

The Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 26, 2021

Blessed Jesus, at Your Word Lutheran Service Book 904, Lutheran Worship 202, The Lutheran Hymnal 16



1 Bless - ed Je - sus, at Your Word We are gath - ered
2 All our knowl - edge, sense, and sight Lie in deep - est
3 Gra - cious Sav - ior, good and kind, Light of Light, from
4 Fa - ther, Son, and Spir - it, Lord, Praise to You and



all to hear You. Let our hearts and souls be stirred
dark - ness shroud - ed Till Your Spir - it breaks our night
God pro - ceed - ing, O - pen now our heart and mind;
ad - o - ra - tion! Grant that we may trust Your Word,



Now to seek and love and fear You, By Your teach - ings,
With the beams of truth un - cloud - ed. You a - lone to
Help us by Your Spir - it's plead - ing. Hear the cry Your
Con - fi - dent of our sal - va - tion, While we here be -



sweet and ho - ly, Drawn from earth to love You sole - ly.
God can win us; You must work all good with - in us.
Church now rais - es; Hear and bless our prayers and prais - es.
low must wan - der, Till we sing Your prais - es yon - der.

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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 135:1–3, 13–14; antiphon Psalm 135:13

L Your name, O Lord, endures forever,
your renown, O Lord, throughout all ages.

C Praise the Lord! Praise the name of the Lord,
give praise, O servants of the Lord,

L who stand in the house of the Lord,
in the courts of the house of our God!

C Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good;
sing to his name, for it is pleasant!

L Your name, O Lord, endures forever,
your renown, O Lord, throughout all ages.

C For the Lord will vindicate his people
and have compassion on his servants.

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 Your name, O Lord, endures forever,
your renown, O Lord, throughout all ages.

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: Everlasting Father, source of every blessing, mercifully direct and govern us by Your Holy Spirit that we may complete the works You have prepared for us to do; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C** Amen.

Numbers 11:4–6, 10–16, 24–29

⁴Now the rabble that was among [the children of Israel] had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, “Oh that we had meat to eat! ⁵We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. ⁶But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at. . .”

¹⁰Moses heard the people weeping throughout their clans, everyone at the door of his tent. And the anger of the LORD blazed hotly, and Moses was displeased. ¹¹Moses said to the LORD, “Why have you dealt ill with your servant? And why have I not found favor in your sight, that you lay the burden of all this people on me? ¹²Did I conceive all this people? Did I give them birth, that you should say to me, ‘Carry them in your bosom, as a nurse carries a nursing child,’ to the land that you swore to give their fathers? ¹³Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? For they weep before me and say, ‘Give us meat, that we may eat.’ ¹⁴I am not able to carry all this people alone; the burden is too heavy for me. ¹⁵If you will treat me like this, kill me at once, if I find favor in your sight, that I may not see my wretchedness.”

¹⁶Then the LORD said to Moses, “Gather for me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them, and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you...”

²⁴So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD. And he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tent. ²⁵Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. And as soon as the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied. But they did not continue doing it.

²⁶Now two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the Spirit rested on them. They were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. ²⁷And a young man ran and told Moses, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.” ²⁸And Joshua the son of Nun, the assistant of Moses from his youth, said, “My lord Moses, stop them.” ²⁹But Moses said to him, “Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD’s people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!”

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

Psalm 104:27–35

- L** ²⁷These all look to you, to give them their food in due season.
- C** ²⁸When you give it to them, they gather it up;
when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.

- L** ²⁹When you hide your face, they are dismayed;
when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.
- C** ³⁰**When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.**
- L** ³¹May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works,
- C** ³²**who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke!**
- L** ³³I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being.
- C** ³⁴**May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the LORD.**
- L** ³⁵Let sinners be consumed from the earth, and let the wicked be no more!
- C** **Bless the LORD, O my soul! Praise the LORD!**

James 5:13–20

¹³Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. ¹⁴Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. ¹⁷Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. ¹⁸Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

¹⁹My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, ²⁰let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

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

Verse of the Day: Mark 9:50b

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Have salt in yourselves, Alleluia.
- C** Alleluia, Alleluia. And be at peace with one another. Alleluia.

Mark 9:38–50

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

³⁸John said to [Jesus], “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.” ³⁹But Jesus said, “Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. ⁴⁰For the one who is not against us is for us. ⁴¹For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.

⁴²“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. ⁴³And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. ⁴⁵And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. ⁴⁷And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸‘where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’ ⁴⁹For everyone will be salted with fire. ⁵⁰Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

- 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.

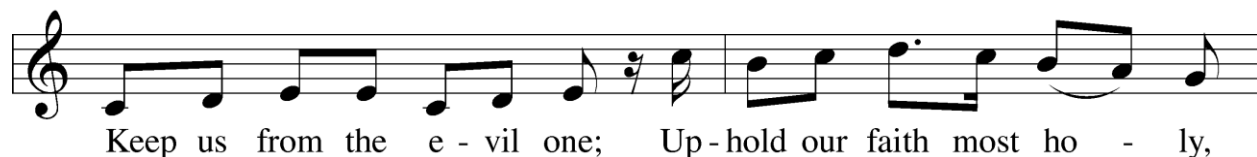
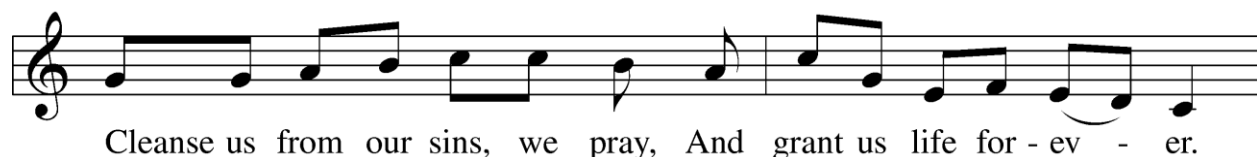
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven

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.

Triune God, Be Thou Our Stay Lutheran Service Book 505, Lutheran Worship 170, The Lutheran Hymnal 247



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Devotional Thoughts:

Would you rather be embarrassed in front of strangers or close friends? On most days, I would answer “strangers” but we don’t always have a choice.

One day, during an important discussion in a doctoral class, (the content of which I have long forgotten), the professor asked me directly if I believed in the Perspicuity of Scripture!

How would you answer? I glanced around the room. I could tell that my classmates had clearly heard the question so pointedly aimed at me. There was a deafening silence as they waited for my answer.

I paused for a moment to ponder this difficult inquiry and to gather my thoughts. As the gears of my mind whirled and figurative smoke escaped my ears, I realized that I had no thoughts, not a one. My thoughts had all quietly escaped through the windows and doors of my mind. In what seemed like an eternity locked in the laser-like gaze of my professor and classmates, I finally took a deep breath. I would have to let the chips fall where they may. In a moment of honesty, I blurted out, “I don’t know what the Perspicuity of Scripture is!”

I could almost hear my classmates gasp as they thought to themselves, “How could this impostor have been admitted into this prestigious program of studies?” There may have been a time when you felt like this. I wanted to just quietly melt away.

But my embarrassment didn’t last long. My kindly professor gently explained that the Perspicuity of Scripture means the clarity of Scripture.

Oh, yes, indeed, I do believe in the clarity of Scripture. It’s a hallmark of the Lutheran Reformation. Already in 1526, Martin Luther wrote about the clarity of Scripture. The Perspicuity of Scripture is the belief that the Bible presents all doctrines and commands of the Christian faith clearly. God's Word is freely accessible to every reader or hearer of ordinary intelligence, without requiring any special education.

So why bring up the Perspicuity of Scripture today? As you heard the Gospel lesson read, you may have said to yourself, “What is this all about? Execution by millstone? The cutting off of hands and feet? The gouging out of eyes? This seems confusing and so unlike the Jesus that I know. How can this be clear?”

So let’s take a deep breath and carefully sort out the Gospel lesson for today. Our first obstacle to understanding clearly this lesson is the way our lectionary divides the Gospel of Mark. The creators of our lectionary want us to read straight through most of the Gospel of Mark in this second half of the Church Year. But two weeks ago, we skipped from chapter 7 to the middle of chapter 9. We already read from chapter 8 in Lent. At the end of the Epiphany season, we read the beginning of chapter 9 on the Transfiguration of our Lord. Now at the end of chapter 9, we have 13 orphan verses that shouldn’t be considered apart from their context.

Following His transfiguration, Jesus passed through Galilee. On the way, He explained to His disciples, “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” (Mark 9:31). Jesus’ work of salvation is coming to its culmination. Through His death on the cross, Jesus will be the servant of all. Unfortunately, the disciples ignore the importance of Jesus’ mission of saving humanity from eternal destruction. Instead, they argue among themselves about who is the greatest!

To explain to His disciples how misguided their thinking is, Jesus “took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, ‘Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me’” (Mark 9:36-37).

Unfortunately, as our Gospel lesson begins today, we find that John hasn’t been listening. He’s still caught up in earthly control and authority. He is quick to complain about an outsider encroaching on their exclusive territory. This interloper has the nerve to cast out demons in the name of Jesus! How dare he do such a thing!

Jesus’ concern is not for personal aggrandizement. His concern is for the ministry. His concern is for eternity!

John will soon come to understand this. Near the end of his Gospel, he wrote, “These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31). But he’s not there yet.

To underscore the importance of an eternity with Him in paradise rather than life without Him in hell, Jesus speaks again about a little child, possibly the same one that He had gathered into His arms in verse 36.

These last few verses seem difficult to understand for two reasons. First, it appears that Jesus is advocating extreme violence. Second, it is for something as universal as sin.

Before we get to those two difficulties, let's consider this little child. Many Christians have the opinion that little children cannot believe. For them, faith is something reserved for adulthood. But Jesus says that this little child believes in Him! (Here is something I find interesting. Greek uses the word "micro" for "little" in this verse.) A key to understanding these words of Jesus is recognizing that this little child is a believer.

Now, what about the word "sin"? In Greek, this is not the word that is usually translated as sin. That word means "missing the mark." It's the word we use when we talk about the sins that we commit daily. However, the Greek word translated as sin here is another word that means to stumble and fall. A significant number of translations use the word "stumble." This verse is talking about causing children to lose their faith and fall away. In fact, some translations use "fall away" or "lose faith" in Mark 9:42. Understanding this, we now recognize the seriousness of this offense.

Jesus speaks these words as a warning! The consequence of causing a little child to lose faith and salvation is far worse than death by drowning! In fact, there is nothing worse than losing the gift of eternal life with Jesus in heaven!

The word "sin" appears three more times in our Gospel lesson for today. Each time it is the same word for stumbling and falling. Jesus is clearly saying that we must avoid falling away at all costs because the consequences are dire!

So you may ask, "Is Jesus really advocating the amputation of hands and feet? Does He really want us to suffer blindness?" Many Christians have asked these questions over the years. Some have suggested that Jesus is simply using the rhetorical device called hyperbole. They believe that Jesus is using this extreme language to make a point. However, I would ask that you read again what He says, "IF your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire."

Does your hand cause you to sin? Does your foot cause you to sin? Does your eye cause you to sin? No, none of those things will cause you to lose your faith. IF they did, it would be a simple matter to secure salvation and avoid the consequence of eternity separated from Jesus in hell.

It is our hearts and minds that cause sin. These are the things that need to be made new! Through faith in Christ, our old self dies and our new self rises to newness of life!

Jesus is very clear in these verses. Losing faith is something to avoid at all costs. It is not something to take lightly.

In the earlier verses, Jesus had made clear His mission to save the world from eternal death. He told them directly, "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" (Mark 9:31). But the disciples were caught up arguing about who was the greatest! They were upset that someone else was engaged in what they considered to be their exclusive territory.

In response, Jesus calls a timeout. He explains again the seriousness of His mission to be "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). They are nearing the day when Jesus will be nailed to the cross. Foolish and petty earthly quarrels are nothing compared to the salvation of souls.

Those standing near the cross will hear a startling conversation. A criminal, executed for real crimes, will say, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Even more astonishing than that, they will hear Jesus say, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:42-43).

Jesus wants forgiven sinners to be with Him forever in paradise. Jesus wants little children to spend eternity with Him in heaven. Jesus wants each of us to experience the joy of living with Him forever. We must let nothing threaten our salvation. It is the most important gift we have ever received.

"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, preserve us from unwholesome cravings for things we may not seek and grant us contentment with the gifts that You so graciously shower upon us.

C Amen.

L O Lord, when we are truly in need, move us to come to You with our prayers, petitions, and supplications. Grant us faith to trust that You will answer our prayers in ways that are best for us in Your own time.

C Amen.

L O Lord, thank You for the gift of children. Protect them from all temptation to sin and those who seek to harm them in body or soul. Grant us the wisdom and compassion to care for all of the children in the family of God.

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.



- 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 Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 27 – October 2, 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 135:1–3, 13–14; antiphon Psalm 135:13

- L** Your name, O Lord, endures forever,
your renown, O Lord, throughout all ages.
- C** Praise the Lord! Praise the name of the Lord,
give praise, O servants of the Lord,
- L** who stand in the house of the Lord,
in the courts of the house of our God!
- C** Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good;
sing to his name, for it is pleasant!
- L** Your name, O Lord, endures forever,
your renown, O Lord, throughout all ages.
- C** For the Lord will vindicate his people
and have compassion on his servants.
- 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** Your name, O Lord, endures forever,
your renown, O Lord, throughout all ages.

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. |

“Antiphon” is a church word. It is a verse sung at the beginning and end of the introit or a psalm. Many American Christians don’t like church words. They don’t like anything “churchy.” However, I’ve noticed that contemporary American religion has a number of “church words” that need explaining. Here are a few examples: doubleheader, quarterback, tipoff, bogey, etc.

The antiphon for our introit this week is “Your name, O Lord, endures forever, your renown, O Lord, throughout all ages” (Psalm 135:13). The history of the Old Testament people is the history of nations and rulers trying to erase and stamp out the name of the Lord. For hundreds of years, the Pharaoh in Egypt enslaved the Children of Israel. But they did not forget the Lord, the God of Abraham and Isaac. The God of their fathers did not forget them. He led them out of bondage in Egypt to the Promised Land.

Today, we live in a time when militant atheists and secularists believe that they can do what the king of Egypt was unable to do. They will not succeed. The name of the Lord endures forever. He will never abandon His people. The Apostle Paul speaks about the ultimate outcome of our struggle with the opposition that we face when he writes, “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:32).

When you become discouraged, remember the antiphon from our introit for this week: “Your name, O Lord, endures forever, your renown, O Lord, throughout all ages” (Psalm 135:13). Remember how Paul ends the eighth chapter of Romans, “I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

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|----------|--|
| L | Let us pray. O Lord, we live in a time when people seek to erase Your name from the world and our hearts. Grant that we would never lose heart but trust in Your promise that Your name endures forever. Give us the strength to endure also in our faith until we reach the Promised Land of heaven to live with You forever. |
| C | Amen |

Tuesday

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

Verse of the Day: Mark 9:50b

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|----------|--|
| L | Alleluia, Alleluia. Have salt in yourselves, Alleluia. |
| C | Alleluia, Alleluia. And be at peace with one another. 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: Everlasting Father, source of every blessing, mercifully direct and govern us by Your Holy Spirit that we may complete the works You have prepared for us to do; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

I got my flu shot this week. Before I received the vaccine, I was required to answer a series of questions. One question asked if I was allergic to certain components used in the preparation of the vaccine. I thank God that thus far in my life; I have not been afflicted with allergies to vaccines or medications.

Not everyone is so blessed. I know some Christians who are extremely allergic to good works. They are so insistent upon being saved by grace that they have a reaction to the thought of good works.

This was an issue for Lutherans at the time of the writing of the Book of Concord. An entire article (IV) is dedicated to good works in the Formula of Concord. It states in part, “We need to remind them (Christians) of how necessary it is that they exercise themselves in good works as a declaration of their faith and gratitude to God. But works should not be mingled in the article of justification.”¹

Our collect this week reminds us that God wants us to complete good works. In fact, He has prepared them for us. The Apostle Paul concludes his concise statement of salvation by grace with an encouragement to do the works that God has prepared for us. He writes:

⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works**, which God **prepared beforehand**, that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Since we are saved by grace through faith for Christ’s sake, we joyfully declare our faith through what we do. In this way, we express gratitude to God for the greatest gift of all—forgiveness of sins and eternal life!

Let us pray: Everlasting Father, source of every blessing, mercifully direct and govern us by Your Holy Spirit that we may complete the works You have prepared for us to do; 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 9:50b

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Have salt in yourselves, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. And be at peace with one another. Alleluia.

Psalm 104:27–35

L ²⁷These all look to you, to give them their food in due season.

C ²⁸**When you give it to them, they gather it up;
when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.**

L ²⁹When you hide your face, they are dismayed;
when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.

C ³⁰**When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.**

¹*Concordia : The Lutheran Confessions*, Edited by Paul Timothy McCain, 484 (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2005).

- L** ³¹May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works,
C ³²**who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke!**
L ³³I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being.
C ³⁴**May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the LORD.**
L ³⁵Let sinners be consumed from the earth, and let the wicked be no more!
C **Bless the LORD, O my soul! Praise 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 each meal, Valerie and I pray, “Come, Lord Jesus. Be our guest and let these gifts to us be blest.” This is known as the Common Table Prayer. It was first published in 1753 in a Moravian hymnal. In German, it reads, “Komm, Herr Jesu; sei du unser Gast; und segne, was du uns bescheret hast.”

Martin Luther suggested that we begin our meals this way:

The children and members of the household shall go to the table reverently, fold their hands, and say:

The eyes of all look to You, [O Lord,] and You give them their food at the proper time. You open Your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing. [Ps. 145:15–16]

Then shall be said the Lord’s Prayer and the following:

Lord God, heavenly Father, bless us and these Your gifts which we receive from Your bountiful goodness, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

²

Psalm 104 is an extended commentary on why we pray at mealtime. The first portion is a description of God’s splendor and majesty. We are then reminded that God created the earth on which we live and everything around us. He provides sustenance for every living thing. God opens His hand and we are filled with good things.

Of course, the best gift of all is the salvation that is ours in Jesus. That is why we want Him in our lives at mealtimes and always.

To remember God’s goodness in providing all that we need to support this body and life, you may wish to occasionally read Psalm 104 at mealtime.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank You for the gift of food You have provided and for all those whose labor brings Your blessings to our table. We pray that at our meals we may be strengthened for Your service and together may await with joy the feast You have prepared for all the faithful in Your eternal kingdom; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

²Martin Luther, *Luther’s Small Catechism With Explanation*, Contains the basic principles of the Lutheran religion with some explanation.; Translation of: *Kleine Katechismus - English.*, electronic ed., 3 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997, c1986).

Thursday

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

Verse of the Day: Mark 9:50b

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Have salt in yourselves, Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia. And be at peace with one another. 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.

Numbers 11:4–6, 10–16, 24–29

⁴Now the rabble that was among [the children of Israel] had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, “Oh that we had meat to eat! ⁵We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. ⁶But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at. . .”

¹⁰Moses heard the people weeping throughout their clans, everyone at the door of his tent. And the anger of the LORD blazed hotly, and Moses was displeased. ¹¹Moses said to the LORD, “Why have you dealt ill with your servant? And why have I not found favor in your sight, that you lay the burden of all this people on me? ¹²Did I conceive all this people? Did I give them birth, that you should say to me, ‘Carry them in your bosom, as a nurse carries a nursing child,’ to the land that you swore to give their fathers? ¹³Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? For they weep before me and say, ‘Give us meat, that we may eat.’ ¹⁴I am not able to carry all this people alone; the burden is too heavy for me. ¹⁵If you will treat me like this, kill me at once, if I find favor in your sight, that I may not see my wretchedness.”

¹⁶Then the LORD said to Moses, “Gather for me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them, and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you...”

²⁴So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD. And he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tent. ²⁵Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. And as soon as the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied. But they did not continue doing it.

²⁶Now two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the Spirit rested on them. They were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. ²⁷And a young man ran and told Moses, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.” ²⁸And Joshua the son of Nun, the assistant of Moses from his youth, said, “My lord Moses, stop them.” ²⁹But Moses said to him, “Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD’s people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!”

I believe that this Old Testament lesson was selected to be read this week because of Eldad and Medad. In the Gospel lesson, John complained to Jesus, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.” In the same way, a young man ran and told Moses, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.” Like John, Joshua asked Moses to stop them. However, Moses responded, “Would that all the LORD’s people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!”

Unlike times past, we live in a time when God’s word is available like never before. All of the Lord’s people have the opportunity and privilege of telling others about God’s will and plan of salvation. No one is

restricted from sharing the message of John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Prayer: Almighty God our heavenly Father, through Your dear Son You have made us all Your witnesses. Enlighten by Your Holy Spirit all who speak to others the message of salvation through Jesus' blood and merit. Grant Your blessing upon each of us so that Your Word may reach out and bear much fruit for the growth of Your Church; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. 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 9:50b

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Have salt in yourselves, Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia. And be at peace with one another. 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 5:13–20

¹³Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. ¹⁴Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. ¹⁷Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. ¹⁸Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

¹⁹My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, ²⁰let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

Our Epistle lesson from James this week reminds us that all of life is connected. Nothing in our lives should exist apart from our relationship with God and His Church.

Suffering produces prayer. Joy produces praise! We never need to endure sickness alone but have the privilege of calling for the elders of the church to pray and anoint.

A couple of observations are in order to avoid a misunderstanding here. First, most often the elders mentioned in the New Testament do not correspond to what we call elders in the Lutheran Church. Rather, most often elders correspond to what we call pastors or ministers. Second, anointing with oil was a medicinal treatment in ancient times. We should understand this today to mean that we should receive our medical treatment while praying for healing according to God's will.

Our whole lives should be immersed in prayer and communion with God. As the Apostle Paul also directed, we are to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Even more important than our physical healing is our spiritual healing through the forgiveness of sins. Our ultimate desire for our brothers and sisters in Christ is that they would never wander from the faith. We yearn for all the prodigal sons and daughters of God to return to the family.

Prayer: O Lord, You are the great Physician of soul and body; You chasten and You heal. Show mercy to us in our need for healing. Spare our lives and restore our strength. Even as You gave Your Son to bear our infirmities and sicknesses, deal compassionately with us and bless us with Your healing power according to Your will. We commit ourselves to Your gracious mercy and protection; 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.

Gradual Psalm 91:11; 103:1

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

Verse of the Day: Mark 9:50b

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Have salt in yourselves, Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia. And be at peace with one another. 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.

Almost unnoticed this week, we've turned a corner. We have a new gradual! It will be with us for the next month.

Psalm 91:11 is an important verse for us to remember during this pandemic. "He will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways." During any time of fear and anxiety, it is good to remember these words. God sends His angels to guard us in all our ways!

On the other hand, we also need to remember that Satan used this verse to tempt Jesus to throw himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. To this Jesus responded, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Luke 4:12 KJV).

I have too often heard otherwise level-headed Christian people ridicule sound medical advice to avoid contracting Covid-19. Their response usually is, "I trust God to protect me." My response has been, "I trust God but I look both ways before I cross the street." Now, I realize a better response would have been, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Jesus refused to do something foolish to prove His faith in God. We should also refuse to be foolish in the face of our current difficulties.

The crucial protection that God offers us is salvation through faith in Jesus. This world and all that is in it will pass away. But we will join with the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven in singing God's praises forevermore.

Prayer: Gracious Father, bless, guide, and govern Your people by Your Holy Spirit, that we may grow in grace and in the knowledge of Your Word. Grant that we may serve You well and usefully. Protect and defend us from all danger and harm, giving Your holy angels charge over us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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