

Home worship service during time of isolation and social distancing.

## The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost July 19, 2020

It is hard to understand evil in the world. It is even more difficult to understand evil in the church on earth. I have noted how church workers become disillusioned by the lack of love and compassion displayed by those who claim to be Christians and who are active in the church. In today's Gospel Lesson, Jesus explains that the devil is active in sowing seeds of evil in the world. These "sons of the evil one" often grow side by side with "the children of the kingdom." At the end of the age, angels will completely separate out from His kingdom "all causes of sin and all law-breakers." Until then, the faithful are called to patience and perseverance.

**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!

6 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.

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

**C** Amen.

**L** Our help is in the name of the Lord,

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

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

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

**L** If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord who could stand?

**C** But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared. (*Psalm 130:3–4*)

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

**C** God, be merciful to me, a sinner, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen. (*Luke 18:13*)

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

**C** Amen.

**Introit** Psalm 86:11–15; antiphon Psalm 86:6

**L** Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer;  
listen to my plea for grace.

**C** Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth;  
unite my heart to fear your name.

**L** I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart,  
and I will glorify your name forever.

**C** For great is your steadfast love toward me;  
you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.

**L** O God, insolent men have risen up against me; a band of ruthless men seek my life,  
and they do not set you before them.

**C** But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

**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** Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer;  
listen to my plea for grace.

## 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, so rule and govern our hearts and minds by Your Holy Spirit that, ever mindful of Your final judgment, we may be stirred up to holiness of living here and dwell with You in perfect joy hereafter; 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 44:6–8

<sup>6</sup>Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel  
and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts:  
“I am the first and I am the last;  
besides me there is no god.  
<sup>7</sup>Who is like me? Let him proclaim it.  
Let him declare and set it before me,  
since I appointed an ancient people.  
Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen.  
<sup>8</sup>Fear not, nor be afraid;  
have I not told you from of old and declared it?  
And you are my witnesses!  
Is there a God besides me?  
There is no Rock; I know not any.”

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

## Gradual Romans 11:33, 36

- 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.**

## Psalm 119:57–64

- L** <sup>57</sup>The LORD is my portion; I promise to keep your words.
- C** <sup>58</sup>**I entreat your favor with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise.**
- L** <sup>59</sup>When I think on my ways, I turn my feet to your testimonies;
- C** <sup>60</sup>**I hasten and do not delay to keep your commandments.**
- L** <sup>61</sup>Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me, I do not forget your law.
- C** <sup>62</sup>**At midnight I rise to praise you, because of your just and righteous decrees.**
- L** <sup>63</sup>I am a companion of all who fear you, of those who keep your precepts.
- C** <sup>64</sup>**The earth, O LORD, is full of your steadfast love; teach me your statutes!**

## Romans 8:18–27

<sup>18</sup>For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup>For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup>For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup>that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup>For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. <sup>23</sup>And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup>For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? <sup>25</sup>But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. <sup>26</sup>Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. <sup>27</sup>And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

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

## Verse Matthew 13:35b

- L** Alleluia. I will open my mouth in parables;
- C** **will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world. Alleluia.**

## Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43

- L** The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter.
- C** **Glory to You, O Lord.**

<sup>24</sup>[Jesus] put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, <sup>25</sup>but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. <sup>26</sup>So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. <sup>27</sup>And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?’ <sup>28</sup>He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ So the servants said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ <sup>29</sup>But he said, ‘No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. <sup>30</sup>Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”

<sup>36</sup>Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.” <sup>37</sup>He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup>The field is the world, and the good seed is the children of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, <sup>39</sup>and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels. <sup>40</sup>Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. <sup>41</sup>The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, <sup>42</sup>and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. <sup>43</sup>Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

**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.

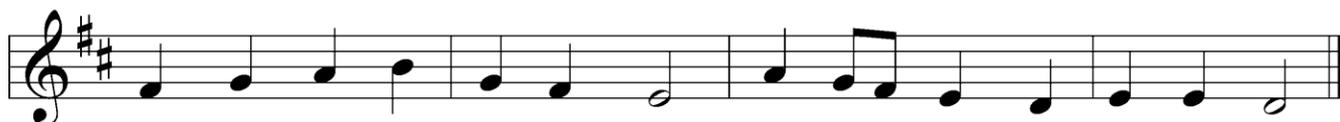
From thence He will come to judge the living  
and the dead.

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 Spirit, Light Divine** Lutheran Service Book 496, Lutheran Worship 166, The Lutheran Hymnal 234



1 Ho - ly Spir - it, light di - vine, Shine up - on this heart of mine;  
2 Let me see my Sav - ior's face, Let me all His beau - ties trace;  
3 Ho - ly Spir - it, pow'r di - vine, Cleanse this guilt - y heart of mine;  
4 Ho - ly Spir - it, joy di - vine, Cheer this sad - dened heart of mine;  
5 Ho - ly Spir - it, all di - vine, Dwell with - in this heart of mine;



Chase the shades of night a - way, Turn the dark - ness in - to day.  
Show those glo - rious truths to me Which are on - ly known to Thee.  
In Thy mer - cy pit - y me, From sin's bond - age set me free.  
Yield a sa - cred, set - tled peace, Let it grow and still in - crease.  
Cast down ev - 'ry i - dol throne, Reign su - preme, and reign a - lone.

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### Devotional thoughts:

According to The Lutheran Study Bible, there are 55 parables in the Gospels. Matthew chapter 13 records eight of them! Jesus' parables help us understand the Kingdom of God or as Matthew often says, the Kingdom of Heaven.

In Jesus' day, people were greatly anticipating the arrival of God's Kingdom. However, they were confused about its true nature. I have to admit that I, too, am often confused about God's Kingdom and need Jesus' parables to point me back in the right direction.

The Parable of the Weeds is one of the parables that Jesus explains in detail. I need that.

One of the favorite questions unbelievers ask is this: If God is good, why is there evil in the world? Jesus anticipates that question and answers it with the Parable of the Weeds.

Jesus brought goodness, compassion, healing, and life into the world. These are all part of God's Kingdom. Jesus explained it this way to the messengers from John the Baptist: "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them" (Matthew 11:4-5). But the people expected more. They

expected that when the Messiah came and ushered in the Kingdom of God that the evil Romans would be driven out of the land.

I have to confess that I have a little bit of that in me, too. I look around the world as I see it today and I become discouraged. There seems to be so much sin and evil. This pandemic sometimes brings out the best in people but it also brings out the worst. Discord and distrust abound. In some places, criminals seem to have free rein. Our leaders appear to be wrangling and bickering as never before. Even the most faithful may become disheartened and ask, "Where is God?"

Yes, Jesus brings goodness and light into the world, but we must wait for the day when evil will finally be driven out. He uses the Parable of the Weeds to explain this.

Jesus sows the good seed in the world. You and I are the good seed. We are the children of the kingdom. We continue Jesus' ministry of bringing goodness, compassion, healing, and life into the world. We continue Jesus' ministry of preaching good news to the poor. We teach forgiveness of sins. We point people to the cross. We rejoice in the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

Nevertheless, there is still evil in the world. The devil is still active. The daily news reports are filled with evidence of his activities in the hearts of people. We all long for it to end.

What we forget is that in each of us there still remains our old evil self. We daily must return to our baptism in repentance so our new self can reemerge. Sometimes it is hard to distinguish the children of the kingdom from the sons of the evil one. In our haste to bring an end to evil and root up the weeds, we may also root up the wheat!

Living in God's Kingdom today requires patience and perseverance. One day, it will all be sorted out. All causes of sin and all law-breakers will be separated from the children of the kingdom. Until then we are called upon to "fight the good fight of the faith" (1 Timothy 6:12).

Evil will remain in the world until the last day but so will believers. You and I are salt and light. God most often works His goodness and compassion in the world through the children of the kingdom, the Church. He does it through us!

We "were dead in the trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1) "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ" (Ephesians 2:4-5). May God grant us the desire and opportunity to bring His mercy and grace to those around us who do not yet know the love of Jesus.

"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** Almighty God, we are too quick to judge Your ways and too bold in questioning Your wisdom. Grant us grace so that we may trust in Your Word and live lives that are pleasing to you in body and soul.

**C** Amen.

**L** Gentle Lord, we ask You to visit the homes of Your people, that they may be places of blessing and love, where faith is nurtured and we learn to live out our new lives in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives.

**C** Amen.

**L** Heavenly Father, we are wounded by the sufferings of this life, and we need Your grace to sustain us in hope and equip us with patience. Give to us all that we need to endure these days of trouble and be found faithful when Christ comes again in His glory.

**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.

**In Thee Is Gladness** Lutheran Service Book 818, Lutheran Worship 442, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a



1 In Thee is glad - ness A - mid all sad - ness, Je - sus,  
2 Since He is ours, \_\_\_\_\_ We fear no pow - ers, Not of



sun - shine of my heart. By Thee are giv - en The gifts of  
earth nor sin nor death. He sees and bless - es In worst dis -



heav - en, Thou the true Re - deem - er art. Our souls Thou  
tress - es; He can change them with a breath. Where - fore the



wak - est, Our bonds Thou break - est; Who trusts Thee sure - ly Has built se -  
sto - ry Tell of His glo - ry With hearts and voic - es; All heav'n re -



cure - ly; He stands for - ev - er: Al - le - lu - ia! Our hearts are  
joic - es In Him for - ev - er: Al - le - lu - ia! We shout for



pin - ing To see Thy shin - ing, Dy - ing or liv - ing  
glad - ness, Tri - umph o'er sad - ness, Love Him and praise Him



To Thee are cleav - ing; Naught can us sev - er: Al - le - lu - ia!  
And still shall raise Him Glad hymns for - ev - er: Al - le - lu - ia!

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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 Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

#### July 20 – July 25

#### 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 86:11–15; antiphon Psalm 86:6

- L** Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer;  
listen to my plea for grace.
- C** Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth;  
unite my heart to fear your name.
- L** I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart,  
and I will glorify your name forever.
- C** For great is your steadfast love toward me;  
you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.
- L** O God, insolent men have risen up against me; a band of ruthless men seek my life,  
and they do not set you before them.
- C** But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.
- 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** Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer;  
listen to my plea for grace.

As often is the case, there is so much more to Psalm 86 than can be captured in these few verses of the introit. Here we have David's personal prayer to God. Reading it this way helps us to understand David and his struggles in life.

Insolent and ruthless men sought to kill him! At this time and place in history, you and I seldom face this danger. However, Christians in other places and at other times have shared this experience with David. They, too, have fervently prayed these words of David, “Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer.”

While I am not aware of insolent and ruthless men seeking to kill me, the first seven verses of this Psalm speak directly to my heart:

### **A Prayer of David.**

- 86** <sup>1</sup> Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me,  
for I am poor and needy.
- <sup>2</sup> Preserve my life, for I am godly;  
save your servant, who trusts in you—you are my God.
- <sup>3</sup> Be gracious to me, O Lord,  
for to you do I cry all the day.
- <sup>4</sup> Gladden the soul of your servant,  
for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.
- <sup>5</sup> For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving,  
abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.
- <sup>6</sup> Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer;  
listen to my plea for grace.
- <sup>7</sup> In the day of my trouble I call upon you,  
for you answer me.

We all are poor and needy when it comes to spiritual matters. We all have troubles. Some days our troubles are worse than other days. But each and every day, God hears our pleas! Each and every day, He answers us.

He preserves our lives. He gladdens our souls. He is good and forgiving. He is abounding in steadfast love!

**L** Let us pray. O Lord, Your steadfast love is from everlasting to everlasting. Help me and comfort me so that I may enjoy peace of mind and spirit. through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, ever one God world without end.

**C** Amen

## **Tuesday**

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

**C** Amen.

**Verse** Matthew 13:35b

**L** Alleluia. I will open my mouth in parables;

**C** will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world. Alleluia.

**L** Let us pray. O God, so rule and govern our hearts and minds by Your Holy Spirit that, ever mindful of Your final judgment, we may be stirred up to holiness of living here and dwell with You in perfect joy hereafter; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Does your mind ever wander? Mine does. It seems like the more I try to think about the right things, the more I think about the wrong things. Some people are naturally positive and upbeat. Others are lean more to the pessimistic side. Either way, it is hard to control our thoughts.

We pray in the collect for this week that God would rule and govern our hearts and minds. One way He is

able to do that is when we are regularly reading His holy word. There we learn of our sinfulness but we also learn of His grace and mercy. We also learn what it takes to live lives that are pleasing to Him. In all our thinking, we should be mindful of eternity and not unduly distracted by temporary pleasures or troubles. Because of Jesus our savior, one day we will live in perfect joy with all the company of heaven.

Prayer: O God, so rule and govern our hearts and minds by Your Holy Spirit that, ever mindful of Your final judgment, we may be stirred up to holiness of living here and dwell with You in perfect joy hereafter; 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 13:35b

**L** Alleluia. I will open my mouth in parables;

**C** will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world. Alleluia.

## Psalm 119:57–64

**L** <sup>57</sup>The LORD is my portion; I promise to keep your words.

**C** <sup>58</sup>**I entreat your favor with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise.**

**L** <sup>59</sup>When I think on my ways, I turn my feet to your testimonies;

**C** <sup>60</sup>**I hasten and do not delay to keep your commandments.**

**L** <sup>61</sup>Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me, I do not forget your law.

**C** <sup>62</sup>**At midnight I rise to praise you, because of your just and righteous decrees.**

**L** <sup>63</sup>I am a companion of all who fear you, of those who keep your precepts.

**C** <sup>64</sup>**The earth, O LORD, is full of your steadfast love; teach me your statutes!**

Have you ever said, “I wish I knew then what I know now”? I imagine that we all have. Another saying that echoes this sentiment is, “Too soon old. Too late smart.”

The Psalmist reminds us that the most important knowledge is learning God’s word. God’s testimonies, commandments, laws, precepts, and statutes are far more important than the trivial details that occupy the minds of the wicked.

The most important part of God’s word to place in our minds and hearts are His promises to us in Christ. In God’s holy word, we learn of His love for us. We learn of forgiveness, life, and salvation. In His holy word, we learn that through Jesus, God has been gracious to us and adopted us into His family.

Prayer: O Lord, You are my portion. You have given me all that I need to support this body and life. More than that you have given me Your own dear Son. Through Him, You have given me salvation. Grant that I may always live according to Your statutes as You teach me Your steadfast love. Amen.

## Thursday

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

**C** Amen.

**Verse** Matthew 13:35b

**L** Alleluia. I will open my mouth in parables;

**C** will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world. Alleluia.

### Isaiah 44:6–8

<sup>6</sup>Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel  
and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts:

“I am the first and I am the last;  
besides me there is no god.

<sup>7</sup>Who is like me? Let him proclaim it.

Let him declare and set it before me,  
since I appointed an ancient people.

Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen.

<sup>8</sup>Fear not, nor be afraid;

have I not told you from of old and declared it?

And you are my witnesses!

Is there a God besides me?

There is no Rock; I know not any.”

Once when I was very young, I climbed a tree but couldn't get down. In my panic, I yelled as loud as I could. To my relief, my mother appeared with a ladder and helped me down. I recount this story to you because I recall this as the first time I realized that it was possible to be in a helpless place.

Part of growing up is learning our limitations and learning to avoid dangerous situations. Those of us who have turned grey often marvel at the foolish risks taken by some.

No matter how cautious we become, there is one danger that we can never escape on our own. This danger is death. From this, we need a Redeemer. What a wondrous truth it is to know that God, Himself, is our Redeemer. He has saved us from the power of death and granted eternal life to all who believe in His Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Let us never place our trust in ourselves or any other false God. He alone is our Rock and our Salvation.

Prayer:

Abide, O dear Redeemer,  
Among us with Your Word,  
And thus now and hereafter  
True peace and joy afford.

Abide, O faithful Savior,  
Among us with Your love;  
Grant steadfastness and help us  
To reach our home above.

## Friday

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

**G** Amen.

**Verse** Matthew 13:35b

**L** Alleluia. I will open my mouth in parables;

**G** will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world. Alleluia.

### **Romans 8:18–27**

<sup>18</sup>For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup>For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup>For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup>that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup>For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. <sup>23</sup>And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup>For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? <sup>25</sup>But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

<sup>26</sup>Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. <sup>27</sup>And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Prayer is an amazing gift. Our prayers can be simple or complex. Our prayers can be spoken out loud or whispered from our hearts. Our prayers can be sentences and paragraphs or our wordless desires.

Sometimes even that isn't enough. When we don't know what to pray for as we ought, the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words!

This brings me great comfort. When my inadequate prayers reach up to God, I do not pray alone. The Holy Spirit is praying for me according to God's holy will. In this sense, my prayers are never inadequate or filled with misplaced priorities.

It is reassuring to know that God's ultimate will for us is to spend eternity with Him in heaven. For this reason, He sent Jesus to be our savior. For this reason, Jesus died and rose again. We can be certain that the Holy Spirit is directing our prayers to this ultimate goal.

Prayer: Grant us, O Lord, we pray, the assurance of our adoption into Your family. Give us the confidence to cry out, "Abba! Father!" to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## Saturday

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

**C** Amen.

**Gradual** Romans 11:33, 36

**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 13:35b

**L** Alleluia. I will open my mouth in parables;

**C** will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world. Alleluia.

This has been a week of learning again about life in God's kingdom. It is constantly on our hearts and in our minds. We pray, "Thy kingdom come!" Luther tells us what we mean when we pray this prayer:

*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: 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.

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