

The Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost November 8, 2020

Historically, today is known as the Third to Last Sunday of the Church Year. As the Church Year comes to a close, we remember that all things here on earth will have an end, particularly each one of us. We must all face the sobering reality that compared to the span of eternity, our lives are but a blink of an eye. Now is the time to be wise and seek the wisdom of the Lord—Faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise Lutheran Service Book 802, Lutheran Worship 451, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a



1 Im - mor - tal, in - vis - i - ble, God on - ly wise,
2 Un - rest - ing, un - hast - ing, and si - lent as light,
3 To all life Thou giv - est— to both great and small—
4 Great Fa - ther of glo - ry, pure Fa - ther of light,

In light in - ac - ces - si - ble hid from our eyes,
Nor want - ing, nor wast - ing, Thou rul - est in might;
In all life Thou liv - est, the true Life of all;
Thine an - gels a - dore Thee, all veil - ing their sight;

Most bless - ed, most glo - rious, the An - cient of Days,
Thy jus - tice like moun - tains high soar - ing a - bove
We blos - som and flour - ish as leaves on the tree
All laud we would ren - der: O help us to see

Al - might - y, vic - to - rious, Thy great name we praise.
Thy clouds which are foun - tains of good - ness and love.
And with - er and per - ish— but naught chang - es Thee.
'Tis on - ly the splen - dor of light that hides Thee.

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 84:1, 9–12; antiphon Psalm 84:3

L Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.

C How lovely is your dwelling place,
O Lord of hosts!

L Behold our shield, O God;
look on the face of your anointed!

C For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

L For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor.
No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.

C O Lord of hosts,
blessèd is the one who trusts in you!

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 Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.

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: Lord God, heavenly Father, send forth Your Son to lead home His bride, the Church, that with all the company of the redeemed we may finally enter into His eternal wedding feast; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Amos 5:18–24

¹⁸Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD!

Why would you have the day of the LORD?

It is darkness, and not light,

¹⁹ as if a man fled from a lion,

and a bear met him,

or went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall,

and a serpent bit him.

²⁰Is not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light,

and gloom with no brightness in it?

²¹“I hate, I despise your feasts,

and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

²²Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,

I will not accept them;

and the peace offerings of your fattened animals,

I will not look upon them.

²³Take away from me the noise of your songs;

to the melody of your harps I will not listen.

²⁴But let justice roll down like waters,

and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Gradual Revelation 7:14; Psalm 84:5

L These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation.

C They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

L Blessed are those whose strength is in you,

C in whose heart are the highways to Zion.

Psalm 70

- L** ¹Make haste, O God, to deliver me! O LORD, make haste to help me!
C ²**Let them be put to shame and confusion who seek my life!**
Let them be turned back and brought to dishonor who desire my hurt!
L ³Let them turn back because of their shame who say, “Aha, Aha!”
C ⁴**May all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you!**
May those who love your salvation say evermore, “God is great!”
L ⁵But I am poor and needy; hasten to me, O God!
C **You are my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay!**

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

¹³But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁵For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. ¹⁸Therefore encourage one another with these words.

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

Verse of the Day Matthew 25:13

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. Alleluia.

Matthew 25:1–13

- L** The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 25th chapter.
C **Glory to You, O Lord.**

¹[Jesus said:] “The kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. ²Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ⁴but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. ⁵As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. ⁶But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ ⁷Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ ⁹But the wise answered, saying, ‘Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’ ¹⁰And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. ¹¹Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ ¹²But he answered, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ ¹³Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.”

- 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.

Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying Lutheran Service Book 516, Lutheran Worship 177, The Lutheran Hymnal 609



1 "Wake, a - wake, for night is fly - ing," The watch - men on the
2 Zi - on hears the watch - men sing - ing, And all her heart with
3 Now let all the heav'ns a - dore Thee, Let saints and an - gels



heights are cry - ing; "A - wake, Je - ru - sa - lem, a - rise!"
joy is spring - ing; She wakes, she ris - es from her gloom.
sing be - fore Thee With harp and cym - bals' clear - est tone.



Mid - night hears the wel - come voic - es And at the thrill - ing
For her Lord comes down all - glo - rious, The strong in grace, in
Of one pearl each shin - ing por - tal, Where, join - ing with the



cry re - joic - es: "Oh, where are ye, ye vir - gins wise?
truth vic - to - rious; Her star is ris'n, her light is come.
choir im - mor - tal, We gath - er round Thy ra - diant throne.



The Bride - groom comes, a - wake! Your lamps with glad - ness take!
Now come, Thou Bless - ed One, Lord Je - sus, God's own Son,
No eye has seen the light, No ear has heard the might



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Devotional thoughts:

During my active ministry at Christ Lutheran Church in Stevensville, Michigan, God granted me the privilege of serving fourteen years with Pastor Kenneth Ferrier. I have fond memories of those years and many tales to tell. I will exercise restraint and simply recall one of his many insights. If you attend any of my Bible classes regularly, at one point or another you will hear me share this quote from Pastor Ferrier about Bible translations: “Even the best translation is like kissing your girlfriend through a screen door!” I know that he attributed this observation to a seminary professor but in my mind, it will always be associated with him.

The Gospel lesson for today presents more evidence for the truth of that statement. Simply reading through the English translation, my thoughts immediately turned to the writing of a homily on wisdom versus folly in light of the approaching end of the Church Year. This certainly would be appropriate and many fine sermons will be preached this Sunday following that theme. But here is where Pastor Ferrier’s observation comes into play.

I know that the Greek word for wisdom is *sophia*. The Hagia Sophia in Istanbul (Constantinople) could be translated into English as Holy Wisdom. Our word philosophy comes from Greek words meaning “love for wisdom.” So I naturally assumed that the wise virgins of our text were filled with *sophia* (wisdom). I was wrong! The Greek word here is not *sophos* (wise) or *sophia* (wisdom). Rather, Jesus used the word *phronimos* to describe the five wise virgins! Surprise! Surprise! Now the hunt was on.

What does this word *phronimos* mean? It does mean wise but not in the sense of wisdom as we usually use the word. More precisely, it means practical wisdom. It means sensible or savvy. It’s a word for a more practical common sense kind of wisdom.

As Veterans Day approaches, my thoughts naturally turn to my father who saw intense combat in the Korean War. I also think of other veterans who have nobly served to protect our country and its freedoms as well as serving to protect the freedoms of others around the globe.

My dad did not often talk about his experience in Korea. I know that he was on the frontline for extremely long periods of time. I know that he experienced harsh conditions and severe hunger. I know that many of his friends were so badly wounded that he refused to report his own shrapnel wound for a Purple Heart because in his mind it was so minor compared to others. I know that on several occasions he came within inches of losing his life and that many of his friends were killed. I know that in one battle his unit started with 800 men and that he was one of 90 who remained following the encounter. I know that more than once he found himself behind enemy lines and had to use his wits to lead his men back to safety. This is all to say that he learned about the ground war in Korea the hard way.

He very quickly earned the rank of Sergeant First Class. One day a newly minted lieutenant was assigned to his unit. While this lieutenant was certainly intelligent and had learned everything a lieutenant could learn, he had no practical experience.

My father related an account of one interaction with this green lieutenant. His interaction with this officer became heated when my dad realized that the lieutenant's plans would surely get them all killed. Fortunately, my father's *phronimos* – practical wisdom prevailed. My dad would always end the story saying that he and the lieutenant eventually became very good friends.

So we might think of Jesus' Parable of the Ten Virgins as the Parable of the Five Clueless Virgins and the Five Savvy Virgins. And the story Jesus proceeds to tell demonstrates this. The five clueless girls bring lamps but no oil! The five practical girls bring both!

One may ask, "How could they forget oil?" I wouldn't be so quick to judge. In my excitement over some event or another, I have often forgotten some important item. Once while serving Hope Lutheran Church in Sioux Lookout, Ontario, I had to conduct the service in stocking feet because I forgot my shoes! My boots were the big clunky type with large felt liners and I decided that conducting the service in stocking feet was the lesser of two evils. I'm embarrassed to say that I could supply more examples of foolish forgetfulness.

Nevertheless, our focus is on the wise, practical, savvy, smart, prudent, intelligent girls. They came prepared with lamps and oil! They were included in the marriage feast and the clueless girls missed out.

Everyone will fall into one camp or the other. We are either clueless or savvy when it comes to God's kingdom and eternal life.

The clueless become so self-absorbed and distracted that they forget things of great importance. This is so easy to do in life. We have been recently distracted by the election in the United States. We can become distracted by the pursuit of wealth, happiness, or fame. And in these distractions, we may neglect God. We may abandon faith.

The Christian faith is of ultimate practical importance. It is sought by the wise not for wisdom's own sake but for the sake of eternal life with God. It seems foolish to the clueless but to the prudent and practical it is the wisdom of God.

All of our own personal efforts to obtain eternal life are as empty as the lamps brought by the foolish girls. But Jesus fills our lamps with a limitless supply of forgiveness and grace. On the cross, He turned death to life and so gives us all that we need to live in His kingdom for all eternity.

As the days of the Church Year draw to a close, as the hours of daylight shrink, let us learn to be alert for the coming of Christ's kingdom. We don't know the day or the hour but we watch with the wisdom of the practical and prudent maidens.

"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 Mighty and eternal God, in a world filled with foolishness, grant us the wisdom that comes from above that we may apply our hearts to love, peace, and joy as we live in faith waiting for the day when we will enter into the Marriage Feast of the Lamb, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C Amen.

L Mighty and eternal God, as our nation has endured the turmoil and strife of the recent election, grant us healing and comfort as you remind us that all our lives are governed by Your gracious hand. Grant our newly elected officials wisdom, and compassion, honesty and integrity, and faithfulness in service.

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.

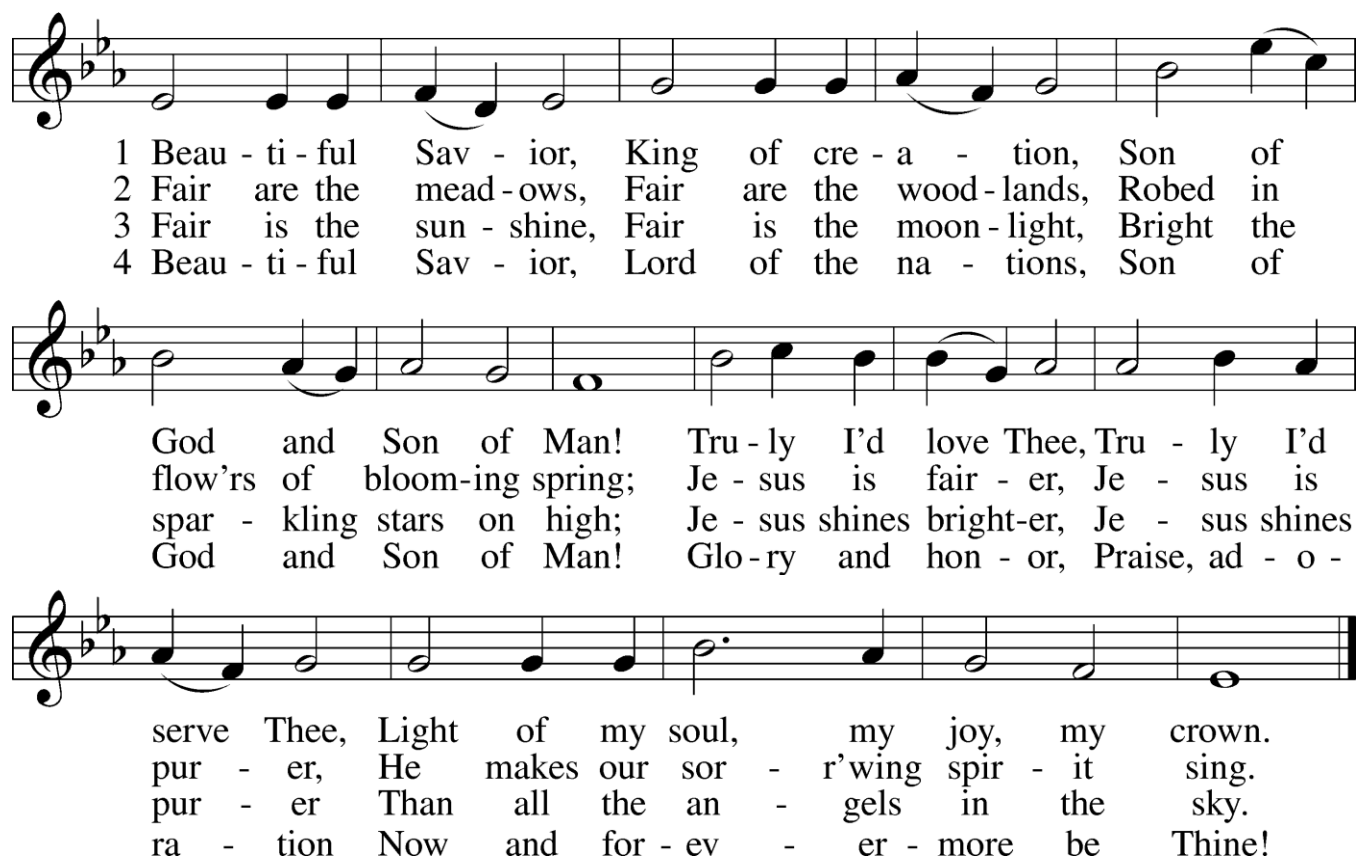
L Let us bless the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

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

C Amen.

Beautiful Savior Lutheran Service Book 537, Lutheran Worship 507, The Lutheran Hymnal 657



1 Beau - ti - ful Sav - ior, King of cre - a - tion, Son of
 2 Fair are the mead - ows, Fair are the wood - lands, Robed in
 3 Fair is the sun - shine, Fair is the moon - light, Bright the
 4 Beau - ti - ful Sav - ior, Lord of the na - tions, Son of
 God and Son of Man! Tru - ly I'd love Thee, Tru - ly I'd
 flow'rs of bloom - ing spring; Je - sus is fair - er, Je - sus is
 spar - kling stars on high; Je - sus shines bright - er, Je - sus shines
 God and Son of Man! Glo - ry and hon - or, Praise, ad - o -
 serve Thee, Light of my soul, my joy, my crown.
 pur - er, He makes our sor - r'wing spir - it sing.
 pur - er Than all the an - gels in the sky.
 ra - tion Now and for - ev - er - more be 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 Week of the Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost

November 9 – November 14

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 84:1, 9–12; antiphon Psalm 84:3

- L** Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.
- C** How lovely is your dwelling place,
O Lord of hosts!
- L** Behold our shield, O God;
look on the face of your anointed!
- C** For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.
- L** For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor.
No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.
- C** O Lord of hosts,
blessèd is the one who trusts in you!
- 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** Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.

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 84 is an ode of joy to being in God's house. During this time of social distancing and restricted gatherings, many of us have not experienced the joy of being in the Lord's house for many months. Psalm 84 is particularly appropriate for us because it is believed to have been written by someone separated from the temple, longing to stand again in the house of the Lord. He writes in verse 2, "My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord." The psalmist even envies the birds that build nests in the temple. This Psalm is a favorite of shut-ins, travelers, and all who have been separated from joining fellow believers in church worshiping together.

We love the Lord's house because there we hear God's holy word. We learn of sin and grace. We find comfort for our souls and rest from the turmoil of life. It is indeed a foretaste of eternity.

Many a sarcastic remark has been made such as this, "I feel closer to the Lord in nature than I do in church." While it is true that we can meditate on the grandeur of the Lord when we witness the beauty of creation, nature can never teach us of God's love. Nature can never bring the message of Jesus' cross, the forgiveness of sins, and eternal life.

Nature can teach us that this is a dog eat dog world. Nature can teach us the danger of lightning, tornadoes, earthquakes, and hurricanes. Nature can teach us our need for food and shelter. Nature can never bring God's mercy and grace. This is why God's people long to join together in God's house, singing His praise and hearing His word.

- L** Let us pray. O Lord, in You we take refuge. We ask that You would again grant to us the joy of gathering with the faithful to hear the sweet message of grace, 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 Matthew 25:13

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. 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. Lord God, heavenly Father, send forth Your Son to lead home His bride, the Church, that with all the company of the redeemed we may finally enter into His eternal wedding feast; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen

Today is Martin Luther's birthday. He was born November 10, 1483. Amazing things have happened since then. In 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue. We have discovered electricity, harnessed the power of the

atom, flown to the moon, and live in the age of computers and communication. Yet none of our discoveries have been as great as the one God granted to Martin Luther—the rediscovery of the Gospel.

Living in the centuries following the Reformation, it is hard for us to imagine a time when people were not taught of God’s full and free forgiveness in Jesus Christ. Luther was trapped by his sins and dreaded judgment from a righteous God.

Many people today do not fear God’s judgment. Like the Pharisees, they believe that they have kept God’s law. They have deceived themselves. Much of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount is devoted to unmasking their error. God requires us to be perfect (Matthew 5:48). This requirement for perfection extends not only to what we do but to what we think (“Everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart,” Matthew 5:48). Martin Luther’s fatal flaw was that he was intensely honest with himself and he recognized that he could never live up to God’s requirement of perfection. This is what made his rediscovery of the Gospel so precious to him.

God demands perfection! The Gospel tells us that God has provided the perfection that He demands in the person of Jesus Christ! When we believe in Jesus as our savior, He takes our sins away and gives us Jesus’ perfection and righteousness. We can now stand before the Judge of the Universe and be declared “not guilty” for Jesus’ sake. May this Gospel message never be lost again.

Prayer: Lord God, heavenly Father, send forth Your Son to lead home His bride, the Church, that with all the company of the redeemed we may finally enter into His eternal wedding feast; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Wednesday – Veterans Day

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day Matthew 25:13

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. Alleluia.

Psalm 70

L ¹Make haste, O God, to deliver me! O LORD, make haste to help me!

C ²Let them be put to shame and confusion who seek my life!

Let them be turned back and brought to dishonor who desire my hurt!

L ³Let them turn back because of their shame who say, “Aha, Aha!”

C ⁴May all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you!

May those who love your salvation say evermore, “God is great!”

L ⁵But I am poor and needy; hasten to me, O God!

C You are my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay!

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.

On this Veterans Day, we pause and thank God for the sacrifice and service of the men and women of the armed forces. I was born while my father was fighting in Korea. I grew up during the Vietnam War where my cousin gave the ultimate sacrifice. I had the privilege of knowing World War II veterans and learning their stories. Nevertheless, I will never really know the suffering and hardship endured by our veterans. We thank them for their dedicated service.

I know that some veterans returned from war bitter and angry. This was not true for my father. My mother and father we married shortly before my dad was deployed to the frontlines in Korea. He had only been in church once or twice in his life up to that point. When he returned, the first thing he wanted to do was to be baptized and confirmed. He followed through with that commitment and sought out Pastor Walter W. Stuenkel of Trinity Lutheran Church in St. Joseph, the same pastor that officiated for my parent's wedding. For the rest of his life here on earth, he was a totally committed Christian. We never missed a Sunday in Church.

What happened? God used the circumstance of my father's life to open his eyes to God's grace. During his service, God provided a chaplain to bring him the Gospel message. God provided him a wife who was a faithful believer. All of these things worked together to bring him to faith in Jesus and give him eternal life. God worked it out in my life that I was born into a faithful family of believers. God has also worked things out in your life so that you would come to know God's love in Christ Jesus. Thanks be to God!

Prayer: Almighty God, thank You for the faithful service of veterans. We are thankful for their dedication and sacrifice in service to their country. Grant that we too would learn dedication from them 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 Matthew 25:13

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. 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.

Amos 5:18–24

¹⁸Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD!

Why would you have the day of the LORD?

It is darkness, and not light,

¹⁹ as if a man fled from a lion,

and a bear met him,

or went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall,

and a serpent bit him.

²⁰Is not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light,

and gloom with no brightness in it?

²¹“I hate, I despise your feasts,

and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

²²Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,

I will not accept them;

and the peace offerings of your fattened animals,

I will not look upon them.

²³Take away from me the noise of your songs;

to the melody of your harps I will not listen.

²⁴But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

The end of the Church Year is a time to contemplate the end of all things. It is both a time to fear and also a time to anticipate with joy. It depends on your standing before God.

The prophet Amos writes a word of warning to people who wrongly believe that the day of the Lord will be wonderful for them. It will not be a time of light and brightness. It will not be a time of feasting and music. Why? Because they have abandoned the Lord. They have sought other gods. They have ignored His commands. Their god was prosperity and pragmatism. They were heading for woe and doom. This warning still speaks to those who reject God and the truth of His word.

It is different for us. As we contemplate the end of all things or the end of earthly life, we look forward with joy. We know that Jesus came to defeat sin, death, and the devil. For us, eternity will be filled with peace and joy. There will be no more sorrow or suffering. We stand before God in the righteousness won for us by Jesus on the cross.

Prayer: O Lord God, thank you for the gift of forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Grant that I may be faithful to You until the day you call me out this present time of tribulation and trial, 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 of the Day Matthew 25:13

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. 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 4:13–18

¹³But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁵For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. ¹⁸Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Do we grieve? Yes, we do. Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus. But we do not grieve as others do who have no hope.

Somehow funerals have become celebrations of life. While indeed we can look back at the lives of our loved ones and celebrate the joy and blessings received through them, these celebrations are a dead end. They provide no hope.

The historic Christian funeral service is one of hope. It is a true celebration of life. Yes, there is grieving

but it is one that celebrates the resurrection of the dead and eternal life.

Since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, we know that God will raise our loved ones from the grave. One day we will join them and all believers to be with the Lord for all eternity. This is the real celebration of life.

Prayer: Almighty, everlasting God, fill us with hope in our grief. Grant us the comfort of anticipating the joy of eternity with you and all believers; 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 Revelation 7:14; Psalm 84:5

L These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation.

C They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

L Blessed are those whose strength is in you,

C in whose heart are the highways to Zion.

Verse of the Day Matthew 25:13

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. Alleluia.

Kyrie

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

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

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

Psalm 70

L ¹Make haste, O God, to deliver me! O LORD, make haste to help me!

C ²Let them be put to shame and confusion who seek my life!

Let them be turned back and brought to dishonor who desire my hurt!

L ³Let them turn back because of their shame who say, "Aha, Aha!"

C ⁴May all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you!

May those who love your salvation say evermore, "God is great!"

L ⁵But I am poor and needy; hasten to me, O God!

C You are my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay!

"God is great! God is good! Let us thank Him for our food." This is a meal prayer that I learned from some of my childhood friends. There is truth in this prayer. God is indeed great. Psalm 70:4 concurs. We rejoice and are glad in the greatness of God revealed in His salvation!

I also remember a certain TV ad from my childhood. In it, an upset woman shouts, "Mother, I'd rather do it myself!" It is an advertisement for some headache relief medicine. After taking the medicine, this woman is now all smiles. She is happy to allow her mother to help.

I'm afraid too many of us are like this woman. We want God out of our lives. We don't need Him. We can do it ourselves without help from a divine hand. Of course, this is a disastrous attitude. We all need help. But first, we must recognize our need.

The psalmist recognizes his need for help from a great God. He declares, "I am poor and needy." We all are poor and needy, even when we do not admit it. Sometimes God allows us to see clearly how inadequate we

are to meet the challenges of life. He does this so that we will call to Him, “Make haste, O God, to deliver me! O Lord, make haste to help me!” God answers our prayers and we rejoice! God is great! He meets all of our needs of body and soul. In Jesus, He met our greatest need of salvation!

Prayer: O Lord, help us to recognize our need for Your greatness in our lives. Grant that we would always rely on You for our salvation and rejoice in your greatness, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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