

The Third Sunday in Lent

March 7, 2021

In our Gospel lesson today we find Jesus in Jerusalem. He is there for the annual Passover observance. As God's faithful Son, Jesus goes to the temple, and there He sees it being desecrated by those who use God's house for personal financial gain. His love for God and true worship move Him to cleanse the temple of these unwholesome practices. When his disciples witness this, they remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." May Jesus' zeal for the house of the Lord always be ours as well.

To Your Temple, Lord, I Come Lutheran Service Book 981, Lutheran Worship 207, The Lutheran Hymnal 2



1 To Your tem - ple, Lord, I come, For it
2 I through Him am rec - on - ciled, I through
3 While Your glo - rious praise is sung, Touch my
4 While the prayers of saints as - cend, God of
5 While I lis - ten to Your Law, Fill my



is my wor - ship home. This earth has no
Him be - come Your child. Ab - ba, Fa - ther,
lips, un - loose my tongue That my joy - ful
love, to mine at - tend. Hear me, for Your
soul with hum - ble awe Till Your Gos - pel



bet - ter place, Here I see my Sav - ior's face.
give me grace In Your courts Your love to trace.
soul may bless Christ the Lord, my righ - teous - ness.
Spir - it pleads; Hear, for Je - sus in - ter - cedes.
bring to me Life and im - mor - tal - i - ty.

6 While Your ministers proclaim
Peace and pardon in Your name,
Through their voice, by faith, may I
Hear You speaking from the sky.

7 From Your house when I return,
May my heart within me burn,
And at evening let me say,
"I have walked with God today."

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 69:14–16; antiphon Psalm 69:9

L For zeal for your house has consumed me,
and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.

C Deliver me from sinking in the mire;
let me be delivered from my enemies and from the deep waters.

L Let not the flood sweep over me, or the deep swallow me up,
or the pit close its mouth over me.

C Answer me, O Lord, for your steadfast love is good;
according to your abundant mercy, turn to me.

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 For zeal for your house has consumed me,
and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on 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.

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 20:1–17

¹And God spoke all these words, saying,

²“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

³“You shall have no other gods before me.

⁴“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

⁷“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

⁸“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. ¹¹For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

¹²“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

¹³“You shall not murder.

¹⁴“You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵“You shall not steal.

¹⁶“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

¹⁷“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”

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 19

L ¹The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

C ²**Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.**

L ³There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard.

C ⁴**Their measuring line goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.**

In them he has set a tent for the sun,

L ⁵which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.

C ⁶**Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat.**

L ⁷The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;

C ⁸**the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;**

- L** ⁹the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
the just decrees of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.
- C** ¹⁰**More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.**
- L** ¹¹Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.
- C** ¹²**Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults.**
- L** ¹³Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me!
Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.
- C** ¹⁴**Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight,
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.**

1 Corinthians 1:18–31

¹⁸The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.
¹⁹For it is written,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”

²⁰Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. ²²For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

²⁶For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption. ³¹Therefore, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

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

Verse of the Day: Joel 2:13; John 2:19

- L** Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;
- C** Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

John 2:13–22

- L** The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 2nd chapter.
- C** Glory to You, O Lord.

¹³The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. ¹⁵And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶And he told those who sold the pigeons, “Take these things away; do not make my Father’s house a house of trade.” ¹⁷His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.”

¹⁸So the Jews said to him, “What sign do you show us for doing these things?” ¹⁹Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” ²⁰The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” ²¹But he was speaking about the temple of his body. ²²When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

L This is the Gospel of the Lord.

G Praise to You, O Christ.

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

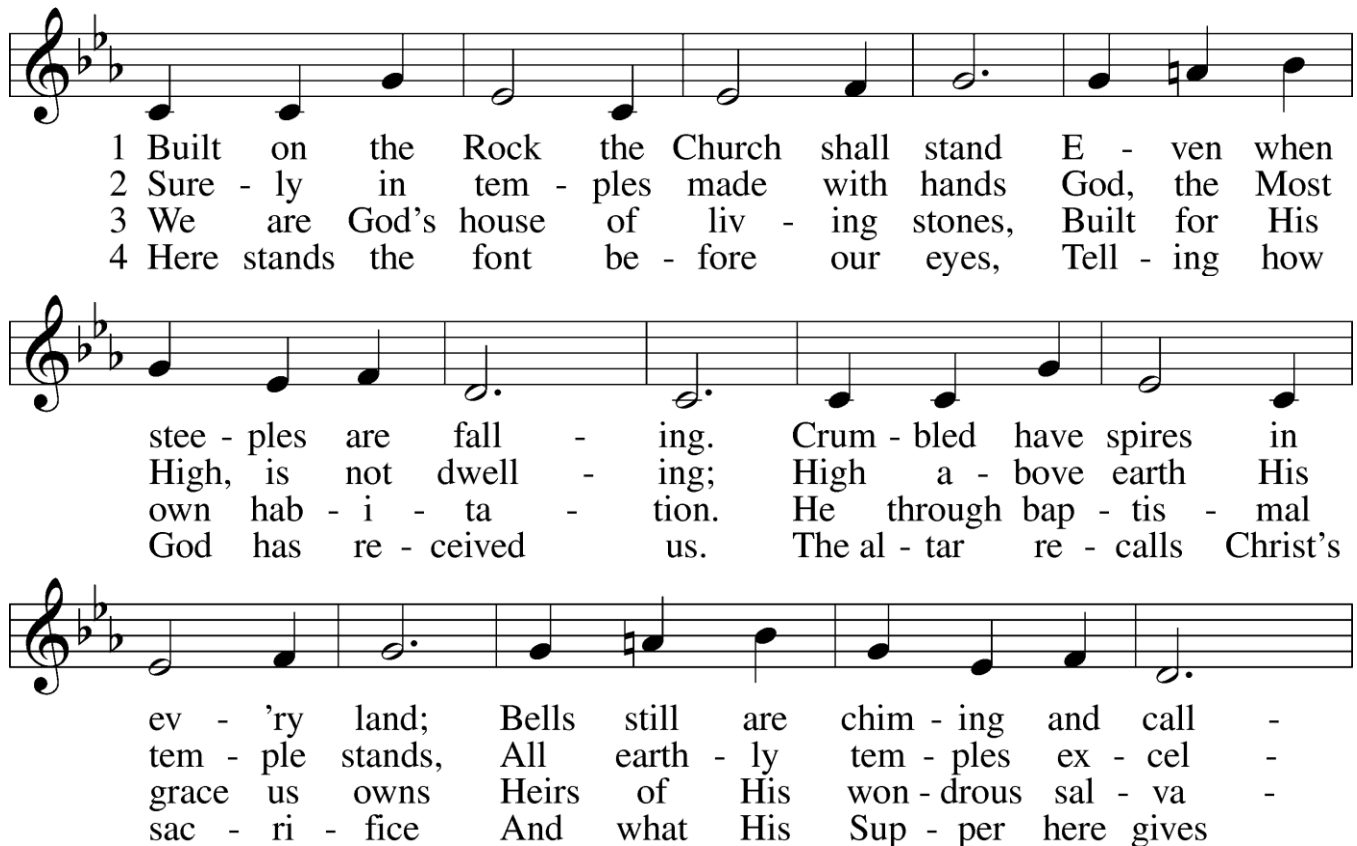
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of God the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

Almighty.

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

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

Built on the Rock Lutheran Service Book 645, Lutheran Worship 291, The Lutheran Hymnal 467



1 Built on the Rock the Church shall stand E - ven when
2 Sure - ly in tem - ples made with hands God, the Most
3 We are God's house of liv - ing stones, Built for His
4 Here stands the font be - fore our eyes, Tell - ing how

stee - ples are fall - ing. Crum - bled have spires in
High, is not dwell - ing; High a - bove earth His
own hab - i - ta - tion. He through bap - tis - mal
God has re - ceived us. The al - tar re - calls Christ's

ev - 'ry land; Bells still are chim - ing and call -
tem - ple stands, All earth - ly tem - ples ex - cel -
grace us owns Heirs of His won - drous sal - va -
sac - ri - fice And what His Sup - per here gives

ing, ling. tion. us. Call - ing Yet Were Here the young who dwells but two the and in heav'n His name to tell, old to a - bove claim

But a - bove all the souls dis - tressed, Choos - es to live with us in love, Yet He would deign with us to dwell Christ yes - ter - day, to - day, the same,

Long - ing for rest ev - er - last - ing. Mak - ing our bod - ies His tem - ple. With all His grace and His fa - vor. And ev - er - more, our Re - deem - er.

5 Grant, then, O God, Your will be done,
That, when the church bells are ringing,
Many in saving faith may come
Where Christ His message is bringing:
“I know My own; My own know Me.
You, not the world, My face shall see.
My peace I leave with you. Amen.”

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Devotional thoughts:

Back in the “good old days,” before the pandemic, did you ever go to a Major League baseball game, a college football game, or an NHL hockey game? Were you fortunate enough to attend a “March Madness” tournament game? If not, you most likely have gone to the movies. Do you recall the prices at the concession stand? I am sure they were outrageous. At least I am outraged when I see those prices. Do these people have no decency or sense of shame? Why do they charge so much? They charge so much because they can. They have a captive audience. There is no competition. We have no alternatives. We must pay their prices or go without.

With this in mind, you can imagine what Jesus saw when He entered the temple as described in our Gospel lesson for today. He found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there.

Sacrifices of oxen, sheep, and pigeons were required. The pilgrims, many of them poor, had no option but to buy these animals for their sacrifices. Undoubtedly, they paid excessive prices. Also, their money was not acceptable for the Temple Tax. They were obligated to exchange it for the correct currency that was allowed at the temple, again for a decidedly unfavorable exchange rate.

The temple in Jerusalem had become an unwholesome economic engine for the chief priests and religious leaders. Pious pilgrims came with religious commitment and passion only to be fleeced by concessionaires.

God's house was not intended for this purpose. With righteous indignation, Jesus sought to end this despicable practice.

Jesus' fervor, zeal, and love for the House of the Lord brought Psalm 69:9 to mind for the disciples. It is the antiphon from our introit this week, "Zeal for your house will consume me." Jesus was boiling over with love for God and His house. He felt obligated to right this wrong!

I find it amazing that professed Christians can be so indifferent to the Lord's house today. You often hear flippant statements such as these, "I can be closer to God on a golf course than in church." Or "I am closer to God when I experience nature." I wonder what Jesus would say to this? He experienced the natural beauty of the wilderness near Jerusalem. He experienced the splendor of fishing in the Sea of Galilee. He knew the wonders of a starry night. But He never neglected attending the synagogue or making His pilgrimages to the temple.

Because Jesus was already too popular for them to stop Him from cleansing the temple, the religious leaders asked Him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" In other words, "What gives you the right?" or "Who do you think you are?"

Jesus could have answered, "I am the Christ, the Son of the living God!" But He didn't. It was abundantly clear to Him that these religious leaders didn't care much about God or His house. They were only interested in themselves and their profit margins.

In some ways, nothing has changed. The purveyors of retail religion still look upon pious believers as cash cows. But before we become self-righteous in our finger-pointing, many of us are just as guilty. Godly ministries are canceled because they hurt the bottom line of our church budget. Christian schools are declared fiscally irresponsible. Pastors and teachers do not receive a fair and equitable wage. It is easy for all of us to allow money to become our god. The words of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount must always be on our ears, "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money" (Matthew 6:24). The religious leaders of Jesus' day had chosen money over God. Let us not be counted among them.

Jesus gave them an answer that still serves us well today. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." He was speaking of the temple of His body!

The Greek word for "temple" implies dwelling place. In the Old Testament, God showed His presence by a cloud over the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle. Jesus recognized the temple as His "Father's House." But God's full and complete dwelling place was in Jesus Himself. Jesus' body was the real temple of God. In Him, the fullness of God dwells in bodily form (Colossians 2:9).

On the first Good Friday, the religious leaders would destroy the temple of His body on the cross. There, the words He spoke on this day would be used to mock Him:

"And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." (Matthew 29:39-40).

But "Be not deceived; God is not mocked" (Galatians 6:7 KJV). The cross could not conquer Jesus. After three days, Jesus would raise the temple of His body and dwell in it for all eternity.

Already, here at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, He was looking toward His death and resurrection. So also do we on our Lenten journey look to His death and resurrection.

On the cross, we see Jesus pay the debt of every sin. We see Him pay what we owe for sacrificing our souls on the altar of greed. We see Him fulfill His mission of redeeming us from every sinful thought or desire.

Everything you own will one day pass away. For this reason, Jesus says, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19-21).

Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, He has come to dwell in you (Ephesians 3:17). His dwelling place is His Church. Wherever we gather in His name as His Church, He is there in our midst (Matthew 18:20). Let us not neglect to meet together, as is the habit of some (Hebrews 10:25). Finally, let us keep our eyes on eternity remembering Jesus' words from John 14:2, "In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?"

“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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L O Lord, our God, You have brought us out of slavery to sin through Christ Jesus, whom You have made to be our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Grant to us in this time of Lent and always a zeal for Your house and Your commandments.

C Amen.

L Heavenly Father, preserve and bless all Christian households, that husbands and wives would live in love and service to each other, that fathers and mothers would diligently bring up their children in nurture and admonition of the Lord, and that children would grow in faith, honor their parents, and be well equipped for service to their neighbors in this life.

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.

How Firm a Foundation Lutheran Service Book 728, Lutheran Worship 411, The Lutheran Hymnal 427



1 How firm a foun - da - tion, O saints of the Lord,
2 "Fear not! I am with you, O be not dis - mayed,
3 "The soul that on Je - sus has leaned for re - pose
4 "When through fi - ery tri - als your path - way will lie,



Is laid for your faith in His ex - cel - lent Word!
For I am your God and will still give you aid;
I will not, I will not, de - sert to his foes;
My grace, all - suf - fi - cient, will be your sup - ply.



What more can He say than to you He has said
I'll strength - en you, help you, and cause you to stand,
That soul, though all hell should en - deav - or to shake,
The flames will not hurt you; I on - ly de - sign



Who un - to the Sav - ior for ref - uge have fled?
Up - held by My righ - teous, om - nip - o - tent hand.
I'll nev - er, no nev - er, no nev - er, for - sake!
Your dross to con - sume and your gold to re - fine.

5 "Throughout all their lifetime My people will prove
My sov'reign, eternal, unchangeable love;
And then, when gray hairs will their temples adorn,
Like lambs they will still in My bosom be borne."

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 Third Sunday in Lent

March 8 – March 13, 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 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 69:14–16; antiphon Psalm 69:9

- L** For zeal for your house has consumed me,
and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.
C Deliver me from sinking in the mire;
let me be delivered from my enemies and from the deep waters.
L Let not the flood sweep over me, or the deep swallow me up,
or the pit close its mouth over me.
C Answer me, O Lord, for your steadfast love is good;
according to your abundant mercy, turn to me.
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 For zeal for your house has consumed me,
and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on 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. |

One day in 1975, I was driving onto the campus of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis when a news report came across the radio stating that Canada had adopted the metric system. At that moment, a brilliant idea entered my mind. I would form the Anti-metric System League. In the 46 years since then, I am proud to report that league membership has swollen to 1.

Although my little project was not intended to be serious, my daughters who are scientists continue to point out the folly of my ways. Even back then, I knew that I couldn't win my argument on scientific merit. Instead, I chose to defend my silliness on cultural and artistic grounds.

My first opportunity presented itself that evening. It was Tuesday. Tuesday night was family night in the seminary cafeteria and off-campus seminarians were encouraged to bring their wives to campus for supper. A number of my friends and their wives were already seated at the table when I arrived. While I knew most of the gentleman, I had yet to meet some of the wives. To my left was one such seminary bride.

Without delay and with much vigor, I launched into my anti-metric system rant. Tongue in cheek, I pointed out that the metric system would destroy our culture. We could no longer teach our children the inchworm song. Using the metric system was tantamount to painting a mustache on the Mona Lisa.

The woman next to me took up the defense of the metric system. She used her tired old scientific arguments that I quickly dismissed with my brilliant reliance on art and the humanities. I was having a great time until this poor woman broke down in tears and left.

I felt terrible that my little joke had been so hurtful to her. My friends at the table explained to me that her father's job was introducing the metric system to America. Unbeknownst to me, I had spent the evening insulting her father!

Have you ever felt the need to defend someone or something that you love? Have you ever felt insulted because someone insulted a beloved friend in your presence?

As you may recall from yesterday, Psalm 69:9 is referenced in our Gospel lesson for this week, "For zeal for your house has consumed me." We spent some time considering it. Today, let us think about the second part of this verse, "The reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me."

If you are like me, "reproach" is not a word that you use often. In fact, I doubt that I ever use it outside the context of the church and the Bible. Other translations use the word "taunt" or "insult." Some other suitable synonyms include "criticism, reprimand, accusation, admonish, reprove, scold, rebuke, blame, etc.

David is saying that people who insult God are also insulting him. Christians often experience that today. Cultural warriors are relentless in their efforts to tear down Christianity and Christian ideals. Their reproaches of God are reproaches that have fallen upon us.

This might lead us to despair. We may run from the table in tears. However, Psalm 69 points out the inappropriateness of this response.

God delivers us from our enemies. We bring our prayers to God and He delivers us from sinking into the mire of insults and taunting.

It may for a time seem like God's enemies are winning but the ultimate victory is already ours in Jesus' death and resurrection.

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

Lutheran Service Book, 490, stanza 1

L Let us pray. Thank You, God, that you defend us from every insult to You and Your Church. Grant us wisdom and strength to recognize the victory that is already ours in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

C Amen

Tuesday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Joel 2:13; John 2:19

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

C Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

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

You probably have heard this old saying, “If God seems distant, who moved?” I’m not sure that this a good approach for speaking to people who have been absent from church. Nevertheless, there is some truth in the query.

We, like sheep, often stray. It’s in our nature. Every time we sin we are straying from God’s ways.

A continual challenge for pastors is dealing with those who are AWOL from church. Some pastors are ruthless in cleaning out the “dead wood.” Others are timid and send letters disenfranchising members. What should we do?

Our collect this week gives us direction. God’s glory is always to have mercy. When we encounter straying sheep, ask how we would like to be treated when we stray.

There is no sure formula to bring back those who were once faithful. Actually, only God can do it. Like the answers to all our prayers, He does it in His own way and in His own time.

God has allowed me over the years to see both the faithful go astray and the straying return to the fold. Whatever we do, we must always hold fast to the unchangeable truth of God’s word! “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost” (1 Timothy 1:15).

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. 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; John 2:19

- L** Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;
C Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

Psalm 19

- L** ¹The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
C ²**Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.**
L ³There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard.
C ⁴**Their measuring line goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.**
In them he has set a tent for the sun,
L ⁵which comes out like a bridegroom| leaving his chamber,
and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.
C ⁶**Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them,**
and there is nothing hidden from its heat.
L ⁷The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul;
the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;
C ⁸**the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;**
the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;
L ⁹the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
the just decrees of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.
C ¹⁰**More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold;**
sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.
L ¹¹Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.
C ¹²**Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults.**
L ¹³Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me!
Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.
C ¹⁴**Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight,**
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

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 19 is rich in imagery. The sky above declares the glory of God. The sun, moon, and stars all testify to His greatness.

We do not worship the sun, moon, or stars. We do not worship mother earth. We worship the creator of all things. His precepts are perfect. They revive the soul!

We are not merely droplets of water tossed about uncaringly by the forces of nature and evolutionary principles. We are cared for by the God of nature who rules the entire universe!

Every one of us has made mistakes in our lives. Some of them seem minor. Others seem great. But we all have broken promises and distorted the truth. We have shattered God's laws. We must suffer the consequences of flaunting our supposed impendence from God.

Even so, the God of creation has not abandoned us. He has entered our universe in the person of His Son. Jesus has suffered the consequence of our sin! He has endured death so that we may enjoy life.

With hearts cleansed from sin by Christ, we exclaim, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer."

Prayer: O Lord, when I see a beautiful sunset or a starry night, when I witness the splendor of snow covered fields or see the grandeur of green growing crops, grant that my heart would turn to You in gratitude for all of Your gifts, especially for the gift of salvation, 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; John 2:19

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

C Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

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 20:1–17

¹And God spoke all these words, saying,

²"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

³"You shall have no other gods before me.

⁴"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

⁷"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

⁸"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. ¹¹For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

¹²"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

¹³"You shall not murder.

¹⁴"You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵"You shall not steal.

¹⁶"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

¹⁷"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."

The Old Testament lesson this week from Exodus 20 is one of two places in the Bible where we find the Ten Commandments. They are also recorded in Deuteronomy 5.

The Ten Commandments are not all that the Bible teaches about God's law. Rather, they are a summary of God's law. Jesus explains them this way in their briefest form:

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:29-31).

In essence, the Ten Commandments describe how we are to love God and how we are to love the people around us. Jesus more fully explains them in His Sermon on the Mount. There we learn that our words and thoughts are also subject to God's commands.

When we read or meditate upon the Ten Commandments, God's word acts as a mirror to the soul. We see ourselves for who we really are, not how we want others to see us.

In the morning, when I look into the mirror, I don't complain that I have a bad mirror because it makes me look so bad. Likewise, God's law is not bad because it makes me feel guilty. Rather, in showing me my faults, it drives me to Christ.

In Christ, I learn that though my sins are as blood-red as scarlet, through forgiveness, they have become as white as snow. In the law, the Holy Spirit does his alien or foreign work as Luther says. He shows me my sin. In the Gospel, the Holy Spirit does His proper work of showing me my savior and salvation from sin, death, and the devil.

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for Your perfect and holy law, grant that in meditating upon your law, I would be moved to repentance and turn to Jesus for full and free forgiveness. 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; John 2:19

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

C Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

Kyrie

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

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

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

1 Corinthians 1:18–31

¹⁸The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

¹⁹For it is written,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”

²⁰Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through

wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. ²²For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

So what is the purpose of the Church? Was the Church established to seek social justice and political change? Is the Church here to end suffering and bring prosperity to the world?

Christians may and should do these and many other things. However, the Church properly speaking has one over-arching purpose. We are to preach Christ crucified.

This may seem like foolishness to media pundits and social justice warriors. It is a stumbling block to those seeking wealth and commercial success.

But the true God can only be found in the cross of Christ. There we find the true power and wisdom of God. Let us never forget that the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for Jesus and His cross of salvation. Grant that we would never be ashamed to preach Christ crucified for sinners and raised to life for justification. 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; John 2:19

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

C Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

Kyrie

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

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

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

1 Corinthians 1:26–31

²⁶For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption. ³¹Therefore, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

In our era of media superstars and social media influencers, humility has gone out the window. There was a time when it was considered bad form to “toot your own horn.” Those days are long gone.

Nevertheless, the way of Christ is not the way of the world. Christians seldom become celebrities in the eyes of the public. By worldly standards, we will be failures.

But God has chosen the despised in the world to accomplish His purpose. He has chosen the cross to bring victory over sin, death, and the devil. In Christ Jesus, we find our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord!

In the Cross of Christ I Glory

Lutheran Service Book 427

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 In the cross of Christ I glory,
Tow’ring o’er the wrecks of time.
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime. | 3 When the sun of bliss is beaming
Light and love upon my way,
From the cross the radiance streaming
Adds more luster to the day. |
| 2 When the woes of life o’ertake me,
Hopes deceive, and fears annoy,
Never shall the cross forsake me;
Lo, it glows with peace and joy. | 4 Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure
By the cross are sanctified;
Peace is there that knows no measure,
Joys that through all time abide. |

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Prayer: O Lord, thank You for Jesus and His cross of salvation. Grant that we would never become discouraged by failing to find worldly success. Rather, grant us the joy of boasting in the Lord, through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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