

The Second Sunday after Pentecost

June 11, 2023

Jesus Sinners Doth Receive

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



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



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



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



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

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

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

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

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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 50:7–10; antiphon: Psalm 50:1

L The Mighty One, God the Lord, speaks and summons the earth
from the rising of the sun to its setting.

C Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, I will testify against you.
I am God, your God.

L Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you;
your burnt offerings are continually before me.

C I will not accept a bull from your house
or goats from your folds.

L For every beast of the forest is mine,
the cattle on a thousand hills.

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 The Mighty One, God the Lord, speaks and summons the earth
from the rising of the sun to its setting.

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 ~ Glory to God in the Highest

- L** Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.
- C** **Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father: We worship You, we give You thanks, and we praise You for Your glory.**
- L** Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, You are Lord and God, You are the Lamb of God:
- C** **Lord Jesus Christ, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.**
- L** Lord Jesus Christ, You are seated at the right hand of the Father; and we ask you to graciously receive our prayer.
- C** **For You alone are the Holy One,
You alone are the Lord,
You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

Collect of the Day

- L** Let us pray: Almighty and most merciful God, You sent Your Son, Jesus Christ, to seek and to save the lost. Graciously open our ears and our hearts to hear His call and to follow Him by faith that we may feast with Him forever in His kingdom; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C** **Amen.**

Hosea 5:15—6:6

¹⁵I will return again to my place,
until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face,
and in their distress earnestly seek me.

^{6:1}“Come, let us return to the LORD;
for he has torn us, that he may heal us;
he has struck us down, and he will bind us up.

²After two days he will revive us;
on the third day he will raise us up,
that we may live before him.

³Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD;
his going out is sure as the dawn;
he will come to us as the showers,
as the spring rains that water the earth.”

⁴What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?
What shall I do with you, O Judah?
Your love is like a morning cloud,
like the dew that goes early away.

⁵Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets;
I have slain them by the words of my mouth,
and my judgment goes forth as the light.

⁶For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice,
the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

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

Gradual Psalm 145:3, 5b, 6b

- L** Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised,
- C** and his greatness is unsearchable.
- L** On your wondrous works, I will meditate,
- C** and I will declare your greatness.

Psalm 119:65–72

- L** ⁶⁵You have dealt well with your servant, O LORD, according to your word.
- C** ⁶⁶**Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in your commandments.**
- L** ⁶⁷Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word.
- C** ⁶⁸**You are good and do good; teach me your statutes.**
- L** ⁶⁹The insolent smear me with lies, but with my whole heart I keep your precepts;
- C** ⁷⁰**their heart is unfeeling like fat, but I delight in your law.**
- L** ⁷¹It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.
- C** ⁷²**The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.**

Romans 4:13–25

¹³For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

¹⁶That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. ¹⁸In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.” ¹⁹He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. ²⁰No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. ²²That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.” ²³But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, ²⁴but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, ²⁵who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

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

Verse for the Day Matthew 9:13b

- L** Alleluia. Alleluia.
- C** I came not to call the righteous, but sinners Alleluia.

Matthew 9:9–13

- L** The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 9th chapter.
- C** Glory to You, O Lord.

⁹As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he rose and followed him.

¹⁰And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” ¹²But when he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

L This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to You, O Christ.

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

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

and sits at the right hand of God the Father
Almighty.

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

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

Chief of Sinners Though I Be

Lutheran Service Book 498, Lutheran Worship 285, The Lutheran Hymnal 242



1 Chief of sin - ners though I be, Je - sus shed His
2 Oh, the height of Je - sus' love, High - er than the
3 On - ly Je - sus can im - part Balm to heal the
4 Chief of sin - ners though I be, Christ is all in



blood for me, Died that I might live on high,
heav'ns a - bove, Deep - er than the depths of sea,
wound - ed heart, Peace that flows from sin for - giv'n,
all to me; All my wants to Him are known,



Lives that I might nev - er die. As the branch is
Last - ing as e - ter - ni - ty! Love that found me—
Joy that lifts the soul to heav'n, Faith and hope to
All my sor - rows are His own. He sus - tains the



to the vine, I am His, and He is mine.
won - drous thought! Found me when I sought Him not.
walk with God In the way that E - noch trod.
hid - den life Safe with Him from earth - ly strife.

5 O my Savior, help afford
By Your Spirit and Your Word!
When my wayward heart would stray,
Keep me in the narrow way;
Grace in time of need supply
While I live and when I die.

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Devotional thoughts:

Do you know the difference between major and minor surgery? Major surgery is mine!

As a corollary to this axiom, do you know the difference between major and minor sin? Major sin is yours!

Let me illustrate this with an event that happened many years ago.

I was attending a monthly meeting of board members and leaders in our church. It was the custom for an elder or other leader to offer an opening devotion and prayer for these meetings. In theory, this seemed to be a good and salutary thing to do. In practice, it didn't always turn out so well. Sometimes these opening devotions could turn into a tirade about a personal pet peeve concerning something in the church.

On this particular occasion, we heard a lecture about leaders who needed to set an example by being in church every Sunday. To be certain, this is a wise and noble goal for leaders. As a pastor, I applauded the sentiment. However, on this particular occasion the "devotion" descended into a diatribe and personal attack on other leaders in the church for their lack of attendance on Sunday mornings. It was a very uncomfortable experience for me.

Normally, I would just chalk this up as another unpleasant event in the life of a pastor and move on. However, I remember this particular episode for this one reason. I noticed that this same gentleman was absent from church the very next Sunday!

It turned out that he and his wife attended a wedding in another state that weekend. Under normal circumstances, I would consider that to be a pretty good excuse for missing church. However, having just received a tongue-lashing from this man about every Sunday church attendance, this episode has stayed with me all these years. Apparently, his excuse for missing church was perfectly valid but he was unable to afford the same justification to others. As I said, the difference between major sin and minor sin is that major sin is yours!

With that in mind, let's examine our Gospel lesson for today. Matthew 9 begins with Jesus in "his own city" (Matthew 9:1). There he healed a paralytic lying on a bed and forgave his sins. From the Gospel of Mark, we learn that this city is Capernaum and this paralytic is the man who was lowered down to Jesus through a hole in the roof (Mark 2:1-12).

Our Gospel lesson tells us that Jesus left there and saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth. Capernaum sits on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. It is on a major trade route that goes from Damascus to Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea. It is most likely that Matthew had his tax booth on this road to collect customs fees and duties as goods and produce were brought into an area for sale.

Then, just as today, tax collectors were not well-liked. No one wants to hear from the IRS. But at least today, we know that our tax dollars are going to support our own government. But in Jesus' day, tax collectors were particularly disliked because they were agents of the Romans who were occupying the Holy Land.

The Romans were pagans and in the eyes of the Pharisees, anyone who worked for them was betraying God and His people. They were despised with self-righteous religious fervor!

We appear to be experiencing something similar today. Many people in our country seem to approach politics with this self-righteous religious fervor. They not only see people of the opposite political persuasion as wrong or uninformed but they view them as evil and hateful. This may help you understand how the Pharisees thought about tax collectors and Matthew in particular.

It must have astounded them when Jesus called Matthew to follow Him and become one of His disciples. Did I say "astounded?" Maybe a better word would have been "offended." How could Jesus dare to accept such a hateful and evil person?

Not only did Jesus call Matthew to follow Him, He even ate dinner with him! Luke tells us that Matthew made a great feast for Jesus in His own house (Luke 5:29). At this feast, there were a large number of tax collectors and sinners. This was unheard of. The Pharisees could hardly stand it. They asked Jesus' disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

Let's pause for a moment and consider the word "sinners." In its most basic sense, it literally means "missing the mark," for example, aiming at a bull's eye and missing the target completely.

Today, it is common for us, as Christian people, to know that everyone is sinful. We all miss the mark of holiness and perfection. However, in this context, "sinners" is used as a term for those who are devoted to sin. They are the ones who are especially wicked. And yet, Jesus eats with them!

And now we get to the point. Jesus overheard the Pharisees' question, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" Listen to His answer. "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

Amazing but true, the Apostle Paul put it this way, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15 KJV).

The Pharisees considered themselves to be the religious experts of their day. No one was allowed to act or think differently from them. But Jesus called out their ignorance when He told the Pharisees, "Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,'" He was reminding them of Hosea 6:6 (KJV), "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." [ESV: For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.]

A long-time friend of mine recently died. She had been ill for quite a while but didn't know it. When she finally went to the doctor and received her diagnosis, it was too late to treat her disease. She died a few weeks later. She didn't know that she needed a physician.

The tax collectors and sinners were fully aware of their sin-sick souls. They flocked to Jesus! He forgave their sins. He invited them to follow Him. He ate with them.

The Pharisees were oblivious to the deadly disease of sin that infected them and every one of us. They were filled with pride and thought that they didn't need a savior.

Jesus worked hard at being their physician. His Sermon on the Mount was intended to help them understand His diagnosis.

The Pharisees believed that if they weren't as bad as the tax collectors and sinners that they were okay. They could see everyone else's major sins but they believed that their own sins were minor and insignificant. They didn't know that every sin is deadly to the soul.

So in His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire" (Matthew 5:21-22).

Believe it or not, anger, hate, and insults are just as deadly to our souls as murder! In human terms, we may differentiate between major and minor sins but, in God's eyes, they all separate us from Him and His perfection. Holiness is the standard for eternity.

There's a little Pharisee in all of us. We like to compare ourselves with others. We justify and excuse our "minor" sins and jump all over the "major" sins of others. But we "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23a).

Tax collectors, sinners of all kinds, you and I all need the Great Physician of the soul who lived and died and rose again for us. We are all "justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:23b).

Those of us who have recognized our sin and received mercy know how to show mercy to others. Pharisees of all times have never felt a need for God's mercy. They do not know how wonderful it is to receive God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness. They are constantly holding people accountable but ignoring their own failures. They feel no mercy towards others but hold them in contempt.

However, you and I are pleased to count ourselves among the tax collectors and sinners who dine with Jesus. We are filled with enthusiasm for Christ and His work because once we had not received mercy but now we have received mercy (1 Peter 2:10).

Join me in thanking God that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief (1 Timothy 1:15 KJV). Let us be the first to offer this same mercy and grace to repentant sinners who come to Jesus and desire to dine with Him in the banquet feast of heaven.

God's richest blessings to you in Christ.

- L** Let us pray. Father in heaven, by Your grace Abraham did not weaken in faith but trusted Your promises. Strengthen parents to be unshakable in their calling to train their children in Your Word and ways. Defend them from discouragement or apathy. Convince them of Your promise to be by their side always.

C Amen.

- L** Creator of all things, You call into existence what does not exist and govern it for good. Remember those You have given authority among the nations, that the laws they administer might reflect Your will and maintain peace.

C Amen.

- L** Heavenly Father, Your Son came to heal the sick and forgive sinners. Hear our prayers for those who suffer in any way. Restore them according to Your gracious will, and strengthen their trust in Your faithfulness and love. Let Your blessings rest upon all medical personnel and first responders who come to our aid in time of need.

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.

Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee

Lutheran Service Book 803, Lutheran Worship n/a, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a



- 1 Joy - ful, joy - ful we a - dore Thee, God of glo - ry, Lord of love!
- 2 All Thy works with joy sur-round Thee, Earth and heav'n re - flect Thy rays,
- 3 Thou art giv - ing and for - giv - ing, Ev - er bless-ing, ev - er blest,



Hearts un - fold like flow'rs be - fore Thee, Prais-ing Thee, their sun a - bove.
Stars and an-gels sing a-round Thee, Cen - ter of un - bro-ken praise.
Well-spring of the joy of liv - ing, O - cean-depth of hap-py rest!



Melt the clouds of sin and sad - ness, Drive the gloom of doubt a - way.
Field and for - est, vale and moun-tain, Flow - 'ry mead - ow, flash-ing sea,
Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly Spir - it, Foun - tain - head of love di-vine:



Giv - er of im - mor - tal glad-ness, Fill us with the light of day.
Chant-ing bird, and flow - ing foun-tain Call us to re - joice in Thee.
Joy - ful, we Thy heav'n in - her - it! Joy-ful, we by grace are Thine!

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Service Notes:

One person may serve as Leader or this may be shared with a number of individuals.

Read one or more of the lessons. Hymns may be sung or read. Use as much or little of this service as you would like.

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Enhancing Your Worship

Meditating on God's Word and Works

I will meditate on your wondrous works. Psalm 119:27
My eyes are awake through the night watches,
That I may meditate on Your word. Psalm 119:148 NKJV

The Week of The Second Sunday after Pentecost June 12 – 17, 2023

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 for the Day Matthew 9:13b

- L** Alleluia. Alleluia.
C I came not to call the righteous, but sinners Alleluia.

Introit Psalm 50:7–10; antiphon: Psalm 50:1

- L** The Mighty One, God the Lord, speaks and summons the earth
from the rising of the sun to its setting.
C Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, I will testify against you.
I am God, your God.
L Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you;
your burnt offerings are continually before me.
C I will not accept a bull from your house
or goats from your folds.
L For every beast of the forest is mine,
the cattle on a thousand hills.
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 The Mighty One, God the Lord, speaks and summons the earth
from the rising of the sun to its setting.

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. |

Once again, our introit invites us to read the entire psalm from which it was taken. Our introit hints that there is something wrong. In Psalm 50:8, God says, “Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you.”

Apparently, at that time, people were fulfilling all the requirements for worship and sacrifice at the temple. That wasn’t the problem. Then why was God intent on rebuking His people if their rituals were carried out accurately?

The rest of the psalm details the problem. The people knew the right words to say. They could recite the Lord’s statutes but God’s word didn’t mean anything to them. They willingly accepted thievery and adultery (verses 16-18). Their language was full of deceit and evil (verses 19-21). They forgot God (verse 22).

It has always been a danger for God’s people to be outwardly faithful but inwardly wayward. Today, Sunday morning worship has become the focus of much effort and expense. Some invest in worship bands, light shows, and smoke machines. Others choreograph every bow and sign of the cross. They invest in luxurious chasubles and other liturgical finery.

It’s important to remember that all of those things are secondary to true worship. True worship of God is characterized by thanksgiving and ordering our ways according to His word. God shows His salvation to these authentically faithful people (verse 23).

- L** Let us pray. O Lord, thank You for all Your gifts, especially the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. Give us an authentic faith and grant us faithfulness to all that You have commanded.

C Amen

Tuesday

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

Verse for the Day Matthew 9:13b

- L** Alleluia. Alleluia.
C I came not to call the righteous, but sinners Alleluia.

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 and most merciful God, You sent Your Son, Jesus Christ, to seek and to save the lost. Graciously open our ears and our hearts to hear His call and to follow Him by faith that we may feast with Him forever in His kingdom; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen

Did Jesus come into the world to bring us better rules than Moses gave the people of the Old Testament? Is it the goal of the Church to stop people from sinning? The answer is “no” to both questions.

Jesus didn’t come to bring better laws although He did explain their full implications. Jesus came to seek and save the lost. He came to call tax collectors and sinners to repentance. He came to offer His life for the sins

of the world.

Only people who acknowledge their sinfulness will receive the salvation that Jesus won for them. May we always be counted among them.

The Church's goal is not to stop people from sinning. The Church's goal is identical to Jesus' goal. We join in His mission of seeking and saving the lost.

When people come to faith, they receive forgiveness and salvation. They will naturally want to put sin behind them and serve God in holiness and righteousness. May we never tire in this noble endeavor.

Prayer: Almighty and most merciful God, You sent Your Son, Jesus Christ, to seek and to save the lost. Graciously open our ears and our hearts to hear His call and to follow Him by faith that we may feast with Him forever in His kingdom; through the same Jesus Christ, 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 for the Day Matthew 9:13b

L Alleluia. Alleluia.

C I came not to call the righteous, but sinners Alleluia.

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 119:65–72

L ⁶⁵You have dealt well with your servant, O LORD, according to your word.

C ⁶⁶Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in your commandments.

L ⁶⁷Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word.

C ⁶⁸You are good and do good; teach me your statutes.

L ⁶⁹The insolent smear me with lies, but with my whole heart I keep your precepts;

C ⁷⁰their heart is unfeeling like fat, but I delight in your law.

L ⁷¹It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.

C ⁷²The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.

I recently read an article about an astronomical discovery that was accompanied by some spectacular pictures. But upon closer inspection, I noted that the pictures weren't pictures at all but simply an artist's rendition of what this discovery might look like. As I read more carefully, I noted that the astronomical discovery wasn't a discovery but a theory of what may have caused a tiny flash on some astronomical instruments.

God hasn't been so vague with us. We don't have to come up with theories about what He wants us to know. God has given us His word. His message to us is clear.

The writer of Psalm 119 treasures God's word. He writes in verse 72, "The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces."

God's word is so wonderful because it brings to us the message of salvation. Yes, it teaches us His commandments and statutes. But more than that, it brings to us the message of Jesus' love, the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of eternal life. Thanks be to God that we never have to wonder or speculated about it.

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for the clear gift of Your word and its message of law and gospel. Move us to treasure this message of salvation and to never forsake Your word even in the face of trials and ridicule 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 for the Day Matthew 9:13b

L Alleluia. Alleluia.

C I came not to call the righteous, but sinners Alleluia.

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.

Hosea 5:15—6:6

¹⁵I will return again to my place,
until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face,
and in their distress earnestly seek me.

^{6:1}“Come, let us return to the LORD;
for he has torn us, that he may heal us;
he has struck us down, and he will bind us up.

²After two days he will revive us;
on the third day he will raise us up,
that we may live before him.

³Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD;
his going out is sure as the dawn;
he will come to us as the showers,
as the spring rains that water the earth.”

⁴What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?
What shall I do with you, O Judah?
Your love is like a morning cloud,
like the dew that goes early away.

⁵Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets;
I have slain them by the words of my mouth,
and my judgment goes forth as the light.

⁶For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice,
the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

Hosea wrote at a time of prosperity and moral decay in the land of Israel. He warned the people that their idolatry and unfaithfulness would bring God’s punishment and judgment.

It is sad to note that throughout human history, prosperity often leads to corruption and moral arrogance. When God allows times to be good, people react by believing that they don’t need God.

Hosea was given the task to invite the people back to God and faithfulness to Him. The nation refused to

listen to Hosea and God allowed the Assyrians to conquer and destroy the northern kingdom in about 722 B.C. 2 Kings 17:15 tells us, “They despised his statutes and his covenant that he made with their fathers and the warnings that he gave them. They went after false idols and became false, and they followed the nations that were around them, concerning whom the LORD had commanded them that they should not do like them.”

May we heed Hosea’s warning today and not be like the people of his time. Pray that we would return to the Lord and receive His steadfast love.

Prayer: Lord, thank You that You graciously welcome us back when we return to You. When we stray from Your word and statutes bring us back to faithfulness 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 for the Day Matthew 9:13b

L Alleluia. Alleluia.
C I came not to call the righteous, but sinners Alleluia.

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 4:13–25

¹³For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

¹⁶That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. ¹⁸In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.” ¹⁹He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. ²⁰No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. ²²That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.” ²³But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, ²⁴but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, ²⁵who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

When you read these verses from Romans, did you think that you had jumped into the deep end of the pool? I did.

This reading from Romans begins at chapter 4 verse 13 but the discussion of the righteousness of faith began way back in chapter 1 verses 16 and 17:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

We have missed quite a bit of Paul's thoughts on the subject between there and where we are in today's reading.

We have this disadvantage because of the way our "new" lectionary is arranged. In some years, the First Sunday after Trinity (now known as the Second Sunday after Pentecost) includes the reading of Romans 1:16-17. Unfortunately, the way things are, we miss that reading this year. In fact, we miss it most years. In order for these verses to be read with this new lectionary, Easter has to occur in the earliest week possible in the year that we are reading from Romans.

This is regrettable because Romans 1:16-17 are some of the most important verses in Romans. Starting our journey through Romans in the 4th chapter is like trying to jump onto a speeding train.

The righteousness of faith is such an important topic that Paul has already spent three chapters explaining it and its relationship to God's law. Paul's discussion of the righteousness of faith and its relationship to the law will continue to the middle of the 8th chapter.

The point that Paul makes in our reading for this week is that Abraham was saved by faith just as we are. We are all children and descendants of Abraham because we share the faith of Abraham (Romans 4:16).

The people of the Old Testament were never saved by obedience to the Law because no one can keep the law perfectly. We are all saved by faith in the One who kept the law perfectly for us and offered Himself up as a sacrifice on the cross for our sins. He did this so that we could receive His righteousness by faith.

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for the gift of faith and the salvation that comes through faith. Grant that we would never doubt the promises that You have given to us in Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Saturday

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

C Amen.

Verse for the Day Matthew 9:13b

L Alleluia. Alleluia.

C I came not to call the righteous, but sinners Alleluia.

Gradual Acts 2:17b; Romans 10:10

L I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,

C and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.

L With the heart one believes and is justified,

C and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

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 10:8-13

⁸ But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); ⁹ because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³ For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

I remember a conversation that I had many years ago with my friend's mother. I was attending seminary at the time so it's not surprising that the subject of religion came up. During our discussion, she said, "I believe that people are basically good." I have pondered that statement through the years.

Of course, I gave her some of the standard Biblical answers. I pointed out that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). I told her that the Bible tells us that there is none that doeth good, no not one (Romans 3:12). Needless to say, I wasn't able to convince her to rethink her opinion.

Many years later, I finally came across a response that may have at least caused her to think. My son was taking a business ethics class while he was attending the university. His professor made this statement. "You know that a person is dishonest if he says, 'I'm basically honest.'"

No one can be "basically honest." You are either honest or not. Likewise, no one can be "basically good." You are either good or you are not.

From time to time, someone may act honestly or in a good way but that doesn't change the fact that a "basically honest" or "basically good" person could act dishonestly or in a bad way at any moment. The professor was warning his students to never trust a "basically honest" person!

The real problem comes when a "basically good" person begins to feel that they are "basically saved" through what they do. "Basically good" people don't need a savior. After all, they are better than sinners and tax collectors. The Pharisees were "basically good."

But what happens if I am honest with myself and admit that I am sinful? Am I without hope? No! "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

It is only when we recognize our sinfulness that we are ready for salvation.

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for the salvation that Jesus won for me on the cross. Let me never reject His grace because I believe that I am a basically good person. Amen.

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