

Home Worship Service for

# The Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

## LWML Sunday

### October 3, 2021

In many Lutheran Church Missouri Synod congregations, this Sunday is known as Lutheran Women's Missionary League Sunday. As long as I can remember, it has always been the first Sunday in October.

About the LWML: The Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) is an official auxiliary of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Since 1942, the LWML has affirmed each woman's identity as a child of God and her relationship with Jesus Christ. Lutheran Women in Mission (an alternate name of the LWML) are women of faith, empowered for active service in Jesus' name and bold support of missions through Mite Box offerings. As Christians, we have been given the kingdom of God to bear its fruit.

The theme for LWML Sunday is:



#### LWML Mission Statement

As Lutheran Women in Mission,  
we joyfully proclaim Christ,  
support missions,  
and equip women to honor God  
by serving others.

*Serve the LORD with gladness! (Psalm 100:2).*

#### CORE VALUES:

Christian Women | In God's Word | Mission Focused  
Embrace Diversity | Servant Leaders





1 Hark, the voice of Je - sus cry - ing, "Who will go and work to - day?  
 2 If you can-not speak like an - gels, If you can - not preach like Paul,  
 3 If you can-not be a watch-man, Stand - ing high on Zi - on's wall,  
 4 Let none hear you i - dly say - ing, "There is noth-ing I can do,"



Fields are white and har-vests wait-ing— Who will bear the sheaves a-way?"  
 You can tell the love of Je - sus, You can say He died for all.  
 Point - ing out the path to heav-en, Of - f'ring life and peace to all,  
 While the mul - ti-tudes are dy - ing And the Mas-ter calls for you.



Loud and long the Mas-ter call-eth; Rich re-ward He of - fers thee.  
 If you can - not rouse the wick-ed With the judg-ment's dread a - larms,  
 With your prayers and with your boun-ties You can do what God com-mands;  
 Take the task He gives you glad-ly, Let His work your plea-sure be;



Who will an-swer, glad-ly say-ing, "Here am I, send me, send me?"  
 You can lead the lit - tle chil-dren To the Sav-ior's wait - ing arms.  
 You can be like faith-ful Aar-on, Hold - ing up the proph - et's hands.  
 An - swer quick-ly when He call-eth, "Here am I, send me, send me!"

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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 127:3–5; antiphon Psalm 127:1a

- L** Unless the Lord builds the house,  
those who build it labor in vain.
- C** Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord,  
the fruit of the womb a reward.
- L** Like arrows in the hand of a warrior  
are the children of one's youth.
- C** Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them!  
He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.
- 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** Unless the Lord builds the house,  
those who build it labor in vain.

### Kyrie

- |                    |                            |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>L</b> O Lord,   | <b>C</b> Have Mercy on us. |
| <b>L</b> O Christ, | <b>C</b> Have Mercy on us. |
| <b>L</b> O Lord,   | <b>C</b> 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: Merciful Father, Your patience and loving-kindness toward us have no end. Grant that by Your Holy Spirit we may always think and do those things that are pleasing in Your sight; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C** Amen.

## Genesis 2:18–25

<sup>18</sup>Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”  
<sup>19</sup>So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup>The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. <sup>21</sup>So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. <sup>22</sup>And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup>Then the man said,

“This at last is bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
she shall be called Woman,  
because she was taken out of Man.”

<sup>24</sup>Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. <sup>25</sup>And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

**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 128

**L** <sup>1</sup> Blessèd is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways!

**C** <sup>2</sup> **You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands;  
you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you.**

**L** <sup>3</sup> Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house;  
your children will be like olive shoots around your table.

**C** <sup>4</sup> **Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord.**

**L** <sup>5</sup> The Lord bless you from Zion!

May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life!

**C** <sup>6</sup> **May you see your children’s children! Peace be upon Israel!**

## Hebrews 2:1–13

<sup>1</sup>Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. <sup>2</sup>For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, <sup>3</sup>how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, <sup>4</sup>while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

<sup>5</sup>Now it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. <sup>6</sup>It has been testified somewhere,

“What is man, that you are mindful of him,  
or the son of man, that you care for him?  
<sup>7</sup>You made him for a little while lower than the angels;  
you have crowned him with glory and honor,  
<sup>8</sup>putting everything in subjection under his feet.”

Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. <sup>9</sup>But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

<sup>10</sup>For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. <sup>11</sup>For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, <sup>12</sup>saying,

“I will tell of your name to my brothers;  
in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.”

<sup>13</sup>And again,

“I will put my trust in him.”

And again,

“Behold, I and the children God has given me.”

**L** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

### Verse of the Day: Mark 10:14b

**L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, Alleluia.

**C** Alleluia, Alleluia. For to such belongs the kingdom of God. Alleluia.

### Mark 10:2–16

**L** The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter.

**C** Glory to You, O Lord.

<sup>2</sup>Pharisees came up and in order to test [Jesus] asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” <sup>3</sup>He answered them, “What did Moses command you?” <sup>4</sup>They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away.” <sup>5</sup>And Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. <sup>6</sup> But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ <sup>7</sup> ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, <sup>8</sup> and they shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two but one flesh. <sup>9</sup> What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

<sup>10</sup>And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. <sup>11</sup>And he said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, <sup>12</sup> and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

<sup>13</sup>And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. <sup>14</sup>But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. <sup>15</sup> Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” <sup>16</sup>And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

**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.

**Oh, Blest the House** Lutheran Service Book 862, Lutheran Worship 467, The Lutheran Hymnal 625



1 Oh, blest the house, what - e'er be - fall, Where Je - sus  
2 Oh, blest that house where faith is found And all in  
3 Oh, blest the par - ents who give heed Un - to their  
4 Oh, blest that house; it pros - pers well. In peace and  
5 Then here will I and mine to - day A sol - emn



Christ is all in all! A home that is not whol - ly  
hope and love a - bound; They trust their God and serve Him  
chil - dren's fore - most need And wea - ry not of care or  
joy the par - ents dwell, And in their chil - dren's lives is  
prom - ise make and say: Though all the world for - sake His



His— How sad and poor and dark it is!  
still And do in all His ho - ly will!  
cost. May none to them and heav'n be lost!  
shown How rich - ly God can bless His own.  
Word, I and my house will serve the Lord!

## Devotional Thoughts:

Pumpkins are for sale. Leaves are changing colors. The air is brisk in the morning. Grapes are being harvested. The crowds at the beach are thinning. Our tomato plants look awful. We have turned a page on our calendar. Fall is upon us. It's time to celebrate 23.4365472133!

23.4365472133 degrees is the axial tilt of the earth. Without this precise tilt of the earth in orbit around the sun, our seasons wouldn't exist the way that they do!

When we study the wonders of creation, we are constantly astounded by the truth of Genesis 1:31, "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good."

The air we breathe is composed of 78.084% Nitrogen, 20.946% Oxygen, and 0.9340% Argon. This totals 99.964% of our atmosphere. The remaining 0.036% is made up of the trace gases of Carbon dioxide, Neon, Helium, Methane, and Krypton. God in His infinite wisdom designed our world this way so that life on earth would be fruitful and multiply.

Carbon dioxide makes up just 0.0416% of our atmosphere. Scientists tell us that a change in this tiny fraction of our atmosphere causes global warming and is a threat to the future of our planet.

Clearly, God knew what He was doing when He created our world. He did not make a mistake when He designed our planet with such exact precision! We are blessed when things work the way God intended them to.

Yet humanity has a history of being dissatisfied with God's plans. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were displeased that God had given them one law to obey. In their disobedience, they rejected the gift of paradise. We continue to experience the effect of sin today.

Not everything remains the way God created it. Things changed with the fall into sin. Genesis 3:17 tells us, "Cursed is the ground because of you." We no longer live in the paradise called the Garden of Eden. Instead, thorns and thistles spring forth from the earth. We suffer when we reject God's perfect plans.

It is easy to appreciate the wisdom of God's decisions when we study nature. The famous scientist, Johannes Kepler, once wrote this about his scientific work, "I was merely thinking God's thoughts after Him."

Unfortunately, when it comes to God's plan and design for our human relationships, we are quick to reject His wisdom. We conclude that we are smarter than God. In ancient as well as modern times, even among religious people, this is a common delusion. In fact, every time we sin, we are declaring that we are smarter than God!

In the Gospel lesson for today, Jesus was confronted by Pharisees who believed that God made a mistake when He established marriage as a lifelong relationship between one man and one woman. Does that sound familiar?

In our contemporary society, we witness God's plan for marriage under attack everywhere we turn. God established marriage to be a blessing to Adam and Eve and all of humanity. But since we are smarter than God, we believe that we can change His formula without suffering consequences from perverting His created design for families.

The piece of God's design for marriage that the Pharisees didn't like was the "lifelong union" part. They wanted marriage to be a temporary union of convenience. They sound positively modern!

Through the years, I have observed countless variations to God's blueprint for marriage. It's not uncommon for people to reject God's plan by living together as husband and wife without a promise of a lifelong commitment to each other in marriage. Yet, these same people expect God to bless them when they ignore His perfect pattern for their life together.

Without reviewing every possible way that we have shattered God's plan for marriage, let's look at how Jesus responded to the Pharisees. They justified their convenient ending of marriage because Moses had allowed it. But Jesus didn't fall for it. He pointed them to God's original design for marriage. We read in Mark 10:5-9:

And Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

Jesus identified the real problem here. It is hardness of heart! Every time we convince ourselves that we are smarter than God and our sins are justified, we reveal the hardness of our hearts!

When we choose to lie or deceive, even if it's for a so-called "good cause," our hearts are hardened. When we justify our dishonest dealings, our hearts are hardened. When we excuse slander or betrayal of our neighbors and friends, our hearts are hardened. When we defend an unwholesome desire for what we may not rightfully have, our hearts are hardened. Hardness of heart is not only found when the breaking of the sixth commandment is excused.

Instead of hardness, what should be the condition of our hearts? Jesus tells us, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30). Do we love God with all our hearts when we neglect preaching and His word? Do we love God with all our hearts when we use God's name for cursing?

Jesus' encounter with the Pharisees concerning marriage and divorce has simply uncovered the tip of the iceberg. We dare not walk away from this encounter by saying, "Shame on you, Pharisees. Shame on you who desecrate the sanctity of marriage." We all act as if we are smarter than God when we chose to willfully sin despite God's clear commands. We all sin and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). We all need repentance and forgiveness.

Jesus fully accomplished His mission to save sinners when He died on the cross. He took away the sins of the world. But those with hardened hearts like the Pharisees are lost because they reject salvation. In the hardness of their hearts, they believe that they do not need repentance. They believe that their sinful actions are justified.

With the humbleness of a child, may we come to Jesus without a pretentious attitude. Let us draw near to God with a true heart and confess our sins of thought, word, and deed! And in this confession of sins against the sixth commandment and all of the rest, let our hearts be comforted by God's mercy and grace. He has given His only Son to die for your sake!

Being redeemed and forgiven, our relationship with God is restored! We have become children of God who will inherit an eternity in paradise where creation is restored to perfection.

Until then, we seek to live on earth in ways that are pleasing to Him. We seek His blessing in our marriages and families. We learn to forgive as He has forgiven us. We live in God's kingdom by living according to His perfect plan for us by loving Him and those around us!

Here is an interesting footnote to our Gospel lesson. Jesus quoted Genesis 2:24 when He said, "A man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife." The Greek word translated as "hold fast" is a word that means "glued together!" May our marriages be glued together by the same love and forgiveness that Christ had for us when He sacrificed Himself on the cross.

"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.

## **LWML PLEDGE**

**☐ In fervent gratitude for the Savior's dying love and His blood-bought gift of redemption we dedicate ourselves to Him with all that we are and have; and in obedience to His call for workers in the harvest fields, we pledge Him our willing service wherever and whenever He has need of us. We consecrate to our Savior our hands to work for Him, our feet to go on His errands, our voice to sing His praises, our lips to proclaim His redeeming love, our silver and our gold to extend His Kingdom, our will to do His will, and every power of our life to the great task of bringing the lost and the erring into eternal fellowship with Him. Amen.**



**L** Lord God, we pray for the mission of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League throughout the world, that every heart will beat with Your love and all hearts extend Your hand of service to others. Through the faithful gathering of mites, may the LWML continue to encourage us to put what You have given us into the mission of reaching the lost and erring.

**C** Amen.

**L** Lord God, help us by Your Spirit to receive Your kingdom in humble repentance like little children, that we may enter it in the joy of forgiveness in Christ.

**C** Amen.

**L** Lord God, pour out Your Holy Spirit upon us, that we may attend to Your Word, lest we drift away from it and neglect the great salvation it reveals to us in Christ.

**C** Amen.

**L** Lord God, in a reflection of Your eternal love, You join man and woman together so that they are no longer two but one flesh. Bless those who are engaged, the newly married and those who have shared many years of faithfulness with an abundance of Your love, that they may live together in it with joy their whole lives long.

**C** Amen.

**L** Lord God, help all parents who have brought their children to Christ in the waters of Holy Baptism also to bring them to Him in worship each Sunday that He may continue to take them in His arms and bless them through His Word.

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



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



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



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

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### Service Notes:

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

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

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# Enhancing Your Worship

## Meditating on God's Word and Works

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

## The Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

### October 4 – October 9, 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 127:3–5; antiphon Psalm 127:1a

- L** Unless the Lord builds the house,  
those who build it labor in vain.  
**C** Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord,  
the fruit of the womb a reward.  
**L** Like arrows in the hand of a warrior  
are the children of one's youth.  
**C** Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them!  
He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.  
**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** Unless the Lord builds the house,  
those who build it labor in vain.

#### Kyrie

- |                    |                            |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>L</b> O Lord,   | <b>C</b> Have Mercy on us. |
| <b>L</b> O Christ, | <b>C</b> Have Mercy on us. |
| <b>L</b> O Lord,   | <b>C</b> Have Mercy on us. |

The introit for this week was written by Solomon and provides us with wisdom for life! It begins, "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain."

When we lived in Northwestern Ontario, we had one TV channel. (Yes, that's 1. We had no cable or satellite TV and no streaming or online TV. We had just one channel—CBC.) One is better than none! But if you wanted to watch television, you had only one choice.

Soon a new television show came on our one channel. It was called "Dallas." It was about a conniving and manipulative oil family in Dallas, Texas. They were just as devious in their family relationships and they were scheming in their business dealings. And they were filthy rich. They had huge homes, expensive cars, and an extravagant lifestyle. As a young pastor, I was extremely disappointed that this tremendously popular TV series glorified immoral behavior. (I know. Compared to today's standards, it was pretty tame.)

Eventually, I had a change of heart. As the series developed, I noticed that none of the characters was happy! They had everything that money can buy but they were miserable. There was something to learn from this show after all.

Unwittingly, the producers of Dallas had verified what Solomon had said so long ago, "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain." Happiness and joy in life do not come from things. Solomon was enormously wealthy but he knew that the Lord must come first or all human efforts come to nothing.

Children are a heritage from the Lord. They are a great blessing when faith and love for God are shared at home. May God grant us the wisdom to help our children learn that riches and prosperity should not be our number one priority in life.

**L** Let us pray. Almighty God, all that we possess comes from Your loving hand. Give us grace that we may honor You with all we own. Visit the homes in which Your people dwell. Keep all harm and danger far from them. Grant that we may dwell together in peace under Your divine protection. To those whom You have blessed with the joy and care of children give calm strength and patient wisdom. Grant that they may teach their children to love what is just and true and good, following the example of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Permit these blessings to be continued to our children and our children's children, that all generations may praise Your holy name; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**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 10:14b

**L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, Alleluia.

**C** Alleluia, Alleluia. For to such belongs the kingdom of God. 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: Merciful Father, Your patience and loving-kindness toward us have no end. Grant that by Your Holy Spirit we may always think and do those things that are pleasing in Your sight; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C** Amen.

Have you ever heard someone described as “too clever by half”? One dictionary defines that expression this way: “Shrewd but flawed by overthinking or excessive complexity, with a resulting tendency to be unreliable or unsuccessful.”

Wile E. Coyote and his never-ending quest to capture the Roadrunner come to mind. Maybe you have known people like that. Maybe we are sometimes just like that.

Whenever we begin to believe that we can outsmart God, we fall into the trap of being a spiritual Wile E. Coyotes. Jonah was that way when he tried to run from God.

Many times young (and old) people think that God’s plan of salvation is a game to win. They learn about forgiveness and immediately believe that they have found a loophole that allows unfettered sinning. In their “shrewdness,” it is not uncommon for someone to think that they can approach God as if He was a light switch. Turn Him off when you want to sin and then turn Him on again when you want forgiveness.

We are never going to outsmart God. We are never going to manipulate Him to our will. But fortunately, God is patient and kind. He helps us to overcome our “too clever” attitude and come to Him in true repentance and faith.

Let us pray: Merciful Father, Your patience and loving-kindness toward us have no end. Grant that by Your Holy Spirit we may always think and do those things that are pleasing in Your sight; 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 10:14b

**L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, Alleluia.

**C** Alleluia, Alleluia. For to such belongs the kingdom of God. Alleluia.

## Psalm 128

**L** <sup>1</sup> Blessèd is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways!

**C** <sup>2</sup> **You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands;  
you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you.**

**L** <sup>3</sup> Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house;  
your children will be like olive shoots around your table.

**C** <sup>4</sup> **Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord.**

**L** <sup>5</sup> The Lord bless you from Zion!

May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life!

**C** <sup>6</sup> **May you see your children’s children! Peace be upon Israel!**

## 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 128 is one of the fifteen “Songs of Ascents” (Psalm 120-134). The Songs of Ascents were sung by pilgrims either on their way to Jerusalem or as they climbed the fifteen steps to enter the temple court.

We can imagine them singing verse 1, “Blessèd is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways!” They were literally walking to meet at the Lord’s house and figuratively referring to their entire lives as a walk in the Lord’s ways.

We still use that language today when we speak of our lives as a walk with the Lord. We are not only people of faith but we are people with lives that reflect our faith in all we do.

Like the Old Testament people of God, we rejoice in going to the Lord’s house. Yet each and every day of our existence is one of walking in the Lord’s ways, i.e., living according to His precepts.

Living according to God’s commands is viewed as a handicap by the world. Secularists believe that it is impossible to find joy and pleasure in righteous living. But our psalm for this week makes the opposite claim.

Walking in the Lord’s ways is a great blessing. We find satisfaction and joy in honest labor. A life of integrity leads to a wellness of the soul.

Walking in the Lord’s way permeates our vocations and family life. Husbands and wives become a blessing to each other. Our children surround us like a flourishing garden.

The capstone to walking in the Lord’s ways is living to see your children’s children and living in peace. Because of sin in the world, not all of us are so privileged. Nevertheless, we are able to recognize every good thing as a blessing from God. We look forward to the day when we are in heaven with the children with whom God has given us the privilege to share our earthly walk with the Lord.

Prayer: O holy and most merciful God, You have taught us Your way of the commandments. May we always be directed to Your will and daily increase in love toward You and one another. Enable us to resist all evil and to live a godly life. Help us to follow the example of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and to walk in His steps until we shall possess the kingdom that has been prepared for us in heaven; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

## Thursday

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

**C** Amen.

## Verse of the Day: Mark 10:14b

**L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, Alleluia.

**C** Alleluia, Alleluia. For to such belongs the kingdom of God. 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.

## Genesis 2:18–25

<sup>18</sup>Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”

<sup>19</sup>So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup>The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. <sup>21</sup>So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. <sup>22</sup>And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup>Then the man said,

“This at last is bone of my bones

and flesh of my flesh;  
she shall be called Woman,  
because she was taken out of Man.”

<sup>24</sup>Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. <sup>25</sup>And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Genesis 1 gives a very brief description of the creation of man (Genesis 1:26-27). Genesis 2 gives us an expanded account of God creating humanity as male and female.

Near the time of my birth, there was a significant snow storm. My dad was in the army fighting in the Korean War so my uncle drove my mom to the hospital. In the elevator on the way to my mom’s room, the nurse asked him if he was the father. He was embarrassed by that question and quickly answered “NO!” He handed my mom’s overnight case to her and quickly left the hospital.

Of course, I only know this because it is the way my mother told me about it. Genesis 1 and 2 are much the same. Moses recorded these events as God had revealed them to him. No human could report on them from experience. We learn in these chapters of God’s special care in creating us as male and female.

In addition, we learn that marriage was God’s intention from the beginning. When husband and wife are joined in marriage, they establish a new family. They hold fast to each other in such a way that no one, not even parents can (or should) intrude. Words from a hymn by former Concordia University, Chicago professor, F. Samuel Janzow put it this way:

Preserve the vow these two shall make,  
This circle round their life,  
This golden ring that none may break  
Which makes them husband, wife.

He goes on to describe one of the great blessings of marriage in the next stanza:

Your daily mercies let them share,  
All threats of harm destroy;  
By this their vow divide their care  
And double all their joy.

May we continue to thank God for the gift of marriage. May the Lord grant to those who are married or will be married the blessing of dividing their cares and doubling their joys.

Lord, When You Came as Welcome Guest  
Lutheran Service Book 859  
Stanzas 3 & 4  
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Prayer: Most gracious God, we give thanks for the joy and blessings that You have granted to the married couples in our lives. Assist them always with Your grace that with true fidelity and steadfast love they may ever honor and keep Your promises, grow in love toward You and for each other, and come at last to the eternal joys that You have promised; 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 10:14b

**L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, Alleluia.  
**C** Alleluia, Alleluia. For to such belongs the kingdom of God. Alleluia.

### Kyrie

<b>L</b> O Lord,	<b>C</b> Have Mercy on us.
<b>L</b> O Christ,	<b>C</b> Have Mercy on us.
<b>L</b> O Lord,	<b>C</b> Have Mercy on us.

### Hebrews 2:1–13

<sup>1</sup>Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. <sup>2</sup>For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, <sup>3</sup>how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, <sup>4</sup>while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

<sup>5</sup>Now it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. <sup>6</sup>It has been testified somewhere,

“What is man, that you are mindful of him,  
or the son of man, that you care for him?”

<sup>7</sup>You made him for a little while lower than the angels;  
you have crowned him with glory and honor,  
<sup>8</sup>putting everything in subjection under his feet.”

Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. <sup>9</sup>But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

<sup>10</sup>For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. <sup>11</sup>For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, <sup>12</sup>saying,

“I will tell of your name to my brothers;  
in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.”

<sup>13</sup>And again,

“I will put my trust in him.”

And again,

“Behold, I and the children God has given me.”



This is the first of seven weeks of readings from the Book of Hebrews. It would have been helpful to start this series of readings from chapter 1 rather than chapter 2. But we already read Hebrews chapter 1 on Christmas Day!

Let's refresh our memory. Imagine hearing these first verses of Hebrews in Church on Christmas morning.

<sup>1</sup> Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. <sup>3</sup> He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>4</sup> having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

<sup>5</sup> For to which of the angels did God ever say,  
"You are my Son,  
today I have begotten you"?

Or again,  
"I will be to him a father,  
and he shall be to me a son"?

<sup>6</sup> And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says,  
"Let all God's angels worship him." (Hebrews 1:1-6)

God's own Son is our Savior! He now upholds the universe by the word of His power. Chapter 2 begins by directing us to pay close attention to His word. It then continues to explain the glory and honor that Jesus receives because He suffered death for everyone! We can now call Him our Brother!

Hebrews is one of the more challenging books of the New Testament for modern readers. It assumes that we are fully saturated with the life and culture of the Old Testament. It represents the message proclaimed to the very first Christians who had been raised in the religion and traditions of worship at the temple in Jerusalem. When you don't exactly understand the nuance of each lesson, sit back and enjoy a sermon that had deep meaning for the earliest Jewish Christians.

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for the gift of Your Son. Through His life of obedience, His suffering, and His death, He has become our Brother. Grant us a full measure of Your Holy Spirit that Your word as recorded in the Epistle to the Hebrews would be a blessing to us, 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 10:14b

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, Alleluia.  
**C** Alleluia, Alleluia. For to such belongs the kingdom of God. 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.

## Mark 10:13–16

<sup>13</sup>And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. <sup>14</sup>But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. <sup>15</sup>Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” <sup>16</sup>And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

This is another week where reading straight through the Gospel of Mark presented me with a dilemma. Our lectionary combined Jesus’ teaching about marriage and divorce with His teaching about little children. In one way, they go together as both relate to the family. But in another way, they are as far from each other as night is from the day.

*The Lutheran Study Bible* has a word of wisdom as we think about these verses. “The key to this chapter is that God accepts us by grace through faith in Jesus, not through obedience or status, just as children receive love they do not earn.”

Children don’t work their way into the family. They are simply received. The kingdom of God belongs to children and those who receive the kingdom of God like a child! We so often have this confused. Some want children to be like adults before they are baptized. How sad.

Jesus took the children into His arms and blessed them. When we come to Jesus, whether we are two or ninety-two, He welcomes us into His arms and blesses us with forgiveness, life, and salvation. There is no need to earn our way into His family.

Prayer: Gracious Father, Your Son grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and all people. Bless, guide, and govern the children and young people of Your Church by Your Holy Spirit, that they may grow in grace and in the knowledge of Your Word. Protect and defend them from all danger and harm, giving Your holy angels charge over them; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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