

The Fifth Sunday in Lent March 17, 2024

The lessons today present us with many opportunities to ponder our condition before the Lord. The fact that we ought not to think too highly of ourselves is an important theme. James and John thought that they were more important than the other ten disciples therefore they asked if they could sit at Jesus' right and left hand in the glory of the kingdom to come. Jesus was quick to point out that proper Christian conduct is service. Just as Jesus came to serve us through the cross, we too serve our brothers and sisters.

One of the most dangerous ways of thinking too highly of ourselves is to believe that our sins are not so bad and that we do not need forgiveness. This deadly delusion leads to eternal destruction.

Thanks be to God that in Christ we have forgiveness, life, and salvation. Thanks be to God that He offers them to us through word and sacrament. May each of us remember the sound of the words of the Lord given through Jeremiah, "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Christ, the Life of All the Living

Lutheran Service Book 420, Lutheran Worship 94, The Lutheran Hymnal 151
Stanzas 1-4



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.

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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 116:1– 4, 8; antiphon Psalm 43:1

L Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people,
from the deceitful and unjust man deliver me!

C I love the Lord, because he has heard
my voice and my pleas for mercy.

L Because he inclined his ear to me,
therefore I will call on him as long as I live.

C The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;
I suffered distress and anguish.

L Then I called on the name of the Lord:
“O Lord, I pray, deliver my soul!”

C For you have delivered my soul from death,
my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.

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 Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people,
from the deceitful and unjust man deliver 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. |

Gloria in Excelsis (Omitted during Lent)

Collect of the Day

- L** Let us pray: Almighty God, by Your great goodness mercifully look upon Your people that we may be governed and preserved evermore in body and 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.

Jeremiah 31:31–34

³¹“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³²not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

- 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 119:9–16

- L** ⁹How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.
- C** ¹⁰**With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!**
- L** ¹¹I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.
- C** ¹²**Blessèd are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes!**
- L** ¹³With my lips I declare all the just decrees of your mouth.
- C** ¹⁴**In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches.**
- L** ¹⁵I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.
- C** ¹⁶**I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.**

Hebrews 5:1–10

¹For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ²He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. ³Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people. ⁴And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

⁵So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him,

“You are my Son,
today I have begotten you”;

⁶as he says also in another place,

“You are a priest forever,
after the order of Melchizedek.”

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Verse of the Day: Joel 2:13; Mark 10:45

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

C Even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Mark 10:32–45

L The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 10th chapter.

C Glory to You, O Lord.

³²And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, ³³saying, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. ³⁴And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.”

³⁵And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to [Jesus] and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” ³⁶And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” ³⁷And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” ³⁸Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” ³⁹And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, ⁴⁰but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” ⁴¹And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. ⁴²And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

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

My Song Is Love Unknown

Lutheran Service Book 430, Lutheran Worship 91, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a

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|---|--|
| 1 My song is love unknown, My Savior's love to me, Love to the loveless shown That they might lovely be. Oh, who am I That for my sake My Lord should take Frail flesh and die? | 4 Why, what hath my Lord done? What makes this rage and spite? He made the lame to run, He gave the blind their sight. Sweet injuries! Yet they at these Themselves displease And 'gainst Him rise. |
| 2 He came from His blest throne Salvation to bestow; But men made strange, and none The longed-for Christ would know. But, oh, my friend, My friend indeed, Who at my need His life did spend! | 5 They rise and needs will have My dear Lord made away; A murderer they save, The Prince of Life they slay. Yet cheerful He To suffering goes That He His foes From thence might free. |
| 3 Sometimes they strew His way And His sweet praises sing; Resounding all the day Hosannas to their King. Then "Crucify!" Is all their breath, And for His death They thirst and cry. | 6 In life no house, no home My Lord on earth might have; In death no friendly tomb But what a stranger gave. What may I say? Heav'n was His home But mine the tomb Wherein He lay. |
| 7 Here might I stay and sing, No story so divine! Never was love, dear King, Never was grief like Thine. This is my friend, In whose sweet praise I all my days Could gladly spend! | |

Devotional thoughts:

“I reject your reality and substitute my own,” Adam Savage from the opening of Mythbusters! While the television show Mythbusters popularized this quote, it originated in 1984 with a low-budget sci-fi/fantasy film *The Dungeonmaster*. In this B-movie, a demonic wizard challenges a modern-day computer programmer to a battle of technology vs. sorcery, with the programmer's girlfriend as the prize.

It often feels like I'm living in this film! <wink, wink> Everyone has their own reality, and that reality is at odds with the reality of everyone else.

There is a reality of the left and a reality of the right. There is a reality of our current administration and a reality of our former administration. There is a reality of the secularists and a reality of the religious people. There is a reality of the young and a reality of the old. The list goes on.

Wouldn't it be nice if we could actually reject a certain reality and substitute our own reality? But in truth, there is only one reality—the reality of Jesus!

Our Gospel lesson begins with Jesus describing reality, the reality of the cross. On their journey from the Jordan River valley to the highlands of Jerusalem, Jesus explained to His disciples the purpose of their trip. For the third time since they began near Caesarea Philippi, Jesus declared, “The Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him.”

Unfortunately, James and John rejected this reality. They were stuck in their old way of thinking. Jesus saw the cross but they were blinded by personal glory. They presented to Jesus this outrageous request, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.”

James and John were living in the reality of personal aggrandizement and fame, selfishness and self-importance! Only a few verses earlier, Jesus had said, “Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” James and John rejected this reality of humility. They sound a lot like me!

Our sinful human nature looks out for number one! In our sinful version of reality, selfishness is good and noble. Self-sacrifice for others is unspeakable. We reject the reality of Jesus and substitute our own! The words of Jesus seem irrational to our ears. Who could live like this? But Jesus insists, “Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.”

Our annual Lenten journey to the cross reminds us that there is only one reality. It is the reality of sin and death. No amount of wishful thinking will free us from destruction. Earthly thrones will ultimately crumble. All false human realities will collapse but the word of the Lord endures forever!

Thankfully for James and John, for you and me, Jesus suffered many things and went to the cross. There He paid the debt of sin. He erased all traces of our self-aggrandizement and arrogance. And after three days, He rose from the dead!

The reality of the cross is unthinkable to humanity but it is the only path to the reality of the resurrection! It is our only escape from the reality of death! In the cross, the words of the Lord given to Jeremiah are fulfilled, “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jeremiah 31:34).

Lent is the time to renew our commitment to the cross and resurrection. It is a time to die again to sin and rise to Christ. It is a time to join Jesus in His mission and ministry. He came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many! May we join in serving Him and our neighbors until He calls us to join Him in the resurrection!

“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 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, Your Son came not to be served but to serve. Help us not lord our authority over one another, but humbly serve one another in our homes, communities, and congregation as Christ has so humbly served us.

C Amen.

L Heavenly Father, pour out Your Holy Spirit on our hearts and write Your Word there that we may know You as the true God who forgives our iniquities and remembers our sins no more.

C Amen.

L Heavenly Father, Your Son stands before You as our great High Priest. By Your Spirit, move our hearts to receive Him as our Savior, who sacrificed Himself for us on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.

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 Gracious Lord, help us to keep our ways pure by guarding our lives with Your word. Move us to seek you with our whole hearts and to delight in your statutes through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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.

Christ, the Life of All the Living

Lutheran Service Book 420, Lutheran Worship 94, The Lutheran Hymnal 151

Stanzas 5-7

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.

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 Fifth Sunday in Lent March 18 - 23, 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 10:45

- L** Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;
- C** Even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Introit Psalm 116:1– 4, 8; antiphon Psalm 43:1

- L** Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people,
from the deceitful and unjust man deliver me!
- C** I love the Lord, because he has heard
my voice and my pleas for mercy.
- L** Because he inclined his ear to me,
therefore I will call on him as long as I live.
- C** The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;
I suffered distress and anguish.
- L** Then I called on the name of the Lord:
“O Lord, I pray, deliver my soul!”
- C** For you have delivered my soul from death,
my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.
- 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** Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people,
from the deceitful and unjust man deliver 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. |

Have you ever heard of “Throwback Thursday?” A few years ago, Thursday was a day for posting old photographs online. On that day, we could marvel at old hairstyles and clothing. We could see our younger and possibly more-fit selves. I would like to name today, “Throwback Monday” or more alliteratively, “Memory Lane Monday” as we take a step back in time.

From before the time of Martin Luther until a few decades ago, the Fifth Sunday in Lent was called “Judica Sunday” or simply “Judica.” Judica is the first word in the introit for today in Latin from Psalm 43:1. The King James Version translates it this way, “Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation.”

While we still have Psalm 43:1 as the beginning of our introit for this week, most of the rest of the Sunday has been lost with the updating of the lectionary. Considering Psalm 43:1 without the historic Gospel for Judica could possibly lead us down the wrong path. For many centuries after singing Psalm 43:1 as part of the introit, the congregation would hear John 8:46-59 read as the Gospel for the day.

John 8:46 begins with these words of Jesus, “Which one of you convicts me of sin?” Jesus was dealing with people who refused to believe. In fact, they declared, “Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?” Jesus was dealing with people who judged Him to be a sinful, blasphemous demoniac. In fact, John 8:59 reports that these enemies of Jesus picked up stones to throw at Him! In this context, we can see Psalm 43:1 as a reference to the sinless Jesus being accused and judged by ungodly people.

If God were to judge me, I would never be vindicated! Like the rest of humanity, I am sinful. I fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). All my righteousness amounts to no more than filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). Only Jesus can stand before God and truly plead, “Vindicate me, O God.”

In spite of His complete holiness and righteousness, Jesus was put to death by unholy people. He hung upon the cross for your sin and mine. But from the cross, in the moments before His death, Jesus says, “Father, forgive them” (Luke 23:34).

Our vindication does not come from our own righteousness. It comes through the gift of forgiveness. Our vindication comes from Christ’s righteousness given to us by grace and received by faith! In Christ’s righteousness, God in His judgment declares you, “Not guilty!” You are justified and holy in God’s sight because of Jesus!

- L** Let us pray. Thank You, God, that You vindicate me by Christ’s death and resurrection. Let me never trust in my own righteousness but only in the forgiveness won for me by Jesus on the cross, through the same Jesus Christ, my 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; Mark 10:45

- L** Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;
C Even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

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: Almighty God, by Your great goodness mercifully look upon Your people that we may be governed and preserved evermore in body and soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.
C Amen.

Sinful, unbelieving people will go out of their way to criticize and insult believers. One common condemnation of God goes like this. If God is so good, then why did this bad thing happen? Of course, the world is filled with bad things. Evil is everywhere. It is found in the headlines. It is found in our homes!

How should God handle evil? Two solutions come to mind. First, He could remove from us our ability to make choices and simply force everyone to do only good and wholesome things. Or second, He could simply destroy all evil and only let the good and wholesome remain.

At first, it is tempting to applaud this second option. Many of God's critics claim that they would praise Him for destroying evil. Murderers would drop dead. So would thieves, adulterers, and unruly children. The world would soon be rid of evil ... and people.

God's way of dealing with evil is with goodness and mercy. The world continues to exist because of God's mercy. God in His patience allows sinful people the opportunity to repent. In His goodness, He sent Jesus to be our savior and pay for our sinfulness upon the cross.

Lent is the time to repent. Lent is the 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).

Let us pray: Almighty God, by Your great goodness mercifully look upon Your people that we may be governed and preserved evermore in body and 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 10:45

L Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;
C Even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Psalms 119:9–16

L ⁹How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.
C ¹⁰**With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!**
L ¹¹I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.
C ¹²**Blessèd are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes!**
L ¹³With my lips I declare all the just decrees of your mouth.
C ¹⁴**In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches.**
L ¹⁵I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.
C ¹⁶**I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.**

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. |

Youth has long escaped me. It lives on in my nostalgic dreams.

Of course, youth isn't as wonderful as we might remember. It is filled with stress. Young people are challenged with life-and-death choices but are often not equipped to make them. Parental wisdom is essential.

Yet not all parents are wise. You may have observed young lives turned into disasters because parents have failed them. This is not to say that all the waywardness of youth should be blamed on parents. However, there is only one sure way for young people to navigate through the rocky rivers of adolescence. That is God's holy word. Proverbs 22:6 rightly declares, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (KJV).

God's word is the only sure guide in life. It keeps us pure in our decisions and actions. It leads us to Jesus and His cross. It brings peace and comfort to the turmoil of life whether we are young or old. It opens the gates of paradise to all believers.

Prayer: O Lord, Give me wisdom to follow Your holy word. Grant young people wise and caring parents who will direct them in Your ways according to Your word through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thursday

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

Verse of the Day: Joel 2:13; Mark 10:45

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| L | Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; |
| C | Even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. |

Jeremiah 31:31–34

³¹"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³²not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Jeremiah lived in difficult times. People were rebellious. They refused to listen to the word of God. As the author of Lamentations, he is often called the "Weeping Prophet." Yet God also allowed him to speak of a better time, a marvelous time. You can read about it in Jeremiah 31:31-34.

It is the day of the New Covenant, the New Testament. It is the day of Jesus. It is the day of salvation. It is the day when He will forgive iniquity and remember sin no more.

It is a great blessing for us to live in this time. We live when we can witness again Jesus' payment for sin on the cross. We can hear Him tell the malefactor on the cross, "Today you will be with me in paradise." We can celebrate His resurrection and look forward to our own.

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for Jeremiah and Your word of consolation spoken by him. Grant that we may always turn in repentance to You and find comfort in Your word of promise to remember our sins no more, 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; Mark 10:45

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

C Even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

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.

Hebrews 5:1–10

¹For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ²He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. ³Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people. ⁴And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

⁵So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him,

“You are my Son,
today I have begotten you”;

⁶as he says also in another place,
“You are a priest forever,
after the order of Melchizedek.”

Hebrews is one of the most fascinating books of the New Testament. It shows us how Paul, Barnabas, and the early Christian evangelists proclaimed Christ to the Jewish people scattered around the Roman Empire. For us modern gentile readers, it takes a little bit more effort to fully appreciate it. To better understand the Book of Hebrews, we must first explore the Old Testament and the religious practices of the first-century Jews.

The concept of the high priest and the priesthood of Melchizedek are two areas that require more study than time allows for today. However, let us take a brief look.

Priests daily sacrificed for sins in Jerusalem. A variety of animals were offered at the temple. A special offering was made one day a year on the Day of Atonement. The high priest would enter the Holy of Holies in the temple and sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice upon the Mercy Seat (or Atonement Cover – ESV). It was only on this one day of the year that the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies to make atonement for the people. The Holy of Holies was never to be entered by anyone other than the high priest on that day. You can read about this in Leviticus 16. Although the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70, observant Jews still recognize this holy day with special worship services. It is called Yom Kippur.

Like all of the Old Testament sacrifices and ceremonial laws, we no longer observe the Day of Atonement. Why? Because Jesus is our high priest. He has made the perfect atoning sacrifice for sins once for all (Hebrews

10:1-18). The Old Testament religious regulations were a foreshadowing of the perfect sacrifice made by Jesus on the cross (Colossians 2:16-17).

Today we rejoice that the very Son of God came into our world to be our perfect high priest and sacrifice himself for sins. No animal sacrifice could ever truly pay for sins. He made that sacrifice for us on the first Good Friday that we will recall again one week from today.

Prayer: O Lord, thank for Jesus, our Prophet, Priest, and King. Grant that we would never doubt the forgiveness won for us by the sacrifice of Himself upon the cross. 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 10:45

- L** Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;
C Even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

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. |

Jesus came to serve! The word minister means “to serve.” Some years ago a book titled “Each One a Minister” was very popular. However, it did tend to lead to some confusion.

Some Christians began to believe that every Christian should serve as a pastor or overseer of the flock. Nothing could be farther from the truth. In truth, every Christian is called to minister. All Christians are called to serve their neighbors. This service often includes sacrifice.

As the Lenten season draws to its conclusion, let us not grow weary of service. We are about to witness the greatest service of all as we recall the day when Jesus gave His life as a ransom for the world.

One of the greatest services that we can offer is to bring the message of forgiveness through Jesus to the people around us. Pray that you may find a way to use Holy Week and Easter as an opportunity to point others to Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for Jesus and His cross of salvation. Grant that we would use Holy Week and Easter as opportunities to serve our neighbors with the blessings of the Gospel, through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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