

The First Sunday in Lent

February 21, 2021

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?"

Jesus, Refuge of the Weary Lutheran Service Book 423, Lutheran Worship 90, The Lutheran Hymnal 145



1 Je - sus, ref - uge of the wea - ry, Blest Re - deem - er,
2 Do we pass that cross un - heed - ing, Breath - ing no re -
3 Je - sus, may our hearts be burn - ing With more fer - vent



whom we love, Foun - tain in life's des - ert drea - ry, Sav - ior
pen - tant vow, Though we see You wound - ed, bleed - ing, See Your
love for You; May our eyes be ev - er turn - ing To be -



from the world a - bove: Of - ten have Your eyes, of - fend - ed,
thorn - en - cir - cled brow? Yet Your sin - less death has brought us
hold Your cross a - new Till in glo - ry, part - ed nev - er



Gazed up - on the sin - ner's fall; Yet up - on the
Life e - ter - nal, peace, and rest; On - ly what Your
From the bless - ed Sav - ior's side, Grav - en in our



cross ex - tend - ed, You have borne the pain of all.
grace has taught us Calms the sin - ner's deep dis - tress.
hearts for - ev - er, Dwell the cross, the Cru - ci - fied.

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.

C 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.

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 22:1–18

¹After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here am I.” ²He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.” ³So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. ⁴On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. ⁵Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.” ⁶And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. ⁷And Isaac said to his father Abraham, “My father!” And he said, “Here am I, my son.” He said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” ⁸Abraham said, “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So they went both of them together.

⁹When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. ¹¹But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here am I.” ¹²He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.” ¹³And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴So Abraham called the name of that place, “The LORD will provide”; as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.”

¹⁵And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven ¹⁶and said, “By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, ¹⁸and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”

- 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.

Psalms 25:1–10

- L** ¹To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.
C ²**O my God, in you I trust; let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies exult over me.**
L ³Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame;
they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

- C** ⁴**Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.**
- L** ⁵Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all the day long.
- C** ⁶**Remember your mercy, O LORD, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.**
- L** ⁷Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O LORD!
- C** ⁸**Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.**
- L** ⁹He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.
- C** ¹⁰**All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness,
for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.**

James 1:12-18

¹²Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. ¹³Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

¹⁶Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. ¹⁷Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. ¹⁸Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Verse of the Day: Joel 2:13; Ephesians 6:11

L Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;

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

Mark 1:9–15

L The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 1st chapter.

C Glory to You, O Lord.

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opening and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

¹²The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

L This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to You, O Christ.

C I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of God the Father

Almighty.
From thence He will come to judge the living
and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

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



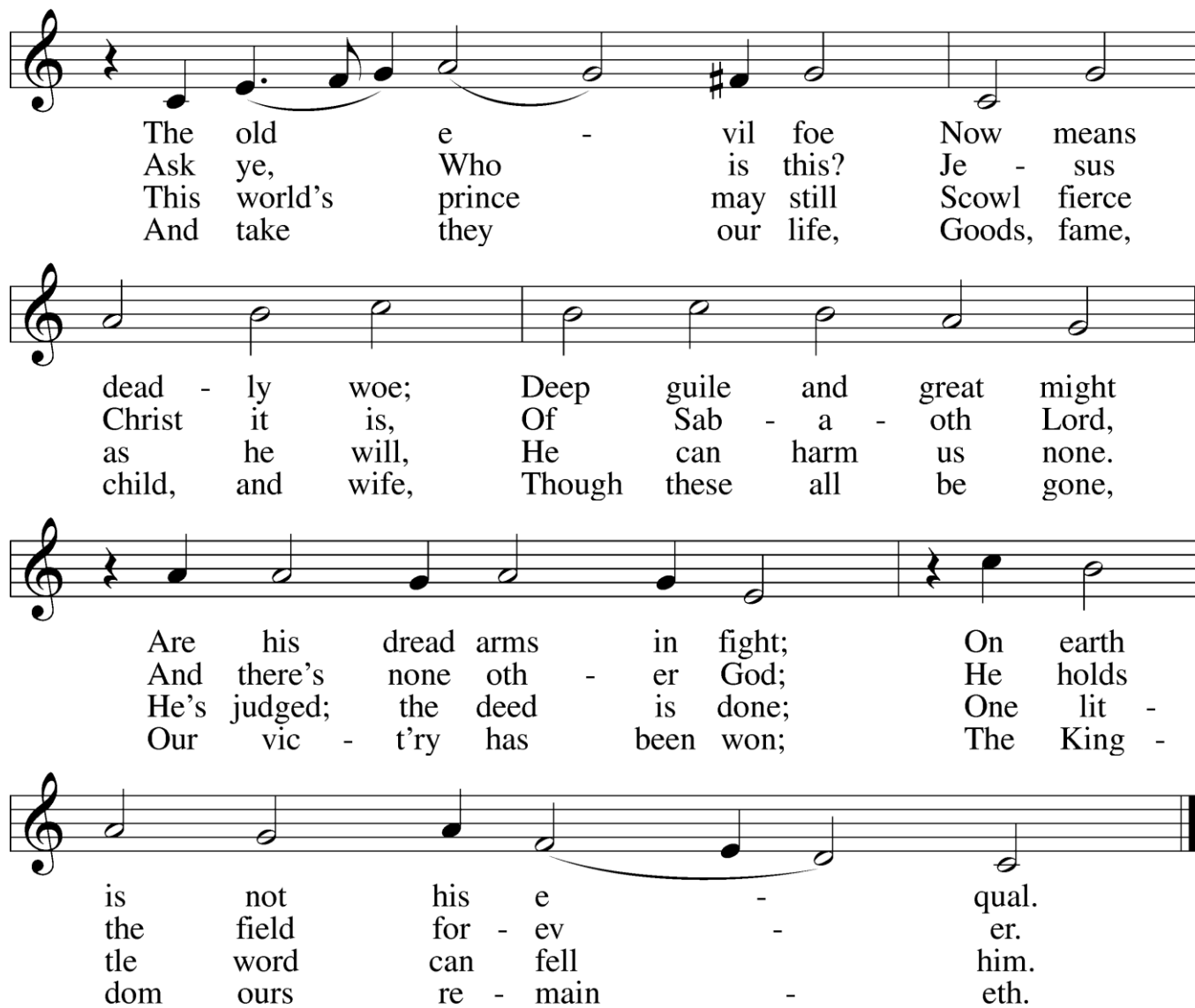
A trust - y shield and weap - on;
Soon were our loss ef - fect - ed;
All ea - ger to de - vour us,
Nor an - y thanks have for it;



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 oth - er 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:

Today's Latin lesson is "paramentum." It means "adornment." We receive our English word "parament" from this Latin word as the name for the cloth hangings that adorn our altars and pulpits. In churches all around our country, the paraments have been changed to purple for the season of Lent. For centuries purple has served as a visual reminder to the faithful that we are in a time of somber repentance and restraint as we prepare for Easter.

The word "lent" comes to us from Old English and German and originally meant "lengthening." It was a word for spring when the days are beginning to lengthen. An older designation that more accurately describes this season and still used in French, Italian, Spanish, and other languages are words that reference the number 40. They are a reminder that Lent is 40 days of self-restraint and spiritual renewal.

In yet other languages such as Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian, the name for this season is a reference to fasting. Together these names recall Jesus' 40 days of fasting in the wilderness following His baptism as He prepared for His three years of ministry.

For Christians around the world and through the centuries, Lent allows us to remember this time in Jesus' life and in some small way participate in it. We do this by fasting and self-sacrifice. We focus on prayer and repentance. We echo Jesus' life with acts of kindness and love such as generosity and compassionate care for those in need.

Our three-year lectionary puts us at a slight disadvantage this year as we begin our 40-day Lenten journey with the Gospel of Mark. It recalls this time in Jesus' life with only a single verse, ".And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him" (Mark 1:13).

To understand the full impact of this event, it is good for us to read again the historic Gospel lesson for The First Sunday in Lent:

Matthew 4:1-11

¹Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ²And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."

⁴But he answered, "It is written,

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

⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple ⁶and 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."

⁷Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

⁸Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." ¹⁰Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written,

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

¹¹Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

When Christians practice the discipline of self-denial in Lent, they are strengthening their capacity to resist temptation. Satan is clever in his ability to make sin look attractive. He makes sin look like a shortcut to happiness and self-fulfillment. In one way or another, this was the essence of each of the three temptations that he placed in front of Jesus. But Satan's real goal was to derail Jesus' mission to be the perfect sacrifice for sinners.

You may have learned that my mother was recently called to be with Jesus in paradise. As you can imagine, I have been thinking of her quite a bit lately.

For the last several years, every morning at about 8 A.M. I would call her on the phone. More often than not she would be laughing as she recounted to me some misadventure of Wally and Beaver. She loved the sitcom, "Leave it to Beaver" so much that I recently purchased for her the complete series on DVD. Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to present it to her as a gift.

Because of her love for the show, I found myself watching it more and more with fresh eyes. I know it is common for "sophisticated" 21st-century people to belittle this program as naive and culturally uninformed. Nevertheless, it provides insight into human nature seldom matched by contemporary writers.

God's richest blessings to you in Christ.

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!

L Heavenly Father, as we enter this Lenten season of repentance and renewed devotion, we pray that You would remember us according to Your steadfast love and goodness in Christ and instruct and lead us by Your Spirit in Your ways so that we may repent and believe the Gospel..

C Amen.

L Almighty God, send Your holy angels to watch over all of our loved ones, especially those who live in distant places. Protect all who attend to our needs during this time of national emergency and pandemic. We ask that you would quickly grant relief according to Your will.

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.

[A note about our Lenten hymns: I've often commented that hymns are like food, food for the soul. When we plan our menus, we need staples such as meat and potatoes. We enjoy dessert and sometimes even cotton candy. But we dare not neglect our greens and vegetables.

I've always thought of Lenten hymns as the vegetables of our hymnal. They are high in spiritual vitamins and nutrition. When we haven't had them for a while, we crave the nourishment they offer.

We may enjoy the cotton candy and potato chip hymns but you can't live on them. We need the sturdy Lenten hymns to balance our spiritual diet. --- Pastor Quardokus]



1 Christ, the life of all the liv - ing, Christ, the death of
 2 Thou, ah! Thou, hast tak - en on Thee Bonds and stripes, a
 3 Thou hast borne the smit - ing on - ly That my wounds might
 4 Heart - less scof - fers did sur - round Thee, Treat - ing Thee with



death, our foe, Who, Thy - self for me once giv - ing
 cru - el rod; Pain and scorn were heaped up - on Thee,
 all be whole; Thou hast suf - fered, sad and lone - ly,
 shame - ful scorn And with pierc - ing thorns they crowned Thee.



To the dark - est depths of woe: Through Thy suf - f'rings,
 O Thou sin - less Son of God! Thus didst Thou my
 Rest to give my wea - ry soul; Yea, the curse of
 All dis - grace Thou, Lord, hast borne, That as Thine Thou



death, and mer - it I e - ter - nal life in - her - it.
 soul de - liv - er From the bonds of sin for - ev - er.
 God en - dur - ing, Bless - ing un - to me se - cur - ing.
 might - est own me And with heav'n - ly glo - ry crown me.



Thou - sand, thou - sand thanks shall be, Dear - est Je - sus, un - to Thee.
 Thou - sand, thou - sand thanks shall be, Dear - est Je - sus, un - to Thee.
 Thou - sand, thou - sand thanks shall be, Dear - est Je - sus, un - to Thee.
 Thou - sand, thou - sand thanks shall be, Dear - est Je - sus, un - to Thee.

5 Thou hast suffered men to bruise Thee,
 That from pain I might be free;
 Falsely did Thy foes accuse Thee:
 Thence I gain security;
 Comfortless Thy soul did languish
 Me to comfort in my anguish.
 Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
 Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.

6 Thou hast suffered great affliction
 And hast borne it patiently,
 Even death by crucifixion,
 Fully to atone for me;
 Thou didst choose to be tormented
 That my doom should be prevented.
 Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
 Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.

7 Then, for all that wrought my pardon,
For Thy sorrows deep and sore,
For Thine anguish in the Garden,
I will thank Thee evermore,
Thank Thee for Thy groaning, sighing,
For Thy bleeding and Thy dying,
For that last triumphant cry,
And shall praise Thee, Lord, on high.

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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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Note: National Lutheran Schools Week materials are available at <https://www.lcms.org/lutheranschoolsweek>

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 First Sunday in Lent

February 22 – February 27, 2021

Introduction

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

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

C 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.

The introit for this week comes from Psalm 91. Psalm 91 is a strong reminder of God's comfort and protection in times of trouble and stress. It is particularly appropriate during this time of Covid-19 and political unrest in our nation. You may wish to read it in its entirety.

It is selected this week because verses 11 and 12 are quoted by Satan in His second temptation of Jesus:

For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways.
On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.

Jesus' response from Deuteronomy 6:16 is particularly appropriate during this time of pandemic and enforced safety measures.

Several times I have heard Christians disparage pandemic safety measures by saying, "I'm not changing my life. I am trusting God. When it's my time, it's my time."

How would you respond to such a statement? My standard response has been, "It is true that when God is ready for me, He will take me to be with Him but I still look both ways when I cross the street."

Jesus' response is better, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God." (KJV).

God does promise to protect us. His first form of protection is giving us human wisdom. Jesus refused to throw Himself from the panicle of the temple because it would be foolish. Likewise, it is foolish for us to reject common-sense measures to fight infectious diseases. Do not tempt God!

Nevertheless, there are times when danger comes that are beyond our control. In these times, we trust in God's grace and mercy to do what is best for us in every circumstance of life.

Fatalism is not a Christian virtue. Rather faith and trust are the hallmarks of Christianity. It would be hard to find a better description of this attitude than the words of the hymn writer, Hans Adolph Brorson, translated by Ditlef G. Ristad.

I Walk in Danger All the Way (LSB 716)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1 I walk in danger all the way.
The thought shall never leave me
That Satan, who has marked his prey,
Is plotting to deceive me.
This foe with hidden snares
May seize me unawares
If I should fail to watch and pray.
I walk in danger all the way.</p> | <p>3 And death pursues me all the way,
Nowhere I rest securely;
He comes by night, he comes by day,
He takes his prey most surely.
A failing breath, and I
In death's strong grasp may lie
To face eternity today
As death pursues me all the way.</p> |
| <p>2 I pass through trials all the way,
With sin and ills contending;
In patience I must bear each day
The cross of God's own sending.
When in adversity
I know not where to flee,
When storms of woe my soul dismay,
I pass through trials all the way.</p> | <p>4 I walk with angels all the way,
They shield me and befriend me;
All Satan's pow'r is held at bay
When heav'nly hosts attend me;
They are my sure defense,
All fear and sorrow, hence!
Unharm'd by foes, do what they may,
I walk with angels all the way.</p> |

5 I walk with Jesus all the way,
His guidance never fails me;
Within His wounds I find a stay
When Satan's pow'r assails me;
And by His footsteps led,
My path I safely tread.
No evil leads my soul astray;
I walk with Jesus all the way.

6 My walk is heav'nward all the way;
Await, my soul, the morrow,
When God's good healing shall allay
All suff'ring, sin, and sorrow.
Then, worldly pomp, begone!
To heav'n I now press on.
For all the world I would not stay;
My walk is heav'nward all the way.

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L Let us pray. Thank You, Lord, for Your divine protection. Send Your holy angels to watch over me and all of my loved ones. Protect us from all harm and danger. Grant that when my short life is ended, By Your angel host attended; fold me within Your arms to rest.

C Amen

Tuesday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Joel 2:13; Ephesians 6:11

L Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;

C Put on the whole armor of God, 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

I am certain that for many of us, this last year has felt like wandering in the wilderness. Every day we see more reports of hardship and stress caused by the pandemic. On top of that, the weather in Texas has been horrendous. People are living without heat. Water pipes have broken. Life is difficult.

Of course, compared to the ancient Israelites, most of us have it pretty easy even with the adversities of 2020 and the first part of 2021. My furnace comes on and heats my house. The water runs at my kitchen sink. My refrigerator and cupboards are stocked. I have the internet and television. I have more books than I can ever read. I still can find things to complain about. God's people have a long tradition of complaining.

God parted the Red Sea and saved His people from the Egyptians. The people complained that they didn't have enough to eat. God sent manna from heaven. The people complained that they wanted meat. Moses went up Mount Sinai. The people complained that he took too long and built a golden calf.

Amid all this complaining, God has never abandoned His people. He continues to lead us into green pastures and beside the still waters. Our world is a wilderness of sin and death. But God in His mercy has

heard our complaining prayers and sent us a savior. Life here will always be a wilderness but the savior brings us to the promised land of eternal life in paradise to live with Him for all eternity.

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. Amen.

Wednesday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Joel 2:13; Ephesians 6:11

L Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;

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

Psalm 25:1–10

L ¹To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

C ²**O my God, in you I trust; let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies exult over me.**

L ³Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame;
they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

C ⁴**Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.**

L ⁵Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all the day long.

C ⁶**Remember your mercy, O LORD, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.**

L ⁷Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O LORD!

C ⁸**Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.**

L ⁹He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.

C ¹⁰**All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness,
for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.**

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.

Spin, spin, spin! Watching evening or morning news reminds me of a story I learned many years ago.

Three candidates were applying for a job. One was a mathematician. One was a statistician. One was an economist.

The job interview consisted of one question asked to each candidate in turn. The question was, “What is $2 + 2$?”

The first candidate responded, “With mathematical certainty, I can tell you that the answer is 4.”

The second candidate answered, “Statistically speaking, there is a more than 90% probability that the answer lies somewhere between 3 and 5.”

When the economist answered, he furtively glanced around the room. Then he closed the blinds and quietly whispered, “What do you want it to be?” (Pause for laughter <wink, wink>)

Truth is a commodity that is hard to come by these days. Media personalities continually spin the facts to hurt the opposition or to protect their personal favorite. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to recognize the endless spinning of the news.

Sometimes it feels like we will never learn the truth. And of course, we should expect this. Truth is only found in one place, God's word. Psalm 25:5 says, "Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation."

I expect media folks to spin the truth but it is more disturbing when religious leaders try to spin God's word. They seem to look around at society and then ask, "What do you want God to say?"

In reality, the truth of God's word never changes. God is still holy and righteous. Sin is still sin. Guilt is still real. Repentance is still required.

We plead to God with the words of Psalm 25:7, "Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions." And thanks be to God, forgiveness is also new every morning. God's love is found on the cross.

Lent is a time to ponder Jesus' sacrifice for sinners and to rejoice that God never changes His promises to grant life and salvation to all who believe.

Prayer: O Lord, during Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, Satan sought to spin the truth. Let us never be deceived by his lying ways. Grant that we will always trust the truth of Your holy word and receive the promised salvation won by Christ on the cross. Amen.

Thursday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Joel 2:13; Ephesians 6:11

L Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;

C Put on the whole armor of God, 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.

Genesis 22:1–18

¹After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." ²He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." ³So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. ⁴On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. ⁵Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you." ⁶And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. ⁷And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here am I, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" ⁸Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together.

⁹When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. ¹¹But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said,

“Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here am I.” ¹²He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.” ¹³And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴So Abraham called the name of that place, “The LORD will provide”; as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.”

¹⁵And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven ¹⁶and said, “By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, ¹⁸and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”

Humanity does not want God to be God. If we had our way, each of us would declare ourselves to be God. That was the temptation presented by Satan to Eve in Genesis 3:5, “You will be like God,”

It is not uncommon for people to read this account of Abraham and Isaac and doubt God’s righteousness because of His request for Abraham to sacrifice his son, his only son. In doing this, we are making ourselves to be God.

Here is a better approach. When we read something in the Bible that makes us question God and His activities or judgments, simply respond, “I don’t understand this God, but I trust that what You are doing is best.”

Abraham was put through this shocking trial for the benefit of all. In this account, we learn of God’s incredible love for us in Christ. It is hard for us to fathom the sacrifice that God requested of Abraham. It is more incredible that God made an even greater sacrifice for us when Jesus, the Lamb of God, went to the cross to save sinners. In Him all the nations of the earth are blessed!

Offered was He for greatest and for least,
Himself the victim and Himself the priest.

Draw Near and Take the Body of the Lord, LSB 637, St. 1b

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for the sacrifice of Your only-begotten Son on the cross. Grant that we would always know Your love for sinners 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: Joel 2:13; Ephesians 6:11

L Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;

C Put on the whole armor of God, 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.

James 1:12-18

¹²Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. ¹³Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

¹⁶Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. ¹⁷Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. ¹⁸Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Our epistle from James this week begins with the words, "Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial." The trials of life are always difficult for us to understand, yet we all have them.

Prosperity preachers have a counterfeit answer to trials. Their message is, "If you do what God wills, He will bless you and you won't have trials." Then they say, "If trials come, you don't have enough faith or you aren't walking in the will of God." This is a disastrous message and one that is contrary to scripture.

On this side of eternity, we can never know for certain why God allows this or that trial to come into our lives. Is this Covid-19 pandemic a judgment from God? What purpose does it serve? God has not granted us the answers to these questions. We are simply called upon to trust Him and persevere.

God allows trials to come. They test our faith. But we must always remember that God tempts no one. He is not the author of evil. Rather, He strengthens us for each challenge that comes our way. He grants courage and peace to believers as they struggle with the difficulties of life. At the right time and in the right way every Christian must take up his cross and follow Jesus.

Lent is a time for self-examination. We ask, "Have I brought these trials upon myself?" When the answer is yes, we bring them to the Lord in repentance. When they come from others, we pray for the grace to bear each other's burdens (Galatians 6:2) just as Christ bore our sin upon the cross.

Prayer: O Lord, thank you for every good and perfect gift. Grant us strength to remain steadfast under trial, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Saturday

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

C Amen.

Gradual 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: Joel 2:13; Ephesians 6:11

L Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;

C Put on the whole armor of God, 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.

Our gradual for Lent is one of my favorites, “O come, let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

There are so many distractions in life. Especially today, everyone seems to be caught up with the latest escapade of some media personality, politician, or celebrity. Allow Lent to be a special time for you to “fix your eyes on Jesus.”

Jesus is the alpha and omega of our faith. He is the beginning and the end. He is the author and perfecter of our faith. Our faith must come from no place else but Jesus. He is our all and all.

The cross was filled with agony and shame. Yet Jesus went to the cross knowing the joy that our salvation would bring.

Lent is a time for us to be like Jesus and sacrifice for others. Let us put selfishness aside and care for others around us with grace and mercy just as Jesus cared for us.

But let us also look past Lent to Jesus’ resurrection on Easter morn. Let us look past Lent to the time that we will join Him in paradise for all eternity.

Prayer: O Lord, help us fix our eyes on Jesus! Grant that as we go through life, we would put on the whole armor of God and stand against the schemes of the devil through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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