

The Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost October 18, 2020

Jesus declares, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Christians continually live in this tension. We are citizens of God's kingdom and also citizens of an earthly kingdom. Of course, God's kingdom is always superior to political powers. If these two come into conflict with each other, we join with Peter and the apostles affirming, "We must obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29). Yet we must recognize that government exercises a legitimate authority in our lives which also has been established by God (Romans 13). Civil laws and regulations are established for our good and blessing.

All Depends on Our Possessing Lutheran Service Book 732, Lutheran Worship 415, The Lutheran Hymnal 425



1 All de - pends on our pos - sess - ing God's a - bun - dant
2 He who to this day has fed me And to man - y
3 Man - y spend their lives in fret - ting O - ver tri - fles
4 When with sor - row I am strick - en, Hope a - new my



grace and bless - ing, Though all earth - ly wealth de - part.
joys has led me Is and ev - er shall be mine.
and in get - ting Things that have no sol - id ground.
heart will quick - en; All my long - ing shall be stilled.



They who trust with faith un - shak - en By their God are
He who ev - er gent - ly schools me, He who dai - ly
I shall strive to win a trea - sure That will bring me
To His lov - ing - kind - ness ten - der Soul and bod - y



not for - sak - en And will keep a daunt - less heart.
guides and rules me Will re - main my help di - vine.
last - ing plea - sure And that now is sel - dom found.
I sur - ren - der, For on God a - lone I build.

5 Well He knows what best to grant me;
All the longing hopes that haunt me,
Joy and sorrow, have their day.
I shall doubt His wisdom never;
As God wills, so be it ever;
I commit to Him my way.

6 If my days on earth He lengthen,
God my weary soul will strengthen;
All my trust in Him I place.
Earthly wealth is not abiding,
Like a stream away is gliding;
Safe I anchor in His grace.

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 121:1–4, 7–8; antiphon Psalm 121:5

L The Lord is your keeper;
the Lord is your shade on your right hand.

C I lift up my eyes to the hills.
From where does my help come?

L My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.

C He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.

L Behold, he who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.

C The Lord will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.

L The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in
from this time forth and forevermore.

C Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

L The Lord is your keeper;
the Lord is your shade on your right hand.

Kyrie

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L O Christ, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

Gloria in Excelsis ~ Glory to God in the Highest

- L** Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.
- C** Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father: We worship You, we give You thanks, and we praise You for Your glory.
- L** Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, You are Lord and God, You are the Lamb of God:
- C** Lord Jesus Christ, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.
- L** Lord Jesus Christ, You are seated at the right hand of the Father; and we ask you to graciously receive our prayer.
- C** For You alone are the Holy One,
You alone are the Lord,
You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Collect of the Day

- L** Let us pray: O God, the protector of all who trust in You, have mercy on us that with You as our ruler and guide we may so pass through things temporal that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C** Amen.

Isaiah 45:1–7

¹Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus,
whose right hand I have grasped,
to subdue nations before him
and to loose the belts of kings,
to open doors before him
that gates may not be closed:
²“I will go before you
and level the exalted places,
I will break in pieces the doors of bronze
and cut through the bars of iron,
³I will give you the treasures of darkness
and the hoards in secret places,
that you may know that it is I, the LORD,
the God of Israel, who call you by your name.
⁴For the sake of my servant Jacob,

and Israel my chosen,
I call you by your name,
I name you, though you do not know me.
⁵I am the LORD, and there is no other,
besides me there is no God;
I equip you, though you do not know me,
⁶that people may know, from the rising of the
sun
and from the west, that there is none besides
me;
I am the LORD, and there is no other.
⁷I form light and create darkness,
I make well-being and create calamity,
I am the LORD, who does all these things.

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

Gradual Psalm 91:11; 103:1

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

Psalm 96:1–13

- L** ¹Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth!
C ²**Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.**
L ³Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!
C ⁴**For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods.**
L ⁵For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens.
C ⁶**Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.**
L ⁷Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength!
C ⁸**Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts!**
L ⁹Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!
C ¹⁰**Say among the nations, “The LORD reigns!**
Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.”
L ¹¹Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
C ¹²**let the field exult, and everything in it! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy**
L ¹³**before the LORD, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth.**
C **He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness.**

1 Thessalonians 1:1–10

¹Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

Grace to you and peace.

²We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, ³remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. ⁶And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, ⁷so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. ⁸For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. ⁹For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, ¹⁰and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Verse Matthew 10:39

L Alleluia, Alleluia. You have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. Alleluia.

C **Alleluia, Alleluia. You have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. Alleluia.**

Matthew 22:15–22

L The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 22nd chapter.

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

¹⁵Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle [Jesus] in his talk. ¹⁶And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone’s opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances. ¹⁷Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” ¹⁸But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, “Why put me to the test, you

hypocrites? ¹⁹Show me the coin for the tax.” And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰And Jesus said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” ²¹They said, “Caesar’s.” Then he said to them, “Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” ²²When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away.

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.

Holy God, We Praise Thy Name Lutheran Service Book 940, Lutheran Worship 171, The Lutheran Hymnal 250



1 Ho - ly God, we praise Thy name; Lord of all, we
2 Hark! The glad ce - les - tial hymn An - gel choirs a -
3 Lo, the a - pos - tles' ho - ly train Join Thy sa - cred
4 Thou art King of Glo - ry, Christ; Son of God, yet



bow be - fore Thee. All on earth Thy scep - ter claim,
bove are rais - ing; Cher - u - bim and ser - a - phim,
name to hal - low; Proph - ets swell the glad re - frain,
born of Mar - y. For us sin - ners sac - ri - ficed,



All in heav'n a - bove a - dore Thee. In - fi - nite Thy
In un - ceas - ing cho - rus prais - ing, Fill the heav'ns with
And the white - robed mar - tyrs fol - low, And from morn to
As to death a Trib - u - tar - y, First to break the



vast do - main, Ev - er - last - ing is Thy reign.
sweet ac - cord: Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord!
set of sun Through the Church the song goes on.
bars of death, Thou hast o - pened heav'n to faith.

5 Holy Father, holy Son,
Holy Spirit, three we name Thee;
Though in essence only one,
Undivided God we claim Thee
And, adoring, bend the knee
While we own the mystery.

6 From Thy high celestial home,
Judge of all, again returning,
We believe that Thou shalt come
On that final judgment morning,
When Thy voice shall shake the earth
And the startled dead come forth.

7 Spare Thy people, Lord, we pray,
By a thousand snares surrounded;
Keep us without sin today,
Never let us be confounded.
Lo, I put my trust in Thee;
Never, Lord, abandon me.

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Devotional thoughts:

In addition to the constant drone of election and campaign reporting, the news this week was dominated by senate hearings for the confirmation of a Supreme Court justice. During the few moments that I watched the hearings, questioning centered on the nominee's religious beliefs and how it might influence her in Right-to-life issues.

This was an odd turn of events. The questioner seemed to be concerned that the nominee would allow her Catholic faith to dominate her judicial rulings. Most of the members of my generation thought that this issue had been solved with the election of John F. Kennedy as president. At the time, many Protestants were afraid that a Roman Catholic president would allow the church to dominate our government.

Yet this line of thought should not be surprising. As our society has become more and more secularized, an anti-Christian, anti-religion bias has controlled much of our public discourse. The Gospel lesson for today shares an excellent insight from Jesus on this subject.

After the senate confirmation hearings this week, I thought it was ironic that the Gospel lesson begins with this statement, "The Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle [Jesus] in his talk." The Pharisees didn't go alone. They took with them the Herodians. The Herodians were the pro-government crowd. Together they would pose to Jesus a "lose-lose" church-state question, "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" If He answered yes, the anti-Romans among the people would abandon Him. If He answered no, the Herodians would report His rebellious talk to the authorities and they would have a reason to arrest Him.

Taxes are constantly a subject of conversation. It seems that almost every political ad talks about raising or lowering taxes. I'm sure that you have thought about them. Mostly, I like taxes when someone else pays them. Otherwise, I'm not so fond of them.

The Boston Tea Party was an act of rebellion against taxes. "No taxation without representation" was a slogan of the American Revolution. One of the most meddlesome parts of government is placing its hand in my pocket.

Nevertheless, the question from the Pharisees really isn't about taxes. They were all for the temple tax. Jesus and Peter's tax was paid by a coin found in the mouth of a fish (Matthew 17:24-27). The real question was, "Should godly people be subject to an ungodly government?" With this question, the Pharisees were sure that Jesus could not escape their trap!

Of course, the Pharisees didn't understand that they were speaking to the very Son of God. Already at age twelve, Jesus was able to deliberate with Bible scholars in the temple (Luke 2:41-51). His wisdom was far beyond anything they could understand or imagine. Jesus' answer was earth-shaking, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

Indeed, Godly people can be subject to ungodly rulers. The Apostle Paul expands on this in Romans 13. For Christians, even an ungodly pagan government can be seen as a gift from God when they punish evil and reward the good.

As God's people, we know that we are ultimately responsible to God. He is the King of all creation. Many of our lessons this week focus on this truth. Even earthly kings are subject to Him whether they recognize it or not.

Because of sin in the world, we are destined to be ruled by sinful men and women. There is no escaping this fact. Even in the misguided attempts to establish Christian utopias on earth, we repeatedly witness how ungodly leaders can misuse their authority.

While we live on earth, we are always subject to earthly authority. But thanks be to God. He sent Jesus to usher in the kingdom of heaven. His way was prepared by John the Baptist.

The kingdom of God is entered through repentance and baptism by the poor in spirit. It is so different from an earthly kingdom that we must be born again into the heavenly kingdom. In this kingdom, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, we daily and richly receive the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. In this kingdom, goodness and righteousness reign, the meek inherit the earth, and those who mourn are comforted. Its citizens turn the other cheek, go the extra mile, feed the hungry, visit the sick and in prison, and give a glass of water to the thirsty.

In this kingdom, God's will is done, the dead are raised, and eternal life in heaven is given to all believers.

One day all earthly kingdoms will pass away. Until then we render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. We pay taxes. We give honor and respect to those in authority (Romans 13:1-7).

There is one important exception to this obedience. When the apostles were ordered to no longer teach in Jesus' name, they responded, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:27-32).

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7).

God's richest blessings to you in Christ.

L Our Father in heaven, grant that we may ever be loyal citizens of Your kingdom.

C Amen.

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

C Amen.

C I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

C Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

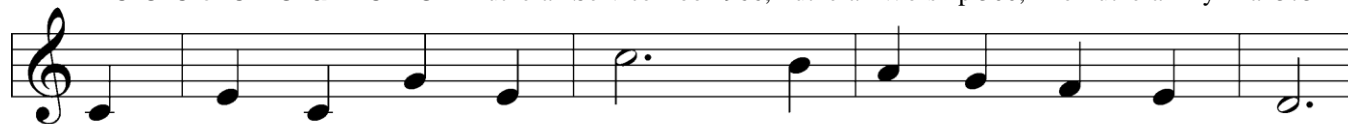
L Let us bless the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

L The Lord bless us, defend us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

C Amen.

Before the Lord We Bow Lutheran Service Book 966, Lutheran Worship 500, The Lutheran Hymnal 575



1 Be - fore You, Lord, we bow, Our God who reigns a - bove
2 The na - tion You have blest May well Your love de - clare,
3 May ev - 'ry moun - tain height, Each vale and for - est green,
4 Earth, hear your Mak - er's voice; Your great Re - deem - er own;



And rules the world be - low, Bound-less in pow'r and love. Our thanks
From foes and fears at rest, Pro - tect - ed by Your care. For this
Shine in Your Word's pure light, And its rich fruits be seen! May ev -
Be - lieve, o - bey, re - joice, And wor-ship Him a - lone. Cast down



we bring In joy and praise, Our hearts we raise To You, our King!
bright day, For this fair land—Gifts of Your hand—Our thanks we pay.
'ry tongue Be tuned to praise And join to raise A grate - ful song.
your pride, Your sin de - plores, And bow be - fore The Cru - ci - fied.

5 And when in pow'r He comes,
Oh, may our native land
From all its rending tombs
Send forth a glorious band,
A countless throng,
With joy to sing
To heav'n's high King
Salvation's song!

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Service Notes:

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

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

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Enhancing Your Worship

Meditating on God's Word and Works

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

The Week of the Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

October 19 – October 24

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 121:1–4, 7–8; antiphon Psalm 121:5

- L** The Lord is your keeper;
the Lord is your shade on your right hand.
- C** I lift up my eyes to the hills.
From where does my help come?
- L** My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.
- C** He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.
- L** Behold, he who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
- C** The Lord will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.
- L** The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in
from this time forth and forevermore.
- C** Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.
- L** The Lord is your keeper;
the Lord is your shade on your right hand.

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 121 is the appointed gradual for the funeral service in Lutheran Worship. I have heard it chanted by Mark Steffens countless times. It gives us comfort in times of stress. It answers the question, "Where does my help come from?" "My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

Life is filled with troubling times. We have trouble in our families. We have trouble in our churches. We have trouble in our government. We have health trouble. We have financial trouble. Life in a sinful world is always filled with trouble.

There is only one real help in times of trouble, God. Thankfully, our God is willing and able to help in every situation. He is merciful and companionate. He tells us to call upon Him in times of trouble. He invites us to cast all our cares upon Him because He cares for us.

God brings help in every time of need. The most important help that He brings is His own Son, our Savior, Jesus.

God's ultimate will for you is to spend eternity in heaven with Him. He gives this eternal bliss to all who believe in Jesus. There will be no more troubles in heaven. Every tear will be wiped from your eyes. You and I will live in peace and joy.

- L** Let us pray. Almighty God, thank You for the invitation to call upon you in times of trouble. Thank You for your promise to deliver us. Grant that we may live in faith, hope, and joy until the day when we enter our eternal home with You, 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 Matthew 10:39

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. You have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia. You have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. Alleluia.

Kyrie

- | | | | |
|----------|-----------|----------|--------------------------|
| L | O Lord, | C | Have Mercy on us. |
| L | O Christ, | C | Have Mercy on us. |
| L | O Lord, | C | Have Mercy on us. |

- L** Let us pray. O God, the protector of all who trust in You, have mercy on us that with You as our ruler and guide we may so pass through things temporal that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen

The collect prayer sums up the theme for this week: God is our ruler and protector. He guides us through our life on this earth until we are able to spend eternity with Him

The danger is that we become so focused on the temporary things of this life that we lose sight of eternity.

Election campaigning is reaching a fevered pitch. Each candidate believes that the world will end unless he or she is elected to office. When we pause to think about it, we know that this is not true. God is still in charge. That doesn't change with the outcome of elections.

Earthly kingdoms crumble. God's kingdom is eternal. For the first four decades of my life, world politics were dominated by the Soviet Union. Its communist government was unashamed of its goal of world domination. Its leader, Nikita Khrushchev, is famous for telling the western world, "We will bury you." Now it exists only in memory. Its Wikipedia article states that it existed from 1922 to 1991.

Whatever the outcome of our election in November, in a few years, it will be a history lesson that students are forced to learn. It will be a clue on Jeopardy. Young people will declare it to be old news.

God's kingdom is always new every day as we enter it through forgiveness won for us by Jesus on the cross. God's kingdom is eternal and it is our ultimate home.

. Prayer: O God, the protector of all who trust in You, have mercy on us that with You as our ruler and guide we may so pass through things temporal that we lose not the things eternal; 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 Matthew 10:39

L Alleluia, Alleluia. You have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. You have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. Alleluia.

Psalm 96:1–13

L ¹Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth!

C ²**Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.**

L ³Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!

C ⁴**For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods.**

L ⁵For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens.

C ⁶**Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.**

L ⁷Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength!

C ⁸**Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts!**

L ⁹Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!

C ¹⁰**Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns!**

Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity."

L ¹¹Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it;

C ¹²**let the field exult, and everything in it! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy**

L ¹³before the LORD, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth.

C **He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness.**

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 96 is an uplifting psalm. We sing to the Lord a new song because of His salvation.

This week, verse 10 jumps out at me, "Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns!" The leaders of the

nations may think that they make all the rules but the Psalmist reminds us that no, God reigns!

One of my vivid memories from seminary is a professor telling me that the Gospel in the Old Testament is often found in the concept that “The Lord reigns.” This has influenced my reading of the Bible ever since.

When God reigns, sin is defeated. When God reigns, life overcomes death. When God reigns the devil can only scowl. Martin Luther understood this when he wrote his famous hymn, “A Mighty Fortress is Our God.”

Both John the Baptist and Jesus began their ministries with the announcement, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:17). In today’s world, God reigns in the hearts of the believing people. His reign is found wherever life, death, and resurrection are proclaimed. God’s reign is found where God’s people live wholesome and god-pleasing. God’s reign is found when the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light.

God’s people pray for His kingdom to be extended when we pray, “Thy kingdom come.”

What does this mean? The kingdom of God certainly comes by itself without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also.

How does God’s kingdom come? God’s kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity.

Prayer: Almighty God, King of all creation, rule in our hearts and minds, grant to us Your Holy Spirit that we may live in your kingdom now and for all eternity, 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 Matthew 10:39

L Alleluia, Alleluia. You have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. You have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. 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.

Isaiah 45:1–7

¹Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus,
whose right hand I have grasped,
to subdue nations before him
and to loose the belts of kings,
to open doors before him
that gates may not be closed:

²“I will go before you
and level the exalted places,
I will break in pieces the doors of bronze
and cut through the bars of iron,

³I will give you the treasures of darkness
and the hoards in secret places,
that you may know that it is I, the LORD,

the God of Israel, who call you by your name.
⁴For the sake of my servant Jacob,
 and Israel my chosen,
 I call you by your name,
 I name you, though you do not know me.
⁵I am the LORD, and there is no other,
 besides me there is no God;
 I equip you, though you do not know me,
⁶that people may know, from the rising of the sun
 and from the west, that there is none besides me;
 I am the LORD, and there is no other.
⁷I form light and create darkness,
 I make well-being and create calamity,
 I am the LORD, who does all these things.

Thinking this week about God ruling over all of creation, Isaiah makes it clear that sometimes God can and does use unbelievers for His own purpose. Cyrus was the king of Persia. God used him and his armies to end the Babylonian empire and return the exiles to the Promised Land.

As humans, we often think that we are on our own missions to accomplish our own goals. However, God is ultimately in charge of human activities. He is able to use them to accomplish His purpose. We see this most clearly in the life of Jesus.

The Old Testament tells us that the savior would be born in Bethlehem. Yet, Mary and Joseph were in Nazareth. In order for God's purpose to be accomplished, Caesar Augustus issued a decree that all the world should be enrolled. Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem in obedience to the imperial decree. Mary gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger. And as they say, "The rest is history."

God has done amazing things in your life. It has worked it out through various means that you would come to faith in Jesus and receive eternal life. Thanks be to God.

Prayer: O God, let us never doubt Your divine providence and authority to rule even the unbelieving world for your ultimate purpose, through 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 Matthew 10:39

L Alleluia, Alleluia. You have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia. You have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. 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.

1 Thessalonians 1:1–10

¹Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

Grace to you and peace.

²We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, ³remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. ⁶And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, ⁷so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. ⁸For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. ⁹For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, ¹⁰and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

In the three year lectionary during the second half of the Church Year, we read through the epistles, one after another. This year we have read a large portion of Romans, Philippians, and now we begin 1 Thessalonians. Next year, our readings will come from 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, James, and Hebrews. In the third year, we will read through Galatians, Colossians, Hebrews, Philemon, 1 and 2 Timothy, and 2 Thessalonians. Large portions of 1 Corinthians are spread out through all three years among the epistle readings of the first half of the Church Year.

Many scholars believe that 1 Thessalonians is the first of Paul's letters. It begins with the apostolic greeting, "Paul, Silvanus (Silas), and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace." Note that the very first word Paul writes to the Thessalonian Christians is "grace." St. Paul will continue to use the word grace more than 80 times in his letters!

One way to remember the meaning of Grace is to think of it as this acronym:

God's
Riches
At
Christ's
Expense

This is a summary of the entire Christian faith. God does not give us eternal life and salvation because we've earned it or deserved it. He freely gives us forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation because His Son, Jesus Christ earned it for us on the cross. This is GRACE!

Prayer: O Lord, thank you for the richness of grace paid for by Jesus' holy precious blood, innocent suffering, and death upon the cross. Grant that we may always live with peace in our hearts because of Your grace. Amen.

Saturday

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

Gradual

- L** Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!
C For from him and through him and to him are all things.
To him be glory forever. Amen.

Verse Matthew 10:39

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. You have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia. You have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. 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. |

1 Thessalonians 1:8–10

⁸For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. ⁹For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, ¹⁰and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

There is always much more to say about each of our lessons. These few verses from 1 Thessalonians are one of the many treasures to be found.

Paul writes to the Thessalonians, “Your faith in God has gone forth everywhere.” This is interesting since Thessalonica was so hostile to the Apostle Paul and the Christian message. You can read about it in Acts 17:1-9. A great many devout Greeks and leading women were brought to faith and founded the church there. Unfortunately, an anti-Christian mob was formed and attacked the house of Jason, dragging him and other members of the church before the authorities, accusing them of rebellion against Rome because they followed King Jesus. Jason was required to post a bond before he was released. Paul and Silas were forced to flee Thessalonica by night.

In the face of this hostility, the Thessalonian Church developed a well-deserved reputation of being a church of great faith. You and I as well as the entire Christian Church live in a time of hostility to the Christian faith. We pray that God would grant us the faithfulness displayed by the Thessalonian Christians and that our faith in salvation through Christ would go forth and be an inspiration to people around us.

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for people of faith wherever they may be. Grant that we may join that throng of believers in time and eternity, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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