

The First Sunday in Lent

March 6, 2022

Although Jesus said it, Christians continue to have a hard time believing it and living according to it: “Man does not live by bread alone.” For the 40 days of Lent may we endeavor to understand the truth of Jesus’ saying and focus our attention on God’s Holy Word of Comfort and the Cross of Christ.

God Loved the World So That He Gave

Lutheran Service Book 571, Lutheran Worship 352, The Lutheran Hymnal 245



1 God loved the world so that He gave His on - ly
2 Christ Je - sus is the ground of faith, Who was made
3 God would not have the sin - ner die; His Son with
4 Be of good cheer, for God's own Son For - gives all



Son the lost to save, That all who would in
flesh and suf - fered death; All then who trust in
sav - ing grace is nigh; His Spir - it in the
sins which you have done; And, jus - ti - fied by



Him be - lieve Should ev - er - last - ing life re - ceive.
Him a - lone Are built on this chief cor - ner - stone.
Word de - clares How we in Christ are heav - en's heirs.
Je - sus' blood, Your Bap - tism grants the high - est good.

5 If you are sick, if death is near,
This truth your troubled heart can cheer:
Christ Jesus saves your soul from death;
That is the firmest ground of faith.

6 Glory to God the Father, Son,
And Holy Spirit, Three in One!
To You, O blessèd Trinity,
Be praise now and eternally!

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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 91:9–13; antiphon Psalm 91:15–16

- L** When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble;
I will rescue him and honor him.
- C** **With long life I will satisfy him
and show him my salvation.**
- L** Because you have made the Lord your dwelling place—
the Most High, who is my refuge—
- C** **no evil shall be allowed to befall you,
no plague come near your tent.**
- L** For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways.
- C** **On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.**
- L** You will tread on the lion and the adder;
the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.
- 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** When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble;
I will rescue him and honor him.
- C** **With long life I will satisfy him
and show him my salvation.**

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 God, You led Your ancient people through the wilderness and brought them to the promised land. Guide the people of Your Church that following our Savior we may walk through the wilderness of this world toward the glory of the world to come; 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 26:1–11

¹“When you come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance and have taken possession of it and live in it, ²you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from your land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket, and you shall go to the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name to dwell there. ³And you shall go to the priest who is in office at that time and say to him, ‘I declare today to the LORD your God that I have come into the land that the LORD swore to our fathers to give us.’ ⁴Then the priest shall take the basket from your hand and set it down before the altar of the LORD your God.

⁵“And you shall make response before the LORD your God, ‘A wandering Aramean was my father. And he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number, and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. ⁶And the Egyptians treated us harshly and humiliated us and laid on us hard labor. ⁷Then we cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. ⁸And the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great deeds of terror, with signs and wonders. ⁹And he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰And behold, now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground, which you, O LORD, have given me.’ And you shall set it down before the LORD your God and worship before the LORD your God. ¹¹And you shall rejoice in all the good that the LORD your God has given to you and to your house, you, and the Levite, and the sojourner who is among you.”

- 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 91:1–13

- L** ¹He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.
C ²I will say to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”
L ³For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence.
C ⁴He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.
L ⁵You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day,
C ⁶nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.

- L** ⁷A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.
- C** ⁸**You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked.**
- L** ⁹Because you have made the LORD your dwelling place—the Most High, who is my refuge—
- C** ¹⁰**no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent.**
- L** ¹¹For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.
- C** ¹²**On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.**
- L** ¹³You will tread on the lion and the adder;
- C** **the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.**

Romans 10:8b–13

^{8b}“The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); ⁹because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ¹¹For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” ¹²For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

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

Verse of the Day: Ephesians 6:11

- L** Put on the whole armor of God,
- C** **that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.**

Luke 4:1–13

- L** The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 4th chapter.
- C** **Glory to You, O Lord.**

¹Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness ²for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. ³The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” ⁴And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’” ⁵And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, ⁶and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. ⁷If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” ⁸And Jesus answered him, “It is written,

“‘You shall worship the Lord your God,
and him only shall you serve.’”

⁹And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, ¹⁰for it is written,

“‘He will command his angels concerning you,
to guard you,’

¹¹and

“‘On their hands they will bear you up,

lest you strike your foot against a stone.””

¹²And Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” ¹³And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

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 sits at the right hand of God the Father
Almighty.

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

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

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.

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

Lutheran Service Book 656, Lutheran Worship 298, The Lutheran Hymnal 262



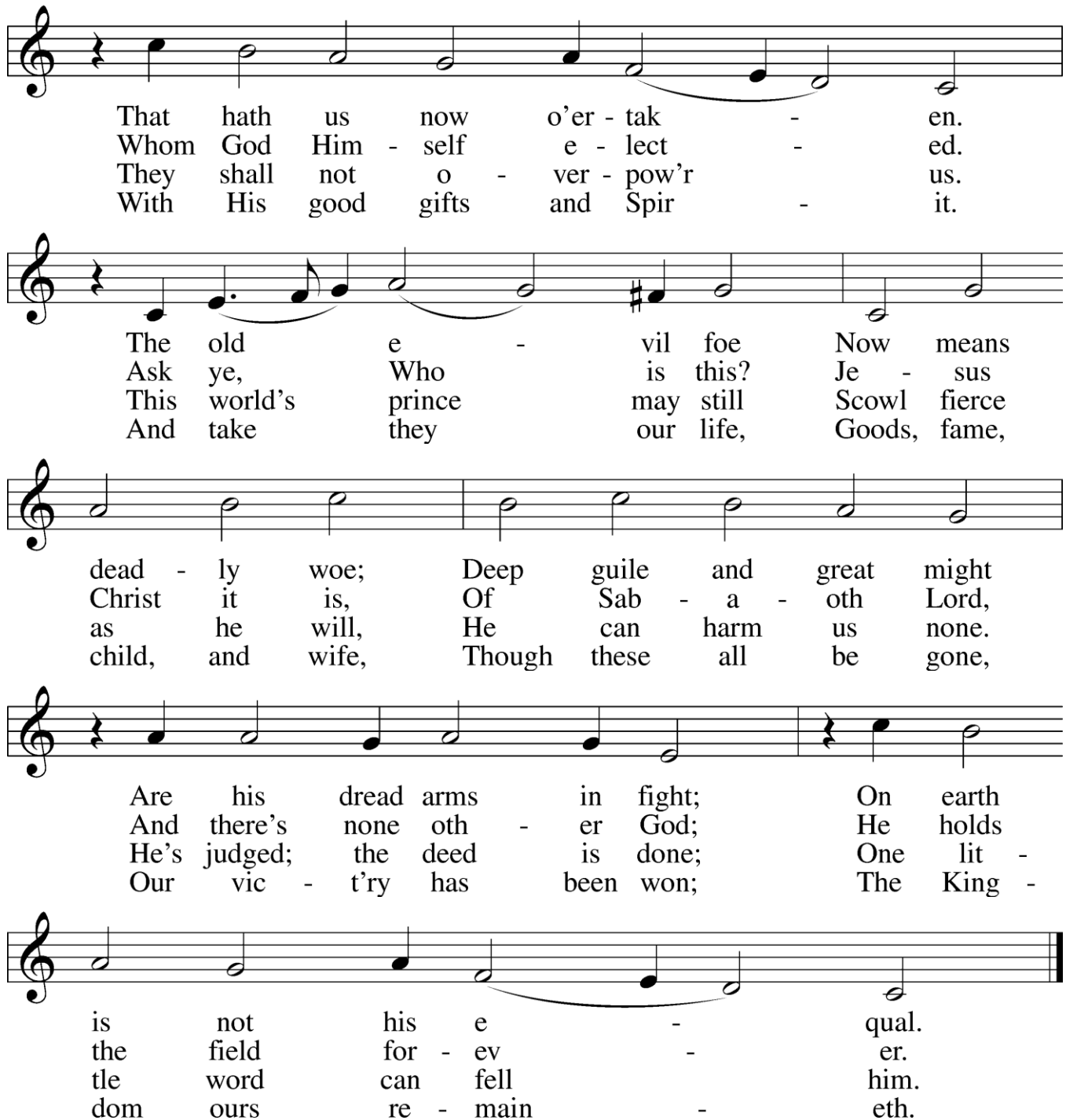
1 A might - y for - tress is our God,
2 With might of ours can naught be done,
3 Though dev - ils all the world should fill,
4 The Word they still shall let re - main



A trust - y shield and weap - on;
Soon were our loss ef - fect - ed;
All ea - ger to de - vour us,
Nor an - y thanks have for it;



He helps us free from ev - 'ry need
But for us fights the val - iant One,
We trem - ble not, we fear no ill;
He's by our side up - on the plain



That hath us now o'er - tak - en.
 Whom God Him - self e - lect - ed.
 They shall not o - ver - pow'r us.
 With His good gifts and Spir - it.

The old e - vil foe Now means
 Ask ye, Who is this? Je - sus
 This world's prince may still Scowl fierce
 And take they our life, Goods, fame,

dead - ly woe; Deep guile and great might
 Christ it is, Of Sab - a - oth Lord,
 as he will, He can harm us none.
 child, and wife, Though these all be gone,

Are his dread arms in fight; On earth
 And there's none oth - er God; He holds
 He's judged; the deed is done; One lit -
 Our vic - t'ry has been won; The King -

is not his e - qual.
 the field for - ev - er.
 tle word can fell him.
 dom ours re - main - eth.

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Devotional Thoughts:

This is the First Sunday IN Lent not OF Lent. Let me explain. Lent began on Ash Wednesday. Why?

Following His baptism, Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit. There He was tempted by the devil while He fasted.

Already by the early 300s, it is reported that Christians everywhere were fasting for 40 days before Easter. This fast echoed Jesus' 40-day fast in the wilderness before beginning His public ministry.

But if you count the days from Ash Wednesday until Easter you will discover that Ash Wednesday is actually 46 days before Easter. Did we begin Lent too soon? Maybe Lent should really start this coming Tuesday which is 40 days before Easter.

Remember I said that this is the First Sunday IN Lent not OF Lent. The math works out if we keep in mind that Sundays are not considered part of Lent. More properly, they are not considered part of the Lenten fast. Every Sunday is a celebration of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. They are "little Easters." Fasting is never appropriate on Easter hence they were not counted as part of the 40-day fast.

Which brings us to our subject at hand, why fast? Or as is the custom of many, why give up something for Lent?

First, Jesus fasted. Luke reports that He ate nothing during those 40 days. When I was about 10 years old, I was taught this bit of folklore. A person can live for 3 minutes without air, for 3 days without water, and for 30 days without food. This made my young mind question how Jesus could last for 40 days without eating. Since that time, I have learned of people living beyond 60 days without food. So I have no reason to doubt that Jesus fasted for 40 days. Nevertheless, I don't recommend that any of us try a complete fast for 40 days.

However, many Christians today practice a modified fast or "give something up for Lent." Christians do this not only to resonate with Jesus' fast. There is also a spiritual benefit to self-denial.

Jesus' fast included temptations by the devil. Three of them are recorded in the Bible. The first one is the temptation to turn stones into bread. The devil was tempting Jesus to abandon His mission to be our substitute in His act of atonement on the cross. If Jesus would have used His divine power to ease the difficulties of life, He would no longer be living as we do in the world.

When we practice self-discipline with something as mundane as a fast or "giving something up for Lent," we strengthen our ability to resist the devil's temptation to indulge ourselves with sinful living. The devil, the world, and our old sinful selves are on a relentless quest to make sin seem to be "a delight to the eyes" and something "to be desired." Learning to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus is an essential activity for Christians. Giving up something for Lent is an exercise that helps you strengthen your spiritual muscles.

The second and possibly more important lesson for us to learn from Jesus' experience in the wilderness is the importance of knowing Holy Scripture. Giving up something for Lent can be a beneficial practice but it can also be empty if we do it without an awareness of God's word and plan of salvation.

The language that Luke used to record Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness indicates that the devil's temptations were ongoing. The final three are recorded for our edification. Did you notice that Jesus answered each temptation of the devil with a quotation from the Bible?

Jesus responded to the first temptation by quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, "Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord." Jesus answered the devil's temptation to worship him with a reference to Deuteronomy 6:13, "It is the Lord your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve." Finally, the devil chose to distort and misapply God's word. Jesus replied by quoting, Deuteronomy 6:16, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test."

So what should you do for Lent? The first and best answer is you don't have to do anything. Lent is about remembering that Jesus did it all for you. There is nothing you can add to the salvation that He won for you on the cross. Through His sacrifice, your sins are totally and freely forgiven. We only choose to do things in Lent that will strengthen our faith in Him.

You may choose to give something up for Lent to bring your understanding of Jesus' sacrifice for us into better focus and to make stronger your ability to resist temptation. A good use of your time in Lent would be attentiveness to learning God's word so that you will be able to respond to the devil in the same way that Jesus did.

One way to do this would be to turn to Luther's Small Catechism. Resolve to read the questions and answers along with the Bible passages for one chief part each week. At the end of the week choose a Bible passage to memorize.

May your Lenten journey be one in which you grow in faith and love for the Lord.

"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 Lord Most High, the dwelling place of Your people. For the sake of Jesus, who suffered temptation and death for our redemption, be our refuge. Preserve us from every evil and strengthen us in faith.

C Amen.

L O Lord, in the midst of this life we are beset by many temptations. Fix our eyes on our Lord Jesus, who bore temptation for us and resisted to the point of death, and bring us through the evils of this fallen world to dwell with You forever.

C Amen.

L Father in heaven, Your Son trampled the serpent underfoot and freed us from sin and death by His own death on the cross. Protect and preserve us all from Satan's wiles. Let Your angels guard us in all our ways for the sake of Jesus.

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, especially the innocent men, women, and children. 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 now experiencing a 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.

On My Heart Imprint Your Image

Lutheran Service Book 422, Lutheran Worship 100, The Lutheran Hymnal 179



On my heart im - print Your im - age, Bless - ed Je - sus, King of grace,



That life's rich-es, cares, and plea-sures Nev - er may Your work e-rase;



Let the clear in - scrip-tion be: Je - sus, cru - ci - fied for me,



Is my life, my hope's foun - da - tion, And my glo - ry and sal - va - tion!

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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 First Sunday in Lent

March 7 – March 12, 2022

Introduction

Most modern forms of mediation turn a person inward. Biblical meditation turns a person outward toward what God has said and done especially what He has said and done through Jesus for our salvation.

Each Sunday has its own special theme directing us to meditate on God's word and actions. This theme is found in the Propers of the Day (the parts of the service that change week to week). From Advent through the Easter season these themes focus our attention on the life of Jesus from His birth to His death and resurrection. There is always much more in the propers than can be covered in any Sunday service. God willing, I will use the propers for Sunday to provide you with a devotion each day to help you meditate on what God has done for you.

Monday

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

Verse of the Day: Ephesians 6:11

- L** Put on the whole armor of God,
- C** that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

Introit Psalm 91:9–13; antiphon Psalm 91:15–16

- L** When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble;
I will rescue him and honor him.
- C** With long life I will satisfy him
and show him my salvation.
- L** Because you have made the Lord your dwelling place—
the Most High, who is my refuge—
- C** no evil shall be allowed to befall you,
no plague come near your tent.
- L** For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways.
- C** On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.
- L** You will tread on the lion and the adder;
the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.
- 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** When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble;
I will rescue him and honor him.
- C** **With long life I will satisfy him
and show him my salvation.**

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 91 makes two appearances in our lessons this week, here and as the appointed psalm. It is used because it is quoted and misapplied in an unsavory way by the devil while he tempted Jesus.

In this encounter with Satan, we are taught a valuable lesson. The devil is able to quote and misuse Scripture for his own purpose and advantage.

To entice Jesus into harming Himself, the devil quotes Psalm 91:11-12:

For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways.
On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.

Psalm 91 is a noble psalm of comfort and encouragement but its misapplication serves as a caution for us all.

One day, while serving as a vicar in Moline, Illinois, Pastor Haake attended a funeral for a woman who had been his long-time friend. When I inquired about it, he told this story that made a lasting impression on me.

The woman grew up with a strong faith. However, the church she attended moved farther and farther away from believing and teaching the Bible so she sought another church. Unfortunately, although the church she chose taught the Bible, it distorted the message.

While visiting the hospital one day, Pastor Haake met this woman leaving while he was on his way in. Eventually, he asked her why she was at the hospital. She responded, "If I had enough faith, I wouldn't be here!"

She continued by explaining that her church taught her to trust God for healing. Instead of seeking medical treatment, they told her that faith and prayer would heal her. Furthermore, they told her that going to the doctor indicated a lack of faith and would keep God from healing her. As a result, she delayed seeing her physician until her disease had progressed from being very treatable to an incurable stage.

The Bible teaches that all healing comes from God. He may choose to use miracles or medicine. Not seeking proper medical attention because it may indicate a lack of faith is similar to the devil tempting Jesus to throw Himself from the temple. A good response would have been the words of Jesus in Luke 4:10, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test."

Let us pray: Lord God, our heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of faith and healing. Grant that we would always put our trust in You and rightly use Your word. Move us to believe and teach the whole counsel of God as revealed in the Bible through Jesus Christ our Lord. 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 6:11

- L** Put on the whole armor of God,
C that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

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 God, You led Your ancient people through the wilderness and brought them to the promised land. Guide the people of Your Church that following our Savior we may walk through the wilderness of this world toward the glory of the world to come; 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 collect for this week reminds us of one aspect of Jesus' temptation that is often overlooked. The temptation of Jesus took place in the wilderness.

Moses received the Ten Commandments from God on Mount Sinai in the wilderness. He led the people of Israel for 40 years in the wilderness. John the Baptist was "a voice crying in the wilderness." Now, Jesus begins His ministry in the wilderness!

The Judean wilderness or desert is a spectacular place even today. It extends from Jerusalem to the Jordan River in the rain shadow of the Judean mountains. It is approximately 600 square miles of mountains, cliffs, chalk hills, and plateaus. There are seasonal riverbeds and canyons. Some of the canyons are 1,500 feet deep. It is an empty place with very little vegetation.

The Greek word translated as wilderness implies a place that is solitary, lonely, desolate, and uninhabited. At times, life can be a wilderness. You may have felt that you were wandering in a wilderness even in a crowded city. Loneliness can overtake us when we are deserted by friends and others. We experience the wilderness of life when we feel vulnerable to attack and there is no one to turn to.

Yet wandering in the wilderness can be a blessing. It can be a time of communion with God. Jesus sometimes withdrew to a desolate place to pray (Mark 1:35). Wandering in the wilderness can drive home the point that all of our help comes from God (Psalm 121:2). He has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5).

One day, all of our earthly wanderings will be over. Because Jesus was totally alone and forsaken on the cross, we are eternally blessed and made part of God's family of believers. Until the day when we are called home to live in the mansions of heaven, Jesus has promised to be with us always (Matthew 28:20).

Let us pray: O Lord God, You led Your ancient people through the wilderness and brought them to the promised land. Guide the people of Your Church that following our Savior we may walk through the wilderness of this world toward the glory of the world to come; 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 6:11

- L** Put on the whole armor of God,
C that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

Psalm 91:1–13

- L** ¹He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.
C ²**I will say to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”**
L ³For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence.
C ⁴**He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.**
L ⁵You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day,
C ⁶**nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.**
L ⁷A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.
C ⁸**You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked.**
L ⁹Because you have made the LORD your dwelling place—the Most High, who is my refuge—
C ¹⁰**no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent.**
L ¹¹For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.
C ¹²**On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.**
L ¹³You will tread on the lion and the adder;
C **the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.**

Kyrie

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

Psalm 91:2 contains this wonderful confession of faith: I will say to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.” Verses 3-13 give supporting reasons for the psalmist’s trust in the Lord.

He protects us from the snares of our enemies and from deadly pestilence. He sends His angels to guard us in all our ways.

Have you ever been in charge of small children? I recently watched a grandmother run after a small boy on a tricycle who was blissfully unaware of the danger ahead. As he joyfully pedaled into a perilous situation, he was unheeding of her insistent calling. Before he could be harmed, she used her “warp speed” to snatch him to safety. Without a second thought, the little boy happily continued on his journey.

It occurs to me that I go through life like this little boy blissfully riding his tricycle. Yes, I’m aware of many dangers that I face but I am convinced that many times I’m unaware of the perils surrounding me.

When we lived in Moline, Illinois, my wife taught third grade at Immanuel Lutheran School in Rock Island. At the time, we only had one vehicle. If I needed the car during the day, I would drive her to school in the morning and pick her up after work.

One afternoon, I was running late (as is often the case). I was on my way to Rock Island to pick her up when two large tractor-trailers blocked both lanes of the highway. I became frustrated and angry. These two inconsiderate drivers were making my tardiness worse. But then I had an insight that I have never forgotten. Could God be sending His angels in the form of these truckers to protect me from danger ahead?

I can count many occasions when God has miraculously intervened to rescue me from harm and possible death. However, I am convinced that He has shielded me from injury innumerable times when I have been blissfully unaware of His protection. I think the writer of Psalm 91 felt the same way.

God's ultimate protection comes when He delivers us from evil. Martin Luther describes it in his explanation of the Seventh Petition of the Lord's Prayer:

"We pray in this petition, in summary, that our Father in heaven would rescue us from every evil of body and soul, possessions and reputation, and finally, when our last hour comes, give us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven."

Here is his suggestion for beginning your day:

In the morning when you get up, make the sign of the holy cross and say:

In the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then, kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. If you choose, you may also say this little prayer:

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.

Then go joyfully to your work, singing a hymn, like that of the Ten Commandments, or whatever your devotion may suggest.

Luther's Morning Prayer from the Small Catechism

Thursday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Ephesians 6:11

L Put on the whole armor of God,

C that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

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 26:1–11

¹"When you come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance and have taken possession of it and live in it, ²you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from your land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket, and you shall go to the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name to dwell there. ³And you shall go to the priest who is in office at that time and say to him, 'I declare today to the LORD your God that I have come into the land that the LORD swore to our fathers to give us.' ⁴Then the priest shall take the basket from your hand and set it down before the altar of the LORD your God.

⁵"And you shall make response before the LORD your God, 'A wandering Aramean was my father. And he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number, and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. ⁶And the Egyptians treated us harshly and humiliated us and laid on us hard labor. ⁷Then we cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. ⁸And the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great

deeds of terror, with signs and wonders. ⁹And he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰And behold, now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground, which you, O LORD, have given me.’ And you shall set it down before the LORD your God and worship before the LORD your God. ¹¹And you shall rejoice in all the good that the LORD your God has given to you and to your house, you, and the Levite, and the sojourner who is among you.”

We all come from different backgrounds. Most of us are not of Jewish heritage. We are not the descendants of those to whom Moses was speaking in our Old Testament Lesson for this week. We are not bound by the ceremonial or civil laws given by Moses to the people. Martin Luther wrote an important piece about this titled, “How Christians Should Regard Moses” (Luther’s Works, Vol. 35, page 161).

However, we do benefit from reading these words of Moses from God to His Old Testament people. We still rejoice in all the good that the Lord has given to us.

Today is a good time to pause and review in your mind the good things given to you by God. Among them may be family and friends, a place to call home, and something to eat. Above them all is the gift of His only-begotten Son who died on the cross to save us from sin and death.

When we recount in our minds the great blessings that we receive from God, it is natural for us to pause and thank and praise God. As part of our thanksgiving, Christians are moved to give gifts to support the ministry of the Church. Our gifts allow the work of sharing the Gospel to flourish. When our mission and ministry thrive, more people recognize God’s goodness in Christ and receive the gift of forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

Let us pray: O Lord God, You led Your ancient people through the wilderness and brought them to the promised land where they received Your goodness day after day. Grant that we would also recognize and rejoice in all the good that You daily give to us through 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: Ephesians 6:11

L Put on the whole armor of God,

C that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

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.

Romans 10:8b–13

^{8b}“The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); ⁹because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ¹¹For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” ¹²For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Pop culture is fond of repeating two contradictory sayings. I observed the first one in a television commercial that declared a certain manufacturer cares about us because it recognizes that we are all different. I

must agree that there is some truth to this. We all have unique DNA. We all have been raised in different families. We all have different likes and dislikes, etc.

On the other hand, there is also a strong contingent of people who are firmly convinced that we are all the same. They believe that we would have a better society if we ended all distinctions between people. However, like anything else when this concept is pushed to the extreme it becomes absurd.

So which is it? Are we all different or are we all the same?

There are obvious differences between us that we ignore at our peril. We know that men and women often react differently to medications. Young people are more susceptible to environmental toxins than older people. Certain ethnic groups are more susceptible to diabetes, etc.

But in some ways, we are all the same. This is particularly true when it comes to God. Before God, we must admit that there is no distinction for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:22-23). Likewise, when it comes to salvation there is no distinction for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (Romans 8:13).

When it comes to salvation if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved (Romans 8:9-10)!

Let us rejoice in the equity of our sin and salvation. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28).

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for the equity that we have before You. We are saddened that we all have sinned but we rejoice that we are one in Christ under His cross and freely receive the salvation that He won for us there through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. 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: Ephesians 6:11

L Put on the whole armor of God,

C that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

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.

Hebrews 12:1-10 NIV

^{12:1} Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning

its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

The gradual for the Sundays in Lent is an adaptation of Hebrews 12:2 from the NIV. It's an appropriate theme for Lent and every day throughout the year.

For as long as I can remember, I have loved the Olympics. The training, skill, and determination displayed by the athletes are spectacular.

I was particularly taken by the cross-country skiers this year. Mile after mile (kilometer after kilometer for my Canadian friends) the athletes used every muscle in their bodies to propel themselves forward. One by one, as they crossed the finish line, each athlete collapsed in total exhaustion. It is hard for me to imagine the determination and focus it takes to compete in that sport at the Olympic level.

That image came to mind as I considered the gradual and its surrounding verses from Hebrews 12. Living the Christian life of faith is much like long-distance Olympic races.

I still try to regularly take long walks. In the beginning, I have enthusiasm for the walk and a spring in my step. But as the miles pass by, the enthusiasm drains away.

Over the years, I have met excited and enthusiastic believers who recently became Christians. Some might describe them as "on fire for the Lord" (which, by the way, is not an expression that I am fond of). I have heard it said by such people, "I'd rather burn out for the Lord than rust out!"

My answer is that God neither wants us to burn out nor to rust out. He wants us to finish the race. Unfortunately, over and over, I have witnessed the excitement and enthusiasm of new believers fade away so that over time, they no longer attend worship or participate in church life. May this never happen to us.

The writer of Hebrews encourages us to run an endurance race to the finish. We will encounter hardships and entanglements along the way. But fixing our eyes on Jesus, we run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Jesus could have abandoned the race. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He prayed that the cup of suffering would be removed. But He endured the cross for our sakes knowing the joy of salvation that He was securing for us.

I don't know where you are on your race to eternity. You may be at the beginning, the middle, or the end. Wherever you are, do not grow weary and lose heart. One day, the Lord will welcome you home with the words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for the race Jesus ran for our salvation. Grant that we would fix our eyes on Him as we run our earthly race of faith. Free us from the entanglements of sin so we may persevere to the end. When we begin to grow weary and lose heart, grant us the refreshment found in Your word and sacraments through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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