

The Third Sunday after Pentecost June 13, 2021

O Worship the King Lutheran Service Book 804, Lutheran Worship 458, The Lutheran Hymnal 17



1 O wor - ship the King, all - glo - rious a - bove.
2 O tell of His might, O sing of His grace,
3 This earth, with its store of won - ders un - told,
4 Thy boun - ti - ful care what tongue can re - cite?



O grate - ful - ly sing His pow'r and His love;
Whose robe is the light, whose can - o - py space;
Al - might - y, Thy pow'r hath found - ed of old,
It breathes in the air, it shines in the light,



Our shield and de - fend - er, the An - cient of Days,
His char - iots of wrath the deep thun - der - clouds form,
Es - tab - lished it fast by a change - less de - cree,
It streams from the hills, it de - scends to the plain,



Pa - vil - ioned in splen - dor and gird - ed with praise.
And dark is His path on the wings of the storm.
And round it hath cast, like a man - tle, the sea.
And sweet - ly dis - tills in the dew and the rain.

5 Frail children of dust
and feeble as frail,
In Thee do we trust,
nor find Thee to fail.
Thy mercies, how tender,
how firm to the end,
Our maker, defender,
redeemer, and friend!

O measureless Might,
ineffable Love,
While angels delight
to hymn Thee above,
Thy humbler creation,
though feeble their lays,
With true adoration
shall sing to Thy praise.

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 92:12–15; antiphon Psalm 92:1

L It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
to sing praises to your name, O Most High;

C The righteous flourish like the palm tree
and grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

L They are planted in the house of the Lord;
they flourish in the courts of our God.

C They still bear fruit in old age;
they are ever full of sap and green,

L to declare that the Lord is upright;
he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

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 It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
to sing praises to your name, O Most High;

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: Blessed Lord, since You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C** Amen.

Ezekiel 17:22–24

²²Thus says the Lord GOD: “I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out. I will break off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. ²³On the mountain height of Israel will I plant it, that it may bear branches and produce fruit and become a noble cedar. And under it will dwell every kind of bird; in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest. ²⁴And all the trees of the field shall know that I am the LORD; I bring low the high tree, and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish. I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it.”

- 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 1

- L** ¹Blessèd is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
- C** ²but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.
- L** ³He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.
- C** ⁴The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
- L** ⁵Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
- C** ⁶for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

2 Corinthians 5:1–10

¹We 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. ²For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, ³if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. ⁴For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

⁶So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Verse of the Day: 2 Peter 3:18a

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Alleluia.

Mark 4:26–34

L The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 4th chapter.

C Glory to You, O Lord.

²⁶[Jesus] said, “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. ²⁷ He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. ²⁸ The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. ²⁹ But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

³⁰And he said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? ³¹ It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, ³² yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”

³³With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. ³⁴He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.

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.



1 Cre - a - tor Spir - it, by whose aid The world's foun - da - tions
 2 O Source of un - cre - at - ed light, The bear - er of God's
 3 Giv - er of grace, de - scend from high; Your sev'n - fold gifts to
 4 Im - mor - tal hon - or, end - less fame At - tend the al - might - y



first were laid, Come, vis - it ev - 'ry hum - ble mind; Come,
 gra - cious might, Thrice - ho - ly fount, thrice - ho - ly fire, Our
 us sup - ply; Help us e - ter - nal truths re - ceive And
 Fa - ther's name; The Sav - ior - Son be glo - ri - fied, Who



pour Your joys on hu - man - kind; From sin and sor - row
 hearts with heav'n - ly love in - spire; Your sa - cred, heal - ing
 prac - tice all that we be - lieve; Give us Your - self that
 for all hu - man - kind has died; To You, O Par - a -



set us free; May we Your liv - ing tem - ples be.
 mes - sage bring To sanc - ti - fy us as we sing.
 we may see The glo - ry of the Trin - i - ty.
 clete, we raise Un - end - ing songs of thanks and praise.

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Devotional thoughts:

My father and grandfathers worked with machines. My dad was a tool and die maker. He could take a block of steel and make anything imaginable. A large portion of his work was making dies and molds for the casting of zinc and aluminum parts. His father was, among other things, a mechanic who specialized in repairing Dodge automobiles. My other grandfather was a machinist. Working with tools and steel is part of my heritage.

But I was never far from the earth. My childhood home was surrounded by farmland. I spent countless hours playing in corn and wheat fields. Many of my cousins lived on farms. They milked cows, drove tractors, and rode horses. Their families owned vineyards, orchards, and fields of raspberries, blueberries, and strawberries. I loved to visit them and play in their haylofts or explore their farms. I spent my summers picking berries for aunts and uncles to earn money for the county fair.

Today's parables of Jesus about planting and growing bring to my mind the sharp contrast between machinery and agriculture. Because my dad worked with machines and had a background in automotive repair from his father, our garage was the home to one repair project after another. Family and friends would ask him for advice or bring a car that was suffering from one malady or another.

He would do “valve jobs” for his brother-in-law, tune-ups for his mother, or troubleshoot electrical problems for the technically challenged. Carburetors, pistons, coils, and spark plugs were common sights. He could turn a crankshaft or a brake drum on a lathe. Neither timing chains nor clutch plates would intimidate him.

You may have caught my point. I first learned this lesson from my dad when I was very young, probably in first or second grade. I had a rootin' tootin' cowboy outfit complete with hat, holster, and cap gun. I knew that caps were an expensive and rare commodity. They were to be used with the utmost care. However, I could shoot my cap-less gun with abandon.

One day, during a ferocious battle with imaginary “bad guys”, my dad asked me to stop shooting so much. I responded that it was okay, I wasn't wasting caps. Then he taught me a lesson that I've never forgotten. He told me that even without caps there were only so many shots in my gun. It would eventually wear out. He told me “everything wears out!”

Jesus' father was a carpenter. We get our word technician from the Greek word translated as carpenter. An ancient tradition says that Joseph specialized in making and repairing farm implements such as plows. Like me, Jesus wasn't raised in a farm family but saw his father working with his hands while being surrounded by agriculture. Jesus couldn't help but observe the contrast. Farmers planted the seed and miraculously the seed sprouted and grew. On the other hand, the things his father manufactured wore out. Everything humans construct suffers the same fate! Jesus' pointed this out in Matthew 6:18-20 when He says, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.”

God's kingdom is not made with hands. It is like a farm, not a factory. Farmers participate by scattering the seed but God produces the growth. Even the tiniest seed will inexplicably grow into a colossal plant as demonstrated by a mustard seed.

This is how God's kingdom grows. It doesn't grow because people are clever with their marketing plans. It doesn't grow because preachers are witty. It doesn't grow because of our human efforts. It grows because God makes it grow. It grows in a miraculous way. We scatter the seed of God's word and the kingdom sprouts and grows. We know not how. God does the work Himself.

On a few occasions, God has demonstrated this to me in astonishing ways. As a pastor, I know I don't live in the “real world.” When people find out that I'm a “man of the cloth,” they clean up their language. If they have been using profanity, they often will apologize. So when someone already knows that I'm a pastor and they continue to use foul and offensive language, they are usually signaling their disdain for God and His Church.

Many years ago, I encountered such a fellow. It didn't take me long to count this gentleman as a “lost cause.” Fortunately, God has granted to me a wife who is overflowing with wisdom. When I told her about this man, she said, “You never know what God has planned.”

I learned the truth of her words a few years later. Through circumstances too long to recount here, I found myself teaching a Bible class for young couples that was attended by this man and his wife. In this class, they learned of God's love for sinners. They learned of sin and grace. They learned of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and the resurrection of the dead. As God's word was sown into their hearts, the Holy Spirit caused it to grow into faith. This “lost cause” of a man became a faithful and active member of our church.

This story has been repeated countless times throughout history and around the world. The thief on the cross requested, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom” and Jesus responded, “Today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:42-43). After Jesus' died, the centurion confessed, “Truly this man was the Son of God!” (Mark 15:39). The Apostle Paul changed from persecuting the Church to becoming one of the greatest missionaries (Acts 9:1-22). And the story continues to this very day!

Machines don't grow. They only wear out. God's kingdom grows. It grows by His miraculous power. During this green season of the Church Year, we pray that it will grow in our hearts and in the hearts and minds of people all over the world. Or as Luther declares in the Small Catechism: 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.

“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 High, we give thanks to You that You have planted Your Holy Word among us. Give strength to Your Church to weather the storms of this world remaining steadfast in Christ.

C Amen.

L Lord God, Your Holy Spirit plants Your Word and causes it to sprout and grow as it pleases You. Bless the preaching and teaching of Your Word, that Your kingdom may be extended, and give us thankful hearts to marvel at Your work. Send faithful laborers into Your fields to scatter Your seed here and abroad, that in due time a harvest may be reaped for Your glory.

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.



1 On what has now been sown Thy bless - ing, Lord, be - stow;
2 To Thee our wants are known, From Thee are all our pow'rs;
3 O grant that each of us, Now met be - fore Thee here,

The pow'r is Thine a - lone To make it sprout and grow. Do Thou
Ac - cept what is Thine own And par - don what is ours. Our prais -
May meet to - geth - er thus When Thou and Thine ap - pear And fol -

in grace the har - vest raise, And Thou a - lone shalt have the praise!
es, Lord, and prayers re - ceive, And to Thy Word a bless - ing give.
low Thee to heav'n, our home. E'en so, a - men, Lord Je - sus, come!

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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 Third Sunday after Pentecost

June 14 – June 19, 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 92:12–15; antiphon Psalm 92:1

- L** It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
to sing praises to your name, O Most High;
C **The righteous flourish like the palm tree
and grow like a cedar in Lebanon.**
L They are planted in the house of the Lord;
they flourish in the courts of our God.
C **They still bear fruit in old age;
they are ever full of sap and green,**
L to declare that the Lord is upright;
he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.
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 It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
to sing praises to your name, O Most High;

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 92 is titled, “A SONG FOR THE SABBATH.” God’s people worship Him every day. But it is especially good for God’s people to gather weekly to give Him thanks and sing praises to His holy name.

In the Old Testament, God required that this weekly worship was to happen on Saturday, the Sabbath. But Jesus has fulfilled this Sabbath requirement for us. He is our Sabbath rest. In Jesus, every day is a Sabbath (Matthew 11:28, Matthew 12:8, Colossians 2:16-17).

Christians may gather for worship any day or every day as they did after Pentecost (Acts 2:46). The “when” of worship is not important but gathering together around God’s word and sacraments is important. In Hebrews 10:25 (NIRV) we read, “Let us not give up meeting together. Some are in the habit of doing this. Instead, let us encourage one another with words of hope.”

St. Paul writes to the Romans, “One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord (Romans 14:5-6a). Psalm 92:1-4 provides us with guidance for honoring the Lord’s Day or whichever day we choose to set aside for the Lord.

¹ It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
to sing praises to your name, O Most High;
² to declare your steadfast love in the morning,
and your faithfulness by night,
³ to the music of the lute and the harp,
to the melody of the lyre.
⁴ For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work;
at the works of your hands I sing for joy.

Besides giving thanks and singing praises, our worship should include declaring God’s steadfast love and faithfulness. God’s steadfast love and faithfulness are seen primarily in the life and work of Jesus. God has not abandoned us to our sinful condition. Rather, He has rescued us by sending His only-begotten Son to live, die, and rise again for us and our salvation. This is what makes us glad and causes us to sing for joy.

L Let us pray. Your works great, O Lord, and Your thoughts are deep. Thank you for revealing them to us in Your Holy Word. Thank You for allowing us to gather in Your house to sing Your praise and hear the message of salvation through Jesus. 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: 2 Peter 3:18a

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 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: Blessed Lord, since You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; 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 for this week has a name. It is called the Collect for the Word. It was written by Thomas Cranmer and first published in the Book of Common Prayer. In the Lutheran Hymnal (the hymnal I used in my youth), The Order of Morning Service without Communion (page 5) ended each Sunday with either the Collect for the Church or the Collect for the Word. As a result, I heard this prayer countless times and can easily recite it from memory. I've always considered it a disappointment that it no longer has a place of prominence in our worship. It says so much.

We have the Bible, the Holy Scriptures, because God has caused it to be written. In fact, it was written for us so that we can learn of the love that is ours in Christ Jesus, His death on the cross, and the forgiveness of sins. We pray that we would not neglect God's holy word but that we would hear it and read it. This hearing and reading should lead us to take careful note of God's message of law and gospel. We should thoroughly learn this message and take it to heart. The ultimate goal of this hearing and learning is bring us to faith and grant to us everlasting life.

Our concluding prayer is the Collect for the Word as printed in the Lutheran Hymnal page 14.

Let us pray: Blessed Lord, who has caused all Holy Scripture to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by the patience and comfort of Thy holy Word we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life which Thou hast given us in our Savior Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.. Amen.

Wednesday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: 2 Peter 3:18a

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Alleluia.

Psalm 1

L ¹Blessèd is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;

C ²**but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.**

L ³He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

C ⁴**The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.**

L ⁵Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;

C ⁶**for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.**

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 1 could easily be the theme for the entire second half of the Church Year, especially the first two verses: "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor

sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.”

The world would have you believe that it is folly to delight in God’s law. The world wants you to believe that successful people are those who cheat, bend the rules, “play the game,” cut corners, turn a blind eye, tell little white lies, and place fiscal responsibility before ethical responsibility.

During this season of Christian growth, we are reminded that God is ultimately in charge. It may appear for a while that the wicked prosper but in the end, they are simply chaff blown away by the wind!

On Good Friday, the chief priests, the scribes, and the Pharisees assumed that they had won. Jesus had been tidily disposed of by the Roman authorities. Their smugness was short-lived. On Easter, the tomb was empty. Jesus’ triumph was complete. He who once was dead now lives for all eternity.

God grants us blessings each and every day. Sometimes they are readily apparent as when we get a good report from the doctor or a lost friend calls. Other times these blessings are only seen through eyes of faith. Sometimes we are called upon to see blessings in bearing the cross and following Jesus.

We join Martin Luther in declaring:

God’s will is done when He breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, which do not want us to hallow God’s name or let His kingdom come; and when He strengthens and keeps us firm in His Word and faith until we die. This is His good and gracious will.

Prayer: O God, thank You that Your ultimate will for us is fulfilled in the eternal life that we have through faith in Jesus. Grant that we may live by faith and not by sight trusting that Your promises are always true. Amen.

Thursday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: 2 Peter 3:18a

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 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.

Ezekiel 17:22–24

²²Thus says the Lord GOD: “I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out. I will break off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. ²³On the mountain height of Israel will I plant it, that it may bear branches and produce fruit and become a noble cedar. And under it will dwell every kind of bird; in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest. ²⁴And all the trees of the field shall know that I am the LORD; I bring low the high tree, and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish. I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it.”

It is hard to jump into this section of Ezekiel without doing an extensive study of this and the surrounding chapters as they relate to the history of Judah and its defeat by Nebuchadnezzar from Babylon. In an overly simplified summary, Judah and its leaders had rebelled against God and His authority. Defeat and exile were their punishment. For a time, it seemed as though the enemies of God were in control but that would not last long. The Lord God would again take control. He would start with one young, tender twig (a reference to the Messiah). It would grow to be an immense plant that would shelter all. His kingdom would flourish in the day when He would again establish it.

This reading from Ezekiel was chosen because it mirrors Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom of God and the Parable of the Mustard Seed. God's kingdom may seem to be small and insignificant like a sprig from the top of a cedar tree or a mustard seed, but God is able to make it grow and prosper.

From an earthly view, the Kingdom of God seems weak and insignificant but God blesses it so that in the end it looks like this:

I looked, and behold a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen" (Revelation 7:9-12).

Prayer: Lord God, heavenly Father, do not allow us to become discouraged when it seems as though the forces of the world are dominating Your Church. Grant us the faith to trust that You remain in control and will bring us one day to join together with the heavenly multitude in singing Your praise. Amen.

Friday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: 2 Peter 3:18a

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 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 5:1–10

¹We 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. ²For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, ³if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. ⁴For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

⁶So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

In this section of 2 Corinthians, Paul refers to a universal truth: We all groan! Young people groan when they are required to do chores or turn off their devices. Old people groan when their political candidate loses. We groan when we're bored. We groan when we struggle. In the morning, we groan with sore muscles and stiff joints. We groan when life is difficult or unpleasant. Groaning is a side effect of sin.

We groan because of the sin of others. We groan because of our own sin. We groan because we live in a fallen world. One day, sin will be no more and all groaning will end. Our mortal groaning will be swallowed up by life!

Revelation 21:3-4 tells us what life will be like when all of our groaning ends:

³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

Jesus delivered us from all of this groaning by His death and resurrection. Knowing that our groaning will soon end, Paul says, “We are always of good courage.” Until that time, we live by faith and not by sight. May God continue to grant us this faith and courage.

Prayer: Father of all mercy, we live in a world of sin that often causes us to groan in distress, grant us the courage and faith to persevere until we join You in our eternal home where there is no more crying or pain, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Saturday

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

C Amen.

Gradual Psalm 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: 2 Peter 3:18a

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 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 Peter 3:14-18

¹⁴ Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. ¹⁵ And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ¹⁶ as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. ¹⁷ You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. ¹⁸ But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

I included this reading to provide context for our Verse of the Day which is the last verse of 2 Peter. Like our Epistle reading, the end of 2 Peter speaks of patience in waiting for the day when God will put an end to all sin. During this time of waiting, we are to be diligent in our Christian faith.

My wife, Valerie, has planted tomatoes in large clay pots near the front door of our house. We check them daily and it pleases me to watch them grow. If they have enough sunlight and water, there is no stopping them.

But if we are not diligent in our watering, they will wilt. If we were to continue to neglect them, they would soon wither and die. Peter knows that our Christian faith is like a tomato plant. If it is well cared for, it will grow and flourish. If it is neglected, it will wither and die. When we are diligent in our study of God's word, we will grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Prayer: O Lord, we live in a time that demands patience. Grant that we would continue to be diligent in our use of the means of grace so that we will grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

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