

## The Fifth Sunday in Lent

### April 3, 2022

Christ and His message are so foreign to human thinking and human nature that even the religious people of Jesus' day sought to destroy him. This was not a surprise to Jesus for He quoted Psalm 118:22 to them: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone."

If, as Christians, we look for acceptance from the world, we will never find it. Indeed, Christians will also find rejection from seemingly religious people who have embraced the world in their thinking, acting, and speaking.

Rather, let us live humbly under the cross of Christ and see there the total defeat of sin, death, and the Devil. May we never forget the wisdom of Proverbs: "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death." (Proverbs 14:12) and let us hold fast to the message of Psalm 27:1, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

### Glory Be to Jesus

Lutheran Service Book 433, Lutheran Worship 98, The Lutheran Hymnal 158



1 Glo - ry be to Je - sus, Who in bit - ter pains  
2 Grace and life e - ter - nal In that blood I find;  
3 Blest through end - less a - ges Be the pre - cious stream  
4 A - bel's blood for ven - geance Plead - ed to the skies;



Poured for me the life - blood From His sa - cred veins!  
Blest be His com - pas - sion, In - fi - nite - ly kind!  
Which from end - less tor - ment Did the world re - deem!  
But the blood of Je - sus For our par - don cries.

5 Oft as earth exulting  
Wafts its praise on high,  
Angel hosts rejoicing  
Make their glad reply.

6 Lift we, then, our voices,  
Swell the mighty flood;  
Louder still and louder  
Praise the precious blood!

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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 3:3–6; antiphon Psalm 3:8

- L** Salvation belongs to the Lord;  
your blessing be on your people!  
**C** **But you, O Lord, are a shield about me,  
my glory, and the lifter of my head.**  
**L** I cried aloud to the Lord,  
and he answered me from his holy hill.  
**C** **I lay down and slept;  
I woke again, for the Lord sustained me.**  
**L** I will not be afraid of many thousands of people  
who have set themselves against me all around.  
**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** Salvation belongs to the Lord;  
your blessing be on your people!

### Kyrie

- |                    |                                   |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>L</b> O Lord,   | <b>C</b> <b>Have Mercy on us.</b> |
| <b>L</b> O Christ, | <b>C</b> <b>Have Mercy on us.</b> |
| <b>L</b> O Lord,   | <b>C</b> <b>Have Mercy on us.</b> |

### 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, by Your great goodness mercifully look upon Your people that we may be governed and preserved evermore in body and soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.  
**C** **Amen.**

## Isaiah 43:16–21

<sup>16</sup>Thus says the LORD,  
who makes a way in the sea,  
a path in the mighty waters,  
<sup>17</sup>who brings forth chariot and horse,  
army and warrior;  
they lie down, they cannot rise,  
they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:  
<sup>18</sup>“Remember not the former things,  
nor consider the things of old.  
<sup>19</sup>Behold, I am doing a new thing;  
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness  
and rivers in the desert.  
<sup>20</sup>The wild beasts will honor me,  
the jackals and the ostriches,  
for I give water in the wilderness,  
rivers in the desert,  
to give drink to my chosen people,  
<sup>21</sup>the people whom I formed for myself  
that they might declare my praise.”

**L** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

## Gradual Hebrews 12:2

**L** O come, let us fix our eyes on Jesus,

**C** the founder and perfecter of our faith,

**L** who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame,

**C** and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

## Psalms 126

**L** <sup>1</sup>When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.

**C** <sup>2</sup>Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy;  
then they said among the nations, “The LORD has done great things for them.”

**L** <sup>3</sup>The LORD has done great things for us; we are glad.

**C** <sup>4</sup>Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like streams in the Negeb!

**L** <sup>5</sup>Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy!

**C** <sup>6</sup>He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing,  
shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

## Philippians 3:8–14

<sup>8</sup>Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup>and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— <sup>10</sup>that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup>that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

<sup>12</sup>Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. <sup>13</sup>Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup>I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

**L** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

### Verse of the Day: Luke 20:17b

**L** The stone that the builders rejected

**C** has become the cornerstone

### Luke 20:9–20

**L** The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 20<sup>th</sup> chapter.

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

<sup>9</sup>[Jesus] began to tell the people this parable: “A man planted a vineyard and let it out to tenants and went into another country for a long while. <sup>10</sup>When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants, so that they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. <sup>11</sup>And he sent another servant. But they also beat and treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. <sup>12</sup>And he sent yet a third. This one also they wounded and cast out. <sup>13</sup>Then the owner of the vineyard said, ‘What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.’ <sup>14</sup>But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Let us kill him, so that the inheritance may be ours.’ <sup>15</sup>And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? <sup>16</sup>He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others.” When they heard this, they said, “Surely not!” <sup>17</sup>But he looked directly at them and said, “What then is this that is written:

‘The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone’?

<sup>18</sup>“Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.”

<sup>19</sup>The scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on him at that very hour, for they perceived that he had told this parable against them, but they feared the people. <sup>20</sup>So they watched him and sent spies, who pretended to be sincere, that they might catch him in something he said, so as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor.

**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.

## Jesus, Refuge of the Weary

Lutheran Service Book 423, Lutheran Worship 90, The Lutheran Hymnal 145



1 Je - sus, ref - uge of the wea - ry, Blest Re - deem - er,  
2 Do we pass that cross un - heed - ing, Breath - ing no re -  
3 Je - sus, may our hearts be burn - ing With more fer - vent



whom we love, Foun - tain in life's des - ert drea - ry, Sav - ior  
pen - tant vow, Though we see You wound - ed, bleed - ing, See Your  
love for You; May our eyes be ev - er turn - ing To be -



from the world a - bove: Of - ten have Your eyes, of - fend - ed,  
thorn - en - cir - cled brow? Yet Your sin - less death has brought us  
hold Your cross a - new Till in glo - ry, part - ed nev - er



Gazed up - on the sin - ner's fall; Yet up - on the  
Life e - ter - nal, peace, and rest; On - ly what Your  
From the bless - ed Sav - ior's side, Grav - en in our



cross ex - tend - ed, You have borne the pain of all.  
grace has taught us Calms the sin - ner's deep dis - tress.  
hearts for - ev - er, Dwell the cross, the Cru - ci - fied.

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### Devotional Thoughts:

Today we consider Jesus' Parable of the Wicked Tenants. To set the stage, let's return to Luke 20:1-2. There we read, "One day, as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders came up and said to him, 'Tell us by what authority you do these things, or who it is that gave you this authority.'"

The chief priests and the scribes with the elders are quite an impressive contingent of elite religious leaders. You might recall this notorious group from Luke 9. Just after Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ and before His transfiguration, Jesus foretold His death with these words: "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised" (Luke 9:22). We will meet them again in Luke 22:66-71 when Jesus is condemned to death. In Matthew, we find them at the foot of the cross, mocking Jesus:

So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we

will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” (Matthew 27:41-43).

With this background, you can understand that Jesus told The Parable of the Wicked Tenants as a portrayal of these religious leaders who were hiding under their pious guise.

First, we meet the owner and planter of the vineyard who is God. The vineyard is Israel. He entrusted it to tenant farmers to be the vinedressers. These vinedressers are the religious leaders who soon began to believe that they were the sole owners of the vineyard.

The owner (God) sent servants (prophets) to reassert his ownership. The Old Testament tells us that it did not go well with God’s servants, the prophets. They were beaten and mistreated. In a final effort to reclaim his vineyard (Israel) from the wicked tenants (the religious leaders), the owner sent his beloved son (Jesus) with the desire that they would respect him more than they had his servants (the prophets).

Alas, this was not to be. The wicked tenants (the religious leaders) chose to kill the son (Jesus) and claim the vineyard (Israel) for themselves. This is exactly what happened.

The chief priests and the scribes with the elders were not amused. “They perceived that he had told this parable against them” (Luke 20:19). They wanted to seize Jesus right there and then but they knew they wouldn’t be able to because the crowds loved Jesus. So they waited until late Thursday night of Holy Week to arrest Him in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22).

Apparently, they hadn’t listened carefully enough to Jesus’ parable. Or at least, they didn’t believe Him. Jesus quoted for them Psalm 118:22, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.” Their rejection of Jesus “The stone the builders rejected” would soon be undone! Jesus was not just another servant to be abused and beaten and killed. He is the Son who is the Cornerstone! Those who oppose Him will be broken to pieces and crushed!

This should not have been a surprise. Psalm 118 was the last of six psalms sung at the Passover. The religious leaders had been reciting these words annually for their entire lives! But they were faithless leaders who were only interested in their own positions of authority. That would soon come to an end. Although Jesus would be killed, on the third day He would be raised!

Every generation faces this same danger. Leaders are tempted to reject God’s ownership. But the outcome is always the same. Those who oppose Him are ultimately broken to pieces and crushed.

On the other hand, those who love and trust Him are raised to new life. On the cross, He bore our grief and sorrow. He was stricken, smitten, and afflicted when we should have been. He was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquity but His chastisement brought us peace and by His wounds, we are healed! (Isaiah 53:4-5). Through Him, we have eternal life.

“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.

**L** O Lord, deliver us from believing that we are righteous before You because of who we are and what we have done. By Your Spirit, move us to see that we are sinners and only deserve Your wrath. Cause us to turn from our worthlessness and hold fast to the surpassing worth of Christ Jesus and His righteousness for us. Amen.

**C** Amen.

**L** O Lord, You gave Your Son to be rejected by sinners, that we might be welcomed into Your kingdom. Preserve Your Church in this life won for us by Christ, crucified and risen. Give faithfulness to the preaching of Your Word and the administration of Your Sacraments, and let Your people receive these gifts with penitence and faith. Amen.

**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. Thank You that are experiencing a continuing decline in the number of new infections and an ease of restrictions. 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.

## When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

Lutheran Service Book 425, Lutheran Worship 114, The Lutheran Hymnal 175



1 When I sur - vey the won - drous cross On which the  
2 For - bid it, Lord, that I should boast Save in the  
3 See, from His head, His hands, His feet Sor - row and  
4 Were the whole realm of na - ture mine, That were a



Prince of Glo - ry died, My rich - est gain I  
death of Christ, my God; All the vain things that  
love flow min - gled down! Did e'er such love and  
trib - ute far too small; Love so a - maz - ing,



count but loss And pour con - tempt on all my pride.  
charm me most, I sac - ri - fice them to His blood.  
sor - row meet Or thorns com - pose so rich a crown?  
so di - vine, De - mands my soul, my life, my all!

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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 Fifth Sunday in Lent

#### April 4 – April 9, 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 mediate 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: Luke 20:17b

- L** The stone that the builders rejected
- C** has become the cornerstone

#### Introit Psalm 3:3–6; antiphon Psalm 3:8

- L** Salvation belongs to the Lord;  
your blessing be on your people!
- C** But you, O Lord, are a shield about me,  
my glory, and the lifter of my head.
- L** I cried aloud to the Lord,  
and he answered me from his holy hill.
- C** I lay down and slept;  
I woke again, for the Lord sustained me.
- L** I will not be afraid of many thousands of people  
who have set themselves against me all around.
- 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** Salvation belongs to the Lord;  
your blessing be on your people!

## Kyrie

<b>L</b>	O Lord,	<b>C</b>	<b>Have Mercy on us.</b>
<b>L</b>	O Christ,	<b>C</b>	<b>Have Mercy on us.</b>
<b>L</b>	O Lord,	<b>C</b>	<b>Have Mercy on us.</b>

Our introit is a shortened version of Psalm 3. The superscription titles it, “A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.”

You might recall that Absalom was a charming, charismatic, and handsome man. He was able to manipulate individuals and groups for his own benefit. His father loved him and doted on him. In return, Absalom staged a rebellion to take over David’s kingdom. At first, it appeared as though Absalom had succeeded in his takeover. David was forced to flee Jerusalem for his life. However, following a great battle, Absalom was killed while his hair was caught in a tree. David regained his throne. (You can read the account of David and Absalom in 2 Samuel 13-18).

Very few of us can get through life without being opposed by enemies and unfair people. We experience bullying in school and at work. Unscrupulous individuals deceive us and undermine our best efforts. Certainly, David experienced similar things in life but for him, things moved to the next level. Most of his enemies wanted to kill him. But that’s not the end of the story. It got worse.

His own son, whom he loved, used subterfuge and deception to steal his crown and kingdom. There are not many things worse than having your own family seek your death.

Like David, some of us have family members that wish us harm. Some may even take action to hurt us. When David experienced this, he wrote Psalm 3. Absalom had rallied the entire nation against David but the Lord was a shield around him.

Psalm 3 reminds us that in these darkest times, “Salvation belongs to the Lord.” When we cry to the Lord, He answers us. When the Lord sustains us, we need not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against us.

As Holy Week and Good Friday approach, I am reminded of Paul’s words in Romans 8: 31-32, “If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”

Prayer: O Lord, when we experience dark days, when our closest and dearest family and friends abandon and oppose us, remind us of Your great love for us in Jesus that though we walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, we need fear no evil for You are with us through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Tuesday

<b>L</b>	In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
<b>G</b>	<b>Amen.</b>

## Verse of the Day: Luke 20:17b

<b>L</b>	The stone that the builders rejected
<b>G</b>	<b>has become the cornerstone</b>

## Kyrie

<b>L</b>	O Lord,	<b>C</b>	<b>Have Mercy on us.</b>
<b>L</b>	O Christ,	<b>C</b>	<b>Have Mercy on us.</b>
<b>L</b>	O Lord,	<b>C</b>	<b>Have Mercy on us.</b>

**L** Let us pray: Almighty God, by Your great goodness mercifully look upon Your people that we may be governed and preserved evermore in body and soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C** Amen.

We live in a dangerous world. Nightly news reports make that clear. The war in Ukraine is horrifying. Crime in the streets is in the headlines daily. Fraud and scams make answering the phone or using the internet hazardous. The Covid-19 pandemic, cancer, heart disease, etc. threaten us all. Although nature is beautiful, it can be deadly. Tornados, hurricanes, floods, freezing weather, heat waves, and droughts all conspire against us. People we consider friends sometimes turn out to be enemies in disguise. The list goes on.

Surrounded by all these threats, how do we survive? Some may believe that they survive because they are clever or shrewd. Others may believe that their charm or strength leads to success. We know that we survive and thrive in the midst of danger because of God's great goodness and mercy.

God cares for everyone even the unbelievers. Jesus tells us, "He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45). But we are the people who recognize God's goodness.

The greatest dangers we face are not threats to our bodies. The greatest dangers we face are threats to our souls. We are constantly tempted to sin. Satan's greatest desire is for us to abandon our faith. But God never abandons us!

Jesus' mission was to rescue us from sin, death, and the devil. Yes, He fed the 5000, healed the sick, made the blind see, the deaf hear, and the lame walk. He ordered the wind to cease and calmed the waves. But His real reason for coming into the world was to open the kingdom of heaven for us and all believers.

Let us pray: Almighty God, by Your great goodness mercifully look upon Your people that we may be governed and preserved evermore in body and soul; 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: Luke 20:17b

**L** The stone that the builders rejected

**C** has become the cornerstone

## Psalm 126

**L** <sup>1</sup>When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.

**C** <sup>2</sup>Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."

**L** <sup>3</sup>The LORD has done great things for us; we are glad.

**C** <sup>4</sup>Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like streams in the Negeb!

**L** <sup>5</sup>Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy!

**C** <sup>6</sup>He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

## Kyrie

<b>L</b>	O Lord,	<b>C</b>	<b>Have Mercy on us.</b>
<b>L</b>	O Christ,	<b>C</b>	<b>Have Mercy on us.</b>
<b>L</b>	O Lord,	<b>C</b>	<b>Have Mercy on us.</b>

Psalm 126 begins, “When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.” Most Bible scholars believe that this Psalm was written after the captives returned from Babylon.

In 587BC, Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem and carried off captives into exile. It appeared to them that all was lost. Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed. Judah would no longer exist as a nation.

But God was not done with His people. He allowed the Babylonian Empire to fall to the Persians. In 538, Cyrus, the king of Persia, decreed that the Jews should return to their homeland. They rebuilt Jerusalem and the temple. The temple had been destroyed in 587BC and was finally rebuilt in 516BC.

For 70 years, there had been no sacrifices to God or temple ceremonies. For most of that time, it seemed as though they never would worship God again at His holy temple. When the temple was rebuilt, they couldn’t believe their eyes. It was as though they were dreaming! It seemed to be too good to be true. But it was true!

They were filled with laughter and shouts of joy. They knew that their restored fortunes were the Lord’s doing and His alone. They had nothing to do with it at all. They shouted, “The LORD has done great things for us; we are glad.”

It’s almost impossible for us to imagine this great turnaround. In my mind, it is comparable to the liberation of Paris and other French cities by Allied Forces in World War II. But even this doesn’t match up well. The Parisians were under Nazi rule for only four years and they had not been deported.

Going to church on Sunday morning is something I had done for my entire life until two years ago when all church services were stopped. When they began again, we continued to worship at home in an attempt to keep my mother safe from the Covid-19 pandemic. Now, since we have returned to church, I appreciate it much more than before. I can’t say that I “shout for joy” because I can go to church on Sunday but it does feel good. How wonderful it would be if God’s people understood the great gift we have in gathering in His house for worship each week.

But God has restored our fortunes in an even greater way. We were all carried into the exile of sin and death. There was no way out. It would not last for 70 years but for eternity. Then God came to our rescue in the person of Jesus.

He alone is responsible for bringing us out of bondage to sin. It is all His doing. It wasn’t easy. It meant that He had to suffer and die on the cross. He did this to restore us. We have every reason to be filled with laughter and to shout for joy. In Him, though we were dead, we shall live for all eternity.

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for restoring our fortunes. Grant us the ability to recognize the great gift of salvation that is ours in Christ and rejoice and be glad in Your love for us in Him. Amen.

## Thursday

<b>L</b>	In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
<b>C</b>	<b>Amen.</b>

## Verse of the Day: Luke 20:17b

<b>L</b>	The stone that the builders rejected
<b>C</b>	<b>has become the cornerstone</b>

## Kyrie

<b>L</b>	O Lord,	<b>C</b>	<b>Have Mercy on us.</b>
<b>L</b>	O Christ,	<b>C</b>	<b>Have Mercy on us.</b>
<b>L</b>	O Lord,	<b>C</b>	<b>Have Mercy on us.</b>

## Isaiah 43:16–21

<sup>16</sup>Thus says the LORD,  
who makes a way in the sea,  
a path in the mighty waters,  
<sup>17</sup>who brings forth chariot and horse,  
army and warrior;  
they lie down, they cannot rise,  
they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:  
<sup>18</sup>“Remember not the former things,  
nor consider the things of old.  
<sup>19</sup>Behold, I am doing a new thing;  
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness  
and rivers in the desert.  
<sup>20</sup>The wild beasts will honor me,  
the jackals and the ostriches,  
for I give water in the wilderness,  
rivers in the desert,  
to give drink to my chosen people,  
<sup>21</sup>the people whom I formed for myself  
that they might declare my praise.”

Did you watch the Grammys at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas on Sunday? If you didn't, I'm not surprised. It has been reported that viewership was only slightly above last year's all-time low.

I'm not sure why people aren't tuning in but I recently learned two interesting statistics that may be factors. An article<sup>1</sup> posted online at the end of January stated, “Old songs now represent 70 percent of the U.S. music market.” It also revealed, “The 200 most popular new tracks now regularly account for less than 5 percent of total streams.”

So that leads to another question. Why are people turning to old music? Isaiah reveals one possible answer in our Old Testament lesson for this week. When times are difficult, people tend to look back and fondly remember the glory days.

That would happen to the Children of Israel when they were in exile in Babylon. They would remember the Exodus and the conquest of the Promised Land. However, the Lord who made “a path in the mighty waters” of the Red Sea and drowned the Egyptian “chariot and horse, army and warrior” when the water closed over them said, “Remember not the former things.” Why? Because He was going to do a new thing to deliver them.

At the proper time, God would bring the captives back from exile. They would rebuild Jerusalem and worship in the temple. Their mouths would be filled with laughter, and their tongues with shouts of joy. But this was just a preview of an even greater salvation that God would bring about.

One day, He would make all things “new” in Jesus. The old way of sin and death would pass away. Jesus would rise from the dead and give new life to all believers. We would become a new creation and look forward to a new heaven and a new earth where tears and sorrows are no more.

Remembering the words of Jesus in our Gospel lesson for this week, Peter describes it this way:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2022/01/old-music-killing-new-music/621339/>

To you therefore who believe, he is precious, but for those who do not believe,  
“The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner,”

and

“A stone that will make men stumble, a rock that will make them fall”;  
for they stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

**But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Peter 2:7-9 RSV).**

Let us pray: O Lord God, thank You for all the mercies that You have shown to us in the past. Grant that we would rejoice in them but look forward to the day when all of Your promises are fulfilled in the resurrection. Until then move us to declare Your wonderful deeds of salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Friday

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

### Verse of the Day: Luke 20:17b

**L** The stone that the builders rejected  
**C** has become the cornerstone

### Kyrie

<b>L</b> O Lord,	<b>C</b> Have Mercy on us.
<b>L</b> O Christ,	<b>C</b> Have Mercy on us.
<b>L</b> O Lord,	<b>C</b> Have Mercy on us.

### Philippians 3:8–14

<sup>8</sup>Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup>and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— <sup>10</sup>that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup>that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

<sup>12</sup>Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. <sup>13</sup>Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup>I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Have you ever invested your heart and soul into something? Some people do. Elite professional athletes do. Their entire lives are dedicated to their sports. I’m not sure that I can even imagine what a superstar quarterback such as Tom Brady does to stay at the top of his game.

The Apostle Paul was like that. He wasn’t an elite athlete but he was totally invested, heart and soul, in his quest to please God. In the preceding verses, he called himself a Hebrew of the Hebrews. To catch the full impact of that statement, remember other expressions such as King of King and Lord of Lords. Paul was saying

that he was the “Hebrewest” of them all. Like Tom Brady, Paul was totally committed in his pursuit of being at the top of his game. No sacrifice was too great.

Keep this in mind as you reread verse 9, “Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.” Notice that he is not saying that Christ helps him to improve his religious life and experience. He’s not saying that Jesus is the next step in his religious quest. Knowing Christ is so incredibly more valuable than everything he had previously poured his life into that now he considers it to be “rubbish” (The foulest rubbish!).

My first thought is, “If I don’t feel the same way, I must be missing something.” Jesus is not just an “add-on” to his life. Jesus is not just an extra frill or a pleasant hobby. For Paul, He is everything. Why is that? He goes on to explain the reason in verse 10, to “be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.”

Paul realized that this personal quest for holiness, everything that he had poured his heart into, was a total dead end (literally). The only way to life was through faith in Jesus. His righteousness was so far beyond his own personal quest for righteousness that it was like comparing a bar of gold to a pile of rubbish! Pause for a moment and let that sink in.

That same righteousness from God in Christ is ours by faith. It doesn’t depend on our religious intensity and efforts to be the best. It only depends on Jesus and His cross. As we approach Palm Sunday and Holy Week, may we remember that Jesus is everything we need. He gives us eternal life and salvation freely by grace.

Prayer: O Lord, Jesus, Nothing in my hand I bring; Simply to Thy cross I cling. Amen.

## Saturday

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

**C** Amen.

## Gradual Hebrews 12:2

**L** O come, let us fix our eyes on Jesus,

**C** the founder and perfecter of our faith,

**L** who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame,

**C** and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

## Verse of the Day: Luke 20:17b

**L** The stone that the builders rejected

**C** has become the cornerstone

## 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.

## Philippians 3:12–14

<sup>12</sup>Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. <sup>13</sup>Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup>I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

The Mona Lisa by Leonardo da Vinci may be the most well-known painting in the world. Have you ever wondered how da Vinci knew that he was finished painting the Mona Lisa? When did he know that his portrait was perfectly complete? How did he know that when he finished his last brush stroke that one more would make the Mona Lisa less than what it is? How did he know when his painting was perfect?

These thoughts came to mind as I read Paul's words in verse 12, "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect." The Greek word translated in the ESV as "perfect" implies the idea of reaching the end or completing a task. It is closely related to the word spoken by Jesus from the cross that we translate, "It is finished!" This verse in the NIV reads this way, "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal." Paul was not implying that he would one day reach perfection here on earth. He meant that there was more left for him to do as he completed his earthly life.

Jesus has fully made us His own. We are fully complete and perfect in the forgiveness of sins that He has granted to us by faith. His righteousness is completely ours. But like, Paul, we are still in the race. We are straining forward to what lies ahead. We haven't finished the race yet. We have things to do here on earth in His service before He calls us to be with Him and receive the crown of righteousness.

I once experienced a serious health issue and major surgery with a long recovery period. My doctor told me that without the surgery, I wouldn't last six months. For some reason, God has granted me more years here on earth. My sojourn and ministry here are not yet complete. There is more to do. I'm not always sure what it is that I'm supposed to accomplish but I am convinced that God knows. Until I one day cross that finish line, like Paul, I must press on. There is still at least one more brush stroke to be added to the canvas of my life. There is also more for you to do in service to the Lord.

## Take My Life and Let It Be

Lutheran Service Book 783, Lutheran Worship 404, The Lutheran Hymnal 400



- 1 Take my life and let it be Con-se - crat - ed, Lord, to Thee;  
2 Take my hands and let them move At the im - pulse of Thy love;  
3 Take my voice and let me sing Al-ways, on - ly for my King;  
4 Take my sil - ver and my gold, Not a mite would I with - hold;



Take my mo - ments and my days, Let them flow in cease-less praise.  
Take my feet and let them be Swift and beau - ti - ful for Thee.  
Take my lips and let them be Filled with mes - sag - es from Thee.  
Take my in - tel - lect and use Ev - 'ry pow'r as Thou shalt choose.

- 5 Take my will and make it Thine,  
It shall be no longer mine;  
Take my heart, it is Thine own,  
It shall be Thy royal throne.
- 6 Take my love, my Lord, I pour  
At Thy feet its treasure store;  
Take myself, and I will be  
Ever, only, all for Thee.

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