the story. The film is an adaptation of the 1959 stage musical of the same name, composed by Richard Rodgers with lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II.

But that was not the beginning. The musical in turn was based on the 1949 memoir *The Story of the Trapp Family Singers* by Maria von Trapp which soon became a best seller. And that’s how it began.

Today, we have the opportunity to start “at the very beginning” of the longest psalm. It’s “a very good place to start.”

The full text of “Do-Re-Mi” doesn’t convey much information and certainly doesn’t teach us anything that we can’t live without. In contrast, Psalm 119 conveys knowledge and guidance of the highest importance.

It begins, “Blessèd are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD!” This is an excellent place to start.

The world wants us to believe that this short sentence is nonsense. The end justifies the means. Following God’s law impedes success. Such are the lies of the devil.

From Joseph to Daniel, the Bible is filled with people who were tempted to reject God and His ways but

ultimately found success and blessings from being faithful to God and His commandments.

We live in similar times. Those seeking to be faithful to God's commands are ridiculed, insulted, and sometimes lose their jobs. Psalm 119 brings encouragement when we become discouraged because those in power are godless. We know that God will ultimately keep His promises to people who are faithful to Him.

But what if we stray from His word? What if our ways haven't been pure? 1 John 1:9 gives us the answer, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." In His eyes, we are again blameless and ready to receive His blessings. We know that through Jesus, the ultimate blessing of eternal life awaits.

The "Do-Re-Me" song is a joy to sing. It's one of my favorites. "The Sound of Music" has a much more profound message. Evil times can come to the most noble of people. Sometimes faithfulness means leaving behind worldly wealth and fame in order to flee evil.

I pray that none of us would ever be placed in such a dire situation. However, let us take comfort in the fact that God blesses those who walk in His ways.

Prayer: Gracious Lord, thank You for blessing Your faithful people who walk in Your ways and seek You with all their hearts. Grant us faith to trust Your promise of ultimate blessings awaiting us in the eternal mansions of heaven through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thursday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Ephesians 5:2

L Alleluia, Alleluia, Walk in love, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia, As Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. 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.

Deuteronomy 30:15–20

¹⁵"See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. ¹⁶If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his just decrees, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. ¹⁷But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, ²⁰loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them."

I searched Google for the "meaning of life cartoon." Google indicated that it had discovered 517 million results!

You know the classic cartoon. A desperate seeker of truth climbs to the top of a mountain. There he finds an eastern sage sitting in the Lotus position or *Padmasana*. He then asks, "What is the meaning of life?" The

supposed wise man replies with some inane answer.

The four verses preceding our Old Testament reading from Deuteronomy must have anticipated these humorous cartoons. They tell us that there is no need to ascend to heaven or cross the ocean to discover the meaning of life. In fact, the answer is very near to you (Deuteronomy 30:11-14). It is found in Deuteronomy 30:16, "If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his just decrees, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it."

We find meaning in life by obeying God's commands, by loving the Lord, and by walking in His ways! This is exactly the opposite of what many people believe. They seek meaning in life through introspection and trances.

Loving and serving the true God is where we find meaning in life. We love and serve Him by gladly hearing His word and keeping it (Luke 11:28). It is in this that we find and choose life.

Rejecting God and His word is choosing death and evil. There is no need to climb a mountain to consult a sage to discover this. God's word is available to every one of us.

We joyfully and freely choose life and goodness because Jesus chose us. He freely chose to sacrifice Himself for our sake so that in His death we could receive life. By the working of the Holy Spirit, may we choose to love and serve Him with all our hearts and minds.

Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart

Lutheran Service Book 708, Lutheran Worship 213, The Lutheran Hymnal 429



1 Lord, Thee I love with all my heart; I pray Thee, ne'er from
2 Yea, Lord, 'twas Thy rich boun-ty gave My bod - y, soul, and
3 Lord, let at last Thine an - gels come, To A - br'ham's bos - om



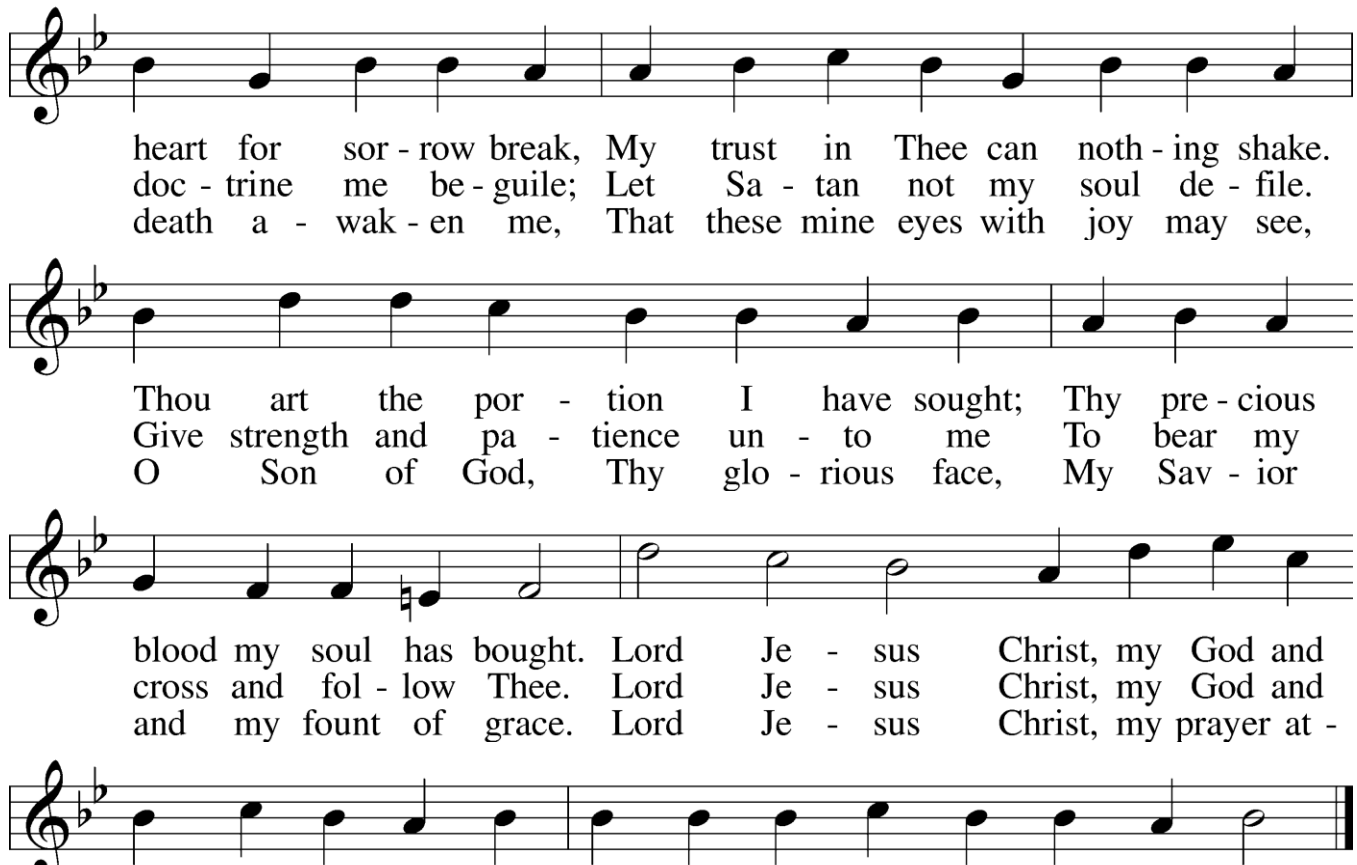
me de - part, With ten - der mer - cy cheer - me. Earth
all I have In this poor life of la - bor. Lord,
bear me home, That I may die un - fear - ing; And



has no plea - sure I would share. Yea, heav'n it - self were
grant that I in ev - 'ry place May glo - ri - fy Thy
in its nar - row cham - ber keep My bod - y safe in



void and bare If Thou, Lord, wert not near me. And should my
lav - ish grace And help and serve my neigh - bor. Let no false
peace-ful sleep Un - til Thy re - ap - pear - ing. And then from



heart for sor - row break, My trust in Thee can noth - ing shake.
 doc - trine me be - guile; Let Sa - tan not my soul de - file.
 death a - wak - en me, That these mine eyes with joy may see,

Thou art the por - tion I have sought; Thy pre - cious
 Give strength and pa - tience un - to me To bear my
 O Son of God, Thy glo - rious face, My Sav - ior

blood my soul has bought. Lord Je - sus Christ, my God and
 cross and fol - low Thee. Lord Je - sus Christ, my God and
 and my fount of grace. Lord Je - sus Christ, my prayer at -

Lord, my God and Lord, For - sake me not! I trust Thy Word.
 Lord, my God and Lord, In death Thy com - fort still af - ford.
 tend, my prayer at - tend, And I will praise Thee with - out end.

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Friday

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

Verse of the Day: Ephesians 5:2

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, Walk in love, Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia, As Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. 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 3:1–9

¹But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. ²I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, ³for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in

a human way? ⁴For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not being merely human?

⁵What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ⁸He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. ⁹For we are God’s fellow workers. You are God’s field, God’s building.

The story of Paul in Corinth is fascinating. Most of it is gleaned from 1 & 2 Corinthians and Acts 18. Unfortunately, the church in Corinth experienced a multitude of problems. One of them was a controversy between two factions who divided themselves between Apollos and Paul.

After Paul left Corinth, Apollos continued the ministry there. Paul indicates this by saying, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.” We don’t know why the people chose sides but it does seem to be something that people are prone to do.

As is so often the case, the people causing divisions did so by convincing themselves that they were doing so for noble reasons. Some claimed to be loyal to Paul. Others claimed to be loyal to Apollos. Paul wanted them to know that their loyalty shouldn’t be directed toward men but toward God.

In reality, Paul and Apollos were not divided. They each fulfilled their vocations by serving God in their own ways.

It was not pleasing to Paul, Apollos, or God that the people in Corinth were dividing their loyalty. What is pleasing to God is unity of faith and practice.

Our world has been continually infected by divisions. This is a symptom of our sinful human nature. But God’s people should be different. We are called to one in faith and one hope through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Corinth wasn’t the only church where Paul found himself needing to encourage the unity of faith. He wrote these valuable words to the Christians in Ephesus that we can cling to today.

^{4:1} I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. ⁷ But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift.

Prayer: Almighty God, thank You for the unity of faith that we share with all believers. Heal divisions among Your people that may fully focus on the salvation that Jesus won for us on the cross. Amen.

Saturday

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

G Amen.

Gradual Psalm 117:1–2a; 96:8

L Praise the Lord, all nations!

G Extol him, all peoples!

L For great is his steadfast love toward us,

G and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.

L Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;

G bring an offering, and come into his courts!

Verse of the Day: Ephesians 5:2

L Alleluia, Alleluia, Walk in love, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia, As Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. 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.

Matthew 5:23–26

²³So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. ²⁶Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

This is part of our Gospel lesson for this week. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is filled with information and insight into Christian living. It gives valuable instructions to those who seek to please God in thought, word, and deed.

In my youth, these verses were often quoted when giving directions to people about the right reception of the Lord's Supper. We learned that if we were experiencing a dispute with someone then we shouldn't go the Communion until this disagreement was resolved. This was good advice.

Unfortunately, like so many other things, people were quick to misunderstand and abuse this sound advice. I recall that some people interpreted it to mean that it was okay to hold a grudge as long as you didn't attend the Lord's Supper!

Here's what they were missing. If you refuse to forgive your neighbor then God withholds His forgiveness from you (Matthew 18: 32). It is an indication that you intend to leave God's family and go your own way.

If you carefully read our verses for today, you will realize that they don't directly apply to the reception of Holy Communion. Likewise, they don't speak of refusing to forgive. Rather, Jesus warns against refusing to recognize your sin against another person.

Jesus is speaking about quickly resolving disputes before they get out of hand. This is so important that bringing a sacrifice to the temple should be delayed. Reconciliation with others is even more important!

This is the heart and core of our faith! This is a good time to remember 1 John 4:10-11:

¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

For our prayer for today, I encourage you to pay special attention to the final four stanzas of "We Give Thee But Thine Own."

We Give Thee But Thine Own

Lutheran Service Book 781, Lutheran Worship 405, The Lutheran Hymnal 441



- 1 We give Thee but Thine own, What - e'er the gift may be;
2 May we Thy boun - ties thus As stew - ards true re - ceive
3 Oh, hearts are bruised and dead, And homes are bare and cold,
4 To com - fort and to bless, To find a balm for woe,



All that we have is Thine a - lone, A trust, O Lord, from Thee.
And glad - ly, as Thou bless - est us, To Thee our first-fruits give!
And lambs for whom the Shep-herd bled Are stray - ing from the fold.
To tend the lone and fa - ther-less Is an - gels' work be - low.

- 5 The captive to release,
To God the lost to bring,
To teach the way of life and peace,
It is a Christ-like thing.

- 6 And we believe Thy Word,
Though dim our faith may be:
Whate'er for Thine we do, O Lord,
We do it unto Thee.

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