

The Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost September 27, 2020

God Himself Is Present Lutheran Service Book 907, Lutheran Worship 206, The Lutheran Hymnal 4



1 God Him - self is pres - ent: Let us now a - dore Him
2 God Him - self is pres - ent: Hear the harps re - sound - ing;
3 Fount of ev - 'ry bless - ing, Pu - ri - fy my spir - it,



And with awe ap - pear be - fore Him. God is in His
See the hosts the throne sur - round - ing. "Ho - ly, ho - ly,
Trust-ing on - ly in Your mer - it. Like the ho - ly



tem - ple; All with - in keep si - lence; Hum - bly kneel in
ho - ly!" Hear the hymn as - cend - ing, Songs of saints and
an - gels, Wor - ship - ing be - fore You, May I cease-less -



deep - est rev - 'rence. He a - lone On His throne
an - gels blend - ing. Bow Your ear To us here:
ly a - dore You. Let Your will Ev - er still



Is our God and Sav - ior; Praise His name for - ev - er!
Hear, O Christ, the prais - es That Your Church now rais - es.
Rule Your Church ter - res - trial As the hosts ce - les - tial.

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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 147:1–5; antiphon: Psalm 147:6

- L** The Lord lifts up the humble;
he casts the wicked to the ground.
C **Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God;
for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting.**
L The Lord builds up Jerusalem;
he gathers the outcasts of Israel.
C **He heals the brokenhearted
and binds up their wounds.**
L He determines the number of the stars;
he gives to all of them their names.
C **Great is our Lord, and abundant in power;
his understanding is beyond measure.**
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 Lord lifts up the humble;
he casts the wicked to the ground.

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 God, You exalted Your Son to the place of all honor and authority. Enlighten our minds by Your Holy Spirit that, confessing Jesus as Lord, we may be led into all truth; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C** Amen.

Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

¹The word of the LORD came to me: ²“What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’? ³As I live, declares the Lord GOD, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. ⁴Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die. . .

²⁵“Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way not just? Is it not your ways that are not just? ²⁶When a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it; for the injustice that he has done he shall die. ²⁷Again, when a wicked person turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he shall save his life. ²⁸Because he considered and turned away from all the transgressions that he had committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ²⁹Yet the house of Israel says, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ O house of Israel, are my ways not just? Is it not your ways that are not just?

³⁰“Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord GOD. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. ³¹Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? ³²For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, and live.”

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

Gradual Psalm 91:11; 103:1

- L** He will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.
- C** Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!

Psalm 25:1–10

- L** ¹To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.
- C** ²**O my God, in you I trust; let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies exult over me.**
- L** ³Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame; they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.
- C** ⁴**Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.**
- L** ⁵Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.
- C** ⁶**Remember your mercy, O LORD, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.**
- L** ⁷Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O LORD!
- C** ⁸**Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.**
- L** ⁹He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.
- C** ¹⁰**All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.**

Philippians 2: 1–18

¹So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ²complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

¹²Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

¹⁴Do all things without grumbling or questioning, ¹⁵that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. ¹⁷Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Verse of the Day Matthew 28:18b

L Alleluia, Alleluia. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

C Alleluia.

Matthew 21:23–32

L The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 21st chapter.

C Glory to You, O Lord.

²³When [Jesus] entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?” ²⁴Jesus answered them, “I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?” And they discussed it among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’” ²⁶But if we say, ‘From man,’ we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet.” ²⁷So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And he said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

²⁸“What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’” ²⁹And he answered, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he changed his mind and went. ³⁰And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but did not go. ³¹Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. ³²For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.

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.

Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word Lutheran Service Book 655, Lutheran Worship 334, The Lutheran Hymnal 261

1 Lord, keep us stead - fast in Your Word; Curb those who
2 Lord Je - sus Christ, Your pow'r make known, For You are
3 O Com - fort - er of price - less worth, Send peace and

by de - ceit or sword Would wrest the king - dom from Your
Lord of lords a - lone; De - fend Your ho - ly Church that
u - ni - ty on earth; Sup - port us in our fi - nal

Son And bring to naught all He has done.
we May sing Your praise e - ter - nal - ly.
strife And lead us out of death to life.

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Devotional thoughts:

I have lived through (endured?) seventeen presidential elections. This one is my eighteenth! Some elections are more memorable than others. The first one that I remember is the election of 1960.

I remember JFK and his bold challenge to reach the moon by the end of the decade. I was under the weather and not at school the day he died so I was watching TV when the first report of his shooting interrupted regular programming. I watched his funeral. If I searched hard enough, I could find a Kennedy half-dollar that I collected when they first were minted.

God has blessed America with great leaders. We have also had to endure those that have had significant flaws. I thank God that He has blessed us with a system of government that is of the people, by the people, for the people and is larger than any one individual.

This year and in every presidential election year, we are bombarded by campaign promises. Ignoring attacks made on opposing candidates, each candidate proclaims what they believe the voters want to hear.

In a way, many presidential candidates are like the second son in Jesus' account of the two brothers. They are all talk but no action. American history is littered with broken campaign promises. They are too numerous to even begin listing them.

But before we get too far afield in criticizing those running for office or the chief priests and elders of the Gospel lesson, it is more important to see ourselves in this Parable of the Two Sons. Have you ever been hurt by those who are "all talk and no action?" Have you ever been "all talk and no action" when it comes to promises made? Have you ever been let down by someone when you depended on their commitment to you? Have you ever let down someone who depended on your word?

It should be no surprise when we see worldly people display a lack of integrity. However, it is particularly disappointing when God's people are found wanting in truthfulness and honor. Through the years, I have heard many stories of people who have been hurt by pastors or people who call themselves Christians. Likewise, I know of numerous accounts of congregations deceiving pastors with false or misleading promises. Such is life in a sinful world. None of us live up to God's standard! May God grant us this recognition.

The tax collectors and prostitutes are represented by the first son. They made no pretense of obedience. They took pride in flatly refusing the father's request.

You have probably met many people like this. Their ungodly attitude is on display for all to see. They may have foul language or a riotous lifestyle. They may slander Christians and call them crazy. Yet often these are the ones who find the Gospel message so wonderful and appealing.

I once met a young husband and father like that. I was convinced that I would never see him in church. Yet by God's grace and the working of the Holy Spirit, I was given the opportunity to instruct him in the faith and confirm him. A few years later, he told me that he and his family would drive in the car and sing our Lutheran liturgy. His favorite part was "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me...Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation!"

How did this happen? Jesus explains at the end of His parable. "John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him."

When we are smug and self-righteous, it is too easy to join with the chief priests and elders. It is too easy to believe that we have earned a place in God's kingdom. But in truth, we are "all talk and no action." Promises to live holy and sinless lives are empty. In thought, word, and deed, we fail to go into the vineyard.

Only when we recognize the great disappointment our actions bring to God do we turn from our sin and believe in our Savior. We join with the tax collectors, sinners, slanderers, and thieves, laying our sins at the foot of Jesus' cross. We hear His soothing words, "Father, forgive them." By God's grace and the working of the Holy Spirit, we sing:

Create in Me Lutheran Service Book 956, Lutheran Worship 5, The Lutheran Hymnal page 12





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“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 4:6-7).

God’s richest blessings to you in Christ.

L Make us to know Your ways, O Lord, that we may walk in the path of salvation revealed in Your holy word. Move us to respond with trust and thanksgiving.

C Amen.

L Encourage us, O Lord, by Your Holy Spirit, that we may not lose heart but serve You with gladness.

C Amen.

L Enlighten us with godly knowledge and wisdom, O Lord, and bless those who pursue science to improve our lives and the lives of those in greatest need. Bless all honorable vocations and all honest labor, and lead the unemployed to good jobs and noble work not only for their own interests but for the good of all.

C Amen.

L Almighty God, in this time of national distress and distrust, give our leaders wisdom for the challenges ahead. Send Your holy angels to watch over all of our loved ones, especially those who live in distant places. Protect all who attend to our needs during this time of national emergency and pandemic.

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.



- 1 A - bide, O dear - est Je - sus, A - mong us with Your grace
2 A - bide, O dear Re - deem - er, A - mong us with Your Word,
3 A - bide with heav'n - ly bright - ness A - mong us, pre - cious Light;
4 A - bide with rich - est bless - ings A - mong us, boun-teous Lord;



That Sa - tan may not harm us Nor we to sin give place.
And thus now and here - af - ter True peace and joy af - ford.
Your truth di - rect and keep us From er - ror's gloom - y night.
Let us in grace and wis - dom Grow dai - ly through Your Word.

5 Abide with Your protection
Among us, Lord, our strength,
Lest world and Satan fell us
And overcome at length.

6 Abide, O faithful Savior,
Among us with Your love;
Grant steadfastness and help us
To reach our home above.

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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 Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 28 – October 4

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 147:1–5; antiphon: Psalm 147:6

- L** The Lord lifts up the humble;
he casts the wicked to the ground.
C Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God;
for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting.
L The Lord builds up Jerusalem;
he gathers the outcasts of Israel.
C He heals the brokenhearted
and binds up their wounds.
L He determines the number of the stars;
he gives to all of them their names.
C Great is our Lord, and abundant in power;
his understanding is beyond measure.
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 Lord lifts up the humble;
he casts the wicked to the ground.

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. |

Introits begin with an antiphon. An antiphon is a short verse or chant added at the beginning and end of the introit or psalm. It is sometimes used as a refrain in the middle of a psalm. The idea of using an antiphon is one of the oldest parts of Christian worship. It was brought over from the experience of worship in the synagogue.

In general, the antiphon is a verse from the psalm that echoes the theme. The antiphon for this week is Psalm 147:6, "The Lord lifts up the humble; he casts the wicked to the ground."

It reflects the words of Jesus recorded in the Gospel lesson, where tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before the chief priests and elders! This is a reason to praise the Lord!

Psalm 147 is the second of the five "Hallelujah Psalms" that complete the Book of Psalms. Hallelujah is Hebrew for "Praise the Lord." In these five psalms, the word praise occurs 44 times in the ESV translation!

Here we praise the Lord for lifting up the humble, those who are poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3). If you have time, read all five of these psalms. You will discover that we praise the Lord because He heals the brokenhearted; He gathers the outcasts; He makes peace in your borders, and He fills you with the finest of the wheat.

We learn that all creation praises the Lord. Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth praise the Lord! Young men and maidens together, old men and children praise the Lord!

Why do you praise the Lord? We praise the Lord because, in Jesus, there is peace on earth, goodwill toward men; In Jesus, there is forgiveness and salvation; In Jesus, we will live in Paradise forever; In Jesus, the Lord lifts up the humble!

L Let us pray. O Lord, let me never stand before You in foolish pride. Grant that I may humbly confess my sins and receive forgiveness, life, and salvation.

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 Matthew 28:18b

L Alleluia, Alleluia. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

C 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 God, You exalted Your Son to the place of all honor and authority. Enlighten our minds by Your Holy Spirit that, confessing Jesus as Lord, we may be led into all truth; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Our collect this week directs our attention to Jesus. His birth was humble. He was raised in a humble village. He had no place to call home. He was insulted, beaten, and crucified. Yet He did no sin.

Because Jesus was completely obedient to His Father, God raised Him from the dead and exalted Him to

His right hand. He placed Him over all, where He rules the world for the sake of the Church (Ephesians 1:19-22).

We pray that we may truly believe in Jesus and confess Him as Lord. We pray that we will faithfully hear His word of life and truth and trust in all of His promises.

Prayer: Almighty God, You exalted Your Son to the place of all honor and authority. Enlighten our minds by Your Holy Spirit that, confessing Jesus as Lord, we may be led into all truth; 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 of the Day Matthew 28:18b

L Alleluia, Alleluia. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

C 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 25:1–10

L ¹To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

C ²**O my God, in you I trust; let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies exult over me.**

L ³Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame;
they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

C ⁴**Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.**

L ⁵Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.

C ⁶**Remember your mercy, O LORD, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.**

L ⁷Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me,
for the sake of your goodness, O LORD!

C ⁸**Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.**

L ⁹He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.

C ¹⁰**All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness,
for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.**

In Psalm 25, David continues the theme for this week of God caring for the humble. Yet we miss the point if we do not recognize that true humility is the recognition of sin!

David pleads in this psalm, “Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions.” It is easy to be plagued by guilt from past wrongs. David felt guilt and in humility pleaded for forgiveness.

Unfortunately, our psalm this week ends at verse 10. However, let us also consider verse 11. “For your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my guilt, for it is great.” This is the plea of a humble man. May we join him in this plea.

Thanks be to God. He has heard our plea for mercy and sent His only-begotten Son to be our Savior. We rejoice in the Lord's steadfast love and faithfulness. He has forgiven our sins and granted us eternal life.

Prayer: O Lord, move our hearts to join with King David in true humility. Grant us grace to confess our sins and receive forgiveness from our Lord and Savior, 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 Matthew 28:18b

L Alleluia, Alleluia. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
C 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.

Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

¹The word of the LORD came to me: ²“What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’? ³As I live, declares the Lord GOD, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. ⁴Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die. . .

²⁵“Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way not just? Is it not your ways that are not just? ²⁶When a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it; for the injustice that he has done he shall die. ²⁷Again, when a wicked person turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he shall save his life. ²⁸Because he considered and turned away from all the transgressions that he had committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ²⁹Yet the house of Israel says, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ O house of Israel, are my ways not just? Is it not your ways that are not just?

³⁰“Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord GOD. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. ³¹Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? ³²For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, and live.”

The news over the last few weeks has been distressing. No one can doubt that injustice exists in our land. It always has and it always will. As long as sinful people are in charge, injustice will exist in every nation.

Equally distressing is seeing people suffer at the hands of those who claim to want justice. Innocent people have been hurt, property has been destroyed, and bystanders have been killed, all in the name of justice.

This section of Ezekiel is a look at God’s justice. Ezekiel tells us this message from God, “the soul who sins shall die.” There is no escaping God’s justice. Everyone is responsible for their own crimes and transgressions.

I have no one but myself to blame for my sin. I deserve each and every consequence of sin that I receive. This is justice.

How thankful I am that God is not only just but He is also merciful. God’s justice demands payment for sin. God’s mercy provides that payment in the person of Jesus, whose holy precious blood, innocent suffering and death are more valuable than gold or silver.

There is no way that one person could pay for the sins of another (Psalm 49:7). However, since Jesus is not only a man but also God, His death on the cross paid for the sins of the whole world (John 1:29).

Your sins have been covered, paid for, and removed from you. Now you stand before God in Christ's holiness.

Prayer: O Lord, as week seek justice for the innocent in our land, grant that we may also be people of mercy. Amen.

Friday

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

Verse of the Day Matthew 28:18b

L Alleluia, Alleluia. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
C 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.

Philippians 2: 1–18

¹So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ²complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

¹²Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

¹⁴Do all things without grumbling or questioning, ¹⁵that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. ¹⁷Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

Jesus is the perfect example of humility. Although He was (and is) completely God, He “made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

It is for this reason that Paul urges us all, “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

It is difficult living in “a crooked and twisted generation.” Yet since we know Jesus, have been forgiven of all our sins, and have the gift of eternal life, we can “shine as lights in the world.”

In this time of national distress and anxiety, may God grant that His people would bring the message of light and life to people around them.

Prayer: O Lord, grant us a humble spirit. Move us to look to the interest of others and let our light shine through 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 of the Day Matthew 28:18b

L Alleluia, Alleluia. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

C Alleluia.

Gradual Psalm 91:11; 103:1

L He will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.

C Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!

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 begin a new gradual this week with the words of Psalm 91:11, “He will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.” Satan used these words to tempt Jesus to throw himself from the pinnacle of the temple. Jesus’ apt response was a quotation from Deuteronomy 6:16, “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.”

In this time of the pandemic, we can learn a valuable lesson from these two verses. Indeed, as we conduct the business of our lives, we need not fear. God’s angels serve to protect us. As we travel to and fro, as we live out our vocations, God’s divine protection is always there. Many of us can give examples of God’s preservation and protection in our lives.

Nevertheless, we should never be foolish in the risks we take. As Jesus noted, this is doing what the Bible forbids.

We trust God to protect us but we look both ways before we cross the street. We trust God to protect us but we practice proper food preparation and sanitation. We trust God to protect us but we are cautious so as not to unknowingly spread disease.

We follow the Good Shepherd into green pastures and beside still waters. He is with us as we walk through the Valley of Death. However, we never knowingly cast ourselves from the pinnacle of the temple.

Prayer:

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.

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