

The Second Sunday in Lent February 25, 2024

Today we hear Peter make his great confession of faith that Jesus is the Christ. Unfortunately, we also hear him try to rebuke Jesus. Our Christian faith is so intimately tied to the cross of Christ that any attempt to envision Christianity without the cross is of Satan. In fact, we not only recognize the cross of Christ but each of us must also take up our cross and follow Him. We rejoice that through the cross we have been justified by faith and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Salvation unto Us Has Come

Lutheran Service Book 555, Lutheran Worship 355, The Lutheran Hymnal 377
Stanzas 1-6



1 Sal - va - tion un - to us has come By God's free grace and fa - vor;
2 What God did in His Law de - mand And none to Him could ren - der
3 It was a false, mis - lead - ing dream That God His Law had giv - en
4 From sin our flesh could not ab - stain, Sin held its sway un - ceas - ing;



Good works can - not a - vert our doom, They help and save us nev - er.
Caused wrath and woe on ev - 'ry hand For man, the vile of - fend - er.
That sin - ners could them - selves re - deem And by their works gain heav - en.
The task was use - less and in vain, Our guilt was e'er in - creas - ing.



Faith looks to Je - sus Christ a - lone, Who did for all the
Our flesh has not those pure de - sires The spir - it of the
The Law is but a mir - ror bright To bring the in - bred
None can re - move sin's poi - soned dart Or pu - ri - fy our



world a - tone; He is our one Re - deem - er.
Law re - quires, And lost is our con - di - tion.
sin to light That lurks with - in our na - ture.
guile - ful heart— So deep is our cor - rup - tion.

5 Yet as the Law must be fulfilled
Or we must die despairing,
Christ came and has God's anger stilled,
Our human nature sharing.
He has for us the Law obeyed
And thus the Father's vengeance stayed
Which over us impended.

6 Since Christ has full atonement made
And brought to us salvation,
Each Christian therefore may be glad
And build on this foundation.
Your grace alone, dear Lord, I plead,
Your death is now my life indeed,
For You have paid my ransom

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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 115:11–13, 18; antiphon Psalm 25:6

L Remember your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love,
for they have been from of old.

C You who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord!
He is their help and their shield.

L The Lord has remembered us; he will bless us;
he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron;

C he will bless those who fear the Lord,
both the small and the great.

L We will bless the Lord
from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the Lord!

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 Remember your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love,
for they have been from of old.

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 (Omitted during Lent)

Collect of the Day

L Let us pray: O God, You see that of ourselves we have no strength. By Your mighty power defend us from all adversities that may happen to the body and from all evil thoughts that may assault and hurt the soul; 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 17:1–7, 15–16

¹When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, ²that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.” ³Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, ⁴“Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. ⁵No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. ⁶I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. ⁷And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. . . .

¹⁵And God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. ¹⁶I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.”

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 22:23–31

L ²³You who fear the LORD, praise him!

All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him, and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!

C ²⁴**For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted,
and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard, when he cried to him.**

L ²⁵From you comes my praise in the great congregation;
my vows I will perform before those who fear him.

C ²⁶**The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the LORD!
May your hearts live forever!**

L ²⁷All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD,
and all the families of the nations shall worship before you.

C ²⁸**For kingship belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations.**

L ²⁹All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship;
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, even the one who could not keep himself alive.

C ³⁰**Posterity shall serve him; it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation;**

L ³¹they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it.

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.**

Romans 5:1–11

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. ⁹Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Verse of the Day: Joel 2:13; Mark 8:34b

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

C If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Mark 8:27–38

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

C Glory to You, O Lord.

²⁷And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” ²⁸And they told him, “John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.” ²⁹And he asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Christ.” ³⁰And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.

³¹And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³²And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

³⁴And he called to him the crowd with his disciples and said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. ³⁶For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? ³⁷For what can a man give in return for his life? ³⁸For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

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

Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart

Lutheran Service Book 708, Lutheran Worship 413, The Lutheran Hymnal 429



1 Lord, Thee I love with all my heart; I pray Thee, ne'er from
2 Yea, Lord, 'twas Thy rich boun-ty gave My bod - y, soul, and
3 Lord, let at last Thine an - gels come, To A - br'ham's bos - om



me de - part, With ten - der mer - cy cheer - me. Earth
all I have In this poor life of la - bor. Lord,
bear me home, That I may die un - fear - ing; And



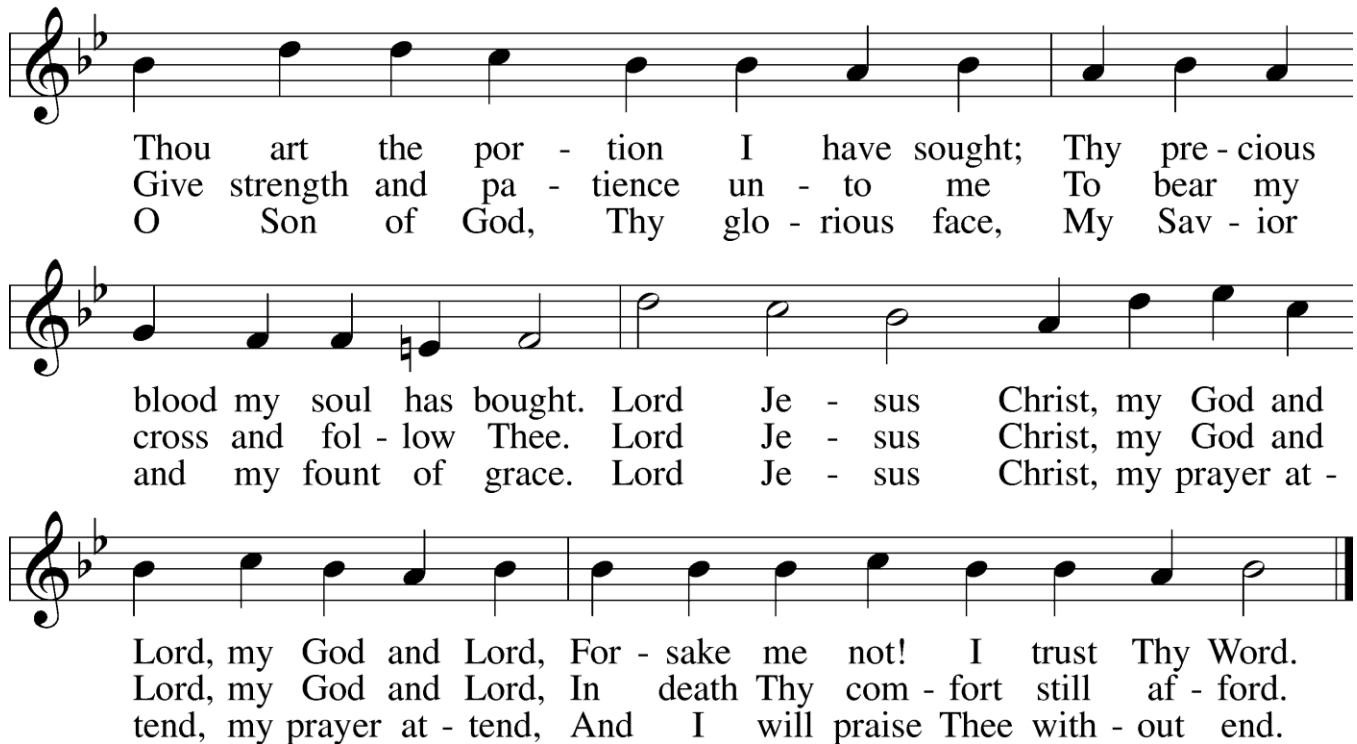
has no plea - sure I would share. Yea, heav'n it - self were
grant that I in ev - 'ry place May glo - ri - fy Thy
in its nar - row cham - ber keep My bod - y safe in



void and bare If Thou, Lord, wert not near me. And should my
lav - ish grace And help and serve my neigh - bor. Let no false
peace-ful sleep Un - til Thy re - ap - pear - ing. And then from



heart for sor - row break, My trust in Thee can noth - ing shake.
doc - trine me be - guile; Let Sa - tan not my soul de - file.
death a - wak - en me, That these mine eyes with joy may see,



Thou art the por - tion I have sought; Thy pre - cious
Give strength and pa - tience un - to me To bear my
O Son of God, Thy glo - rious face, My Sav - ior
blood my soul has bought. Lord Je - sus Christ, my God and
cross and fol - low Thee. Lord Je - sus Christ, my God and
and my fount of grace. Lord Je - sus Christ, my prayer at -
Lord, my God and Lord, For - sake me not! I trust Thy Word.
Lord, my God and Lord, In death Thy com - fort still af - ford.
tend, my prayer at - tend, And I will praise Thee with - out end.

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Devotional thoughts:

You may be aware that on Thursday a minor disaster struck the United States. Large numbers of people were forced to live without their cell phones!

Although the number may be few, some people are perfectly content to live life that way. In fact, I, too, lived without a cell phone for the majority of my life. But now, life without a cell phone is more than an inconvenience. It's an emergency!

Of course, I only rarely talk to anyone on my phone. Although I would call my mother several times a day, now I am texting, googling, checking Facebook, reading email, taking pictures, watching videos, etc. I am probably as connected as anyone my age can be.

Being connected is often a blessing. When I attended college, my dormitory had only one phone. It was a payphone next to the front door. Young people today might ask, "How could an entire dormitory of college students get by with only one phone?" But in reality, that phone was rarely used! Its most frequent use was ordering pizza. My parents seldom heard from me unless...I wanted money; locked my keys in the trunk; or needed advice. But now with a cell phone, my children and I can text each other several times a day. I can send and receive pictures. I can FaceTime with my grandchildren. Being connected is a blessing. How did we ever live without phones in our hands?

People have always found ways to be connected. In addition to using telephones, back in the day, radio and television served my generation. Before that, newspapers had morning, afternoon, and evening editions. People crave connections and have always found ways to pass news to family and friends.

So it was in Bible times. People from the northern tip of Galilee to the southern reaches of Judea, from the Mediterranean to beyond the Jordan knew about Jesus! They heard about His miracles. They knew of His teaching.

I can imagine people talking about Him as they gathered around the town well or in the marketplace. As word spread, people sought Him out. One time, Jesus fed 5,000 of them. Another time, He fed 4,000. They sat on the shore and listened to Him speak from a boat. They covered the side of a mountain as He proclaimed God's word to them.

As much as it is a blessing that we stay connected with our phones, there is also a downside. Not a day goes by that I don't receive a scam call or a marketing ploy. There seems to be as much disinformation as

information on the information superhighway. Faster download speeds and 5G simply mean a faster road to confusion!

While there was much information being shared about Jesus, there was also much confusion. Much like today, everyone had an opinion. And just like today, most of those opinions were wrong. It was a real challenge to separate the disinformation from the information.

And so, we find Jesus and His disciples in and around the villages of Caesarea Philippi at the base of Mount Hermon near one of the sources of the Jordan River. Everyone had an opinion about Jesus and they were all wrong! Some believed that He was John the Baptist who came back from the dead. This is what Herod Antipas believed (Mark 5:14). Others were convinced that He was Elijah, the great prophet of the Old Testament who had once again appeared to perform awesome miracles. Still, others weren't quite sure who He was but admitted that He must unquestionably be one of the prophets.

Does this sound familiar? Everyone today has an opinion about Jesus and religion. Most of them are wrong. People are swayed by marketing and retail religion. They are misled by celebrities and media personalities. They gravitate toward the trendy and fashionable. But these trendy and stylish, popular and up-to-date opinions about Jesus and religion are just as mistaken as those opinions held by the people of Jesus' day.

Cutting through all the clutter and disinformation, Peter, boldly speaking for all the disciples, gives the true and precise answer to the question, "Who is Jesus?" He is the Christ! And as Matthew records, He is the Son of the living God!

This presents an inconvenient truth for our modern culture where people believe that no one can claim to have a corner on absolute truth. But times really haven't changed since Bible times. Jesus and his disciples were near Caesarea Philippi where multiple temples were built to honor a variety of "gods." In the Roman world, everyone had their own personal favorite "god." It was just as offensive to them as it is to modern ears for the disciples to recognize Jesus as the Son of the only true God! But indeed that is who He is.

But the disciples were still a bit confused. They knew that Jesus is the Christ but they didn't know exactly what that meant so Jesus took this opportunity to explain it to them.

To be the Christ meant that Jesus would suffer many things. He would be rejected by the religious leaders of His day, the elders and the chief priests, and the scribes. This rejection would lead to His death!

Peter could not accept this reality. He took Jesus aside and, as Matthew records, said, "This shall never happen to you" (Matthew 16:22).

We are often like Peter. The cross never sounds good to our human way of thinking. Suffering and death never sound good. This is because we are not setting our minds on the things of God but on the things of man. Human thinking cannot visualize God's plan of salvation through Jesus' death and resurrection.

Modern religious marketing is based on Peter's ideas that rejection and suffering are bad and must never happen. Mega-churches draw crowds because people are attracted to success and prosperity. But Jesus clearly says, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

Religion without Jesus, religion without the cross, religion without self-denial, is from Satan! Sin is real! Guilt is real! Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is real!

But thanks be to God, He turns death to life. Forgiveness is real. Jesus' resurrection is real. "Whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it," is a true statement.

Our Lenten journey is one of seeking the truth of God's word. It is one of understanding that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God who suffered many things, was rejected and killed for our sake and for the entire sinful world. Our Lenten journey looks past the cross to the empty tomb knowing that after three days, Christ rose again. We must say this plainly over and over again so that there is no confusion or misinformation.

Let us never be ashamed of Jesus. Let us never be ashamed to declare with Peter that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Let us never be ashamed of Jesus' suffering and death on the cross.

Rather, let us look to the resurrection and Christ's return in glory with the holy angels when we will leave behind this vale of tears and live with Him forever in eternity.

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:4-7).

God's richest blessings to you in Christ.

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, give us Your Holy Spirit, that we might deny ourselves, take up the crosses You give, and follow Your Son through this troubled life into heaven.

C Amen.

L O Lord, give the Church and all her servants grace to fulfill the ministries to which You have committed us. Grant each of us the strength to confess Christ boldly before the world.

C Amen.

L Heavenly Father, teach us to never shun our Lord's suffering nor our own. When we endure persecution or ridicule for being Your children, give us faith and perseverance. As You have promised, deliver us out of the hand of the wicked and redeem us from the grasp of the ruthless.

C Amen.

L O God, You blessed and multiplied Abraham's family. Bless also our families as well. Protect expectant mothers and the children they carry. Equip parents to lead their households with wisdom so that their families will learn to know You and Your love for them in Christ. Grant them faith to walk together through life trusting Your promises.

C Amen.

L O God, bless our president and all our leaders that we may be governed wisely and justly for the good of all. Guard those who protect us, especially our armed forces, police, and firefighters.

C Amen.

L O God of peace, during this time of war in the ancient land of Jesus' birth and in Ukraine, we pray that You would grant a swift end to the conflict and lasting peace, that right and justice would prevail, and that You would grant Your mighty hand of protection to the innocent and helpless.

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 Heavenly Father, receive our praise this day for St. Peter and his confession that Jesus is the Christ. We rejoice that Your Son builds His Church upon this rock and that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. Keep us in this faith all our days; through the same 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.

Salvation unto Us Has Come

Lutheran Service Book 555, Lutheran Worship 355, The Lutheran Hymnal 377

Stanzas 7-10

7 Let me not doubt, but truly see
Your Word cannot be broken;
Your call rings out, "Come unto Me!"
No falsehood have You spoken.
Baptized into Your precious name,
My faith cannot be put to shame,
And I shall never perish.

8 The Law reveals the guilt of sin
And makes us conscience-stricken;
But then the Gospel enters in
The sinful soul to quicken.
Come to the cross, trust Christ, and live;
The Law no peace can ever give,
No comfort and no blessing.

9 Faith clings to Jesus' cross alone
And rests in Him unceasing;
And by its fruits true faith is known,
With love and hope increasing.
For faith alone can justify;
Works serve our neighbor and supply
The proof that faith is living.

10 All blessing, honor, thanks, and praise
To Father, Son, and Spirit,
The God who saved us by His grace;
All glory to His merit.
O triune God in heav'n above,
You have revealed Your saving love;
Your blessed name we hallow.

Salvation unto Us Has Come

The hymn “Salvation Unto Us Has Come” was written by Paul Speratus, who lived from 1484 to 1551. He assisted Martin Luther in compiling *Etlich Christlich lider*, a collection of early Lutheran chorales in polyphonic style for choir. *Salvation Unto Us Has Come* was included in that collection and has endured to this day because it is possibly the best Lutheran hymn ever written. It preaches Law and Gospel so clearly that it gives us the fullness of the Gospel story and gives us a framework from which we can understand all of Scripture. The tune is from the same collection and is also a favorite of mine. The tune is fun to sing without being excessively difficult.

Paul Speratus was born in what is now Germany in 1484 and became a preacher in 1518. He believed Luther’s teachings to be in accordance with what Scriptures teach and he was persecuted for his faithfulness to the pure Gospel. He was fired from his early preaching posts for expressing his views too openly. He was also one of the first priests to get married during the reformation period. He received his Doctor of Divinity degree from the University of Vienna, but was later condemned by the Vienna faculty for defending marriage and the doctrine of justification by grace through faith. His preaching, however, became very popular with the people and he was thrown in prison for it in 1523, where he stayed for three months. It was while he was in prison that he wrote this hymn, based on Romans 3:28 (*For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.*). Our current hymnal includes 10 of the original 14 stanzas

From Musical Catechesis: A Lutheran musician’s perspective on worship and music
(<http://musicalcatechesis.wordpress.com>) by Timothy Shewmaker.

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 Second Sunday in Lent February 26 – March 2, 2024

Introduction

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

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

Monday

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

Verse of the Day: Joel 2:13; Mark 8:34b

- L** Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;
- C** If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Introit Psalm 115:11–13, 18; antiphon Psalm 25:6

- L** Remember your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love,
for they have been from of old.
- C** You who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord!
He is their help and their shield.
- L** The Lord has remembered us; he will bless us;
he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron;
- C** he will bless those who fear the Lord,
both the small and the great.
- L** We will bless the Lord
from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the Lord!
- 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** Remember your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love,
for they have been from of old.

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. |

Many years ago, when I was a young pastor, I attended a massive gathering of people at a convention center in St. Louis. It was a wonderful get-together called a Great Commission Convocation designed to help individuals and congregations reach out with the Gospel of Christ. There were small sessions and plenary sessions. Each of the speakers for the large assemblies was outstanding. One of them was Walter W. Stuenkel.

Rev. Stuenkel was a well-known pastor in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. He had recently retired after serving 23 years as president of Concordia College, Milwaukee (Now Concordia University, Wisconsin). After his presentation on stage to the thousands of people in attendance, I was determined to seek him out and speak to him personally. As I made my way through the crowd, I spotted him surrounded by many others with the same intention of meeting him. When my turn came, I introduced myself. He grabbed my hand, looked me in the eye, and exclaimed, "I baptized you!" You can imagine how surprised and pleased I was that he remembered me!

As you can gather, to this day, I still fondly recall this encounter. How pleasant it is to be remembered! We take pleasure in being remembered not only by the well-known but also by past acquaintances and friends of every type. The introit for this week reminds us how particularly pleasant it is to be remembered by God in His mercy and steadfast love.

Yet, we all have things we would like to forget. We especially want God to forget about them. Of course, God in His omniscience knows all things and forgets no one and nothing. This can be distressing when we recall our personal sins and failures.

Yet the writer of Hebrews (8:12) recalls the words of Jeremiah 31:34 where God says, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." God in His remembrance of you, remembers your sin no more. In Christ and His cross, your sin is taken away. It is erased. Psalm 103:12 tells us, "As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us."

Now God only remembers you in mercy and steadfast love!

- L** Let us pray. Thank You, Lord, that in Christ you have removed our sins from us as far as the east is from the west. Grant that we may daily rely on your mercy and love, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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; Mark 8:34b

- L** Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;
C If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

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, You see that of ourselves we have no strength. By Your mighty power defend us from all adversities that may happen to the body and from all evil thoughts that may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen

During the hazy days of summer water parks are filled. Long lines form behind the tallest water slides. Young people zip down them with squeals of glee. But another area of the park holds a greater attraction for me, the Lazy River.

Floating down the lazy river, you can imagine life as a trouble-free gentle ride. But of course, life is nothing like a lazy river. It is filled with troubles and adversities.

In our collect for this week, we remember that in the face of these adversities, we are helpless without aid from God. They soon can become overwhelming.

As difficult as life can be, the greater challenge is dealing with the evil thoughts that assault our mind and soul. First among them is the temptation to sin and rebel against God. We all succumb to this as the devil, the world, and our own sinful selves seek to pull us away from God.

But an even greater danger is to believe that our sins and failures are so great that God could never love and forgive us. This assault on the soul leads to anguish and despair.

Lent is a time to “Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love” (Joel 2:13). Jesus sacrifice on the cross was sufficient to pay for every one of your sins. When His sacrifice was complete, He declared, “It is finished.” Since He finished the payment for your sins on the cross, there is nothing that you can add. You have been washed clean in the blood of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Your soul can rest secure in the loving arms of your savior! This is more wonderful than any lazy river.

Let us pray: O God, You see that of ourselves we have no strength. By Your mighty power defend us from all adversities that may happen to the body and from all evil thoughts that may assault and hurt the soul; 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; Mark 8:34b

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

C If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Psalms 22:23–31

L ²³You who fear the LORD, praise him!

All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him, and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!

C ²⁴**For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard, when he cried to him.**

L ²⁵From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will perform before those who fear him.

C ²⁶**The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the LORD! May your hearts live forever!**

L ²⁷All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD,

and all the families of the nations shall worship before you.

C ²⁸**For kingship belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations.**

L ²⁹All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship;

before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, even the one who could not keep himself alive.

C ³⁰**Posterity shall serve him; it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation;**

L ³¹they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it.

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.

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.**

Some years ago, a young woman in our church taught me a most useful word, “awesome.” I am sure that I have come to overuse it. But it’s such a handy word that I can’t help myself.

Among other things, it means breathtaking, splendid, remarkable, tremendous, and overwhelming. With that definition, I am sure that much of what I have called awesome isn’t that awesome at all. However, God is always awesome.

Psalm 22:23 declares, “You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him, and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!” What causes you to stand in awe of God? Is it purple mountains majesty? Beautiful sunsets across Lake Michigan? The smile of a newborn? Or the beauty of a tree? God’s work of creation is always awe-inspiring. But the Psalmist goes on to explain the most awesome thing about God. He does not despise the afflicted but hears their cries!

Your awesome God is awesome because of His great love for you. Your awesome God is awesome because He sent His only-begotten Son so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Your awesome God is awesome because of Good Friday and Easter!

He hears your pleas and answers with life and forgiveness for Christ’s sake.

Prayer: O Lord, during this season of Lent, remind us again of Your awesome love for sinners. Grant us the will and energy to proclaim your awesome love to each new generation, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. 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; Mark 8:34b

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

C **If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.**

Genesis 17:1–7, 15–16

¹When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, ²that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.” ³Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, ⁴“Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. ⁵No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. ⁶I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I

will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. ⁷And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. . . .

¹⁵And God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. ¹⁶I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her."

Our Old Testament lesson for this week from Genesis 17 recounts the renaming of Abraham and Sarah. But more important than their renaming is the covenant that God makes with them. In this covenant, God chooses Abraham, Sarah, and their descendants to be His own people. This is an everlasting covenant.

As we read through the Old Testament, we soon learn that the Savior will be a descendant of Abraham. The New Testament begins with the fulfillment of this prophecy with these words from Matthew 1:1, "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham."

This everlasting covenant now applies to all believers in Jesus whether they are of Jewish descent or Gentiles by birth. Galatians 3:29 tells us, "If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."

In our baptism, we have become heirs according to the promise and received into the family of God. In Colossians 3:11-12, we learn that baptism is the counterpart to Old Testament circumcision and makes us part of the covenant people. In baptism, we have received a new name, the name of Christ as He has made us His very own.

In the ancient Church, Lent was a time of meditation on baptism. For those not yet part of the family of God, it was a time of instruction in the Christian faith in preparation for baptism on the Saturday night before Easter. For those already baptized, it was a time to return to baptism through repentance and daily contrition.

It is especially a time to recall the final words of Jesus recorded in Matthew 28:18-20: "And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations (*gentiles*), baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for making me one of Your covenant people. Grant me true repentance and faith in this Lenten time and always that I may be a child of promise throughout time and for all eternity, through Jesus Christ. 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; Mark 8:34b

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

C If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

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 5:1–11

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. ⁹Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

One of the great blessings of being a pastor is working with young couples as they prepare for marriage and their wedding day. It is wonderful to look into their faces and see the stars in their eyes as they contemplate marital bliss. Unfortunately, little in the modern world has prepared them for the realities of marriage.

In fact, in many ways, marriage has become a joke in popular culture. Our society has made it a matter of frivolity and foolishness. People marry when it suits their current needs and when those needs change they abandon their vows. As you can guess, I need to say at this point, “Don’t get me started.”

However, marriage can truly be a joy and filled with happiness when we follow the biblical model for marriage. It is most clearly laid out for us in Ephesians 5:25, “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” Marriage in its finest form is companionship immersed in self-sacrificing love. 1 Corinthians 13 gives a detailed description of this self-sacrificing love.

However, our Epistle lesson this week from Romans makes it even clearer. How should husbands love their wives? Ephesians tells us that they should love their wives as Christ loved the Church. How did Christ love the Church? Romans 5:8 explains, “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

If you are struggling in marriage because you married a sinful person, now is the time to show your spouse the love of Christ. He did not die for perfectly loveable people. He died for us “while we were still sinners.”

Prayer: O Lord, thank you that we have been justified by faith because our actions are always imperfect and filled with sin. Grant that we can share the self-sacrificing love of Christ in our families and with people around us 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; Mark 8:34b

- L** Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;
- C** If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

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.

Lent is a time of self-denial and cross-bearing. It reminds us that for us to receive forgiveness and salvation, Jesus denied himself and gave himself up as a sacrifice for sin on the cross.

However, we must always remember that self-denial and cross-bearing are not limited to Lent. They are the daily vocation of Christians.

I once gave a fellow pastor a ride to O'hare Airport in Chicago. As you can imagine, the traffic was horrendous. At one point, a semi started to signal that he wanted to enter my lane. I slowed down and let him come over in front of me. At this point, my companion pastor chided me and explained that he never would do such a thing. I was amazed that a pastor would say this.

Then I began to feel bad. I realized that in my self-righteous indignation, I had forgotten all the times that I had been more selfish and self-serving than I was mentally accusing this pastor of being.

Sinful human nature always puts itself first. We put ourselves in front of our spouses, in front of our neighbors, and most of all we put ourselves in front of God.

Each of the Ten Commandments reminds us of how we have failed to love God and others. Christian living only comes when we understand self-denial and cross-bearing.

Yet, Lent is a reminder of how often we stumble and fall in our feeble attempts to follow Jesus. Our daily Lenten prayers ought to be, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

Prayer: 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.

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