

The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany January 30, 2022

Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee Lutheran Service Book 803, Lutheran Worship N/A, The Lutheran Hymnal N/A



1 Joy - ful, joy - ful we a - dore Thee, God of glo - ry, Lord of love!
2 All Thy works with joy sur-round Thee, Earth and heav'n re - flect Thy rays,
3 Thou art giv - ing and for - giv - ing, Ev - er bless-ing, ev - er blest,



Hearts un - fold like flow'rs be - fore Thee, Prais-ing Thee, their sun a - bove.
Stars and an-gels sing a-round Thee, Cen - ter of un - bro-ken praise.
Well-spring of the joy of liv - ing, O - cean-depth of hap - py rest!



Melt the clouds of sin and sad - ness, Drive the gloom of doubt a - way.
Field and for - est, vale and moun-tain, Flow - 'ry mead-ow, flash-ing sea,
Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly Spir - it, Foun - tain - head of love di-vine:



Giv - er of im - mor - tal glad-ness, Fill us with the light of day.
Chant-ing bird, and flow - ing foun-tain Call us to re - joice in Thee.
Joy - ful, we Thy heav'n in - her - it! Joy - ful, we by grace are Thine!

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[For those who do not have *Lutheran Service Book*, an alternative hymn is:

I Am Trusting Thee, Lord Jesus Lutheran Service Book 729, Lutheran Worship 408, The Lutheran Hymnal 428]

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 10:16–18; antiphon Psalm 10:12

L Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up your hand;
forget not the afflicted.

C **The Lord is king forever and ever;
the nations perish from his land.**

L O Lord, you hear the desire of the afflicted;
you will strengthen their heart;

C **you will incline your ear to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed,
so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more.**

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 Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up your hand;
forget not the afflicted.

Kyrie

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

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

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

Gloria in Excelsis ~ Glory to God in the Highest

L Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

C **Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father: We worship You, we give You thanks, and we praise You for Your glory.**

L Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, You are Lord and God, You are the Lamb of God:

C **Lord Jesus Christ, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.**

L Lord Jesus Christ, You are seated at the right hand of the Father; and we ask you to graciously receive our prayer.

C **For You alone are the Holy One,
You alone are the Lord,
You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

Collect of the Day

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

C **Amen.**

Jeremiah 1:4–10

⁴Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

⁵“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
and before you were born I consecrated you;
I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

⁶Then I said, “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.” ⁷But the LORD said to me,

“Do not say, ‘I am only a youth’;
for to all to whom I send you, you shall go,
and whatever I command you, you shall speak.

⁸Do not be afraid of them,
for I am with you to deliver you,
declares the LORD.”

⁹Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me,

“Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.

¹⁰See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms,
to pluck up and to break down,
to destroy and to overthrow,
to build and to plant.”

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! Extol him, all peoples!

C For great is his steadfast love toward us, 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 71:1–6

L ¹In you, O LORD, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame!

C ²In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me; incline your ear to me, and save me!

L ³Be to me a rock of refuge, to which I may continually come;
you have given the command to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress.

C ⁴Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and cruel man.

L ⁵For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O LORD, from my youth.

C ⁶Upon you I have leaned from before my birth; you are he who took me from my mother's womb.
My praise is continually of you.

1 Corinthians 12:31b—13:13

^{31b}I will show you a still more excellent way.

¹If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

²And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

⁴Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ⁵or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. ⁷Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. ¹¹When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. ¹²For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

¹³So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Verse of the Day: Luke 4:43b

L Alleluia, Alleluia, I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia, for I was sent for this purpose. Alleluia.

Luke 4:31–44

L The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 4th chapter.

C Glory to You, O Lord.

³¹[Jesus] went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them on the Sabbath, ³²and they were astonished at his teaching, for his word possessed authority. ³³And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, ³⁴“Ha! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.” ³⁵But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent and come out of him!” And when the demon had thrown him down in their midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm. ³⁶And they were all amazed and said to one another, “What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!” ³⁷And reports about him went out into every place in the surrounding region.

³⁸And he arose and left the synagogue and entered Simon’s house. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they appealed to him on her behalf. ³⁹And he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her, and immediately she rose and began to serve them.

⁴⁰Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them. ⁴¹And demons also came out of many, crying, “You are the Son of God!” But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ.

⁴²And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them, ⁴³but he said to them, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.” ⁴⁴And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

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.

Son of God, Eternal Savior Lutheran Service Book 842, Lutheran Worship 394, The Lutheran Hymnal N/A



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



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



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



glo - ry, For Your own will ev - er plead: Fill us with Your
sil - ver, Yours the wealth of land and sea; We but stew - ards
toil - ing, By Your si - lent hours of pain, Quench our fe - vered
will - ing That Your peo - ple should be one, Grant, O grant our



love and pit - y, Heal our wrongs, and help our need.
of Your boun - ty Held in sol - emn trust will be.
thirst of plea - sure, Stem our self - ish greed of gain.
hope's fru - i - tion: Here on earth Your will be done.

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Devotional Thoughts:

One of my favorite writers was a gentleman named Jerry Pournelle. I first discovered him in Byte magazine. The more I learned about him, the more surprised I became at his wide-ranging accomplishments.

I once attended a large computer show at McCormick Place in Chicago called Comdex. Jerry Pournelle wrote about new computer developments that would soon affect common users and he attended these shows.

Leaving home, I told Valerie, "I hope that I meet Jerry Pournelle." Arriving at McCormick place, I descended an escalator. At the bottom, there stood Jerry Pournelle. I couldn't believe my eyes. He was on his way up the escalator before I could walk over to meet him. Fortunately, before the day was out, I was able to chat with him for a few minutes and tell him how much I admired his writing.

This all came to mind as I read these words from Luke 4:31, "[Jesus] went down to Capernaum." We know that Jesus left Nazareth in Luke 4:30. I thought, "I wonder what the journey from Nazareth to Capernaum looks like." It was then that I thought of Jerry Pournelle.

I recalled an article that he wrote about a new technology which was essentially a box that always knew exactly where it was. It relied on something called The Global Positioning System. We know it today as GPS. I thought to myself, "Why would we ever need that?"

I know of others that were skeptical about GPS as well. However, today virtually every phone and car is equipped with GPS. In addition, runners, golfers, and countless others use GPS technology in their activities. One of my favorite television shows features a surveyor with a GPS antenna on top of a staff that marks the location of objects with high precision. I have heard of farmers using tractors equipped with GPS to precisely fertilize, plant, and harvest their fields.

Without GPS or a good map, it would be difficult to navigate from Nazareth to Capernaum. You actually do go "down" to Capernaum. Nazareth is located 1,138 feet above sea level while Capernaum is on the Sea of Galilee at 680 feet below sea level. There is no direct route to Capernaum. This mountainous area has an abundance of twists and turns.

On His way, Jesus most likely passed through Cana where He had once changed water into wine. From there, He would have followed valleys taking Him through Magdala, the home of Mary Magdalene. Finally, He followed the shoreline until He reached Capernaum.

On this trip, He walked about 30 miles. He may have stayed in those towns along the way. We do know that He arrived in time to teach in the synagogue on the Sabbath. You can visit the remains of the 4th Century synagogue in Capernaum which is built upon the foundation of the one where Jesus taught.

When He was in Nazareth, Jesus taught about the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. We do not know what He taught in Capernaum but we do know that His teaching astonished the people because "His word possessed authority!"

Jesus followed up His teaching by casting out a demon! This utterly confounds the people who question and exclaim, "What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!"

So here's the problem. These people are in the dark. They haven't got a clue as to who is teaching in their synagogue. Ironically, the unclean demon knows exactly who Jesus is. He declares, "I know who you are—the Holy One of God." Later on, Luke reports that many demons cry out, "You are the Son of God!"

Such is the condition of humanity. In our lost and fallen state, we have no idea who Jesus really is.

It has been disconcerting for me to see so many in our nation become irreligious and opposed to Christianity. Yet, in reality, this has long been the case.

I have known atheists and irreligious people my whole life. I have been acquainted with them in my extended family. My father did not come to faith until after my parents were married. You may have experienced the same thing. I know many fellow believers who are distressed that their loved ones reject Jesus.

The 1960s were a similar time of tumult in our country. I recall when someone discovered that I intended to become a pastor, he asked, "Why? There won't be a church in 30 years!"

This darkness of unbelief and ignorance is the world that Jesus found when He began His ministry. Only by divine revelation can people learn to know the real Jesus as the Son of God! We all have a need for this epiphany.

I was once lost in Northwestern Ontario. It was early spring and I was hiking through thigh-deep snow with a friend. I had a map. He had a compass.

Following a nice lunch on the shore of a lake, my friend decided to take a shortcut back. We set off on a diagonal route through the wilderness that he calculated would bring us to where my car was parked. We trudged on, blazing a trail through the forest while the deep snow sapped my strength.

Soon, we came upon another lake! There was no lake on the map between us and the car! How did we miss it? Where was my car?

We angled back to the left hoping to intersect a logging road. The sun was low in the sky over my shoulder. After a while, my friend said, "We're going to have to retrace our steps and go back the way we came." Although I was a young man at the time, I know that I could never make it back that way before dark.

At that point, I would have given anything for "a box that always knew exactly where it was!" While there is more to the story, I can report that after much prayer, my friend found the car.

Epiphany is the season that reminds us of our spiritual ignorance. This applies to everyone. Without God intervening with His word, we will never know where we are.

Some people claim to be spiritual but not religious. This is just another way of saying that they have rejected God's word and His plan of salvation.

Through word and sacrament, the Holy Spirit has entered our lives revealed to us this ultimate spiritual truth; Jesus is the Son of God who came into the world to save us from sin, death, and the devil. There is no other way. Without Him, we remain hopelessly lost. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life! (John 14:6).

You know the way to something much more important than a car parked in the wilderness. God, by His Spirit, has opened your eyes. God's word is a lamp to your feet and a light to your path (Psalm 119:105). Your eyes have seen your salvation (Luke 2:30).

You know the narrow way of the cross, the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. God has granted this epiphany to you!

As we continue through the Epiphany season, it is a good time to ask yourself if there may be someone you know who needs this same epiphany. Is it possible that God will use you to rescue someone from wandering in the wilderness of sin?

God's word always speaks the truth of sin and grace to you. It always points to Jesus and His cross. It opens to us the kingdom of heaven! May we share it with others.

"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 Heavenly Father, thank You for revealing to us that Jesus is Your only-begotten Son. Grant us faith to believe that You sent Him so that we would have eternal life.

C Amen.

L Lord God, heavenly Father, Your Son went from place to place teaching in the synagogues of Galilee and Judea. Move us to be faithful in hearing Jesus and His teaching in our congregations.

C Amen.

L Lord God during this season of Epiphany, keep our eyes open to the truth of Your Word that we would see Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

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 the pandemic. As we witness this pandemic push our health care system to its limit, we ask for Your continued protection and grace to rest upon all who serve in the medical professions.

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 46



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!

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 Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

January 31 – February 5, 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: Luke 4:43b

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; Alleluia.
- C** Alleluia, Alleluia, for I was sent for this purpose. Alleluia.

Introit Psalm 10:16–18; antiphon Psalm 10:12

- L** Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up your hand;
forget not the afflicted.
- C** The Lord is king forever and ever;
the nations perish from his land.
- L** O Lord, you hear the desire of the afflicted;
you will strengthen their heart;
- C** you will incline your ear to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed,
so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more.
- 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** Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up your hand;
forget not the afflicted.

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.

One of the dangers of social media and talk shows on radio and television is the constant onslaught of pop psychology and misguided advice. One such example is the notion that we ought to “live in the present moment.”

Without much effort, I discovered “10 Tips to Start Living in the Present Moment”, “6 Ways to Live in the Moment”, and “The True Meaning of Living in the Moment.” The list goes on.

Like all dangerous advice, it contains an element of truth. It is important for us not to miss God’s present blessings by dwelling on the past or dreading the future. However, “living in the moment” is only helpful advice when life is going well. Life often consists of moments that are not noble or pleasant. The psalms are a great testimony to this. “Living in the moment” in those times can lead to hopelessness and despair.

Our introit for this week consists of the concluding verses of Psalm 10. The preceding verses describe moments that no one wants to live in or experience. Nevertheless, they are very real.

The “moments” of verses 1-11 are times of trouble when God seems far away. The wicked pursue the poor. Those who are greedy curse and renounce the Lord. There is deceit and oppression. It is a time of mischief and iniquity. The innocent are murdered. The helpless are crushed. How ridiculous to advise people experiencing these things to “live in the present moment.”

Rather, it is a time to live in hope for the future when God will arise and rescue the afflicted. He hears our desires and strengthens our hearts. He ultimately brings justice to the oppressed.

The last generation lived through the Depression and World War II. They witnessed unspeakable horrors. “Living in the present” was not viable advice.

President Roosevelt had many failings but he had a gift for bringing people out of their present despair and giving them hope for the future. He ended his famous Pearl Harbor “Date which will Live in Infamy” speech with these words: “With confidence in our armed forces, with the unbounding determination of our people, we will gain the inevitable triumph—so help us God.”

Whether he was sincere or not, FDR got it right. Our past, present, and future are only worth living with the help of God. God is “a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1).

Our introit reminds us that God rescues us from awful and appalling present circumstances. His ultimate rescue was carried out by His only-begotten Son on the cross. The success of His mission was displayed on Easter morning when Jesus rose from the dead. Through Him, we have the gift of eternal life.

Your present moments may be difficult and unpleasant but “Be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord” (Psalm 27:14).

Let us pray: Lord God, our heavenly Father, we often experience distress in life. When these times come, grant us faith to trust Your promise to rescue us at just the right time 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: Luke 4:43b

L	Alleluia, Alleluia, I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; Alleluia.
C	Alleluia, Alleluia, for I was sent for this purpose. Alleluia.

Kyrie

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

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

C Amen.

Sometimes things don't go according to plan—and that's a good thing.

At the end of one of our vacations, we were on a deadline to return home by Friday for a wedding rehearsal. We started out on Thursday and planned to drive cross-country through the night.

On the other side of Minneapolis, I realized that my plan was not going to work. We were just too exhausted to carry on. We found a hotel with a pool. Our children were able to swim and we would get a very early start the next day.

In the morning, we loaded the kids into the van. We were pulling a very old boat and trailer. I inspected our rig and was shocked to discover that one side of the trailer axle had become detached and the other side was just barely holding on. If we had continued through the night, I have no doubt we would have lost the axle. God had protected our family and possibly others by thwarting my plans.

I know it is easy to become frustrated when things do work out the way that you intended. I am often quick to complain when my plans go awry. However, it's important to remember that sometimes God changes our plans for a purpose.

Part of maturity is recognizing the dangers in our activities and taking proper precautions. However, none of us can be fully aware of the real dangers that surround us every day.

There are both physical and spiritual dangers. A wise person will recognize the need to seek God's strength and protection even from hidden dangers.

When your planning comes to naught, pause and remember that God may be protecting you from physical danger and spiritual temptation. Pray for the faith to say, "Not my will, but Thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

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

Wednesday – Candlemas: The Presentation of Jesus and the Purification of Mary

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

Psalm 84

L ¹How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!
C ²**My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD;
my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.**
L ³Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young, at your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God.
C ⁴**Blessèd are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise!**

- L** ⁵Blessèd are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion.
- C** ⁶**As they go through the Valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools.**
- L** ⁷They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion.
- C** ⁸**O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob!**
- L** ⁹Behold our shield, O God; look on the face of your anointed!
- C** ¹⁰**For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.**
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.
- L** ¹¹For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor.
 No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.
- C** ¹²**O LORD of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you!**

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 2:14–18

¹⁴Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. ¹⁶For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. ¹⁷Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

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

Luke 2:22–32

- L** The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 2nd chapter.
- C** Glory to You, O Lord.

²² When the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord

²³(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”) ²⁴and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.” ²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. ²⁷And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, ²⁸he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

- ²⁹“Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,
 according to your word;
³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation
³¹that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
 and for glory to your people Israel.”

L This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to You, O Christ.

Since I've already mentioned Jerry Pournelle this week, I was reminded of one of his sayings as I considered our meditation for today. It goes something like this: A Dark Age is not when society forgets how to do something. A Dark Age is when society forgets that something can be done! It seems that the Church has forgotten Candlemas.

Have you heard of Candlemas? If not, don't be dismayed. Few people have. In fact, I had been a pastor for more than ten years before I first learned of Candlemas. Imagine that! While it is still known in the Roman Catholic and Episcopal Churches, most American Protestants have never heard of it. I'm not surprised. Many American Protestants only celebrate Christmas and Easter.

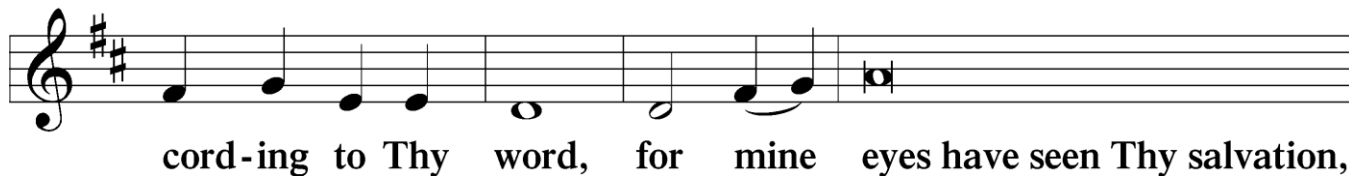
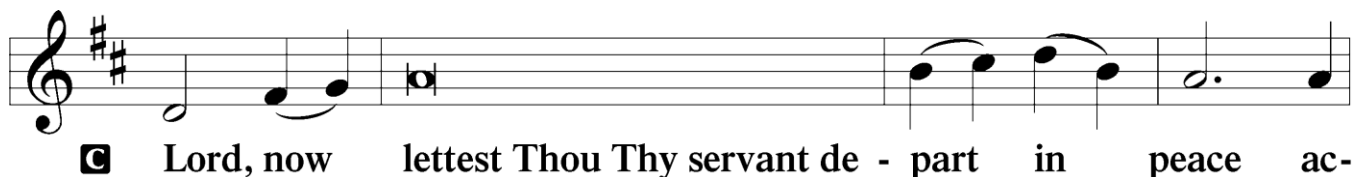
Today is 40 days after Christmas. It is the day that Mary, Joseph, and Jesus went to the temple. There they met Simeon and Anna. It has been celebrated in the Church since earliest times. An early Church bishop who died about A. D. 312 wrote a sermon for this celebration that we still have. It is 26 pages long! We also know of several other early Church Fathers from the 4th Century who have written sermons for today. A Christian woman named Egeria visited the Holy Land in the 380s. She reports that in Jerusalem, they celebrated this day "with the greatest honor." She goes on to say, "All things are done in order with great joy, just as at Easter." All the priests and the bishop preach on that day!

So what about the name Candlemas? Simeon's Song, also known as the Nunc Dimittis, gives us the answer. While holding Jesus in his hands, Simeon declares that his eyes have seen the Lord's salvation which is "a light to lighten the gentiles." To commemorate Jesus, the True Light, all the candles are lit at church and at home. Some churches have the custom of bringing candles to church from home to be blessed. Other churches hand out their previously used candle stubs for use in daily devotions at home, hence the name Candlemas.

While everyone else is celebrating Groundhog Day, pause and thank God that by faith your eyes have seen the Lord's salvation in the person of Jesus who is the light that lightens the gentiles. Remember the words of Jesus, "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14).

Like Simeon, we are ready to depart this life in peace. Our sins are forgiven. We have been made part of the family of God through the life, death, and resurrection of the baby born in Bethlehem.

Nunc Dimittis



a light to light - en the Gen - tiles and the glo - ry of Thy

peo - ple Is - ra - el. Glo - ry be to the Father and

to the Son and to the Ho - ly Ghost; as it was in the beginning,

is now, and ev - er shall be, world without end. A - men.

Thursday

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

Verse of the Day: Luke 4:43b

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia, for I was sent for this purpose. 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. |

Jeremiah 1:4–10

⁴Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

⁵“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
and before you were born I consecrated you;
I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

⁶Then I said, “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.” ⁷But the LORD said to me,

“Do not say, ‘I am only a youth’;
for to all to whom I send you, you shall go,
and whatever I command you, you shall speak.

⁸Do not be afraid of them,
for I am with you to deliver you,
declares the LORD.”

⁹Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me,

“Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.

¹⁰See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms,
to pluck up and to break down,
to destroy and to overthrow,
to build and to plant.”

This is a curious Old Testament reading for this week. The easy approach would be to say that it is a prophecy about the coming Messiah. But it isn't. Commentators don't see it that way. It is a report of Jeremiah's call into the prophetic office.

Jeremiah was given the unenviable task of warning Judah and calling them to repentance but they refused to listen and respond. No one wants a job description like his. Yet all of us must answer the Lord's call.

You may not think that you have the skills to accomplish the task. It may be something difficult and unpleasant to do. It may be a thankless job but when God calls we all must respond with a resounding, “Yes!”

Jeremiah's ministry lasted 40 years. He warned the people. But they continued in their sinful ways and Jeremiah witnessed the fulfillment of his prophecies with the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the nation to Babylon. Nevertheless, Jeremiah was faithful.

We live in a success-oriented culture. Churches are judged by their success in filling auditoriums. Yet Jeremiah is a witness to the false notion that God calls us to success. No, God calls us to faithfulness.

The people of Jeremiah's day believed that abandoning God's commandments and following false gods would lead to affluence and success. Jeremiah called them to repentance but they pursued prosperity rather than righteousness.

Jesus, too, was faithful in His obedience to God's call. Philippians 2:8 tells us that Jesus “being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

God will give you the skills and strength to accomplish the things that He calls you to do. If it's His will, He will grant you success. However, sometimes, like Jeremiah, we are called to faithfulness but are prevented from seeing success here on earth. Yet God looks at things from the perspective of eternity. When our earthly journey is complete, only a few of us will be successful in the eyes of the world, but we look forward to the Lord pronouncing His assessment with the words, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21 KJV).

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for calling us to be Your people. Grant us a full measure of Your Holy Spirit that we would always remain faithful to Your calling in all we do and say 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: Luke 4:43b

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia, for I was sent for this purpose. 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 12:31b—13:13

^{31b}I will show you a still more excellent way.

¹If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ²And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

⁴Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ⁵or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. ⁷Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. ¹¹When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. ¹²For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

¹³So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

First Corinthians 13 is known as the great love chapter of the Bible. (Although 1 John 4:7-21 is a wonderful companion passage about God's love.). It is often read at weddings, but the Apostle Paul did not write it for that occasion. He wrote it to correct the conflict and division happening in the Corinthian church.

When I read these words, I am reminded of how much I fail to love properly. All sin can be traced to a lack of love—a lack of love for God and a lack of love for our neighbors.

Every time I try to follow this blueprint for love, I fall flat on my face. Even in marriage, it is difficult to love in the way Paul describes. How beautiful marriage would be if husbands and wives lived up to this ideal. But Paul isn't talking about marriage. He's talking about our lives together in the Church!

Maybe it would be a good practice to start every meeting at church with a reading of 1 Corinthians 13! I have often quipped, "Pastors don't retire. They just quit going to meetings." I would gladly return to church meetings if they displayed the kind of love Paul talks about here!

It may be too much to ask that our meetings would be as loving as this. But there is nothing preventing you from displaying this loving attitude at church and in the world.

Let's conclude with John 4:7-2:

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 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. ¹² No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

¹³ By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶ So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. ¹⁷ By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. ²¹ And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for the love that is ours in Christ. Grant that we would be His agents of love in the Church and in the world. Amen.

Saturday

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

Gradual Psalm 117:1–2a; 96:8

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

Verse of the Day: Luke 4:43b

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia, for I was sent for this purpose. 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. |

Luke 4:38–39

³⁸ And he arose and left the synagogue and entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they appealed to him on her behalf. ³⁹ And he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her, and immediately she rose and began to serve them.

You may have noticed that I passed over these verses in our Devotional Thoughts on Sunday. It was hard for me to do because I always have a lot to say about them.

Peter's house is about halfway between the synagogue and the Sea of Galilee. It's an appropriate location for a fisherman. You can walk down to the shore from Peter's house and look back and see both the house and the synagogue. It is easy to imagine Jesus and Peter taking that walk on numerous occasions.

There is no absolute proof that the place identified as Peter's house was actually his but there is a high probability that it is. From earliest times it served as a house church and then an ancient octagonal church was

built over the original structure. It seems logical that no other house in Capernaum would be worthy of such recognition.

It is quite moving to stand in Capernaum and picture Jesus and His disciples walking the streets, talking with the people, and going about the activities of daily life. Fishing boats were pulled up on the shore. Nets were drying. People filled the market.

On that Sabbath day, Jesus left the synagogue and went back to Peter's house. Apparently, He was staying there with Peter and his family. It's hard to know for sure, but I can guess that they may have had a regular routine of refreshments following their time at the synagogue much like our Sunday dinner following church.

As they entered Peter's house, they may have expected the table to be set and a meal prepared but such was not the case. Peter's mother-in-law was sick. In fact, it seems that she was so sick that she had to stay in bed!

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all relate this event. Matthew and Luke dedicate two verses to it. Mark has three.

At first, it seems that Jesus healing Peter's mother-in-law is such a minor thing that some may wonder why it is even included in the Bible. It's sandwiched between two significant accounts of Jesus teaching and healing.

I am always fascinated by these small glimpses into Jesus' interactions with the ordinary and commonplace activities of life. They make Jesus' life on earth seem real to me. Some believe that the New Testament is simply a collection of myths. If this was the case, it doesn't make sense to include this minor detail in the events that happened that day in Capernaum. It only makes sense if these things actually happened and Matthew, Mark, and Luke were simply recording the facts.

Jesus attended the synagogue. There He taught in an amazing and astonishing way with authority. A man with an unclean demon appeared. He recognized Jesus as the Holy One of God. Jesus commanded the demon to leave the man and it left. That would certainly be enough but there is more.

Peter is married. His wife's mother is so sick that she cannot get out of bed. With compassion, Jesus pauses from His demanding day and heals her.

Not only did Jesus attend to the ordinary details of life, but He is also concerned with the ordinary details of our lives. He cares about our illnesses, disappointments, frustrations, and the like. There is nothing in life that is too great or small to bring to Him in prayer.

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for the concern that You have for our daily activities. Move us to live lives that are pleasing to You. Grant that faith and confidence to bring every detail of life to you in prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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