

The Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 12, 2021

Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise Lutheran Service Book 802, Lutheran Worship 451, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a



1 Im - mor - tal, in - vis - i - ble, God on - ly wise,
2 Un - rest - ing, un - hast - ing, and si - lent as light,
3 To all life Thou giv - est— to both great and small—
4 Great Fa - ther of glo - ry, pure Fa - ther of light,

In light in - ac - ces - si - ble hid from our eyes,
Nor want - ing, nor wast - ing, Thou rul - est in might;
In all life Thou liv - est, the true Life of all;
Thine an - gels a - dore Thee, all veil - ing their sight;

Most bless - ed, most glo - rious, the An - cient of Days,
Thy jus - tice like moun - tains high soar - ing a - bove
We blos - som and flour - ish as leaves on the tree
All laud we would ren - der: O help us to see

Al - might - y, vic - to - rious, Thy great name we praise.
Thy clouds which are foun - tains of good - ness and love.
And with - er and per - ish— but naught chang - es Thee.
'Tis on - ly the splen - dor of light that hides 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 31:14 –16; antiphon Psalm 31:24

L Be strong, and let your heart take courage,
all you who wait for the Lord!

C But I trust in you, O Lord;
I say, “You are my God.”

L My times are in your hand;
rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors!

C Make your face shine on your servant;
save me in your steadfast love!

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 Be strong, and let your heart take courage,
all you who wait for the Lord!

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: Lord Jesus Christ, our support and defense in every need, continue to preserve Your Church in safety, govern her by Your goodness, and bless her with Your peace; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C** Amen.

Isaiah 50:4–10

- ⁴The Lord GOD has given me
the tongue of those who are taught,
that I may know how to sustain with a word
him who is weary.
Morning by morning he awakens;
he awakens my ear
to hear as those who are taught.
- ⁵The Lord GOD has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious;
I turned not backward.
- ⁶I gave my back to those who strike,
and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard;
I hid not my face
from disgrace and spitting.
- ⁷But the Lord GOD helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like a flint,
and I know that I shall not be put to shame.
- ⁸He who vindicates me is near.
Who will contend with me?
Let us stand up together.
Who is my adversary?
Let him come near to me.
- ⁹Behold, the Lord GOD helps me;
who will declare me guilty?
Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment;
the moth will eat them up.
- ¹⁰Who among you fears the LORD
and obeys the voice of his servant?
Let him who walks in darkness
and has no light
trust in the name of the LORD
and rely on his God.

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

Gradual Psalm 34:9, 19, alt.

- L** Fear the Lord, you his saints,
- C** **for those who fear him lack nothing!**
- L** Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
- C** **but the Lord delivers him out of them all.**

Psalm 116:1–9

- L** ¹ I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy.
- C** ² **Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.**
- L** ³ The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;
I suffered distress and anguish.
- C** ⁴ **Then I called on the name of the Lord: “O Lord, I pray, deliver my soul!”**
- L** ⁵ Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; our God is merciful.
- C** ⁶ **The Lord preserves the simple; when I was brought low, he saved me.**
- L** ⁷ Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.
- C** ⁸ **For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling;**
- L** ⁹ I will walk before the Lord
- C** **in the land of the living.**

James 3:1–12

¹Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. ²For we all stumble in many ways, and if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. ³If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. ⁴Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. ⁵So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.

How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! ⁶And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. ⁷For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ⁸but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. ¹¹Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? ¹²Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

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

Verse of the Day: Ephesians 2:8, Mark 9:23b

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. By grace you have been saved through faith. Alleluia.
- C** **Alleluia, Alleluia. All things are possible for one who believes. Alleluia.**

Mark 9:14–29

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

¹⁴When they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. ¹⁵And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to [Jesus] and greeted him. ¹⁶And he asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?" ¹⁷And someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. ¹⁸And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able." ¹⁹And he answered them, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me." ²⁰And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. ²¹And Jesus asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. ²²And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." ²³And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible for one who believes." ²⁴Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" ²⁵And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." ²⁶And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, "He is dead." ²⁷But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. ²⁸And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" ²⁹And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer."

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 sits at the right hand of God the Father
Almighty.

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

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

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.

I Am Trusting Thee, Lord Jesus Lutheran Service Book 729, Lutheran Worship 408, The Lutheran Hymnal 428



1 I am trust-ing Thee, Lord Je - sus, Trust - ing on - ly Thee;
2 I am trust-ing Thee for par - don; At Thy feet I bow,
3 I am trust-ing Thee for cleans - ing In the crim - son flood;
4 I am trust-ing Thee to guide me; Thou a - lone shalt lead,



Trust - ing Thee for full sal - va - tion, Great and free.
For Thy grace and ten - der mer - cy Trust - ing now.
Trust - ing Thee to make me ho - ly By Thy blood.
Ev - 'ry day and hour sup - ply - ing All my need.

5 I am trusting Thee for power;
Thine can never fail.
Words which Thou Thyself shalt give me
Must prevail.

6 I am trusting Thee, Lord Jesus;
Never let me fall.
I am trusting Thee forever
And for all.

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Devotional Thoughts:

I live where fields of corn are lush and flourishing. Orchards are inviting us to pick sumptuous apples. Vineyards are rapidly ripening. God has been good in granting growth.

During this green season of the Church Year, God has been good in granting us growth, too, through His word. We continue to grow in the Fruit of the Spirit. Our worship life is flourishing. Our good works abound. Our faith is unshakeable.

Or is it?

As water falls from the sky to make the earth bring forth fruit, so also has God's word showered upon us to help us produce a crop of faith and good works. But in our sinful condition, sometimes our faith isn't lush and flourishing. Sometimes the sumptuous Fruit of the Spirit is hard to find in our lives. Our Gospel lesson speaks to such a time.

If you have been following along through the last few weeks, you know that we have been reading through the Gospel of Mark. So you may be surprised to notice that this week we have skipped from the end of chapter 7 to the middle of chapter 9! This isn't a conspiracy to hide these chapters from you. We have already read from chapter 8 earlier in the Church Year and the beginning of chapter 9 is the account of Jesus' transfiguration. It is good to remember this as we place today's lesson in context.

Our scene opens today, with Jesus, Peter, James, and John having just come down from the Mount of Transfiguration. They experienced Jesus' divine radiance as He conversed with Moses and Elijah. They heard the Voice from heaven declare, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him" (Mark 9:1-13).

Meanwhile, the rest of the disciples have been carrying on with the ministry. As it turns out, they have been rather unsuccessful in their attempts to heal a boy with an unclean spirit. Jesus stepped up to the plate and in compassion healed the boy but more on that later.

The disciples are curious about their inability to heal this young person. When they are in a house away from the crowd, the disciples privately asked Jesus about their lack of success. His answer is swift and to the point. Their lack of success can be traced to a lack of prayer!

I am sure that Jesus' response speaks to each of us today. Jesus had only been away from the disciples a short time but in His absence, their prayer life suffered. I have noticed this in myself. When I am absent from hearing God's word or neglect the Scriptures, my prayer life suffers.

However, the heart of our Gospel lesson uncovers a deeper problem. It is one that we all share.

When Jesus arrived, He was confronted by the father of a boy. He explained the situation to Jesus and that the disciples were not able to help. He concluded his narrative with these words, "If you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us."

Jesus immediately recognized the real problem, a lack of faith! He responded to the father with these words, "'If you can?'! All things are possible for one who believes."

This father hadn't brought his son to Jesus in faith. He brought him to Jesus as just another option.

It's hard for me to blame this man. After all, he already had been disappointed by the disciples. I can easily imagine that he was bracing himself for more disappointment.

Jesus would have none of it. He instantly placed His finger on the problem. This man is not a man of faith but a man of doubt!

Next, a prayer came from this man that I have echoed many times. "I believe; help my unbelief!" Rather, I have more often used the words of this prayer found in the King James Version, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

As I see the lush green fields around my home, it would be nice to think of my faith flourishing the same way. It would be nice to think of God's word nourishing my faith in such a way that doubt or disappointment

would never haunt me. It would be nice to think that my faith would be so strong so that no evil thoughts or words would ever enter my heart or leave my mouth. But on this side of heaven, it will never be so.

My faith will always need to grow. Sin will always need to be confessed. I must always continue to strive to live a better life filled with the Fruit of the Spirit. Until I am in heaven, I will always be disappointed in myself. I will always need the prayer, “Lord, I believe; help Thou my unbelief.”

If you have felt disappointed in your lack of faith or if others have been critical of you because of a lack of faith then remember the man from our Gospel lesson today. Remember his prayer.

If someone comes to you disappointed in themselves because they lack faith or if they are feeling that God will not hear their prayers because of a lack of faith then remind them of this prayer. “Lord, I believe, help Thou my unbelief.”

“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.

L Lord God, we believe; help our unbelief! Sustain us through the many troubles and trials of this world. When unclean spirits afflict us and those that we love, revive our trust in You.

C Amen.

L Lord and Father, tame our tongues. Turn them by Your Spirit from cursing to blessing, and keep us from stumbling in what we say. Move our hearts to use our speech would be seasoned with salt as we share Your holy word and praise Your holy name.

C Amen.

L Heavenly Father, sustain us when we are weary. Sustain us when we are weak. Grant us the grace to come to the aid of our brothers and sisters in times of need.

C Amen.

L Almighty God, send Your holy angels to watch over all of our loved ones, especially those who live in distant places. We thank You for the protection granted to all who have attended to our needs during the pandemic. As we again experience an increase in infections, we ask for Your continued protection and grace.

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.

On What Has Now Been Sown Lutheran Service Book 921, Lutheran Worship 217, The Lutheran Hymnal 46



1 On what has now been sown Thy bless - ing, Lord, be - stow;
2 To Thee our wants are known, From Thee are all our pow'rs;
3 O grant that each of us, Now met be - fore Thee here,



The pow'r is Thine a - lone To make it sprout and grow. Do Thou
Ac - cept what is Thine own And par - don what is ours. Our prais -
May meet to - geth - er thus When Thou and Thine ap - pear And fol -



in grace the har - vest raise, And Thou a - lone shalt have the praise!
es, Lord, and prayers re - ceive, And to Thy Word a bless - ing give.
low Thee to heav'n, our home. E'en so, a - men, Lord Je - sus, come!

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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 Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 13– September 18, 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 31:14 –16; antiphon Psalm 31:24

- L** Be strong, and let your heart take courage,
all you who wait for the Lord!
C But I trust in you, O Lord;
I say, "You are my God."
L My times are in your hand;
rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors!
C Make your face shine on your servant;
save me in your steadfast love!
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 Be strong, and let your heart take courage,
all you who wait for the Lord!

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. |

Before the days of the pandemic, stores had employees handing out samples of food. I almost always said no to these offers. I knew that if I were to take just one bite of their tasty treats, I would crave more. Our weekly

introits sometimes work that way for me, too. They give me a little taste of a psalm. When I go to the psalm, I am not disappointed. Often I discover that a feast awaits me in the unused verses of the psalm.

Our introit this week from Psalm 31 is one such example. Bible scholars tell us that this psalm may have been written when King Saul was seeking to kill David (1 Samuel 23:15).

Like you, I have had difficult times in my life. I have struggled with a lack of financial resources (I was poor). I have had serious medical issues. I have had friends abandon me and people dislike me. I have been lost in the wilderness and experienced multiple life-threatening dangers. I have never had anyone seek to kill me!

It is hard to imagine what David must have felt as all the power of the king was arrayed against him. At one point David writes, "I had said in my alarm, 'I am cut off from your sight'" (Psalm 31:22). In his fright, he had given up hope that God would rescue him. You may have felt the same way at times.

But that was not the end. He continues, "But you heard the voice of my pleas for mercy when I cried to you for help." David's story was not over. God had a plan for him and his descendants. No earthly king could succeed in opposing God and his servant.

God saved him and made him a great king. Then in the fullness of time, Jesus was born of the house and lineage of David. You and I benefit from God's merciful action in preserving David long ago.

In the antiphon of our introit, we read David's concluding words of Psalm 31, "Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the LORD!"

Waiting can be difficult. It was for David. He imagined that he had been cut off from God. But in the end, David encourages us to have patience as we wait for the Lord. Because of his experience with God, he urges us to be strong and take courage.

In His steadfast love, God saved David. In His steadfast love, God saved us! Our time on this earth is filled with stress and anxiety but God in Christ has opened the kingdom of heaven to us and all believers.

L Let us pray. Lord Jesus Christ, give us patient spirits. Make us willing to wait and pray. Let us never grow weary. Move us to cast our cares upon You with confidence, trusting You for what is best.

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: Ephesians 2:8, Mark 9:23b

L Alleluia, Alleluia. By grace you have been saved through faith. Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. All things are possible for one who believes. 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: Lord Jesus Christ, our support and defense in every need, continue to preserve Your Church in safety, govern her by Your goodness, and bless her with Your peace; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Already in high school, I knew that I wanted to become a pastor. I had to respond to comments both positive and negative about my chosen vocation. There is one comment that caught me off guard and I have never forgotten.

The decade of the 1960s was a time of turmoil and unrest. We were deeply engaged in the Vietnam War. Young men burned their draft cards. Violent protests were in the streets. Some cities burned with racial tension. We experienced the revolution of the youth culture and an explosion in drug usage. Rebellion against society was found in popular music, clothing, and language. Psychedelic was the word of the day. Hippies were everywhere. Young people were flocking to communes. In this context, someone seriously said to me, “Why do you want to become a pastor? There won’t be a church in 30 years!”

Some people may have the same thoughts today. There is turmoil in society in a way that hasn’t been seen in many years.

But the Church will remain. Jesus promised that He would build His Church and the “gates of hell would not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:17-19). The Church has survived the Roman Empire, the Dark Ages, the Enlightenment, communist atheism, and much, much more. God will never abandon His people. He will continue to send His Holy Spirit into the hearts and minds of people and bring them to faith. People will continue to seek His mercy and receive His forgiveness. Jesus will continue to hear our prayers and grant us life and salvation.

We remember again today the words of David, “Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the LORD!”

Let us pray: Lord Jesus Christ, our support and defense in every need, continue to preserve Your Church in safety, govern her by Your goodness, and bless her with Your peace; for You live and reign with the Father 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: Ephesians 2:8, Mark 9:23b

L Alleluia, Alleluia. By grace you have been saved through faith. Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. All things are possible for one who believes. Alleluia.

Psalms 116:1–9

L ¹ I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy.

C ² Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.

L ³ The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;
I suffered distress and anguish.

C ⁴ Then I called on the name of the Lord: “O Lord, I pray, deliver my soul!”

L ⁵ Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; our God is merciful.

C ⁶ The Lord preserves the simple; when I was brought low, he saved me.

L ⁷ Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.

C ⁸ For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling;

L ⁹ I will walk before the Lord

C in the land of the living.

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.

We live in a time when we contemplate life and death almost every day. Television displays images of destruction following hurricanes. We remember the death toll of 9/11. We see a disaster unfolding in Afghanistan. And we are constantly aware of the threat that surrounds us because of the pandemic. Psalm 116 is a psalm that is particularly appropriate for times such as these. Verse 3 in the NIV brings this into a little better focus than the ESV:

“The cords of death entangled me,
the anguish of the grave came over me;
I was overcome by distress and sorrow.” (NIV)

What are we to do when we are overcome by distress? We call on the name of the Lord!

We pray to Him and He delivers our souls. When we feel inadequate or unable to find answers, He saves us. He gives us rest in times of anxiety. He delivers our souls from eternal death. He frees us from tears. He keeps our feet from stumbling.

When we walk with the Lord, we walk in the land of the living for all eternity.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, our Savior, have compassion upon all the afflicted. Be with me, at this time that I may find comfort and strength when I am surrounded by the threat of death. Give me faith that I may turn to You in my anxiety and find rest for my soul in Your blessed name. Amen.

Thursday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Ephesians 2:8, Mark 9:23b

L Alleluia, Alleluia. By grace you have been saved through faith. Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. All things are possible for one who believes. 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.

Isaiah 50:4–10

⁴The Lord GOD has given me
the tongue of those who are taught,
that I may know how to sustain with a word
him who is weary.
Morning by morning he awakens;
he awakens my ear
to hear as those who are taught.
⁵The Lord GOD has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious;
I turned not backward.
⁶I gave my back to those who strike,
and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard;
I hid not my face
from disgrace and spitting.

⁷But the Lord GOD helps me;
 therefore I have not been disgraced;
 therefore I have set my face like a flint,
 and I know that I shall not be put to shame.

⁸He who vindicates me is near.
 Who will contend with me?
 Let us stand up together.
 Who is my adversary?
 Let him come near to me.

⁹Behold, the Lord GOD helps me;
 who will declare me guilty?
 Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment;
 the moth will eat them up.

¹⁰Who among you fears the LORD
 and obeys the voice of his servant?
 Let him who walks in darkness
 and has no light
 trust in the name of the LORD
 and rely on his God.

It is difficult to parachute into our Old Testament lesson for this week. It is a bit like walking into the middle of a conversation without knowing the situation.

Our reading begins with these words, “The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary.” Who is speaking here?

My first answer to that question is, “Isaiah.” And in a sense that is true because this is his book of prophecy. However, there is a better answer. If you go all the way back to Isaiah 42:1, you will read these words, “Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.” Here Isaiah is talking about God’s chosen servant who will one day come. We know that this servant turned out to be Jesus! Now read again the Old Testament lesson with the understanding that God’s Chosen Servant is speaking.

God’s Chosen Servant sustains the weary with a word! He gave His back to those who beat Him. He allowed His face to be spat upon!

Isaiah was a great prophet and a man of God. He spoke about the salvation that was to come through God’s Chosen Servant but he was not privileged to know the Servant the way we do. He knew that the Chosen Servant would be beaten and spat upon. In a few more chapters he will write these words:

“He was despised and rejected by men,
 a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
 and as one from whom men hide their faces
 he was despised, and we esteemed him not.
 Surely he has borne our griefs
 and carried our sorrows;
 yet we esteemed him stricken,
 smitten by God, and afflicted.
 But he was pierced for our transgressions;
 he was crushed for our iniquities;
 upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
 and with his wounds we are healed” (Isaiah 53:3-5).

But we have the wonderful pleasure and honor of knowing Jesus. We know that in the fullness of time God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons (Galatians 4:4-5) in the fulfillment of Isaiah's words:

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end (Isaiah 9:6-7)

Prayer: Lord God, heavenly Father, through the prophet Isaiah, You promised to Your people Your Chosen Servant who would redeem Your people through His life, death, and resurrection. Grant to us true faith in Your Chosen Servant, Jesus, who came to heal us from the brokenness of sin through the same 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: Ephesians 2:8, Mark 9:23b

L Alleluia, Alleluia. By grace you have been saved through faith. Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. All things are possible for one who believes. 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.

James 3:1–12

¹Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. ²For we all stumble in many ways, and if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. ³If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. ⁴Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. ⁵So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.

How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! ⁶And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. ⁷For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ⁸but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. ¹¹Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? ¹²Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

Do you remember a time when there was something called “polite company”? I don’t think that exists anymore. We hear people using foul language in almost every setting. Unfortunately, it seems that our children are being raised in a vulgar world.

As upsetting as this may be, James warns us of something far worse. He writes, “From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.”

As offensive as crude speech may be, it is even more harmful when we speak evil of someone. Yet from politicians to media personalities, we hear the most shameful comments about others.

Jesus reminds us to love our neighbors as ourselves but much of what we hear is hateful. I suppose that is to be expected in the secular, uncouth world of ill-mannered people. But James is troubled by the fact that God’s people are using their voices to curse others.

Have things changed in the Church since the time of James? I think not. We may not use crude and earthy language but many of us are too quick to speak evil of brothers and sisters in Christ.

When we are guilty of this sin, may we humble ourselves and confess. I know a few people who never speak an unkind word. May we be counted among them for “from the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.”

May we heed the words of the Apostle Paul, “Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person” (Colossians 4:5-6)

Prayer: Almighty God, grant me wisdom in my language. Let me be gracious in my speech. Move me to speak well of others that cursing would not come out of my mouth through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.

Saturday

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

C Amen.

Gradual Psalm 34:9, 19, alt.

L Fear the Lord, you his saints,

C for those who fear him lack nothing!

L Many are the afflictions of the righteous,

C but the Lord delivers him out of them all.

Verse of the Day: Ephesians 2:8, Mark 9:23b

L Alleluia, Alleluia. By grace you have been saved through faith. Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. All things are possible for one who believes. 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.

James 3:1

¹Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

I remember driving home from the hospital with our newborn son. All of a sudden, I felt the weight of parental responsibility upon my shoulders. Could I be a good father? Would I make good decisions for my son?

I suspect that most parents have the same thoughts. It is easy to be a free spirit when no one relies upon you and your judgment. However, many people bear responsibility for the well-being of others.

School bus drivers and airline pilots are two examples of those who are entrusted with the lives of others. I never want to fly with a pilot who is a “free spirit.”

Likewise, James points out that teachers (and pastors) are also accountable. People will make important decisions based on what they are taught. Some of these may be life and death decisions.

Pastors and Bible teachers are particularly responsible for teaching the truth. When God’s word is corrupted, people are misled about eternity. This is extremely dangerous for souls.

Over the years, I have sometimes heard people say, “I’m not concerned about doctrine, I’m concerned about souls.” James would find such a statement extremely concerning. It is impossible to be concerned about souls without being concerned about the truth of God’s word. Paul wrote to Titus, “But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1). May our pastors and teachers always give heed to these words. May parents always be faithful in teaching their children about Jesus and His love for them through the cross.

Prayer: Merciful God, we humbly implore You to cast the bright beams of Your light upon all teachers in Your Church that we, being instructed by the doctrine of the apostles, may walk in the light of Your truth and finally attain to the light of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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