

Last Sunday of the Church Year November 21, 2021

No one knows the day or hour of Christ's return. He may come in the morning, or evening or midnight. Let us stay watchful by living in faith waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

A Time for Everything

¹For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

²a time to be born, and a time to die;

a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

³a time to kill, and a time to heal;

a time to break down, and a time to build up;

⁴a time to weep, and a time to laugh;

a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

⁵a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;

a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

⁶a time to seek, and a time to lose;

a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

⁷a time to tear, and a time to sew;

a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

⁸a time to love, and a time to hate;

a time for war, and a time for peace.

The end of the Church Year is a time for sober reflection and joyful expectation of Christ's return. There is a time for frivolity and merriment but this time of year is set aside for serious contemplation of our lives and the end times. As each day we see horrific news, we are reminded of the sinful world in which we live. We cling to Jesus' promise to return and bring an end to these evil days. We pray that by the working of the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament that we will persevere in faith to the end. May we always cling to the cross of Christ for hope and peace.



1 O wor - ship the King, all - glo - rious a - bove.
 2 O tell of His might, O sing of His grace,
 3 This earth, with its store of won - ders un - told,
 4 Thy boun - ti - ful care what tongue can re - cite?



O grate - ful - ly sing His pow'r and His love;
 Whose robe is the light, whose can - o - py space;
 Al - might - y, Thy pow'r hath found - ed of old,
 It breathes in the air, it shines in the light,



Our shield and de - fend - er, the An - cient of Days,
 His char - iots of wrath the deep thun - der - clouds form,
 Es - tab - lished it fast by a change - less de - cree,
 It streams from the hills, it de - scends to the plain,



Pa - vil - ioned in splen - dor and gird - ed with praise.
 And dark is His path on the wings of the storm.
 And round it hath cast, like a man - tle, the sea.
 And sweet - ly dis - tills in the dew and the rain.

5 Frail children of dust
 and feeble as frail,
 In Thee do we trust,
 nor find Thee to fail.
 Thy mercies, how tender,
 how firm to the end,
 Our maker, defender,
 redeemer, and friend!

6 O measureless Might,
 ineffable Love,
 While angels delight
 to hymn Thee above,
 Thy humbler creation,
 though feeble their lays,
 With true adoration
 shall sing to Thy praise.

Public domain

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 39:4–5a, 7–8, 12a; antiphon 2 Peter 3:13b NIV

L We are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth,
the home of righteousness.

C O Lord, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days;
let me know how fleeting I am!

L Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths,
and my lifetime is as nothing before you.

C And now, O Lord, for what do I wait?
My hope is in you.

L Deliver me from all my transgressions.
Do not make me the scorn of the fool!

C Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry;
hold not your peace at my tears!

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 We are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth,
the home of righteousness.

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: Lord Jesus Christ, so govern our hearts and minds by Your Holy Spirit that, ever mindful of Your glorious return, we may persevere in both faith and holiness of living; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C** Amen.

Isaiah 51:4–6

- ⁴“Give attention to me, my people,
and give ear to me, my nation;
for a law will go out from me,
and I will set my justice for a light to the peoples.
- ⁵My righteousness draws near,
my salvation has gone out,
and my arms will judge the peoples;
the coastlands hope for me,
and for my arm they wait.
- ⁶Lift up your eyes to the heavens,
and look at the earth beneath;
for the heavens vanish like smoke,
the earth will wear out like a garment,
and they who dwell in it will die in like manner;
but my salvation will be forever,
and my righteousness will never be dismayed.

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

Gradual Revelation 7:14; Psalm 84:5

- L** These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation.
- C** They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
- L** Blessèd are those whose strength is in you,
- C** in whose heart are the highways to Zion.

Psalm 93

- L** ¹The LORD reigns; he is robed in majesty; the LORD is robed; he has put on strength as his belt.
Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved.
- C** ²Your throne is established from of old; you are from everlasting.
- L** ³The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their roaring.
- C** ⁴Mightier than the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea,
the LORD on high is mighty!
- L** ⁵Your decrees are very trustworthy;
- C** holiness befits your house, O Lord, forevermore.

Jude 20–25

²⁰But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; ²¹keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. ²²And have mercy on those who doubt; ²³save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

²⁴Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ²⁵to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Verse of the Day: Revelation 22:13

L Alleluia, Alleluia. I am the Alpha and the Omega, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. The first and the last, the beginning and the end. Alleluia.

Mark 13:24–37

L The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 13th chapter.

C Glory to You, O Lord.

²⁴“In those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, ²⁵ and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶ And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷ And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

²⁸ “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰ Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³² “But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴ It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. ³⁵ Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the cock crows, or in the morning— ³⁶ lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. ³⁷ And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”

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.



1 "Wake, a - wake, for night is fly - ing," The watch - men on the
 2 Zi - on hears the watch-men sing - ing, And all her heart with
 3 Now let all the heav'ns a - dore Thee, Let saints and an - gels



heights are cry - ing; "A - wake, Je - ru - sa - lem, a - rise!"
 joy is spring - ing; She wakes, she ris - es from her gloom.
 sing be - fore Thee With harp and cym - bals' clear - est tone.



Mid - night hears the wel - come voic - es And at the thrill - ing
 For her Lord comes down all - glo - rious, The strong in grace, in
 Of one pearl each shin - ing por - tal, Where, join - ing with the



cry re - joic - es: "Oh, where are ye, ye vir - gins wise?
 truth vic - to - rious; Her star is ris'n, her light is come.
 choir im - mor - tal, We gath - er round Thy ra - diant throne.



The Bride - groom comes, a - wake! Your lamps with glad - ness take!
 Now come, Thou Bless - ed One, Lord Je - sus, God's own Son,
 No eye has seen the light, No ear has heard the might



Al - le - lu - ia! With brid - al care Your - selves pre - pare
 Hail! Ho - san - na! We en - ter all The wed - ding hall
 Of Thy glo - ry; There - fore will we E - ter - nal - ly



To meet the Bride - groom, who is near."
 To eat the Sup - per at Thy call.
 Sing hymns of praise and joy to Thee!

Devotional Thoughts:

I drove past a church today with an interesting message on their digital sign. At first, the sign read, "Climate Change." There were no other words on the sign. As planned, it caught my attention. Since the sign is at an intersection with a four-way stop, I was able to contemplate it for a moment. Then, as I was watching, a message gradually appeared at the bottom of the sign. It read, "Is a SOUL issue."

I'm not exactly sure why this message was on their sign. Since this is a church that I have known to champion trendy social issues, I suspect that they wanted to say that climate change is a spiritual issue and stopping or slowing climate change is a religious and moral imperative.

As is so often the case, I doubt that anyone will point out the irony. They chose to display a message about climate change on an electronic sign that increases their carbon footprint.

However, the message on this sign highlights something about human nature. We are inherently concerned about the end of creation.

Most of us know that in the 1950s and 60s, people were afraid of nuclear annihilation. One Lutheran church was so concerned that they equipped their parsonage with a nuclear fallout shelter.

In the 1970s, some people were afraid of global cooling and a new ice age. I know that we are tempted to snicker at such a thought. However, in May, a prestigious public radio station published an article suggesting that global warming could lead to a new ice age.

While it is often exciting to speculate about such matters, I'm really not interested in the debate. The truth is that creation will one day come to an end. Jesus speaks about it in the Gospel lesson for today.

When will this happen? Jesus answers that question, too. He says, "Concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

Could global warming or cooling be signs of the end? Could nuclear weapons or a deadly virus be signs of the end? Yes, indeed, they may be. But God has reserved for Himself the right to end creation. The important thing is to be prepared. Jesus says, "Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come."

How can we be prepared? For the young Luther, it meant entering a monastery and learning to deprive himself of physical comforts. It meant following the constant discipline of being a monk.

But that was all for nothing. No matter how hard he tried, nothing he did would make him holy enough to meet the Holy Creator of All.

Is climate change a soul issue? You can decide for yourself. However, no matter how righteous you are on environmental or social issues, it will never be enough to face the end of creation with confidence.

The only way to be awake and ready for the end of the world is to follow the directions given by the Apostle Peter on the first Pentecost. He concluded His sermon with these words, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36). The people were cut to the heart. They asked Peter, "What shall we do?" He responded, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."

On this last Sunday of the Church Year, we contemplate the end of creation and the end of time. For those who care to look, there are signs of the coming end and Christ's return. Don't be caught off guard. Be awake! Be aware of sin. Repent. Live by faith. Trust that God has sent Jesus to pay for your sins and that in the end, He will come and take you to live with Him in perfect joy for all eternity.

"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 Most merciful God and Father, give Your people throughout the world Your grace to wait patiently for our Lord's return and grant us faith to endure to the end.

C Amen.

L Heavenly Father, You know all our anxieties and fears as we experience difficult times. Grant us faith to call upon You in times of trouble and to cast every care upon You. According to Your will, give us peaceful and quiet hearts that we may firmly trust in the mercy You have shown to us in Christ Jesus.

C Amen.

L O Lord God, thank You for Your daily presence. We know that our times and seasons are under Your control. With each passing day, as Christ's return draws ever closer, grant us faith to commend ourselves, body and soul, into your gracious hands through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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 again experience an increase in infections, we ask for Your continued protection and grace.

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.



1 From all that dwell be - low the skies Let the Cre - a - tor's
 2 E - ter - nal are Thy mer - cies, Lord; E - ter - nal truth at -
 3 All praise to God the Fa - ther be, All praise, e - ter - nal



praise a - rise; Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
 tends Thy Word. Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
 Son, to Thee. Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!



Let the Re - deem - er's name be sung Through ev - 'ry land by
 Thy praise shall sound from shore to shore Till suns shall rise and
 Whom with the Spir - it we a - dore For - ev - er and for -



ev - 'ry tongue. Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
 set no more. Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
 ev - er - more: Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
 Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
 Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

The Church Year

The majority of Christians follow a worship calendar known as The Church Year. Unfortunately, it is foreign to many American Protestants who have forgotten or rejected their connection to the Church throughout history.

The Church Year follows a rhythm of focusing half of the year on the life of Christ and half a year on the life of the Church (or Christian growth). This discipline is helpful in keeping individual pastors or churches from becoming one-dimensional in their spiritual lives. It is also helpful for Christians throughout the world to express their unity through their weekly sharing of the same lessons from God's Word.

We are at a turning point of The Church Year today. The Church Year ends with our focus on the return of Christ at the end of the age. Today, all around the world Christians are rejoicing in the blessed anticipation of seeing their Savior return with all of His angels to bring a culmination to all of the promises of Holy Scripture.

Next Sunday we begin anew our annual celebration of Advent with its dual focus on both the first and second coming of Christ. We will again hear the cry of John the Baptist. We will join Isaiah in joyful anticipation. We will overhear Gabriel's grace-filled greeting to Mary as she learns that she will be the mother of our Savior and Lord.

About 50 years ago the series of lessons read on Sunday was reformed to include more Scripture than had previously been read in the churches. The one-year lectionary was replaced with a three-year cycle of lessons that reflect the Church Year more broadly from all four Gospels. Today we conclude Series B in this cycle which as you may have noticed draws most of the Gospel lessons from St. Mark. Next Sunday we begin Series C. The Gospel According to St. Luke will provide most of our Gospel lessons for the coming Church Year.

A summary of the Church Year is found on page x in Lutheran Service Book. The lessons appointed for Series C are found on page xviii. Since Easter is the key day around which the Church Year pivots, the Epiphany Season is shortened or lengthened each year. The dates of Easter until the year 2050 are found on page xxiii.

While you are exploring the introductory pages of the Lutheran Service Book, turn to page xxiv and review the glossary of worship terminology. The Church has used most of the terms defined on those pages for over a thousand years. Sports fans and hobbyists, professionals, and specialists become familiar with the distinctive vocabulary for their chosen interests. Christians who seek to be more than just casual observers will also want to explore the richness of our historic vocabulary of worship and worship practices.

Pastor Quardokus

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

Last Sunday of the Church Year

November 22 –27, 2021

Introduction

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

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

Monday

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

Introit Psalm 39:4–5a, 7–8, 12a; antiphon 2 Peter 3:13b NIV

- L** We are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth,
the home of righteousness.
- C** O Lord, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days;
let me know how fleeting I am!
- L** Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths,
and my lifetime is as nothing before you.
- C** And now, O Lord, for what do I wait?
My hope is in you.
- L** Deliver me from all my transgressions.
Do not make me the scorn of the fool!
- C** Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry;
hold not your peace at my tears!
- 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** We are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth,
the home of righteousness.

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. |

Is there an unwelcome activity from your childhood that now you appreciate as a blessing? Perhaps you learned the discipline of doing chores from your mother. Or maybe it was the importance of work before play.

At the time, I wasn't particularly thrilled with helping my dad do automotive repair. It was my job to hand him tools like a surgery room nurse attending to a doctor. I sometimes was required to hold a trouble-light so he could see but I never did it right. However, through helping him, I learned the bravery necessary to tackle difficult jobs and the importance of carefully attending to details.

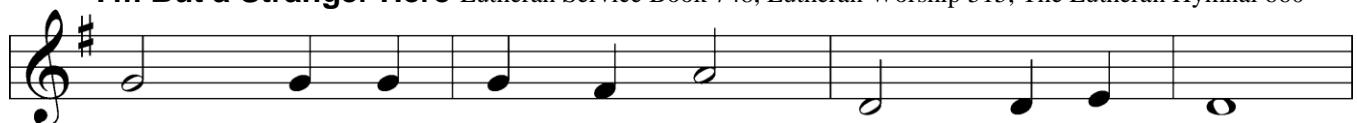
Another hidden blessing from my childhood comes as a surprise to me as an adult. As a student in a Lutheran school, I was often required to sing at funerals. Upon reflection it was a good thing that I first experienced funerals for people that I didn't know. When the time came, I was more equipped to deal with funerals for loved ones.

In those days, it seemed that every funeral included the hymn, "I'm But a Stranger Here." Upon reflection, as an adult, this hymn was a valuable lesson for me to learn. This sinful and corrupt world is not my permanent dwelling. As the antiphon from 2 Peter states in our introit, "We are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness."

Our time here on earth is fleeting. We need to be aware of this and rightly number our days. Compared to eternity, our lifetimes are a few handbreadths.

The shortness of our time here on earth should move us to put our hope in the Lord. While we wait for that day, Peter encourages us to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." He is the one who saved us from sin, death, and the devil! We look forward to living forever with Him in the home of righteousness.

I'm But a Stranger Here Lutheran Service Book 748, Lutheran Worship 515, The Lutheran Hymnal 660



1 I'm but a strang - er here, Heav'n is my home;
2 What though the tem - pest rage, Heav'n is my home;
3 There - fore I mur - mur not, Heav'n is my home;



Earth is a des - ert drear, Heav'n is my home.
Short is my pil - grim - age, Heav'n is my home;
What - e'er my earth - ly lot, Heav'n is my home;



Dan - ger and sor - row stand Round me on ev - 'ry hand;
And time's wild win - try blast Soon shall be o - ver - past;
And I shall sure - ly stand There at my Lord's right hand;



Heav'n is my fa - ther - land, Heav'n is my home.
I shall reach home at last, Heav'n is my home.
Heav'n is my fa - ther - land, Heav'n is my home.

Tuesday

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

Verse of the Day: Mark 13:13b

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia.
C The one who endures to the end will be saved. 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: Lord Jesus Christ, so govern our hearts and minds by Your Holy Spirit that, ever mindful of Your glorious return, we may persevere in both faith and holiness of living; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
C Amen.

We once lived on a small hill. From our back deck, we could look down on rooftops.

One day, from that vantage point, we noticed a flurry of activity at a home behind us. Fire trucks were blocking the road and we could see smoke billowing from the windows. Soon, firefighters placed large fans in the doorways to evacuate smoke from the house.

We were naturally worried for the safety of the occupants but our concerns were soon eased. We learned that a young gentleman living in the house had left home for a brief errand. Unfortunately, he left potatoes boiling on the stove. The water soon boiled away in his absence and the house filled with smoke from burnt potatoes.

When the smoke cleared all would have been fine except for one thing. It turned out that his house was filled with stolen goods that he was selling.

Certain things in life are so unimportant that we can ignore them. In fact, we ought to not be overly distracted by insignificant details when essential matters are at hand. But some things are too important to ignore. Our neighbor learned the hard way that you should never ignore a boiling pot on your stove (especially if you are a thief).

In worship class at the seminary, I learned to place my right thumb over my left thumb to make a cross while praying. I'm sure that this is something that I can safely ignore. However, it is important never to ignore the reality of Christ's return. We do that to our eternal peril. Our mindfulness of Christ's return should lead us to cherish and nourish our faith.

Let us pray: Lord Jesus Christ, so govern our hearts and minds by Your Holy Spirit that, ever mindful of Your glorious return, we may persevere in both faith and holiness of living; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Wednesday

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

Verse of the Day: Mark 13:13b

L Alleluia, Alleluia.

C The one who endures to the end will be saved. Alleluia.

Psalm 93

L ¹The LORD reigns; he is robed in majesty; the LORD is robed; he has put on strength as his belt.
Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved.

C ²**Your throne is established from of old; you are from everlasting.**

L ³The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their roaring.

C ⁴**Mightier than the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea,
the LORD on high is mighty!**

L ⁵Your decrees are very trustworthy;

C holiness befits your house, O Lord, forevermore.

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 trend in America is a growing belief that no one can tell me what to do. States believe that they don't need to enforce federal laws that they don't like. Cities insist that the state can't tell them what to do. Individuals believe that they don't need to comply with restrictions placed upon them to shorten the pandemic. And so it goes.

Throughout most of history, people understood that our social structures require levels of authority. Children are to obey their parents. Employers give directions to employees, etc. And, until the rise of democracy, subjects obeyed the monarch.

It is in this context that we read the first words of Psalm 93, "The Lord reigns!" Sinful people do not want a king. Sinful people don't want to live by rules. The ultimate consequence of sin is anarchy. But when God reigns all of the consequences of sin are undone!

Some time back, I learned from a Bible scholar that in the Old Testament the Gospel is often found in the words, "The Lord reigns." That is why at the beginning of His ministry, the first words of Jesus recorded by Mark are: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15).

When God reigns, everything is the way it ought to be. When God reigns in our hearts, we live holy and righteous lives. When the angels announced to the shepherds, "Peace on earth. Goodwill toward men," they were saying that the Lord's reign was beginning through the babe born in Bethlehem.

God's reign comes to us here on earth by grace through faith for Christ's sake. God's reign is completely and fully restored when lamb and lion lie down together and we dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Thy kingdom come. Amen.

Prayer: O God the Father, in loving-kindness You sent Your only-begotten Son to be our savior. We thank You that for His sake You have given us pardon and peace. We ask You always to rule our hearts and minds by Your Holy Spirit that we may be enabled constantly to serve You; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Thursday – Thanksgiving Day

(For a longer Thanksgiving Day service with three readings and five hymns go to
<http://quardokus.com/homeworship/Thanksgiving-25November2021.pdf>)

Come, Ye Thankful People, Come Lutheran Service Book 892, Lutheran Worship 495, The Lutheran Hymnal 574



1 Come, ye thank-ful peo - ple, come; Raise the song of har-vest home.
2 All the world is God's own field, Fruit un - to His praise to yield;
3 For the Lord, our God, shall come And shall take His har-vest home,
4 E - ven so, Lord, quick - ly come To Thy fi - nal har-vest home;



All be safe - ly gath - ered in Ere the win - ter storms be - gin;
Wheat and tares to - geth - er sown, Un - to joy or sor - row grown.
From His field shall in that day All of - fens - es purge a - way,
Gath - er Thou Thy peo - ple in, Free from sor-row, free from sin,



God, our mak - er, doth pro-vide For our wants to be sup-plied.
First the blade and then the ear, Then the full corn shall ap - pear.
Give His an - gels charge at last In the fire the tares to cast,
There, for - ev - er pu - ri - fied, In Thy gar - ner to a - bide:



Come to God's own tem - ple, come; Raise the song of har-vest home.
Lord of har - vest, grant that we Whole-some grain and pure may be.
But the fruit - ful ears to store In His gar - ner ev - er - more.
Come with all Thine an - gels, come, Raise the glo - rious har-vest home.

Public domain

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

C Amen

Matthew 28:19

P O Lord, open my lips,

C and my mouth shall declare Your praise.

Psalms 51:15

Psalms 95:1-7

L Oh come, let us sing to the Lord;

C let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

L Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;

C let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

L For the Lord is a great God,

C and a great King above all gods.
L In his hand are the depths of the earth;
C the heights of the mountains are his also.
L The sea is his, for he made it,
C and his hands formed the dry land.
L Oh come, let us worship and bow down;
C let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!
L For he is our God,
C and we are the people of his pasture,
 and the sheep of his hand.
 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.

Luke 17:11-19

¹¹On the way to Jerusalem [Jesus] was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. ¹²And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance ¹³and lifted up their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." ¹⁴When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. ¹⁵Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; ¹⁶and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷Then Jesus answered, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine?" ¹⁸Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" ¹⁹And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."

Thanksgiving is one of my favorite holidays. Maybe it is for this reason that when I actively served as a pastor, I annually held a Thanksgiving Day service on Thanksgiving Day! After all, that's the purpose of the day.

However, as you know, few people see Thanksgiving as a day for giving thanks! For example, over the years, many have chosen to call it Turkey Day. It has become "a day for family" or "a day for sports." All of those are fine, as long as we never forget that it is primarily a day for giving thanks to God!

Some pastors downplay Thanksgiving because it is not part of the historic Church Year. However, Thanksgiving, as well as Christmas and Easter, are firmly rooted in our Christian heritage.

There was a time when all children learned in school that what we call "The First Thanksgiving" was observed by the Pilgrims after their first harvest in the New World in October 1621. It was a three-day feast attended by 53 Pilgrims and 90 Wampanoag.

But of course, this wasn't the real "First Thanksgiving." The Bible is filled with people who turned to God in thanksgiving for all of their blessings.

Many Christians are aware of Psalm 50:15, "Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me." But we should also remember the previous verse, "Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High" (Psalm 50:14 KJV).

Some of our most sincere and heartfelt thanks come when we recognize that God has delivered us from trouble! That was the case for the Pilgrims. Almost half of the original pilgrims died during their first winter in the new world. Now, they recognized the goodness of God in the bounty of their harvest. As faithful Christians, they were compelled to offer thanks to God!

In the Gospel reading for Thanksgiving Day, we learn of ten lepers who were sentenced to a life of misery and distress because of their disease. They cried out to Jesus for mercy. In His love for them, Jesus healed them all from the unimaginable distress of leprosy.

All of them turned to Jesus for help. Only one gave thanks. Unfortunately, that seems to be about right.

God has abundantly blessed us, too. We are all compelled to cry out, "Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever" (KJV). Unfortunately, sometimes it seems that only one in ten do.

God has delivered us from a greater trouble than hunger or leprosy. He has delivered us from sin and death! Our hearts are so overwhelmed by His compassion that we not only thank Him one day a year but we thank Him every day.

On this Thanksgiving Day, it is also appropriate that we thank God for every blessing that He has granted to our nation. We are not the first generation to recognize the shortcomings of our country. But sometimes it seems as though we are becoming the first generation to forget the blessings of living in the “home of the brave and the land of the free.”

As a country, we would do well to read again George Washington’s proclamation of the first national Thanksgiving Day in 1789—the first year of our constitutional republic. It begins with these words, “It is the duty of all Nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey his will, to be grateful for his benefits, and humbly to implore his protection and favor.”

(I have included His entire proclamation below.)

L Let us Pray. Lord God, heavenly Father, through whose kindness we have again received the fruits of the earth in their season, grant us ever to rejoice in Your mercy that neither prosperity nor adversity may drive us from Your presence; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and rules with You the Holy Spirit, for whose blessed peace we give thanks.

C Amen.

We Praise You, O God Lutheran Service Book 785, Lutheran Worship 494, The Lutheran Hymnal 568



1 We praise You, O God, our Re - deem - er, Cre - a - tor;
2 We wor - ship You, God of our fa - thers, we bless You;
3 With voic - es u - nit - ed our prais - es we of - fer



In grate - ful de - vo - tion our trib - ute we bring.
Through tri - al and tem - pest our guide You have been.
And glad - ly our songs of thanks - giv - ing we raise.



We lay it be - fore You, we kneel and a - dore You;
When per - ils o'er - take us, You will not for - sake us,
With You, Lord, be - side us, Your strong arm will guide us.



We bless Your ho - ly name, glad prais - es we sing.
And with Your help, O Lord, our strug - gles we win.
To You, our great Re - deem - er, for - ev - er be praise!

Friday

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

Verse of the Day: Mark 13:13b

L Alleluia, Alleluia.
C The one who endures to the end will be saved. 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.

Isaiah 51:4–6

⁴“Give attention to me, my people,
and give ear to me, my nation;
for a law will go out from me,
and I will set my justice for a light to the peoples.
⁵My righteousness draws near,
my salvation has gone out,
and my arms will judge the peoples;
the coastlands hope for me,
and for my arm they wait.
⁶Lift up your eyes to the heavens,
and look at the earth beneath;
for the heavens vanish like smoke,
the earth will wear out like a garment,
and they who dwell in it will die in like manner;
but my salvation will be forever,
and my righteousness will never be dismayed.

Our clothes drier died today. Or technically, the heater element died. If you have experience with household appliances, you know that this will eventually happen to every device that you own. In reality, it will happen to everything. This is the message of Isaiah 51:6. There is no avoiding it.

It’s frightening to realize that the heavens will vanish like smoke and the earth will wear out like a garment. It is even more sobering to recognize that all who dwell on the earth “will die in like manner.”

This is the message of the end of the Church Year. But that is only half the story. Isaiah 51:6 concludes with these words: “but my salvation will be forever, and my righteousness will never be dismayed.”

The sobering thought of our mortality should cause us to turn to God. Our present experience of creation will one day end but God’s salvation lasts forever.

He has provided us with His salvation in Jesus Christ. Jesus won it for us on the cross. We don’t deserve it but He offers it to us for free. We receive it by faith. It is all pure grace.

Now, more than ever, it is time to give our attention to God. It is time to put an end to the allure of temporal things and focus on eternity.

Prayer: O Lord, grant that we would give our attention to You. Move us to listen to Your word. Cause us to put our hope in You for we know that no one who trusts in You will ever be dismayed. Thank You that you grant us salvation that lasts forever through 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 Revelation 7:14; Psalm 84:5

L These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation.
C They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
L Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
C in whose heart are the highways to Zion.

Verse of the Day: Mark 13:13b

L Alleluia, Alleluia.
C The one who endures to the end will be saved. 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.

Jude 20–25

²⁰But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; ²¹keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. ²²And have mercy on those who doubt; ²³save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

²⁴Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ²⁵to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen

Jude is a short book written for Christians threatened by false teachers. Our reading consists of six verses of encouragement during difficult times.

I don't know anyone who doubts that we are living in difficult times. Most of us have enough to eat, clothes to wear, and a place to sleep. Our difficult times are not physical but spiritual.

Just as in the days of St. Jude, we are being assailed on every side by false notions concerning morality and truth. Jude's words of encouragement and advice are just as relevant today as they were the day he wrote them.

First, in these difficult times, it is wise for us to build ourselves up in the faith. Now is not the time to take faith for granted.

God has given us the tools to build our faith, His word and sacraments. Through these means of grace, the Holy Spirit "calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith" (Luther's Small Catechism-The explanation of the third article of the Apostles' Creed).

Second, it is wise for us to pray. Christians are given the privilege of coming to their loving Father with every concern of body and soul. We are not required to face life's challenges without help from above.

Finally, remember that the people around us are also struggling during these difficult times. As God's people, we are called to be people of mercy. There are those around us who doubt or have fallen into sin. We have the privilege of sharing with them God's love for us in Jesus. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Prayer: O Lord God, You are able to keep us from stumbling. Grant us faith to trust in You during these difficult times until when at the end we will stand before Your throne in the presence of Your Glory with great joy, through our Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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George Washington's Thanksgiving Proclamation 1789

By the President of the United States of America, a Proclamation.

Whereas it is the duty of all Nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey his will, to be grateful for his benefits, and humbly to implore his protection and favor-- and whereas both Houses of Congress have by their joint Committee requested me to recommend to the People of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty God especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness.

Now therefore I do recommend and assign Thursday the 26th day of November next to be devoted by the People of these States to the service of that great and glorious Being, who is the beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be-- That we may then all unite in rendering unto him our sincere and humble thanks--for his kind care and protection of the People of this Country previous to their becoming a Nation--for the signal and manifold mercies, and the favorable interpositions of his Providence which we experienced in the course and conclusion of the late war--for the great degree of tranquility, union, and plenty, which we have since enjoyed--for the peaceable and rational manner, in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions of government for our safety and happiness, and particularly the national One now lately instituted--for the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed; and the means we have of acquiring and diffusing useful knowledge; and in general for all the great and various favors which he hath been pleased to confer upon us.

and also that we may then unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of Nations and beseech him to pardon our national and other transgressions-- to enable us all, whether in public or private stations, to perform our several and relative duties properly and punctually--to render our national government a blessing to all the people, by constantly being a Government of wise, just, and constitutional laws, discreetly and faithfully executed and obeyed--to protect and guide all Sovereigns and Nations (especially such as have shewn kindness unto us) and to bless them with good government, peace, and concord--To promote the knowledge and practice of true religion and virtue, and the encrease of science among them and us--and generally to grant unto all Mankind such a degree of temporal prosperity as he alone knows to be best.

Given under my hand at the City of New York the third day of October in the year of our Lord 1789.

Go: Washington