

The Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 19, 2021

Come, Thou Almighty King Lutheran Service Book 905, Lutheran Worship 169, The Lutheran Hymnal 239



1 Come, Thou al - might - y King, Help us Thy
2 Come, Thou in - car - nate Word, Gird on Thy
3 Come, ho - ly Com - fort - er, Thy sa - cred
4 To Thee, great One in Three, E - ter - nal



name to sing; Help us to praise; Fa - ther all -
might - y sword; Our prayer at - tend. Come and Thy
wit - ness bear In this glad hour! Thou, who al -
prais - es be Hence ev - er - more! Thy sov - 'reign



glo - ri - ous, O'er all vic - to - ri - ous,
peo - ple bless, And give Thy Word suc - cess,
might - y art, Now rule in ev - 'ry heart,
maj - es - ty May we in glo - ry see,



Come and reign o - ver us, An - cient of Days.
And let Thy righ - teous - ness On us de - scend.
And ne'er from us de - part, Spir - it of pow'r.
And to e - ter - ni - ty Love and a - dore.

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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 37:5–7; antiphon Psalm 37:4

L Delight yourself in the Lord,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.

C Commit your way to the Lord;
trust in him, and he will act.

L He will bring forth your righteousness as the light,
and your justice as the noonday.

C Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him;
fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!

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 Delight yourself in the Lord,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.

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: O God, whose strength is made perfect in weakness, grant us humility and childlike faith that we may please You in both will and deed; 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 11:18–20

¹⁸The LORD made it known to me and I knew;
then you showed me their deeds.
¹⁹But I was like a gentle lamb
led to the slaughter.
I did not know it was against me
they devised schemes, saying,
“Let us destroy the tree with its fruit,
let us cut him off from the land of the living,
that his name be remembered no more.”
²⁰But, O LORD of hosts, who judges righteously,
who tests the heart and the mind,
let me see your vengeance upon them,
for to you have I committed my cause.

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 54

L ¹ O God, save me, by your name, and vindicate me by your might.
C ² **O God, hear my prayer; give ear to the words of my mouth.**
L ³ For strangers have risen against me; ruthless men seek my life; they do not set God before themselves.
C ⁴ **Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life.**
L ⁵ He will return the evil to my enemies; in your faithfulness put an end to them.
C ⁶ **With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to you;**
I will give thanks to your name, O Lord, for it is good.
L ⁷ For he has delivered me from every trouble,
C **and my eye has looked in triumph on my enemies.**

James 3:13—4:10

¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. ¹⁵This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. ¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

^{4:1}What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? ²You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. ⁴You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you suppose it is

to no purpose that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”? ⁶But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” ⁷Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Verse of the Day: Mark 9:35b

L Alleluia, Alleluia. If anyone would be first, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. He must be last of all and servant of all. Alleluia.

Mark 9:30–37

L The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 9th chapter.

C Glory to You, O Lord.

³⁰[The disciples] went on from there and passed through Galilee. And [Jesus] did not want anyone to know, ³¹for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.” ³²But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him.

³³And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you discussing on the way?” ³⁴But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest.

³⁵And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.” ³⁶And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.”

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.



1 Lord of glo - ry, You have bought us With Your
 2 Grant us hearts, dear Lord, to give You Glad - ly,
 3 Won - drous hon - or You have giv - en To our
 4 Lord of glo - ry, You have bought us With Your



life - blood as the price, Nev - er grudg - ing for the
 free - ly of Your own. With the sun - shine of Your
 hum - blest char - i - ty In Your own mys - te - rious
 life - blood as the price, Nev - er grudg - ing for the



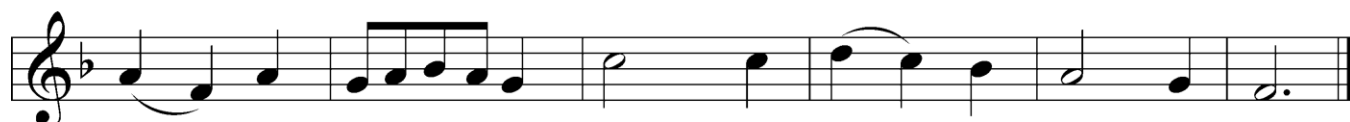
lost ones That tre - men - dous sac - ri - fice;
 good - ness Melt our thank - less hearts of stone
 sen - tence, "You have done it all to Me."
 lost ones That tre - men - dous sac - ri - fice.



And with that have free - ly giv - en Bless - ings
 Till our cold and self - ish na - tures, Warmed by
 Can it be, O gra - cious Mas - ter, That You
 Give us faith to trust You bold - ly, Hope, to



count - less as the sand To the un - thank - ful
 You, at length be - lieve That more hap - py
 deign for alms to sue, Say - ing by Your
 stay our souls on You; But, oh, best of



and the e - vil With Your own un - spar - ing hand.
 and more bless - ed 'Tis to give than to re - ceive.
 poor and need - y, "Give as I have giv'n to you?"
 all Your grac - es, With Your love our love re - new.

Devotional Thoughts:

Have you seen the housing prices lately? They are going through the roof (wink, wink), especially here in Southwest Michigan where people from Chicago are arriving in droves to buy second homes near the lake.

I love looking out over Lake Michigan. In an alternate reality, I would own a home beside the lake and sit on the porch with my morning coffee and gaze at the lake every day. Even before the current real estate buying frenzy, I knew that I could never afford such luxury. But what I can afford is a daily drive along the shore. I can look out over the dunes and beaches and watch the waves for free!

On some days, high on the bluff when the air is crisp and clear (if you know just where to look), you can see the tallest buildings of downtown Chicago on the far side of the lake. Other times, a haze floats over the lake so it is almost impossible to tell where the water ends and where the sky begins. Our eyes need contrast to see. On hazy days, the buildings are still there but they go unnoticed on our side of the lake.

Our Gospel lesson from Mark this week is one of complete contrast. We cannot help but plainly see the difference between our way of thinking and Jesus' way of life.

Without using parables, metaphors, or allegories, Jesus tells the disciples as clearly as possible, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise." But the disciples are walking around in a fog. They just don't get it even though this is the second time Jesus had been so blunt about His mission to save sinners (Mark 8:31).

Living in the smog of sin, as Jesus is facing death on the cross, all that they can think about is who is the greatest among them! In fact, they had been arguing and debating about this all along the way!

The contrast between Jesus and His disciples couldn't be greater. The contrast between Jesus and the world is easy to see. The contrast between Jesus and our way of thinking is in sharp focus.

In my youth, an athlete made this boast, "I am the greatest." Today, we celebrate that athlete and his boast. Our infatuation with sports is simply one example of our inclination to be like the disciples. This same competition for dominance is evident in business. It is experienced in our personal relationships. Unfortunately, it is found in the Church. I see it in my own sinful nature.

I have been known to quip, "Pastors never retire. They just quit going to meetings." I can't begin to number the times that I returned home late in the evening totally exhausted following a meeting with Jesus' present-day disciples. Like the disciples of old, we had argued and debated about whose ideas and plans were the greatest.

I still witness this from a distance as congregation after congregation deals with the issue of face masks. If I hadn't had 40+ years of experience with meetings, I would have found it hard to believe the acrimony that is produced by something so simple. When it comes to arguing, even in the church, courtesy goes out the window.

Displaying an abundant amount of patience, Jesus sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." With those words, Jesus set their concept of greatness on its head. He turned it upside down. Greatness is not found in domination. Greatness is found in service!

It would have been easy for Jesus to succumb to the temptation of seizing power. Satan had offered it to Him at the beginning of His ministry (Matthew 4:8-10). After feeding the five thousand, the crowds wanted to take Him by force to make Him king (John 6:15). Peter picked up his sword to defend Him. (John 18:10). He could have had twelve legions of angels fight to give Him earthly power (Matthew 26:53). But He would have none of it. His mission was to serve the world through His suffering and death on the cross.

As an exclamation point to His seminar on greatness and service, He took a child and put him in the middle of the group for all the arguing disciples to see. Then He tenderly took this small child into His arms and said, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me."

A constant refrain from my childhood was, "Phil, get this." Or "Phil, do that." You may have experienced the same. I can imagine that in Jesus' day, children were often treated as servants. In days past, it was sometimes said that farmers had large families to help in the fields. Jesus turns this attitude upside down! Receiving and serving children is receiving Jesus. And in so doing, we receive the Father who sent Him.

We often set goals for ourselves in life. Some of them go unrealized and others by the grace of God are fulfilled. Early in my ministry, I knew that I wanted to serve in a church with a school. For 32 years, I was privileged to be a pastor at Christ Lutheran Church and School in Stevensville, Michigan. During this time, I

always felt that it was my duty to be 110% supportive of our school (please excuse the hyperbole). It has always been so disappointing to me when pastors accept a call to a church with a school and refuse to support it. Or worse, they see the school as competition. I wonder what they think when they read passages such as today's Gospel lesson. Let's take a moment and remember some of the things Jesus said about children.

At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children" (Matthew 11:25).

"Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3).

Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 19:13-14).

At times, there is much confusion and fog about what constitutes the heart and soul of the Christian faith. It is tempting to use the Bible to support one political agenda or another. It's not uncommon for those seeking to be the greatest in one endeavor or another to quote the Bible in their quest to be the greatest. When we are faced with sorting through all of this rhetoric, it would be good to pause and reread the Gospel lesson for today. "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise." Jesus' service to us through His death and resurrection is the heart and soul of the Christian faith. Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief! (1 Timothy 1:15).

May God grant us the grace to set aside our striving for dominance and receive children in His Name.

"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 O Lord of hosts, You oppose the proud and give grace to the humble. Help us by Your Spirit to submit ourselves to You and resist the devil, that he would flee from us.

C Amen.

L Lord of hosts, subdue our passions by Your Spirit, that we may not be ruled by jealousy and selfish ambition that give rise to disorder and every evil practice.

C Amen.

L Lord of hosts, uphold this world in Your order. Preserve the Church and the preaching of Your Word against all enemies. Bless our homes, that parents and children may serve one another faithfully and grow in instruction and faith until life's end. Give health and wisdom to all who serve in public office, that their authority may be exercised for the benefit of our people.

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.

Shepherd of Tender Youth Lutheran Service Book 864, Lutheran Worship 471, The Lutheran Hymnal 628



1 Shep - herd of ten - der youth, Guid - ing in
 2 You are the ho - ly Lord, O all - sub -
 3 You are the great High Priest; You have pre -
 4 O ev - er be our guide, Our shep - herd,



love and truth Through de - vious ways; Christ, our tri -
 du - ing Word, Heal - er of strife. Your - self You
 pared the feast Of ho - ly love; And in our
 and our pride, Our staff and song. Je - sus, O



um - phant king, We come Your name to sing
 did a - base That from sin's deep dis - grace
 mor - tal pain None calls on You in vain;
 Christ of God, By Your en - dur - ing Word



And here our chil - dren bring To join Your praise.
 You so might save our race And give us life.
 Our plea do not dis - dain; Help from a - bove.
 Lead us where You have trod; Make our faith strong.

5 So now, and till we die,
 Sound we Your praises high
 And joyful sing:
 Infants and all the throng,
 Who to the Church belong,
 Unite to swell the song
 To Christ, our king!

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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 Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 20 – September 25, 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 mediate 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 37:5–7; antiphon Psalm 37:4

- L** Delight yourself in the Lord,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.
- C** **Commit your way to the Lord;
trust in him, and he will act.**
- L** He will bring forth your righteousness as the light,
and your justice as the noonday.
- C** **Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him;
fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!**
- 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** Delight yourself in the Lord,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.

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. |

As is often the case, we benefit from reading the entire psalm that is suggested by the introit. Psalm 37 is an acrostic poem with two verses for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The acrostic psalms are powerful reminders of the effort and skill used to produce these hymns of the Old Testament.

In the few verses of the psalm used for our introit today, we learn an important lesson: “Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart” (Psalm 37:4). At first glance, some may read this as a formula for getting our own way in life. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

When we delight in the Lord, the desires of our hearts are in accord with His purpose and will. Delighting in the Lord means that we are on His side.

In contrast, instead of delighting in the Lord, we rebel against Him. We complain that He doesn’t know what He’s doing in our lives. We look around and see immoral and wicked people prospering and we complain to God about our meager resources. This is not delighting in the Lord.

In the Gospel lesson, we learn that delighting in the Lord is making ourselves last and the servants of all. The One in whom the Lord was well pleased is the One who went to the cross and offered His life as a ransom for the sins of the world. In Him, we delight!

L Let us pray. Lord Jesus Christ, teach us to delight in Your will and purpose for our lives. Grant that we would be free from envy of the sinful world.

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: Mark 9:35b

L Alleluia, Alleluia. If anyone would be first, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. He must be last of all and servant of all. 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: O God, whose strength is made perfect in weakness, grant us humility and childlike faith that we may please You in both will and deed; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

It is enjoyable to watch children grow and prosper in life. It is a pleasure to watch them accomplish difficult tasks and achieve success.

But this is a bittersweet experience. As children grow, we also know that they will soon lose the innocence of childhood. They will become jaded and cynical. In one way or another, it has happened to each of us.

In our Gospel lesson and collect for this week, we learn the necessity of returning to a childlike faith. We learn to put away our sinful striving for dominance and learn the importance of service.

We pray for the humility to please God by receiving children and all of those around us. We pray that we would delight in the Lord’s will and learn to please Him with all of our actions.

Through the weakness of the cross, Jesus defeated sin, death, and the devil for us. May we never become jaded and cynical about the love of God that is ours in Christ.

Let us pray: O God, whose strength is made perfect in weakness, grant us humility and childlike faith that we may please You in both will and deed; 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: Mark 9:35b

L Alleluia, Alleluia. If anyone would be first, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. He must be last of all and servant of all. Alleluia.

Psalm 54

L ¹ O God, save me, by your name, and vindicate me by your might.

C ² **O God, hear my prayer; give ear to the words of my mouth.**

L ³ For strangers have risen against me; ruthless men seek my life; they do not set God before themselves.

C ⁴ **Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life.**

L ⁵ He will return the evil to my enemies; in your faithfulness put an end to them.

C ⁶ **With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to you;
I will give thanks to your name, O Lord, for it is good.**

L ⁷ For he has delivered me from every trouble,

C **and my eye has looked in triumph on my enemies.**

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.**

Most of us have had to deal with people who wish us evil. We find this to be particularly difficult to deal with when we are betrayed by friends or fellow believers in the Church. King David experienced all of this and more. His enemies not only wished him harm but they sought to take his life.

In those difficult times, David turned to God. He alone could save David in his hour of need.

When we find ourselves hurt and betrayed by unknown enemies or so-called friends, like David, we turn to God in prayer. He is our helper. He upholds our lives.

For a time, in this sinful world, ruthless and evil people appear to win. As C.F.W. Walther, the first president of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod once wrote in his famous hymn, “He’s Risen, He’s Risen”, stanza 2:

The foe was triumphant when on Calvary
The Lord of creation was nailed to a tree.

But the story was not over. He goes on to write in stanza 3:

But short was their triumph; the Savior arose.
And death, hell, and Satan, He vanquished His foes.

Or as the Apostle Paul reminds us:

“O death, where is your victory?
O death, where is your sting?”

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:55-57).

Prayer: O God, hear my prayer; give ear to the words of my mouth. Save me, by Your name, and vindicate me by Your might. Thank you for the victory that is ours through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Thursday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Mark 9:35b

L Alleluia, Alleluia. If anyone would be first, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. He must be last of all and servant of all. 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.

Jeremiah 11:18–20

¹⁸The LORD made it known to me and I knew;
then you showed me their deeds.

¹⁹But I was like a gentle lamb
led to the slaughter.

I did not know it was against me
they devised schemes, saying,
“Let us destroy the tree with its fruit,
let us cut him off from the land of the living,
that his name be remembered no more.”

²⁰But, O LORD of hosts, who judges righteously,
who tests the heart and the mind,
let me see your vengeance upon them,
for to you have I committed my cause.

In the Gospel lesson, Jesus is acutely aware of His impending betrayal, suffering, death, and resurrection. What Jesus experienced was a repeat of what had happened to many of the prophets.

In the Old Testament lesson for this week, Jeremiah recounts his betrayal by the people of his hometown (Jeremiah 11:21). God’s people continue to suffer betrayal at the hands of friends and colleagues.

However, Jeremiah’s enemies were no match for the Lord. The townspeople threatened Jeremiah with death if he didn’t stop speaking God’s word of prophecy. But he kept on preaching the truth. Today, we are among the beneficiaries of Jeremiah’s persistent faithfulness to his prophetic office.

Jesus would not be deterred from being faithful to His mission of saving the world. Even Peter tried to dissuade Him from making the ultimate sacrifice (Matthew 16:23). But Jesus was determined to reconcile the world to Himself through the cross. He was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He made you His own and welcomes You into His arms through the forgiveness of sins won that day on Calvary.

We, too, have a mission to share God's saving word with people around us. Satan still threatens us. We sometimes suffer betrayal but we join with Luther in singing:

Though devils all the world should fill,
All eager to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill;
They shall not overpow'r us.
This world's prince may still
Scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none.
He's judged; the deed is done;
One little word can fell him.

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God, LSB 656
Stanza 3

Prayer: O Lord of hosts, heavenly Father, Jeremiah, like so many of Your prophets of old, suffered at the hands of sinners because they were faithful to You. Grant that we would remain faithful to you though we may also suffer. Thank You for the victory that is ours in Christ through His suffering and death on the cross. Amen.

Friday

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

Verse of the Day: Mark 9:35b

L Alleluia, Alleluia. If anyone would be first, Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia. He must be last of all and servant of all. 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 3:13–18

¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. ¹⁵This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. ¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

In reading through these verses from James, I am struck by a short phrase: the meekness of wisdom! This is an interesting pairing of concepts.

Some years ago, I was told a story about a congregation that was in the process of calling a pastor. Apparently, they had been experiencing conflict and were looking for someone to resolve the tension that they were enduring.

They interviewed one candidate who went by the nickname of "Big John." (For the significance of this nickname, check out the song, "Big Bad John" by Jimmy Dean or watch a John Wayne movie.) This pastor was

from cattle country and as the call committee explained to him the state of their current conflict, he was heard to say: "I have big boots and I know how to use them." The call committee responded, "That's what we want!"

During his five years in this congregation, Big John was true to his word. Some people loved his Wild West style of leadership and others found homes in neighboring congregations.

When it came time to call their next pastor, the people no longer wanted a "Big John." They called a meek, quiet, and humble pastor.

In our world, meekness seems to be unappreciated. But James asks us to pause and consider the wisdom of meekness. He is not alone. In the Beatitudes, Jesus says, "Blessed are the **meek**, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). Paul writes to the Colossians, "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, **meekness**, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive" (Colossians 3:12-13).

Jealousy and selfish ambition lead to conflict among people. We see it all around us in our world today. Unfortunately, we continue to see it in our churches just as James did.

It takes the meekness of wisdom to overcome such strife. It takes the meekness and wisdom of the cross. Big boots may crush the opposition but compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience heals conflict. The ultimate resolution to conflict is forgiveness. Forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven us! This is the meekness of wisdom.

Prayer: Almighty God, grant us the meekness of wisdom. Grant that our lives may show forth the working of Your Holy Spirit in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, according to the image of Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior. 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: Mark 9:35b

L Alleluia, Alleluia. If anyone would be first, Alleluia.

C **Alleluia, Alleluia. He must be last of all and servant of all. 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 4:1–10

¹What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? ²You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your

passions. ⁴You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”? ⁶But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” ⁷Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

A wise pastor once said, “If you want to see what causes war, take two children and give them one toy.” This may be an oversimplification but it does illustrate human nature.

Quarrels and fights among brothers and sisters are the banes of parenthood. Fighting to obtain things that aren’t rightfully ours is the way of the world. Worldly wisdom consists of deception and dishonesty to “legally” cheat people out of their hard-earned money. When we make friends with this way of thinking, we make ourselves enemies of God!

These words from James should make each one of us uncomfortable. In the popular piety of contemporary American culture, no one is flawed at birth. If someone can claim that they were born that way, there is no need for them to justify their actions. However, in these verses, James is describing us in our natural state at birth. We are filled with sinful passions and desires. We are a covetous and adulterous people. That is why Jesus says that we must be born again of water and the Spirit (John 3:3-6).

The Apostle Paul says it this way, “Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!— assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:17-24).

Jesus came into the world to end our old sinful ways that lead to death. He died on the cross so that we may have newness of life beginning now and lasting for eternity. Pause for a moment and contemplate this new life as recorded in Revelation 21:1-5a:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.”

Prayer: Almighty God, merciful Father, in Holy Baptism You declared us to be Your children and gathered us into Your one, holy Church, in which 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. Amen.

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