

The Third Sunday in Lent

March 8, 2026

In the Cross of Christ I Glory

Lutheran Service Book 427, Lutheran Worship 101, The Lutheran Hymnal 354



1 In the cross of Christ I glo - ry, Tow'r - ing
2 When the woes of life o'er - take me, Hopes de -
3 When the sun of bliss is beam - ing Light and
4 Bane and bless - ing, pain and plea - sure By the



o'er the wrecks of time. All the light of sa - cred
ceive, and fears an - noy, Nev - er shall the cross for -
love up - on my way, From the cross the ra - diance
cross are sanc - ti - fied; Peace is there that knows no



sto - ry Gath - ers round its head sub - lime.
sake me; Lo, it glows with peace and joy.
stream - ing Adds more lus - ter to the day.
mea - sure, Joys that through all time a - bid.

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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 84:1–4; antiphon Psalm 84:5

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

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 God, whose glory it is always to have mercy, be gracious to all who have gone astray from Your ways and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of Your Word; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C** **Amen.**

Exodus 17:1–7

¹All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. ²Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.” And Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?” ³But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?” ⁴So Moses cried to the LORD, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.” ⁵And the LORD said to Moses, “Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. ⁶Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.” And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the LORD by saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?”

- 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 95:1–9

- 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, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.
Today, if you hear his voice,
- C** ⁸**do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,**
- L** ⁹when your fathers put me to the test
- C** **and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.**

Romans 5:1–8

¹Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.
²Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

⁶For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—⁸but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

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

Verse of the Day: John 4:23a

- L** The hour is coming, and is now here,
- C** **when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.**

John 4:5–30, 39–42

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

⁵[Jesus] came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

⁷There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." ⁸(For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) ⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus answered her, "If

you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." ¹¹The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?" ¹²Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." ¹³Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty forever. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." ¹⁵The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."

¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." ¹⁷The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; ¹⁸for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." ¹⁹The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet." ²⁰Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." ²¹Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ²²You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." ²⁵The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." ²⁶Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."

²⁷Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?" ²⁸So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, ²⁹"Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" ³⁰They went out of the town and were coming to him. . .

³⁹Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." ⁴⁰So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. ⁴¹And many more believed because of his word. ⁴²They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

L This is the Gospel of the Lord.

G 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

Jesus Sinners Doth Receive

Lutheran Service Book 609, Lutheran Worship 229, The Lutheran Hymnal 324



1 Je - sus sin - ners doth re - ceive; Oh, may all this
2 We de - serve but grief and shame, Yet His words, rich
3 Sheep that from the fold did stray No true shep - herd
4 I, a sin - ner, come to Thee With a pen - i -



say - ing pon - der Who in sin's de - lu - sions live
grace re - veal - ing, Par - don, peace, and life pro - claim;
e'er for - sak - eth; Wea - ry souls that lost their way
tent con - fes - sion. Sav - ior, mer - cy show to me;



And from God and heav - en wan - der! Here is hope for
Here our ills have per - fect heal - ing. Firm - ly in these
Christ, the Shep - herd, gent - ly tak - eth In His arms that
Grant for all my sins re - mis - sion. Let these words my



all who grieve: Je - sus sin - ners doth re - ceive.
words be - lieve: Je - sus sin - ners doth re - ceive.
they may live: Je - sus sin - ners doth re - ceive.
soul re - lieve: Je - sus sin - ners doth re - ceive.

5 Oh, how blest it is to know:
Were as scarlet my transgression,
It shall be as white as snow
By Thy blood and bitter passion;
For these words I now believe:
Jesus sinners doth receive.

6 Now my conscience is at peace;
From the Law I stand acquitted.
Christ hath purchased my release
And my ev'ry sin remitted.
Naught remains my soul to grieve:
Jesus sinners doth receive.

7 Jesus sinners doth receive;
Also I have been forgiven;
And when I this earth must leave,
I shall find an open heaven.
Dying, still to Him I cleave:
Jesus sinners doth receive.

Devotional thoughts:

When I was in high school, my mom and dad loaded their five children into the back of our dark blue 1964 Ford Galaxy 500 station wagon for our first trip to Florida. We went to celebrate Christmas with my aunt, uncle, and cousins in Venice, Florida.

I have many wonderful memories from that trip. I remember my parents pointing out that Georgia was famous for its red clay. They didn't want us to miss out on any educational benefits produced by our trip.

However, we all noticed something less educational but more obvious. It seemed that every few miles one of us would spot a billboard that shouted, "Visit Rock City." Pretty soon this became a game. Who could spot the next "Rock City" sign?

Not too long ago, returning from Florida, I remember seeing exactly one "Visit Rock City" sign. There may have been more but they definitely weren't as noticeable as they once had been.

But I did notice signs that announced, "MAKER'S MARK," "JAMES B. BEAM," and "JACK DANIEL DISTILLERY." For the uninitiated, Maker's Mark and Jim Beam are brands of Kentucky Bourbon and Jack Daniel's is a Tennessee Whisky. How times have changed! These are the new tourist attractions.

I discovered that there are 43 Distilleries on the Kentucky Bourbon Trail. Tennessee boasts 29 Distilleries. This leads me to ask the age-old question, "Who makes better whiskey, Kentucky or Tennessee?"

I suppose the answer depends on whether you live in Kentucky or Tennessee. If you are from one of those two states you know that there is an intense rivalry between them that extends beyond whiskey. It's most prominent when the University of Kentucky Wildcats compete with the University of Tennessee Volunteers in sports. However, the animosity between Kentucky and Tennessee is nothing compared to the hostility that existed between the Jews and the Samaritans.

The Samaritans lived in the area of the Holy Land between Judea and Galilee. Jesus and His disciples chose a direct route back to Galilee from Jerusalem and today we find them almost halfway to Nazareth at the town of Sychar. Sychar was either near the ancient city of Shechem or possibly another name for Shechem.

The Samaritans only accepted the Five Books of Moses and they refused to recognize the temple in Jerusalem as legitimate. Instead, they built a rival temple on Mount Gerizim.

This did not sit well with the Jews. In 107 BC, the Jewish king and high priest destroyed the Samaritan Temple and the city of Shechem. No, the Samaritans and Jews did not get along.

In John 1:29, John the Baptist declared, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Last week, we read about Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a member of the Jewish ruling council, the Sanhedrin. It is understandable that He would tell Nicodemus, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

But what about this Samaritan woman? Did this promise of salvation apply to her as well? Could this outsider and enemy of the Jews be saved? Yes, indeed. Jesus' encounter with her shows that He came into the world to save sinners of every kind.

Normally, a Jew would have nothing to do with a Samaritan. A Jewish man would definitely not talk to a Samaritan woman especially one with such a questionable history and reputation. Jews wouldn't even use dishes that Samaritans had used! This would render them unclean.

But Jesus is different. He came to give her living water, the water of life, the water of eternal life.

At first, the Samaritan woman was confused by Jesus and His offer of living water. She thought that Jesus was talking about water to quench a thirsty body but Jesus' was talking about water that quenches a thirsty soul!

There is much, much more happening in our Gospel lesson for this week but I chose to "distill" it down to this one very important point. "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

The Samaritan woman had a sketchy history. She came from a group of people who had a wrong idea about God and worshipped in the wrong place and in the wrong way. She was the most unlikely candidate for salvation. But Jesus loved her and saved her. She was so touched by Jesus' message that she became the first missionary to the Samaritans.

She went directly into town and told everyone about Jesus. John records, “Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony.” When the love of God in Christ truly touches our hearts, we cannot help but mimic this woman and tell others.

Because of the doors that were opened by this woman, Jesus stayed in Sychar for two days. He taught the people about the Kingdom of God, about sin and grace. John then reports, “Many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, ‘It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.’” (John 4:41-42).

Jesus knew the history of the woman at the well. I don’t know your history but I do know that whatever it is, Jesus came to be your savior. What Paul wrote to the Romans still applies to us today, “while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6).

“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).

On My Heart Imprint Your Image

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



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



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



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



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

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Prayers

L Heavenly Father, You have called us to worship You in spirit and truth. Receive our praise and hear our prayers, that we would be fully satisfied with the living water of Your holy word.

C Amen.

L Lord God, heavenly Father, You led Your ancient people by the hand of Moses and Aaron. Lead us through the wilderness of this world by Your guiding hand as we follow Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

L Lord of all, You bestow Your riches on those who call upon You. Bless parents with true wisdom to teach their children Your ways and the salvation that You have granted to us through faith in Jesus.

C Amen.

L Lord God, You showed Your love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Grant us true peace through our Lord Jesus Christ that we may always stand in Your grace and rejoice even during times of suffering.

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 hostilities with Iran would quickly end.

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 Almighty Lord, to You all hearts are open and all sins are known. Strengthen our hearts that we, who daily sin much, would freely confess and receive forgiveness for Jesus' sake.

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.

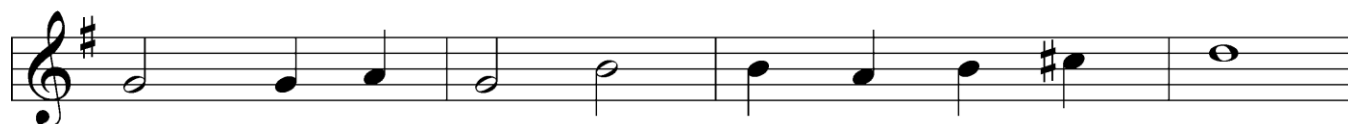
C Amen.

Savior, Again to Thy Dear Name We Raise

Lutheran Service Book 917, Lutheran Worship 221, The Lutheran Hymnal 47



1 Sav - ior, a - gain to Thy dear name we raise
2 Grant us Thy peace up - on our home - ward way;
3 Grant us Thy peace, Lord, through the com - ing night;
4 Grant us Thy peace through - out our earth - ly life,



With one ac - cord our part - ing hymn of praise;
With Thee be - gan, with Thee shall end, the day.
Turn Thou for us its dark - ness in - to light.
Our balm in sor - row and our stay in strife;



Once more we bless Thee ere our wor - ship cease,
Guard Thou the lips from sin, the hearts from shame,
From harm and dan - ger keep Thy chil - dren free;
Then, when Thy voice shall bid our con - flict cease,



Then, low - ly bend - ing, wait Thy word of peace.
That in this house have called up - on Thy name.
For dark and light are both a - like to Thee.
Call us, O Lord, to Thine e - ter - nal peace.

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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 Third Sunday in Lent March 9—14, 2026

Introduction

Most modern forms of meditation 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 84:1–4; antiphon Psalm 84:5

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

Verse of the Day: John 4:23a

- L** The hour is coming, and is now here,
- C** **when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.**

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. |

I'm approaching the sixth anniversary of providing these home worship services and daily meditations. Those first weeks and months were strange. Everything shut down. Schools closed. Worship services were canceled. Very few congregations provided online worship opportunities so I began to provide these home services. I am thankful for the positive feedback that I have received. It has given me encouragement to continue.

But I have also learned something that the writer of Psalm 84 understood long ago. There is something special about being in the Lord's house.

I often watch the services of Christ Lutheran Church on YouTube at 8 a.m. and then attend the 10:45 a.m. service. There is no comparison between worshiping online and being there in person!

The psalm begins, "How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God."

When I couldn't go to church, like the psalmist, I missed being in the courts of the Lord. I concur with the words of verse 4, "Blessèd are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise!"

To hear God's word and sing His praise in the His house with fellow believers is a blessing that we may not have appreciated before the pandemic. But I soon learned that we receive intangible blessings from being in the Lord's house with fellow believers.

Prayer: O Lord God, thank You for the blessings that come from gathering with fellow believers to worship and praise You. Grant us wisdom to seek You in Your house and receive from You the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Tuesday

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

Verse of the Day: John 4:23a

- | | |
|----------|--|
| L | The hour is coming, and is now here, |
| C | when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. |

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 God, whose glory it is always to have mercy, be gracious to all who have gone astray from Your ways and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of Your Word; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. |
|----------|---|

- | | |
|----------|--------------|
| C | Amen. |
|----------|--------------|

I read an article about how powerful players in our society are actively opposing the Christian faith. The author sounded the alarm and offered some solutions. I'm glad that I read the article. I learned a few things and appreciated the author's insight into much of what passes for contemporary thought.

But I am reminded that our faith was born in the face of violent opposition. Herod ordered the baby boys of Bethlehem to be slaughtered in an effort to destroy God's plans but Joseph, Mary, and Jesus escaped to Egypt. Religious leaders in Jerusalem manipulated secular authority to crucify Jesus but Jesus rose from the dead on Easter morning. Saul was committed to arresting Christians and throwing them into jail but he met Jesus on the road to Damascus and became one of the greatest missionaries ever. The Roman Empire was intent on stamping out the Christian faith but God called Emperor Constantine to serve the Church. A young monk was summoned to stand before the Diet of Worms and ordered to recant but he declared, "Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen." God's unchangeable truth will always win because Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

While we may or may not witness a turnaround in society during our lifetime, God wins victories every day when those who have gone astray come to repentance. He calls the lowly and He calls the powerful. Early in my ministry, God granted me the privilege of instructing and confirming three "hopeless cases." We must never give up hope. God can and does the impossible every day. We commend ourselves, our families, our community, and our nation to His mercy and grace.

Prayer: O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy, be gracious to all who have gone astray from Your ways and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of Your Word; 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: John 4:23a

- L** The hour is coming, and is now here,
- C** when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.

Psalm 95:1–9

- 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, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.
Today, if you hear his voice,
- C** ⁸do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,
- L** ⁹when your fathers put me to the test
- C** and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.

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 95 is one of the most well-known unknown psalms. <wink, wink> Of course, I say that tongue-in-cheek.

Psalm 95:1-7 is known as the Venite. Growing up, I sang it every Wednesday in chapel at Trinity Lutheran School in Sawyer and Immanuel Lutheran School in Bridgman. It wasn't until I was a pastor that I learned the Venite is the beginning of Psalm 95. I still enjoy singing the Venite today. I'm sorry that the Matins service has fallen out of favor in many congregations and Lutheran schools.

It was chosen for our psalm this week because of verse 8, "do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness." This is a reference to the events recorded in the Old Testament lesson, Exodus 17:1-7, when the people quarreled and doubted God's goodness and protection.

In the midst of troubling and turbulent times, it is good to sing the Venite or read Psalm 95. It reminds us that "the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods." He created and sustains everything!

He has made us and He cares for us. "We are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand." He gave manna to the Children of Israel in the wilderness. He sustained them by providing water from the rock. He also cares for each one of us. He provides us with living water.

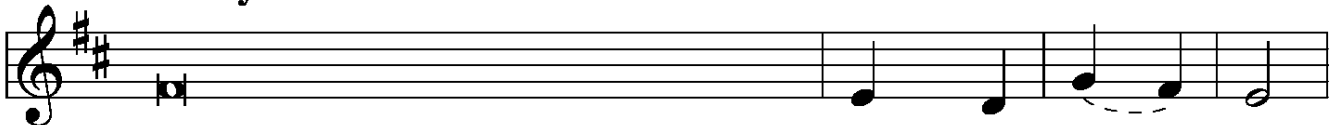
Pharaoh and all the might of Egypt could not overcome God's people because He was protecting them. The forces of evil that oppose us today cannot win. "Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!"

Prayer: O Lord, You are our help in time of need. Grant us faith to trust that we are the people of Your pasture and the sheep of Your hand especially in these difficult and trying times through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

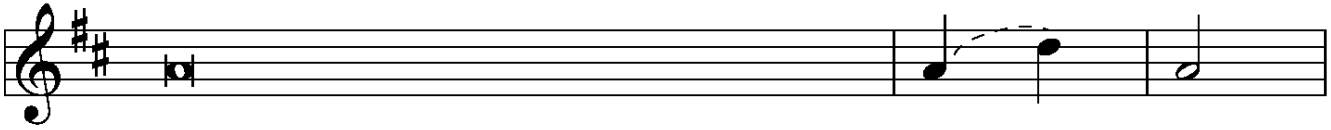
Venite



- C** 1 O come, let us sing to the Lord,
2 For the Lord is a great God
3 The sea is His, for He made it,
5 Glory be to the Father and to the Son



- 1 let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our sal - va - tion.
2 and a great king a - bove all gods.
3 and His hand formed the dry land.
5 and to the Ho - ly Spir - it;



1 Let us come into His presence with thanks - giv - ing,
2 The deep places of the earth are in His hand;
3 O come, let us worship and bow down,
4 For He is our God,
5 as it was in the be - - gin - ning,

Thursday

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

Verse of the Day: John 4:23a

- L** The hour is coming, and is now here,
- C** when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.

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.

Exodus 17:1-7

¹All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. ²Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" ³But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" ⁴So Moses cried to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." ⁵And the LORD said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. ⁶Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the LORD by saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

Exodus 17:1-7 is the account of the people of Israel testing the Lord by saying, "Is the Lord among us?" We are often plagued by the same question today.

There may be a few people who have a never wavering faith. However, many of us falter on our faith journey through life.

The people of Israel had escaped Pharaoh by passing through the Red Sea on dry land. They had received from God's hand manna from heaven but now they ask, "Is the Lord among us or not?" Like them, God richly blesses us day by day, but sometimes we walk by sight and not by faith and stumble.

We must guard against repeating the errors of the Israelites. However, it's good to know that when, in weakness, we slip and fall that God is always faithful to us.

He heard the ungrateful grumbling of the people of Israel. He could have ignored them because of their appalling attitude. But instead, He graciously provided them with the water that they were seeking.

We should never be afraid to come to God with our requests. Even when our motives are suspect and our faith is feeble, God hears our prayers and answers them in the way that is best for us. He sometimes does this in a miraculous way as He did when water flowed from the rock. Other times, He uses mundane means to provide for our needs. As our loving Father, He may choose to ask us to wait patiently or He may need to say no to our requests. However God chooses to answer our prayers, we know that it is for our ultimate blessing.

Prayer: Lord God, thank You for hearing and answering our prayers. Grant us faith to accept that Your answers are always best for us and for our salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Friday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: John 4:23a

L The hour is coming, and is now here,

C when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.

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 5:1–8

¹Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

²Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

⁶For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

At one time, there was an ethos and culture in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod that were informally handed down and passed around among pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers. It included an unwritten code of ethical conduct and an understanding of Biblical theology.

This culture was nurtured in the parsonages and teacherages of our churches (Yes, some congregations had teacherages where called teachers could live with their families while serving in the congregation). Pastors and teachers had large families and many of their children also entered the ministry, one generation after another.

It was also cultivated at our Concordias. Mine was the last generation where the vast majority of pastors were products of our pastor/teacher training system. This meant that many of my classmates spent 8 years together in college and seminary preparing for ordination. Today, it is rare to find a pastor graduating from the seminary who did prep work at a Concordia. In addition, many at the seminary are married with families so their interaction with other students is rather limited because of their family obligations.

Where am I going with this? In our Epistle lesson from Romans, I counted at least five significant passages that would have been recognized as foundational for solid Lutheran theology. Pastors of my generation would

have understood them as basic prerequisites for ministry. But I've noticed that more and more pastors think differently about these things today.

Romans 5:1 is the first of these foundational passages, "Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." While justification by faith is still mentioned as important in our circles, it is often only given lip service. More often I hear things like, "We are justified by faith as long as we do A, B, and C." What one hand giveth the other hand taketh away!

But Paul was right. The only way that we can have peace with God is through justification by faith. If we add things to this, we destroy peace in our hearts. You and I can never know if we have worshiped accurately and often enough. We can never know if we've tithed enough. We can never know if we have been socially active enough. Because in reality, we can't. It is only through firm confidence in justification by faith that we can have peace in knowing that despite our failures, we stand in God's grace. May this truth never be lost among us.

Prayer: Almighty God, thank You for sending Jesus to fulfill the demands of Your law for us. Grant us faith to trust that we have peace with You despite our failures through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Saturday

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

C Amen.

Gradual Hebrews 12:2

L O come, let us fix our eyes on Jesus,

C **the founder and perfecter of our faith,**

L who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame,

C **and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.**

Verse of the Day: John 4:23a

L The hour is coming, and is now here,

C **when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.**

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 5:1-8

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⁶For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Some Christians live with the idea that we are forever falling into and out of God's grace. Their thought process goes something like this.

When we sin, we confess our sin and God forgives it and we are under God's grace. But as soon as we sin again, we are outside of God's grace until we confess and receive forgiveness once more.

If this was the case, then no one could ever be certain of salvation. Eternal life in heaven would depend on the timing of death. Dying immediately after confession and forgiveness would be the only way to be saved. Any sudden death following a sin would lead to damnation.

But the Apostle Paul makes it clear that we "stand" in God's grace as long as we have faith. When we sin out of weakness, this is not a loss of faith. We continue to stand in God's grace. Standing in God's grace allows us to rejoice in the salvation that God has promised to us through our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is so much more to say about these few verses from Romans but time doesn't permit it. Nevertheless, I don't want to neglect these words from verse 5, "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

God's love isn't something that we produce or something that comes about through our own efforts. It is something that the Holy Spirit has poured into our hearts.

True love is an essential characteristic of the Christian life. True love shows itself through obedience to God's commands. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

True Christian love displays itself by honoring father and mother. It means that we help our neighbors in times of need. It means that we honor God's plan for marriage. It means that we respect the line between what is mine and what is thine. It means that we speak well of our neighbor and explain everything in the kindest way.

Take a moment and review the Ten Commandments along with Luther's explanation to see how true love is made real in practical ways.

Prayer: Almighty God, thank You for the gift of Your grace and love. Move us the fulfill the law of love in our lives by loving You and our neighbors as You have commanded through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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