

The Second Sunday after Pentecost June 6, 2021

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



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



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



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



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

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

C Amen.

L Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C who made heaven and earth. (*Psalm 124:8*)

L Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults.

C Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. (*Psalm 19:12, 13*)

L If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord who could stand?
C But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared. (*Psalm 130:3–4*)

L Let us, confess before God that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and as His people let us take refuge in His infinite mercy seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, saying:

C God, be merciful to me, a sinner, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

(*Luke 18:13*)

L Almighty God, merciful Father, in Your holy Church, You daily and richly forgive us our sins and grant us new life through Your Spirit. Be in our midst, enliven our faith, and graciously receive our prayer and praise; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C Amen.

Introit Psalm 28:7–9; antiphon Psalm 28:6

L Blessèd be the Lord!

for he has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy.

C The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped;
my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him.

L The Lord is the strength of his people;

he is the saving refuge of his anointed.

C Oh, save your people and bless your heritage!

Be their shepherd and carry them forever.

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 Blessèd be the Lord!

for he has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy.

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 and eternal God, Your Son Jesus triumphed over the prince of demons and freed us from bondage to sin. Help us to stand firm against every assault of Satan, and enable us always to do Your will; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Genesis 3:8–15

⁸And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” ¹⁰And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” ¹¹He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” ¹²The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” ¹³Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

¹⁴The LORD God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this,
cursed are you above all livestock
and above all beasts of the field;
on your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat
all the days of your life.

¹⁵I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel.”

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Gradual Psalm 145:3, 5b, 6b

L Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised,

C and his greatness is unsearchable.

L On your wondrous works, I will meditate,

C and I will declare your greatness.

Psalm 130

L ¹Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD!

C ²O Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy!

L ³If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?

C ⁴But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.

L ⁵I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope;

C ⁶my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning,
more than watchmen for the morning.

L ⁷O Israel, hope in the LORD!

For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption.

C ⁸And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

2 Corinthians 4:13—5:1

¹³Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, “I believed, and so I spoke,” we also believe, and so we also speak, ¹⁴knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. ¹⁵For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

¹⁶So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

¹For we know that if the tent, which is our earthly home, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Verse of the Day: Psalm 127:1a

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Unless the LORD builds the house; Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. those who build it labor in vain. Alleluia.

Mark 3:20–35

L The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 3rd chapter.

C Glory to You, O Lord.

²⁰Then [Jesus] went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. ²¹And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, “He is out of his mind.”

²²And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “by the prince of demons he casts out the demons.” ²³And he called them to him and said to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. ²⁶And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. ²⁷But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.

²⁸“Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, ²⁹but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin” — ³⁰for they had said, “He has an unclean spirit.”

³¹And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. ³²And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.”

³³And he answered them, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” ³⁴And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.”

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.

Rise! To Arms! With Prayer Employ You

Lutheran Service Book 668, Lutheran Worship 303, The Lutheran Hymnal 444



1 Rise! To arms! With prayer em-ploy you, O Chris-tians, lest the
2 Cast a - far this world's vain plea - sure And bold - ly strive for
3 Wise - ly fight, for time is fleet - ing; The hours of grace are



foe de-stroy you; For Sa - tan has de-signed your fall.
heav'n-ly trea - sure. Be stead-fast in the Sav - ior's might.
fast re - treat - ing; Short, short is this our earth - ly way.



Wield God's Word, the weap - on glo - rious; A - gainst all foes be
Trust the Lord, who stands be - side you, For Je - sus from all
When the Lord the dead will wak - en And sin - ners all by



thus vic - to - rious, For God pro-protects you from them all.
harm will hide you. By faith you con-quer in the fight.
fear are shak - en, The saints with joy will greet that day.



Fear not the hordes of hell, Here is Em - man - u - el.
Take cour - age, wea - ry soul! Look for - ward to the goal!
Praise God, our tri-umph's sure. We need not long en-dure



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Devotional thoughts:

Today we begin the “Green Season” of the Church Year. From now until the beginning of Advent on November 28, the paraments in our churches are green. In the first half of the Church Year, we focused on the events in the life of Jesus from His birth to His ascension and the sending of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. During this second half of the Church Year, green centers our attention on Christian growth. Nevertheless, Jesus is still at the heart of our thoughts and contemplation.

In our Gospel Lesson from Mark 3, we find Jesus surrounded by massive crowds. He is completely engaged with His teaching ministry and cannot find time to eat.

His family is worried. They decide to take matters into their own hands and force Him to pause for nourishment. Their anxiety is so great that they have reached an astonishing conclusion, “He is out of his mind.” In the King James Version and the Revised Standard Version, their judgment sounds less harsh. In these translations, His family says, “He is beside himself.”

My first inclination is to criticize the foolishness of Jesus’ family for their ignorance of His calling and work. But after some reflection, I realize that they should also be commended for their misguided but heartfelt concern for Jesus and His physical well-being. Even today, the best families aren’t always right, but they are always loving and concerned. Thank God if you are blessed with such a family. Pray that you would also have a genuine love for your family.

After an interlude where Jesus must deal with antagonistic and aggressive scribes (which we will consider in our Saturday meditation), we meet Jesus’ family again. This time, Mark is more detailed in his description. It is Jesus’ mother and brothers who have come to “rescue” Him. Picture this chaotic scene. They cannot make their way through the mob of people swarming around Jesus so they must call out.

The Master Teacher, Jesus, uses every opportunity to clarify and illustrate the Kingdom of God. The presence of His interfering family provides the perfect occasion to explain how we too can be part of His family.

We know Jesus loved and respected His earthly family. At age twelve, Jesus was submissive to His parents (Luke 2:51). At the beginning of His ministry, He responded to His mother’s appeal for help on behalf of a bridal couple (John 2:1-11). Even from the cross, He made provision for the care of His mother into her golden years (John 19:25-27).

So even here, at the presence of His misguided family, He is not rejecting them. Rather, He increases the circle of His closest relationships when He declares, “Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.”

At first, this seems simple enough. Keep God’s law, keep the Ten Commandments, and you are guaranteed a place in Jesus’ family.

It would be easy at this point to begin a lecture condemning those who “talk the talk” but don’t “walk the walk.” It is comfortable to reprimand hypocritical Christians who lecture us on spiritual matters but appear to

live lives of self-indulgence and pride. It is an old pastime to denounce Sunday Christians who sell their souls to the business world the other six days of the week.

But before we go down that path, let's remember Jesus' encounter with a rich young man who asks, "What good deed must I do to have eternal life?" (Matthew 19:16-26). Jesus answers, "If you would enter life, keep the commandments." He then enumerates them, "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

In haste and foolishness, the rich young man answers, "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?" Like him, we too foolishly imagine that we do the will of God and so should be counted among Jesus' brothers and sisters.

But Jesus puts an end to this foolishness by responding, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

The rich young man is happy to imagine himself as perfect or at least "good enough" until Jesus tells him to do something that he considers to be fiscally irresponsible. The young man "went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions."

Jesus then declares, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." The disciples recognize this as an utterly impossible task when they ask, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus gives them this startling answer, "With man this is impossible!"

For those of us who wish to make ourselves brothers and sisters of Jesus by doing the will of God, it would be well for us to remember this encounter. Because of our fallen condition, every attempt to perfectly do the will of God falls short in one way or another. With the disciples, we are moved to ask, "Who then can be saved?"

We then pause and hear Jesus' complete answer, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." None of us can become brothers or sisters of Jesus by our own actions. It takes God to do the impossible. He did the impossible for us on the cross.

We are adopted into God's family and given the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation through faith because our brother Jesus paid for our sins by His suffering and death. We are born again into His family. He is our brother!

As part of His family, we share the same heavenly Father. As children of the heavenly Father, we seek to do His will. Those who are of the family of this world never do God's will. However, those who are Jesus' brothers and sisters are the ones who do the will of God. Yes, we often fail but each day we are renewed by the working of the Holy Spirit. Our sins are washed away and we live in the newness of life.

"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 most merciful God, thank You for the first promise of a savior made in the garden. Grant that we would always remember that Jesus defeated sin, death, and the devil on the cross for our sake and for all the offspring of Adam and Eve through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

L O God, grant us faith to believe that just as You raised the Lord Jesus, You will raise us also and bring us with you into His presence. Move us to speak clearly about this message of salvation so that grace extends to more and more people through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

L O Lord, heavenly Father, thank You for making us brothers and sisters of Jesus. Grant us Your Holy Spirit that we would always be moved to do Your will through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

L Almighty God, 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. We ask that you would quickly grant relief according to Your will.

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.

God of Grace and God of Glory Lutheran Service Book 850, Lutheran Worship 398, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a



1 God of grace and God of glo - ry, On Your peo - ple
2 Lo, the hosts of e - vil round us Scorn the Christ, as -
3 Cure Your chil - dren's war - ring mad - ness; Bend our pride to
4 Save us from weak res - ig - na - tion To the e - vils



pour Your pow'r; Crown Your an - cient Church's sto - ry;
sail His ways! From the fears that long have bound us
Your con - trol; Shame our wan - ton, self - ish glad - ness,
we de - plore; Let the gift of Your sal - va - tion



Bring its bud to glo - rious flow'r. Grant us wis - dom,
Free our hearts to faith and praise. Grant us wis - dom,
Rich in things and poor in soul. Grant us wis - dom,
Be our glo - ry ev - er - more. Grant us wis - dom,

grant us cour - age For the fac - ing of this
grant us cour - age For the liv - ing of these
grant us cour - age Lest we miss Your king - dom's
grant us cour - age, Serv - ing You whom we a -

hour, For the fac - ing of this hour.
days, For the liv - ing of these days.
goal, Lest we miss Your king - dom's goal.
dore, Serv - ing You whom we a - dore.

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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 Second Sunday after Pentecost

June 7 – June 12, 2021

Introduction

Most modern forms of mediation turn a person inward. Biblical meditation turns a person outward toward what God has said and done especially what He has said and done through Jesus for our salvation.

Each Sunday has its own special theme directing us to meditate on God's word and actions. This theme is found in the Propers of the Day (the parts of the service that change week to week). From Advent through the Easter season these themes focus our attention on the life of Jesus from His birth to His death and resurrection. There is always much more in the propers than can be covered in any Sunday service. God willing, I will use the propers for Sunday to provide you with a devotion each day to help you meditate on what God has done for you.

Monday

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

Introit Psalm 28:7–9; antiphon Psalm 28:6

- L** Blessèd be the Lord!
for he has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy.
C The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped;
my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him.
L The Lord is the strength of his people;
he is the saving refuge of his anointed.
C Oh, save your people and bless your heritage!
Be their shepherd and carry them forever.
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 Blessèd be the Lord!
for he has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy.

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 28 begins with a petition asking God to hear David's prayer for help. You may have joined David in offering such a plea.

Life is full of stressful situations. In our prayers, we seek relief from God. Sometimes, God's answer is immediate and breathtaking. Other times, we are called upon to have patience in our waiting.

David may have had one such situation in mind when he penned Psalm 28. He says in verse 2, “Hear the voice of my pleas for mercy, when I cry to you for help.” You can almost feel the desperation in David’s request. Many of us can fully identify with his anxiety.

The introit for this week begins with verse 6. Here David rejoices that indeed God has heard and answered his pleas for mercy.

There have been many times in my life that I have felt distressed and pressed upon. They were times when I couldn’t understand God’s plan or purpose for me. Yet, as God granted to me the perspective of time, I was able to see how He answered my prayers in ways much better than I could have anticipated.

When this happens to you, turn to Psalm 28 and the introit for this week. Remember that God is our Shepherd and He carries us until we dwell in His house forever.

L Let us pray. Lord God, our shepherd, You gather the lambs of Your flock into the arms of Your mercy and bring them home. Comfort us with the certain hope of the resurrection to everlasting life and a joyful reunion with those we love who have died in the faith; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

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: Psalm 127:1a

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Unless the LORD builds the house; Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. those who build it labor in vain. 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 and eternal God, Your Son Jesus triumphed over the prince of demons and freed us from bondage to sin. Help us to stand firm against every assault of Satan, and enable us always to do Your will; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

The Apostle Paul writes, “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12 NIV). If life is difficult for you, it is good to remember these words. But more important than that, let us remember that Jesus has triumphed over the prince of demons and freed us from the bondage of sin!

In Christ, we can stand against the schemes of the devil! Jesus will never leave you or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5).

Let us heed Paul’s instructions, “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith,

with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints (Ephesians 6:10-18).

Let us pray: Almighty and eternal God, Your Son Jesus triumphed over the prince of demons and freed us from bondage to sin. Help us to stand firm against every assault of Satan, and enable us always to do Your will; through 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: Psalm 127:1a

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Unless the LORD builds the house; Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia. those who build it labor in vain. Alleluia.

Psalm 130

- L** ¹Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD!
C ²O Lord, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy!
L ³If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?
C ⁴But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.
L ⁵I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope;
C ⁶my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning,
more than watchmen for the morning.
L ⁷O Israel, hope in the LORD!
For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption.
C ⁸And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

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.

Human nature is given to arrogance. We often believe that we can outsmart or outmaneuver God.

The Prophet Jonah had such delusions. God told Jonah, “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me” (Jonah 1:2). But Jonah thought that he could evade God’s calling by boarding a ship to Tarshish. God would not allow it. A tempest of such great power arose that the ship was about to sink. And as they say, you know the rest of the story. In the depth of despair and literally in the depth of the sea, Jonah offered a cry of desperation from the belly of a big fish.

You and I are likely to never find ourselves in a similar situation. However, we do sometimes find ourselves in the depth of despair. From time to time, our arrogance may get in the way of our relationship with God and He allows us to look up to Him for deliverance. When that happens to you, turn to Psalm 130.

The Lord hears your voice! He is attentive to you when you cry out for mercy. He grants you forgiveness and redeems you from all your sins. His steadfast love and plentiful redemption rest upon us.

Prayer: O God, as the prophet Jonah spent three days in the belly of the great fish, so Your Son Jesus spent three days in the heart of the earth. Grant us repentance to embrace our death in Him through Holy Baptism and to proclaim His victory over sin and death to all the world; through the same 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: Psalm 127:1a

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Unless the LORD builds the house; those who build it labor in vain. Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. Unless the LORD builds the house; those who build it labor in vain. 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 3:8–15

⁸And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” ¹⁰And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” ¹¹He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” ¹²The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” ¹³Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

¹⁴The LORD God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this,
cursed are you above all livestock
and above all beasts of the field;
on your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat
all the days of your life.

¹⁵I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel.”

Our Old Testament reading includes one of the most famous and valuable passages of Holy Scripture. Right there in the garden, immediately after the fall into sin, God gives Adam and Eve the first promise of a savior in Genesis 3:15:

I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel

Through the centuries, this passage has been considered so significant that it has been given its own name, The Protoevangelium. Protoevangelium means “First Gospel.”

It is read every year on Christmas Eve in our Service of Nine Lessons and Carols. It is part of children’s

Christmas pageants around the world. But this passage brings another momentous memory for me.

Years ago, while I was a vicar (intern) at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Moline, Illinois, I was attending a Bible study conducted by Pastor Eldor Haake. We had just read this passage. Pastor Haake had just explained that Adam and Eve had done nothing but sin when God spoke these words. At that, the woman sitting next to me started to cry.

We were all startled. Pastor Haake stopped the class and asked her what was wrong. She exclaimed, “We really don’t have to do anything to be saved!”

We have all heard that passage so often that it may be hard to believe. But at that moment in time, the Holy Spirit used Genesis 3:15 to allow this woman to understand grace.

What is so significant to me is that I had been to this woman’s home a few weeks before. I had heard the Gospel presented to her in the usual way with words often heard from pastors and laypeople alike. However, none of them had the impact of Genesis 3:15 on that day. For the first time in her life, she understood what it meant to be saved by grace through faith for Christ’s sake.

Prayer: Lord God, heavenly Father, You created Adam and Eve in your image. After their fall into sin, You promised them a Savior who would crush the devil's might. By Your mercy, number us among those who receive by faith the salvation won for us by Jesus on the cross; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Friday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Psalm 127:1a

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Unless the LORD builds the house; those who build it labor in vain. Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. Unless the LORD builds the house; those who build it labor in vain. 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.

2 Corinthians 4:13—5:1

¹³Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, “I believed, and so I spoke,” we also believe, and so we also speak, ¹⁴knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. ¹⁵For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

¹⁶So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

¹For we know that if the tent, which is our earthly home, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens

Paul writes these encouraging words, “We do not lose heart.” It is easy to become discouraged. We all suffer one affliction or another. For some, affliction can become very intense. First, we grow up then we grow old. As our abilities and health decline, we understand what Paul means when he says, “our outer nature is wasting away.”

Paul calls us to look beyond our momentary afflictions and to see the eternal weight of glory that awaits those who believe in Jesus. The tent of our earthly bodies may one day be destroyed but we have a house not made by hands that is prepared for us in the eternal heavens.

While we are waiting for the day when angels will carry us to Abraham's bosom, God has given us the privilege of sharing His message of grace so that more and more people would believe in Jesus and receive the gift of eternal life.

Prayer: Father of all mercy, You never fail to help those who call upon You in faith. Give strength and confidence to us in our times of affliction. Grant that we may fix our eyes on Jesus and the eternal mansions that He has prepared for us through His life, death, and resurrection, through the same 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 145:3, 5b, 6b

L Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised,

C and his greatness is unsearchable.

L On your wondrous works, I will meditate,

C and I will declare your greatness.

Verse of the Day: Psalm 127:1a

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Unless the LORD builds the house; those who build it labor in vain. Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. Unless the LORD builds the house; those who build it labor in vain. 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 3:20–30

²⁰Then [Jesus] went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. ²¹And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind."

²²And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "by the prince of demons he casts out the demons." ²³And he called them to him and said to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. ²⁶And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. ²⁷But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.

²⁸"Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, ²⁹but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" — ³⁰for they had said, "He has an unclean spirit."

There was a time when I frequently was asked about "the unforgivable sin." As biblical literacy has waned, I seldom hear this question.

It was natural to fear that in ignorance or carelessness, I possibly had committed an unforgivable sin, also known as the sin against the Holy Spirit. This question would arise because people had some nodding

acquaintance with this passage from Mark.

Top scribes from Jerusalem arrived in Galilee attacking Jesus' credibility with the accusation that He was casting out demons because He himself was possessed by the prince of demons. Jesus put that silliness to rest with these words, "How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand."

Then He put His finger on the heart of the matter. By attacking Jesus and attributing His power to Satan, they had attacked the Holy Spirit. This is the sin without forgiveness.

There is forgiveness for all sins. But those who reject the Holy Spirit do not receive forgiveness because the work of the Holy Spirit is to bring us to repentance and faith in Jesus. It's not that this sin is so great that it cannot be forgiven. Rather, rejecting the Holy Spirit rejects forgiveness itself.

As wise pastors have often counseled, "The fact that you are asking the question about the unforgivable sin is proof that you haven't committed it."

Prayer: O God, our refuge and strength, renew in us the true faith and grant us Your forgiveness. Prosper the work of the Holy Spirit through the means of grace that repentance and assurance of salvation would abound in the hearts of Your people through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

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