

# The First Sunday in Lent

## February 22, 2026

We live in a world where the Devil is always looking to destroy the work of Jesus. This is starkly evident today as we read of Jesus' Temptation in the Gospel Lesson. The Devil sought to derail Jesus' mission to rescue us from sin and death. But Christ has overcome the devil and granted to us forgiveness and life. Each time temptation comes we are faced with the choice: "Am I going to follow the Devil or Am I going to follow Jesus?"

### Glory Be to Jesus

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



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



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

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

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

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

**C** Amen.

**L** Our help is in the name of the Lord,

**C** who made heaven and earth. (*Psalm 124:8*)

**L** Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults.

**C** Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. (*Psalm 19:12, 13*)

**L** If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord who could stand?

**C** But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared. (*Psalm 130:3–4*)

**L** Let us, confess before God that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and as His people let us take refuge in His infinite mercy seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, saying:

**C** God, be merciful to me, a sinner, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

(*Luke 18:13*)

**L** Almighty God, merciful Father, in Your holy Church, You daily and richly forgive us our sins and grant us new life through Your Spirit. Be in our midst, enliven our faith, and graciously receive our prayer and praise; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**C** Amen.

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

**L** When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble;  
I will rescue him and honor him.  
With long life I will satisfy him  
and show him my salvation.

**C** Because you have made the Lord your dwelling place—  
the Most High, who is my refuge—

**L** no evil shall be allowed to befall you,  
no plague come near your tent.

**C** For he will command his angels concerning you  
to guard you in all your ways.

**L** On their hands they will bear you up,  
lest you strike your foot against a stone.

**You will tread on the lion and the adder;  
the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.**

**C** Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

**L** When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble;  
I will rescue him and honor him.  
With long life I will satisfy him  
and show him my salvation.

### Kyrie

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

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

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

[Gloria in Excelsis is omitted during Lent]

### Collect of the Day

**L** Let us pray: O Lord God, You led Your ancient people through the wilderness and brought them to the promised land. Guide the people of Your Church that following our Savior we may walk through the wilderness of this world toward the glory of the world to come; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C** Amen.

### Genesis 3:1–21

<sup>1</sup>Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.

He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” <sup>2</sup>And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup>but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” <sup>4</sup>But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. <sup>5</sup>For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” <sup>6</sup>So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food,

and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. <sup>7</sup>Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

<sup>8</sup>And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup>But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" <sup>10</sup>And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." <sup>11</sup>He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" <sup>12</sup>The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." <sup>13</sup>Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

<sup>14</sup>The LORD God said to the serpent,

"Because you have done this,  
cursed are you above all livestock  
and above all beasts of the field;  
on your belly you shall go,  
and dust you shall eat  
all the days of your life.

<sup>15</sup>I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and her offspring;  
he shall bruise your head,  
and you shall bruise his heel."

<sup>16</sup>To the woman he said,

"I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;  
in pain you shall bring forth children.  
Your desire shall be for your husband,  
and he shall rule over you."

<sup>17</sup>And to Adam he said,

"Because you have listened to the voice of your wife  
and have eaten of the tree  
of which I commanded you,  
'You shall not eat of it,'  
cursed is the ground because of you;  
in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

<sup>18</sup>thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;  
and you shall eat the plants of the field.

<sup>19</sup>By the sweat of your face  
you shall eat bread,  
till you return to the ground,  
for out of it you were taken;  
for you are dust,  
and to dust you shall return."

<sup>20</sup>The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. <sup>21</sup>And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

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

### Gradual Hebrews 12:2

- L** O come, let us fix our eyes on Jesus,
- C** **the founder and perfecter of our faith,**
- L** who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame,
- C** **and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.**

### Psalm 32:1–7

- L** <sup>1</sup>Blessèd is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.
- C** <sup>2</sup>**Blessèd is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.**
- L** <sup>3</sup>For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.
- C** <sup>4</sup>**For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.**
- L** <sup>5</sup>I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,” and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.
- C** <sup>6</sup>**Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.**
- L** <sup>7</sup>You are a hiding place for me;
- C** **you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance.**

### Romans 5:12–19

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— <sup>13</sup>for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. <sup>14</sup>Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

<sup>15</sup>But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. <sup>16</sup>And the free gift is not like the result of that one man’s sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. <sup>17</sup>If, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

<sup>18</sup>Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. <sup>19</sup>For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.

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

### Verse of the Day: Ephesians 6:11

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

## Matthew 4:1–11

**L** The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter.

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

<sup>1</sup>Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup>And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. <sup>3</sup>And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” <sup>4</sup>But he answered, “It is written,

“Man shall not live by bread alone,  
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.””

<sup>5</sup>Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple <sup>6</sup>and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written,

“He will command his angels concerning you,’

and

“On their hands they will bear you up,  
lest you strike your foot against a stone.””

<sup>7</sup>Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” <sup>8</sup>Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. <sup>9</sup>And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” <sup>10</sup>Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written,

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

<sup>11</sup>Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

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

**C** **Praise to You, O Christ.**

## The Apostles' Creed

**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**

# A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

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



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



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



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



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



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



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

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

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

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### Devotional thoughts:

I don't know of anyone who would consider me to be "fashion-forward." But corduroy pants are a trend in 2026! They are featured heavily on runways and in street style. Who would have guessed?

I am pretty sure that several generations have grown to adulthood without experiencing the joy (or humiliation) of hearing their corduroy pants go "swish, swish, swish" as they walked down the hallway at school. (I referred to "the" hallway rather than "a" hallway because my first two schools had only one hallway each.) Corduroy pants or as we simply called them "corduroys" came to mind because of an event that happened to me while wearing them when I was 5 or 6 years old. (Yes, I know that trendy people often call them "cords" but it's been decades since I've been accused of being trendy.)

My dad could fix anything. He was a tool and die maker and his dad was (among other things) a sought-after auto-mechanic. I could spend hours recounting the litany of my dad's skills. But I want to focus on one Saturday in the summer when I "helped" my dad fix our well-loved lawnmower.

As I supervised, dad cleaned the spark plug. Then he disassembled and cleaned the carburetor. Somehow during the process, my hands became as dirty as my dad's. Dad always kept a red shop towel handy to wipe his hands and clean his tools before putting them away. I didn't need a shop towel. I was wearing corduroys!

As I wiped my hands on my corduroys, my dad said, "Don't do that!" I responded, "It's okay. They're already dirty." Then my dad imparted to me one of his many pearls of wisdom. He said, "You have grease on your hands. It won't wash out of your pants."

This was a new concept to me. It was one that I had never considered. My pants might never come clean because of my thoughtless act. As you have already guessed, I have never forgotten my dad's wise admonition. (I'm sure Valerie must be convinced that I never learned that grease won't come out in the laundry.)

On this Sunday of The Temptation of Jesus, I am reminded of how often Satan tries to deceive us into believing that simple acts of disobedience will not stain our souls. He first tempted Eve into believing that eating the forbidden fruit would make her like God, knowing good and evil. Surely, a simple taste couldn't hurt.

Likewise, the Devil tempted Jesus to abandon His mission of serving as our substitute by using His divine power to satisfy His hunger. Surely, a simple taste couldn't hurt.

Adam and Eve were easily deceived. Jesus was not deceived but countered the temptation with God's holy word, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." Jesus refused to allow His soul to be stained.

Two more times, the devil tried to woo Jesus away from God's assigned task. But Jesus resisted these temptations and every other temptation that came His way. He experienced the same temptations that we all face but He never once gave in. He remained sinless until His very last breath on the cross (Hebrews 4:15).

No one can deny that there is great evil in the world. Our headlines chronicle it every day. But what the Devil wants you to believe is that your sins aren't so bad. After all, you are not like the people that you read about in the headlines.

Many television shows and movies even go so far as to say that a little bit of sinning might be good for you. It helps overcome your hang-ups and inhibitions. Many people fall into this trap because they don't have a dad telling them that grease won't wash out of their corduroys. Once your soul is stained with sin, it is stained forever. There is nothing that you can do about it.

But thanks be to God. He sent His only-begotten Son to live a holy and perfect life for us. He resisted the temptations of the devil. He went to the cross without any stain or blemish on His soul. He endured the cross to restore our souls and open the kingdom of heaven for us (Hebrews 12:2).

Our sin-stained robes have been washed in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14). Jesus remained perfect for us to the very end so that our hearts would be fully and completely cleansed from every stain of sin so that the kingdom of heaven would be open for us.

Lent is a time of repentance. It is a time to focus on our sins and to seek renewal from our Savior. Nothing that we do in Lent can cleanse us from sin. But God removes every stain of sin from our souls for Jesus' sake. Where we are sinful, He is sinless. We deserve punishment for our sins. Jesus never sinned but He was punished fully for our sins on the cross. He did everything that we are unable to do!

David's words from Psalm 32:5 are some of my favorites. He wrote, "I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and you forgave the iniquity of my sin." David did not have to "do penance" to receive God's mercy and forgiveness. He simply acknowledged His Sin and God forgave him.

May Lent be a time when we learn how to resist the wiles of the Devil. More than that, may Lent be a time when we see how Jesus resisted every temptation of the Devil and remained sinless for us in order to grant us salvation and eternal life through faith in Him.

"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).

## Prayers

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

**C** Amen.

**L** O Lord, You sought Adam and Eve in the garden and called them to repentance. Seek us when we wander from Your Holy Word, and give us contrite hearts to confess our sins and receive the forgiveness and restoration You promise us.

**C** Amen.

**L** O Lord, You created the home to be a place where we are brought up in the ways of truth, goodness and mercy. Sustain parents in this sacred task, and grant that our homes would be places where confession and forgiveness of sins abound.

**C** Amen.

**L** Almighty God, Your Son was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to suffer temptation for our sake. Strengthen us when we are tempted, and teach us to rely upon Your Word as our defense against the evil one.

**C** Amen.

**L** Lord, guide and give wisdom to our nation and its leaders, and to all judges and magistrates. Protect those who serve us as firefighters, police, disaster workers and medical personnel. Protect those in harm's way because of the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East that cause innocent men, women, and children to suffer. Grant that the new found peace in Gaza would be sustained.

**C** Amen.

**L** Visit us in Your compassion, O Lord. Deliver the sick from their infirmity, the troubled from their afflictions, the grieving from their sorrow, and the dying from their fear. May all who cry to You receive grace according to Your will. Help each of us to bear our crosses with patience and grace.

**C** Amen.

**L** Lord God, heavenly Father, You have given us a refuge from the world in Your family, the Church. Protect us from all evils of body and soul, that we would find rest, peace, and comfort in this life and eternal rest in Your heavenly presence; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C** Amen.

**C** I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

**C** Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

**L** Let us bless the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

**L** The Lord bless us, defend us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

**C** Amen.

## On My Heart Imprint Your Image

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



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



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



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



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

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### Service Notes:

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

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

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# Enhancing Your Worship

## Meditating on God's Word and Works

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

## The Week of The First Sunday in Lent February 23—28, 2026

### Introduction

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

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

### Monday

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

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

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

## Verse of the Day: Ephesians 6:11

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

## Kyrie

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

You may not have heard of the Scottish novelist and poet, George John Whyte-Melville. He was quite well-known in his lifetime and published twenty-six books.

He served in the 93<sup>rd</sup> Highlanders and then The Coldstream Guards in the British Army. In the mid-1850s he served as an officer of Turkish irregular cavalry in the Crimean War. His experience there inspired him to write a book titled, “The Interpreter.” It is a novel based on his experiences in the war.

In this book, he described a woman as “too clever by half.” And so this expression entered the lexicon of our English language. Since that time, it has been used over and over again to describe someone who thinks more highly of himself than he ought. This self-inflated ego and over estimation of intelligence causes him to outwit himself, ergo “too clever by half.”

It is most often used to describe criminals and other evil doers. In the account of the Temptation of Jesus, it is an apt description of the Devil.

When he tempted Jesus to abandon His mission of being our substitute by using His divine power to turn stones into bread, Jesus answered, “It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” At that point, the Devil must have thought, “I will defeat Him with Scripture.”

He then said to Jesus, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you,’ and “On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.”

I can imagine Satan being proud of himself for being so clever. But he wasn’t as clever as he thought. Without even a moment’s hesitation, Jesus answered, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test’” (Deuteronomy 6:16). (I prefer the King James Version, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” But that’s my own personal preference. The ESV translation is perfectly adequate.)

The Devil had quoted two verses from our introit to Jesus (Psalm 91:11-12). The irony is that God fulfilled His promise by protecting Jesus from the Devil’s evil intent. Satan should have remembered what God said in the previous two verses of Psalm 91, “Because you have made the Lord your dwelling place— the Most High, who is my refuge—no evil shall be allowed to befall you” (Psalm 91:9-10). In these verses, God was promising to protect Jesus and all His people from the Evil One! And this He does day in and day out. It is such an integral part of what God does for us that Jesus directs us to pray, “Deliver us from evil!”

- L** Let us pray. Our Father who art in heaven, deliver us from evil.  
**C** Amen.

[*What does this mean?* We pray in this petition, in summary, that our Father in heaven would rescue us from every evil of body and soul, possessions and reputation, and finally, when our last hour comes, give us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven.<sup>1</sup> ]

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Luther, *Luther's Small Catechism With Explanation*, Contains the basic principles of the Lutheran religion with some explanation.; Translation of: *Kleine Katechismus - English.*, electronic ed., 3 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997, c1986).

## Tuesday

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

### Verse of the Day: Ephesians 6:11

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

### Kyrie

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

- L** Let us pray: O Lord God, You led Your ancient people through the wilderness and brought them to the promised land. Guide the people of Your Church that following our Savior we may walk through the wilderness of this world toward the glory of the world to come; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.  
**C** Amen.

What thoughts come to your mind when you think of the word wilderness? Many modern people will think of “untouched beauty,” “pristine water,” or “peaceful solitude.” These ideas are reinforced by commercials showing luxury SUVs driving through the desert or to the shore of a secluded mountain lake. We watch travel videos of stunning sunsets and magnificent rainforests from the comfort of our easy chairs.

In reality, throughout most of history, people knew that the wilderness is a very inhospitable and unforgiving place. People who wandered into the wilderness were often thirsty and hungry while suffering from heat or cold. They were in danger from wild animals, swarming insects, venomous snakes, and worse. The wilderness is not a safe or comfortable place.

The ancient people of Israel were anxious to leave the wilderness and arrive in the Promised Land flowing with milk and honey. Because of their rebellious nature, they were required to wander in the wilderness for 40 years before God permitted them to enter the land of Canaan.

For us, our modern world can feel like a wilderness. Biblical values are ridiculed and mocked. People are prosecuted and marginalized for being faithful to God. Immorality and vice are promoted as normal.

We are bombarded by scams and fraudsters. Few of us feel safe outside our homes. Our recent pandemic underscores the dangers we face from disease. Inflation seems to be pushing more and more people into poverty. In many ways, daily life feels like a wilderness.

Fortunately, we are not destined to spend eternity in the wilderness. We are pilgrims and strangers here. Our Savior came to lead us out of the wilderness into the Promised Land of heaven. He came to transfer us from the wasteland of death to the Kingdom of Glory and eternal life. We are able to endure the discomfort of this world because Jesus has rescued us from wandering and given us purpose and direction.

We all know people who are lost in the wilderness of life. Pray that God would allow us to help those who are off course and disoriented to find their way back home to the Savior.

Prayer: O Lord God, You led Your ancient people through the wilderness and brought them to the promised land. Guide the people of Your Church that following our Savior we may walk through the wilderness of this world toward the glory of the world to come; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## Wednesday

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

### Verse of the Day: Ephesians 6:11

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

### Psalm 32:1–7

- L** <sup>1</sup>Blessèd is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.  
**C** <sup>2</sup>**Blessèd is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.**  
**L** <sup>3</sup>For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.  
**C** <sup>4</sup>**For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.**  
**L** <sup>5</sup>I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,” and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.  
**C** <sup>6</sup>**Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.**  
**L** <sup>7</sup>You are a hiding place for me;  
**C** you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance.

### Kyrie

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

Psalm 32 is an excellent way to begin Lent. It is the second penitential psalm. The others are 6, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143. Paired with Psalm 51, it gives us insight into David’s spiritual state after his sin with Bathsheba.

From the youngest to the oldest, from the most feeble to the most powerful, our sinful human nature convinces us that we are clever enough to sin and avoid any consequence. The news is filled with accounts of brazen criminals who commit horrendous crimes in front of security cameras. Others believe that they are smart enough to hide their fraud or theft. Some may be successful. But no one can hide their sins from their own conscience.

When powerful King David tried to hide his sin of adultery, he used his position of authority to eliminate Uriah. No one would find out. But not only did God know what he had done; his conscience troubled him day and night. He wrote:

For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away  
through my groaning all day long.  
For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;  
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.

Psalm 32:3-4

He felt his sin down to his bones! His joy was gone. His life was filled with groaning. What could he do?

He couldn't undo his evil deeds. But there was one solution. He turned to the Lord in confession!

For those of us who grew up with pages 5 and 15 in The Lutheran Hymnal and those who are familiar with Setting Three in Lutheran Service Book, David's words in Psalm 32:5 are well known and cherished. He said:

I acknowledged my sin to you,  
and I did not cover my iniquity;  
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,"  
and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

Restoration is as simple as coming to God in sincere repentance and confessing our sins. With joy, we hear the Lord forgive the iniquity of our sins. We learn again the truth stated by David in the first verse of Psalm 32:

Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,  
whose sin is covered.

Although the final verse of Psalm 32 is not included in our Psalm of the week, it is good for us to hear how David responds to forgiveness. He writes:

Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous,  
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

May we always rejoice in the forgiveness and salvation won for us by Jesus on the cross. May our Lenten journey of penitence be one filled with the joy and gladness of forgiveness.

Prayer:

Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and renew a right spirit within me.  
Cast me not away from your presence,  
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and uphold me with a willing spirit. Amen.

Psalm 51:10

## Thursday

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

## Verse of the Day: Ephesians 6:11

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

## Kyrie

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

## Genesis 3:1–21

<sup>1</sup>Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.

He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” <sup>2</sup>And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup>but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” <sup>4</sup>But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. <sup>5</sup>For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” <sup>6</sup>So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. <sup>7</sup>Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

<sup>8</sup>And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup>But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” <sup>10</sup>And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” <sup>11</sup>He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” <sup>12</sup>The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” <sup>13</sup>Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

<sup>14</sup>The LORD God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this,  
cursed are you above all livestock  
and above all beasts of the field;  
on your belly you shall go,  
and dust you shall eat  
all the days of your life.

<sup>15</sup>I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and her offspring;  
he shall bruise your head,  
and you shall bruise his heel.”

<sup>16</sup>To the woman he said,

“I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;  
in pain you shall bring forth children.  
Your desire shall be for your husband,  
and he shall rule over you.”

<sup>17</sup>And to Adam he said,

“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife  
and have eaten of the tree  
of which I commanded you,  
‘You shall not eat of it,’  
cursed is the ground because of you;  
in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

<sup>18</sup>thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;  
and you shall eat the plants of the field.

<sup>19</sup>By the sweat of your face  
you shall eat bread,

till you return to the ground,  
for out of it you were taken;  
for you are dust,  
and to dust you shall return.”

<sup>20</sup>The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. <sup>21</sup>And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

To be honest, I’m scratching my head trying to understand the thinking that went into selecting Genesis 3:1–21 as our Old Testament Lesson for this week. My first thought was, “It could have been shorter.” My second thought was, “They wanted to tell the entire story of the fall into sin but why did they leave out the last three verses of chapter three?” Such are the imponderables of life.

Although every year we learn about Jesus’ temptation by Satan on the first Sunday in Lent, the Old Testament lesson varies. Besides the fall into sin, next year it will be Genesis 22:1-18 which is Abraham and The Sacrifice of Isaac. The following year it is Deuteronomy 26:1–11 which is the Offering of Firstfruits and Tithes when the Children of Israel came into the Promised Land.

Genesis three is the first appearance of our “Old Evil Foe.” He has been our adversary from the beginning. Humanity’s first encounter with him did not go so well. In Adam and Eve, the entire human race abandoned paradise and followed their own sinful desires. Although Adam and Eve were created perfect and holy, with the fall into sin, we lost our perfection and our full knowledge of God. Now, “the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Genesis 8:21). “There is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Romans 3:12, KJV).

Death is the evidence that “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23) because “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). If there had been no sin, there would be no death.

The fall into sin made necessary Jesus’ mission of saving us from sin, death, and the devil. While Satan triumphed in his first encounter with humanity, he failed miserably when he tempted Jesus. His wiles were no match for the sinless Christ. Death, hell, and Satan were destroyed by Jesus’ sacrifice of Himself upon the cross. This is why it is always important to remember the second half of Romans 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death, but *the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”

The First Sunday in Lent is not primarily a day to grieve over our fall into sin. It is a day to rejoice in Jesus’ triumph over Satan.

Prayer: Almighty God, thank You for sending Jesus to triumph over sin, death, and the Devil on our behalf. Grant that during this Lenten season and throughout our lives that we would live in true repentance and so receive the free gift of God—Eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

## Friday

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

## Verse of the Day: Ephesians 6:11

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

## Kyrie

- L** O Lord,           **C** Have mercy on us.  
**L** O Christ,       **C** Have mercy on us.  
**L** O Lord,           **C** Have mercy on us.

## Romans 5:12–19

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— <sup>13</sup>for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. <sup>14</sup>Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

<sup>15</sup>But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. <sup>16</sup>And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. <sup>17</sup>If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

<sup>18</sup>Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. <sup>19</sup>For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

The concept of fairness permeates our current culture. It is seen by many as the ultimate goal of society. Equality under the law is no longer good enough. There is a movement to redress wrongs that are more than a century old. Whatever your thoughts are on this issue, it does miss one very important fact. Fairness is not the highest good of society.

If God would have been totally fair with humanity, there would be no humanity. In fairness, all sin must be punished. But God chose to move beyond fairness to grace and mercy.

God's grace cost Him dearly. It meant the suffering and death of His only-begotten Son. For God to be gracious and merciful abounding in steadfast love, His justice was satisfied on our behalf by Jesus' sacrifice.

We do not demand fairness from God. In fairness, He must punish our sins. Rather we beg for mercy and by His grace, we receive justification and life!

If God is gracious and merciful to us in such a way, can we be less toward others? This is why Jesus teaches us to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive others."

Jesus told The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18:21-35) to show us how and why we should live as merciful people. May we never reject God's grace through our own unmerciful behavior and attitude.

Prayer: Almighty God, thank You for the grace that is ours in Jesus Christ. Grant us Your Holy Spirit so that we may live as merciful people through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Saturday

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

**C** Amen.

## Gradual Psalm 117:1–2a; 96:8

**L** Praise the LORD, all nations!

**C** Extol him, all peoples!

**L** For great is his steadfast love toward us,

**C** and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever.

**L** Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;

**C** bring an offering, and come into his courts!

## Verse of the Day: Ephesians 6:11

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

## Kyrie

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

## Ephesians 6:10-20

<sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. <sup>13</sup> Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. <sup>14</sup> Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, <sup>15</sup> and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; <sup>17</sup> and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, <sup>18</sup> praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, <sup>19</sup> and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

I once read a news story about a school board member who said the school district should reject hiring teachers with Christian values because Christian values are not safe. I've experienced this anti-Christian bias most of my life so this attitude doesn't surprise me. However, what does surprise me is that an elected official now is emboldened to say this publicly. Apparently, this individual believes such a statement will help in an upcoming re-election campaign.

Of course, this is nothing new. The Apostle Paul warned the early Christians in Ephesus to "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil."

The devil has been scheming against God's people since the beginning. He targeted Jesus and he will continue to target us. Are darker times ahead? I don't know. They may be. But we do know that Satan will continue to oppose God and His plans until the end of time. We would do well to heed Paul's admonition to put on the whole armor of God.

How can we stand in the face of such an onslaught of evil? Our first line of defense is truth. The Devil is the father of lies (John 8:44). He can't stand the truth.

Next, live lives of righteousness. Make sure that the attacks against us are unjustified (1 Peter 2:19-25).

Don't let evil provoke us to anger. The world knows how to wage war but Jesus calls upon us to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44). We of all people should be known for our love of peace.

Although the days may be evil (Ephesians 5:16), we live by faith. We know what the world does not know. God wins! He has triumphed over evil through the cross of Christ.

Jesus lives! The vict'ry's won!  
Death no longer can appall me;  
Jesus lives! Death's reign is done!  
From the grave will Christ recall me.  
Brighter scenes will then commence;  
This shall be my confidence.

LSB 490, stanza 1

Finally, be faithful in the use of God's word. It is the sword of the Spirit. Nothing can stand in the face of God's holy word of law and gospel.

Evil will win if we choose to oppose it with our own wisdom and strength. But we have the privilege of turning to God in prayer and seeking His protection. May we never lose heart when wickedness rears its ugly head.

Prayer:

Jesus lives! And now is death  
But the gate of life immortal;  
This shall calm my trembling breath  
When I pass its gloomy portal.  
Faith shall cry, as fails each sense:  
Jesus is my confidence! Amen.

LSB 490, stanza 5

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