

The Last Sunday of the Church Year November 22, 2020

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 is a time set aside for serious contemplation of our lives and the end times. As we see horrific news each day, the sinful world in which we live falls upon us. 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.

Thine Forever, God of Love Lutheran Service Book 687, Lutheran Worship 256, The Lutheran Hymnal 338
(**Alternate: Lift High the Cross** Lutheran Service Book 837, Lutheran Worship 311, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a)



1 Thine for - ev - er, God of love! Hear us from Thy throne a - bove;
2 Thine for - ev - er! Oh, how blest They who find in Thee their rest!
3 Thine for - ev - er, Lord of Life! Shield us through our earth - ly strife.
4 Thine for - ev - er! Shep-herd, keep These Thy frail and trem-bling sheep;
5 Thine for - ev - er! Thou our guide, All our wants by Thee sup - plied,



Thinefor - ev - er may we be Here and in e - ter - ni - ty!
Sav - ior, guard - ian, heav'n-ly friend, O de - fend us to the end!
Thou, the life, the truth, the way, Guide us to the realms of day.
Safe a - lone be - neath Thy care, Let us all Thy good-ness share.
All our sins by Thee for-giv'n; Lead us, Lord, from earth to heav'n.

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

L In keeping with his promise 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!
For I am a sojourner with you, a guest, like all my fathers.

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 In keeping with his promise 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: Eternal God, merciful Father, You have appointed Your Son as judge of the living and the dead. Enable us to wait for the day of His return with our eyes fixed on the kingdom prepared for Your own from the foundation of the world; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Ezekiel 34:11–16, 20–24

¹¹“For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. ¹²As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness.

¹³And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. ¹⁴I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land.

There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD. ¹⁶I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice. . . .

²⁰“Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them: Behold, I, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. ²¹Because you push with side and shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns, till you have scattered them abroad, ²²I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep. ²³And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. ²⁴And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken.

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 95:1–7a

- L** ¹Oh come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!
C ²**Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!**
L ³For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.
C ⁴**In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also.**
L ⁵The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.
C ⁶**Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!**
L ⁷For he is our God,
C **and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.**

1 Corinthians 15:20–28

²⁰But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ²⁴Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. ²⁸When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

- 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, the first and the last, Alleluia.
C **the beginning and the end. Alleluia.**

Matthew 25:31-46

- L** The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 25th chapter.
C **Glory to You, O Lord.**

³¹[Jesus said:] “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’”

⁴¹ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ ⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

L This is the Gospel of the Lord.

G 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.

The King of Love My Shepherd Is Lutheran Service Book 709, Lutheran Worship 412, The Lutheran Hymnal 431



1 The King of love my shep - herd is, Whose good - ness
2 Where streams of liv - ing wa - ter flow, My ran - somed
3 Per - verse and fool - ish oft I strayed, But yet in
4 In death's dark vale I fear no ill With Thee, dear



fail - eth nev - er; I noth - ing lack if
soul He lead - eth And, where the ver - dant
love He sought me And on His shoul - der
Lord, be - side me, Thy rod and staff my



I am His And He is mine for - ev - er.
pas - tures grow, With food ce - les - tial feed - eth.
gent - ly laid And home re - joic - ing brought me.
com - fort still, Thy cross be - fore to guide me.

5 Thou spreadst a table in my sight;
 Thine unction grace bestoweth;
And, oh, what transport of delight
 From Thy pure chalice floweth!

6 And so through all the length of days
 Thy goodness faileth never;
Good Shepherd, may I sing Thy praise
 Within Thy house forever!

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Devotional thoughts:

Our Gospel lesson for the Last Sunday of the Church Year begins with Jesus saying, “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.” This is quite a contrast to how it all began when a babe born in Bethlehem was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger!

Until the day when He returns, Christ’s body, the Church, will continue to be hidden from the eyes of the world. The Christian people will suffer tribulation, distress, and persecution just as Jesus did during His earthly life. This will all change on the Last Day, that Great Day, when Jesus will sit on His glorious throne with all the angels surrounding Him.

Not only will angels surround Him but all that nations of the earth will be gathered before the throne. The Great King, The Great Shepherd of the sheep, with eyes that penetrate the heart, will separate the people one from another as sheep from the goats with the sheep on His right and the goats on His left.

You and I and all believers will be on His right. We will hear Him speak the most breathtaking words that have ever touched our ears, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

What is the great gift that we and all believers receive? It will be the Kingdom, the kingdom of God prepared for us from the very beginning of creation!

You may be tempted to jump forward to the following words of Jesus when He says, “I was hungry and you gave me food, etc.” However, please pause for a moment and ponder what Jesus has just said. In doing so, you will avoid much confusion about this passage of Scripture.

Did you notice that I called the kingdom a gift? Why did I use that word? Isn’t the kingdom something that we earn by feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, clothes to the naked, and visiting those sick and in prison? I used the word gift because that is what Jesus says. He says that the kingdom is an inheritance! This one word is the key to understanding this entire passage of scripture. An inheritance is something earned and owned by someone and freely given to an heir who has no intrinsic right to claim it. In this case, the inheritance is given to God’s children who have been adopted into His family by grace!

The Apostle Paul explains it this way in Galatians 4:4-7:

⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

You can trace this theme of adoption and inheritance throughout the entire Bible. The Apostle John writes about it this way in 1 John 3:1-2

^{3:1} See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

² Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

Now that we have cleared this up, we can progress to the rest of this lesson. Did you notice that when Jesus speaks to those on His right, He never mentions anything bad or evil that has been done by those standing

there? Doesn't this seem odd to you? Are the people on the right perfect with no faults? The answer of course is, yes!

This is amazing to many people. Most people believe that God will judge people by their works. They say things like, "I've done more good than bad," or "I'm basically good," or "I'm not bad enough to go to hell" or "I'm better than those people who go to church." But it turns out that Jesus doesn't say any of those things to the people on the right! What is the answer?

Why are the people on the right perfect? It is because their sins have been washed away. Their sins have been forgiven. Because Jesus died on the cross and paid for their sins, God remembers their sins no more. In His eyes, these people are perfect. They receive the inheritance of eternal life.

Those on the left are different. Jesus doesn't mention anything evil about them. He simply states that they have never done the good things mentioned. In theological terms, they have committed sins of omission! Again, some may ask, how can this be? They must have done something good. The Bible answers that question as well. We learn in Hebrews 11:6 that without faith it is impossible to please God.

So the solution is this. Those on the right are those who have faith. Their sins have been forgiven. All that remains on their record is the good things they have done in faith to the glory of God. Everything evil has been washed away. On the other hand, those on the left have never done things that are truly good in God's eyes because they have never acted in faith. All that remains for them is sin.

The Church Year is a wonderful tool for guiding our faith. Next Sunday, we will begin our annual review of the life of Jesus with the first half, the festival half of the Church Year. We have just completed the second half of the Church Year that focuses on the life of the Church, the Christian people.

As this Church Year draws to a close, we are reminded that all things will end, even the world on which we live. You and I may live to see this end and the return of Jesus with all His angels. Or you and I may find our days running their course before Christ's return. Either way, we belong to the Lord. In life or in death, we are His. We have been adopted into His family. The inheritance of eternal life is ours. Because Jesus lives, we too shall live (John 14:19).

"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 4:6-7).

God's richest blessings to you in Christ.

L Almighty God, Creator of all things, as this Church Year draws to its conclusion, grant that we may be faithful as we await Christ's return with joy, anticipating a blessed eternity with you and all the saints.

C Amen.

L O Lord Jesus Christ, Judge of all, grant that we may stand in faith before You on the Last Day covered with the white robe of righteousness won by You on the cross.

C Amen.

L Almighty God, in this time of national distress and distrust, give our leaders wisdom for the challenges ahead. Send Your holy angels to watch over all of our loved ones, especially those who live in distant places. Protect all who attend to our needs during this time of national emergency and pandemic.

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.

Crown Him with Many Crowns Lutheran Service Book 525, Lutheran Worship 278, The Lutheran Hymnal 341
(Alternate: **Thine the Amen** Lutheran Service Book 680, Lutheran Worship n/a, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a)



1 Crown Him with man - y crowns, The Lamb up - on His throne;
2 Crown Him the vir - gin's Son, The God in - car - nate born,
3 Crown Him the Lord of love. Be - hold His hands and side,
4 Crown Him the Lord of life, Who tri - umphed o'er the grave



Hark how the heav'n-ly an - them drowns All mu - sic but its own.
Whose arm those crim-son tro-phies won Which now His brow a-dorn:
Rich wounds, yet vis - i - ble a - bove, In beau - ty glo - ri - fied.
And rose vic - to - rious in the strife For those He came to save.



A - wake, my soul, and sing Of Him who died for thee, And
Fruit of the mys - tic rose, Yet of that rose the stem, The
No an - gels in the sky Can ful - ly bear that sight, But
His glo - ries now we sing, Who died and rose on high, Who



hail Him as thy match-less king Through all e - ter - ni - ty.
root whence mer - cy ev - er flows, The babe of Beth - le - hem.
down - ward bend their won-d'ring eyes At mys - ter - ies so bright.
died e - ter - nal life to bring And lives that death may die.

5 Crown Him the Lord of heav'n,
Enthroned in worlds above,
Crown Him the king to whom is giv'n
The wondrous name of Love.
Crown Him with many crowns
As thrones before Him fall;
Crown Him, ye kings, with many crowns,
For He is king of all.

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Service Notes:

One person may serve as Leader or this may be shared with a number of individuals.

Read one or more of the lessons. Hymns may be sung or read. Use as much or little of this service as you would like.

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Enhancing Your Worship

Meditating on God's Word and Works

I will meditate on your wondrous works. Psalm 119:27
My eyes are awake through the night watches,
That I may meditate on Your word. Psalm 119:148 NKJV

The Last Sunday of the Church Year

November 23 – November 28

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

- L** In keeping with his promise 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!
For I am a sojourner with you, a guest, like all my fathers.
- 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** In keeping with his promise 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. |

You may have heard it said, “Life is a journey, not a destination.” I suppose there may be truth in those words if by them it is meant that we should stop and smell the roses along the way. However, anyone actually thinking about this as a motto for life will immediately see the foolishness. Destination is everything.

We were last able to travel in February when we visited Connecticut. After a short stay at home, we were planning a trip to Florida. That trip and every one since have been cancelled! I long to visit my children and grandchildren. Because of the pandemic, we must stay at home. I don’t really care whether we would travel by car, train, airplane, or boat! I don’t care about the journey. It is irrelevant. I just want to be at the journey’s end with my family.

The introit this week, puts our focus on the all important destination of life’s journey, the new heaven and the new earth. We read about it in Revelation 21. This destination is the time when we live with our family. We live with all of our brothers and sisters in Christ. We will live with God for all eternity. Compared to this destination, our journey here on earth is but a blink of the eye.

In this Psalm, David recognizes that his life on earth is nothing but a few handbreadths compared to eternity. When we measure our days properly, we discover that they are fleeting.

Our sojourn here on earth is watered by tears. If life is only the journey, we are to be pitied.

But God has delivered us from this passage through sin and death. He has prepared for us an inheritance in heaven. He sent His only-begotten Son to liberate us from this death march and make us His own, when there will be no more dying, only light with the Lamb eternally.

L Let us pray. Visit, O Lord, the homes in which Your people dwell. Keep all harm and danger far from us during our journey through life. Grant that we may dwell together in peace under the protection of Your holy angels until we share eternally in Your blessings at our ultimate destination in heaven; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C Amen

Tuesday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Revelation 22:13

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

C the beginning and the end. 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. Eternal God, merciful Father, You have appointed Your Son as judge of the living and the dead. Enable us to wait for the day of His return with our eyes fixed on the kingdom prepared for Your own from the foundation of the world; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen

Pondering the end of the Church Year and Jesus’ return to judge the living and the dead, it would be good for us to review the Second Article of the Apostles’ Creed and its explanation by Martin Luther,

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.

What does this mean? I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

Prayer: Eternal God, merciful Father, You have appointed Your Son as judge of the living and the dead. Enable us to wait for the day of His return with our eyes fixed on the kingdom prepared for Your own from the foundation of the world; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Wednesday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Revelation 22:13

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

C the beginning and the end. Alleluia.

Psalm 95:1–7a

L ¹Oh come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

C ²Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

L ³For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

C ⁴In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also.

L ⁵The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.

C ⁶Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!

L ⁷For he is our God,

C and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

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.

Happy Thanksgiving Eve!

¹Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

²Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! (Psalm 95:1-2).

Most churches will celebrate Thanksgiving with services today rather than tomorrow. Please pardon my Ebenezer Scrooge take on this. This appears to me as just another way to get God out of the way so that we can go about our real business of merriment on the holiday. I remember a few years ago when Christmas fell on a Sunday, many churches cancelled their services so that people could be with their families. This all seems topsy-turvy to me. The primary purpose of Thanksgiving is thanksgiving! That is, giving thanks to God!

Putting the best construction on this as Luther commends, let us remember that there is no command in the Bible to celebrate Thanksgiving Day. Likewise, there is no command in the Bible to worship on Sunday (or Saturday for New Testament believers). St. Paul will guide us in our thinking concerning this matter in Romans 14:5-9

⁵ One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶ The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. ⁷ For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. ⁸ For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

So if you eat a turkey tomorrow (or ham or beef or a vegetarian meal), do so to the Lord giving thanks to God. If you abstain, honor the Lord and give thanks to God.

We are ultimately thankful to God not for house and home or food and drink. We are ultimately thankful to God for Christ who died and lived again that we might live forever with Him.

If you choose to celebrate Thanksgiving today, you might want to sing the Venite, Psalm 95:1-7—our psalm for the week. It is found in the service of Matins on page 220 of the Lutheran Service Book, or page 236 in Morning prayer. Versions in Lutheran Worship are on page 209 and 237. The Lutheran Hymnal has the Venite on page 33.

Prayer: Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! Amen.

Thursday - THANKSGIVING DAY

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!

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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.

Prayer of the Day

- L** The Lord be with you.
C And also with you.
L Let us Pray.
C 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

Hymn ~ "God of Our Fathers" Lutheran Worship 501

By: Daniel C. Roberts

God of our fathers, whose almighty hand
Leads forth in beauty all the starry band
Of shining worlds in splendor through the skies:
Our grateful songs before your throne arise.

Your love divine has led us in the past;
In this free land by you our lot is cast;
Oh, be our ruler, guardian, guide, and stay;
Your Word our law, your paths our chosen way.

From war's alarms, from deadly pestilence
Make your strong arm our ever sure defense.
Your true religion in our hearts increase;
Your bounteous goodness nourish us in peace.

Refresh your people on their toilsome way;
Lead us from night to never ending day;
Fill all our lives with heaven born love and grace
Until at last we meet before your face.

Note: God of Our Fathers was written in 1876 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the United States Declaration of Independence.

Deuteronomy 8:1-10

¹"The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers. ²And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. ³And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes

from the mouth of the LORD. ⁴Your clothing did not wear out on you and your foot did not swell these forty years. ⁵Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the LORD your God disciplines you. ⁶So you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him. ⁷For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, ⁸a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, ⁹a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. ¹⁰And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Philippians 4:6-20

⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

¹⁰I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. ¹¹Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. ¹²I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

¹⁴Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. ¹⁵And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. ¹⁶Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. ¹⁷Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. ¹⁸I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. ¹⁹And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Luke 17:11-19

P The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 17th chapter.

C Glory to you, O Lord.

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."

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to You, O Christ.



- 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.

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Devotional thoughts:

The lessons appointed for today are filled with appropriate thoughts for Thanksgiving. For now, I would like to ponder a connection between the Ten Lepers and the Plymouth Colony Pilgrims.

As with everything else in modern America, Thanksgiving and its history has been used to make some political point or change our culture. Let us avoid that and just think about the reality of Thanksgiving.

Both the Ten Lepers and the Pilgrims were beset by devastating afflictions. The Ten Lepers faced life-ending disease and social rejection. The Pilgrims were confronted with one disaster after another. Starvation was staring them in the face.

God solved both their problems. Jesus healed the Ten Lepers and restored them to society. God granted a bountiful harvest to the Pilgrims.

The ultimate solution to their needs was God. True in the case of the Pilgrims, one could point to the help they received from the Native Americans, their own hard work, and cooperation among the colonists. Nevertheless, the Pilgrims recognized what the Lepers could not deny. Their ultimate salvation came from God.

On this Thanksgiving, along with feasting and festivities, let us pause for a moment and kneel before the real source of all our blessings and give thanks. 2020 may have been a difficult year for you, just as the Pilgrims faced their difficulties. Even so, let us count our blessings: Blessings of family and friends, Blessings of abundance and warmth, Blessings of medical staff and caregivers, Blessings of vaccines and treatments both promised and realized. But above all, let us give thanks for being part of the family of God where sins are forgiven for Christ's sake and eternity in heaven is the final harvest home.

Who from our moth - ers' arms Has blest us on our way
And keep us in His grace And guide us when per - plexed
The one e - ter - nal God, Whom earth and heav'n a - dore:



With count-less gifts of love And still is ours to - day.
And free us from all ills In this world and the next!
For thus it was, is now, And shall be ev - er - more.

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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.

Sing to the Lord of Harvest Lutheran Service Book 893, Lutheran Worship 493, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a



1 Sing to the Lord of har - vest, Sing songs of love and praise;
2 God makes the clouds rain good - ness, The des - erts bloom and spring,
3 Bring to this sa - cred al - tar The gifts His good - ness gave,



With joy - ful hearts and voic - es Your al - le - lu - ias raise.
The hills leap up in glad - ness, The val - leys laugh and sing.
The gold - en sheaves of har - vest, The souls Christ died to save.



By Him the roll - ing sea - sons In fruit - ful or - der move;
God fills them with His full - ness, All things with large in - crease;
Your hearts lay down be - fore Him When at His feet you fall,



Sing to the Lord of har - vest A joy - ous song of love.
He crowns the year with bless - ing, With plen - ty and with peace.
And with your lives a - dore Him Who gave His life for all.

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Friday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Revelation 22:13

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

C the beginning and the end. 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 15:20–28

²⁰But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ²⁴Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. ²⁸When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

1 Corinthians 15 is the great Resurrection Chapter of the Bible. It is good to be familiar with it.

Jesus is the “firstfruits” of those who have fallen asleep. Notice that Paul references death for a Christian as not much more than falling asleep. Ever since that time, we have often considered death simply falling asleep in Jesus.

Firstfruits is a concept not much used in our culture. In Bible times, firstfruits was an offering given at the beginning of the harvest. Firstfruits happens in the Jewish calendar at about the same time as Easter in our calendar. When Paul calls Jesus, “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep,” he is saying that Jesus is the first to be raised from the dead! We, who believe in Jesus as our savior, will all certainly follow. On this day after Thanksgiving, we are thankful for the resurrection from the dead that will come on the last day.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, in Your death on the cross, You completed Your work of bearing all our burdens and on the third day showed us in Your resurrected body the firstfruits of the new creation. Raise us up on the Last Day that we might live with You forever; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. 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: Revelation 22:13

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, Alleluia.
C the beginning and the end. 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. |

Ezekiel 34:11–16, 20–24

¹¹“For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. ¹²As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. ¹³And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. ¹⁴I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD. ¹⁶I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice. . . .

²⁰“Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them: Behold, I, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. ²¹Because you push with side and shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns, till you have scattered them abroad, ²²I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep. ²³And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. ²⁴And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken.

The shepherd theme is plentiful in the Bible. One place where we may have missed it is our reading from Ezekiel this week. God declares that He will seek out His flock and rescue His sheep.

These are comforting words, especially in a time when society seems to be dominated by the anti-religion crowd. God will never neglect us. We may feel lost in a flood of secularism but God will seek us out and feed us with rich pasture. God promises to bring back the strayed and bind up the injured. He will strengthen the weak and bring justice to the oppressed.

God fulfilled His promise when He sent the Good Shepherd to lay down His life for the sheep. We are thankful that we are the sheep of His pasture who are led beside the still waters to dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Prayer: O Lord God, our shepherd, You gather the lambs of Your flock into the arms of Your mercy and bring them home. Comfort us with the certain hope of the resurrection to everlasting life and a joyful reunion with those we love who have died in the faith; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

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