

The Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 7, 2025

I Am Trusting Thee, Lord Jesus

Lutheran Service Book 729, Lutheran Worship 408, The Lutheran Hymnal 428



1 I am trust-ing Thee, Lord Je - sus, Trust - ing on - ly Thee;
2 I am trust-ing Thee for par - don; At Thy feet I bow,
3 I am trust-ing Thee for cleans - ing In the crim - son flood;
4 I am trust-ing Thee to guide me; Thou a - lone shalt lead,



Trust - ing Thee for full sal - va - tion, Great and free.
For Thy grace and ten - der mer - cy Trust - ing now.
Trust - ing Thee to make me ho - ly By Thy blood.
Ev - 'ry day and hour sup - ply - ing All my need.

5 I am trusting Thee for power;
Thine can never fail.
Words which Thou Thyself shalt give me
Must prevail.

6 I am trusting Thee, Lord Jesus;
Never let me fall.
I am trusting Thee forever
And for all.

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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 119:28–32;; antiphon Psalm 119:27

- L** Make me understand the way of your precepts,
and I will meditate on your wondrous works.
- C** **My soul melts away for sorrow;
strengthen me according to your word!**
- L** Put false ways far from me
and graciously teach me your law!
- C** **I have chosen the way of faithfulness;
I set your just decrees before me.**
- L** I cling to your testimonies, O Lord;
let me not be put to shame!
- C** **I will run in the way of your commandments
when you enlarge my heart!**
- 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** Make me understand the way of your precepts,
and I will meditate on your wondrous works.

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 merciful Lord, You did not spare Your only Son but delivered Him up for us all. Grant
us courage and strength to take up the cross and follow Him, who lives and reigns with You and the
Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C** Amen.

Deuteronomy 30:15–20

¹⁵“See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. ¹⁶If you obey the commandments of the LORD
your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his
commandments and his statutes and his just decrees, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God
will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. ¹⁷But if your heart turns away, and you

will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, ²⁰loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Gradual Psalm 34:9, 19, alt.

L Fear the Lord, you his saints,

C **for those who fear him lack nothing!**

L Many are the afflictions of the righteous,

C **but the Lord delivers him out of them all.**

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.**

Philemon 1–21

¹Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,

To Philemon our beloved fellow worker ²and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house:

³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, ⁵because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and all the saints, ⁶and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. ⁷For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.

⁸Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, ⁹yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus—¹⁰I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. ¹¹(Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.) ¹²I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. ¹³I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, ¹⁴but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own free will. ¹⁵For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, ¹⁶no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

¹⁷So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. ¹⁸If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. ¹⁹I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. ²⁰Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.

²¹Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Verse of the Day: Galatians 6:14

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. By which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Alleluia.

Luke 14:25–35

L The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 14th chapter.

C Glory to You, O Lord.

²⁵Now great crowds accompanied [Jesus], and he turned and said to them, ²⁶“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, ³⁰saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ ³¹Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³²And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. ³³So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

³⁴“Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? ³⁵It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

L This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to You, O Christ.

The Apostles' Creed

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

Take My Life and Let It Be

Lutheran Service Book 783, Lutheran Worship 404, The Lutheran Hymnal 400



- 1 Take my life and let it be Con-se - crat - ed, Lord, to Thee;
- 2 Take my hands and let them move At the im - pulse of Thy love;
- 3 Take my voice and let me sing Al-ways, on - ly for my King;
- 4 Take my sil - ver and my gold, Not a mite would I with - hold;



Take my mo - ments and my days, Let them flow in cease-less praise.
Take my feet and let them be Swift and beau - ti - ful for Thee.
Take my lips and let them be Filled with mes - sag - es from Thee.
Take my in - tel - lect and use Ev - 'ry pow'r as Thou shalt choose.

- 5 Take my will and make it Thine,
It shall be no longer mine;
Take my heart, it is Thine own,
It shall be Thy royal throne.
- 6 Take my love, my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store;
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee.

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Devotional thoughts:

This year I am celebrating the 48th anniversary of my ordination. Reaching this milestone in life causes me to reminisce about seminary life and my early days in the ministry. Doubtless, this is the reason that the following story came to my mind while I was contemplating the lessons for this week.

There has long been an ongoing debate about what should be taught at the seminary. Curriculums continually change. Yet, no matter what they teach, there is no way that they can fully prepare you for what comes next. I left the seminary as a theologian and Bible scholar. I learned how to be a pastor from Pastor Haake during my vicarage year. What I did not learn was how much controversy a pastor must face in the congregation and community where he will eventually serve. As the saying goes, "I could write a book."

In our little town of Ignace, Ontario there was a Lutheran Church, an Anglican Church, a Catholic Church, a Baptist Church, and a Pentecostal Church. The clergy of the town met together regularly and we were good friends. We certainly had our theological differences but one issue united us.

The youth hockey association (in their infinite wisdom and desire to save money) decided to hold hockey practice on Sunday morning! While many in our community saw no problem with this decision, the pastors and priests were (needless to say) quite dismayed. One pastor from our ministerial association, speaking for us all, wrote a letter to the editor of our small town newspaper expressing our concern.

I will never forget a response that was published a week later. In brief, the letter writer stated that if the pastors would make church and Sunday school more fun, we wouldn't have problems getting young people there on Sunday morning instead of attending hockey practice.

More troubling than that letter is the number of people who agree with that sentiment. For 48 years, people both inside and outside the church have expressed that opinion to me in one form or another. For the church to grow, they say, it must be fun, enjoyable, and entertaining. To be certain, there is nothing particularly godly about a boring church service. However, the opinion that Christianity must be fun does run contrary to what Jesus says in our Gospel lesson for today.

Do Christians attend church because there is nothing better to do on Sunday morning? Do we follow Jesus because Christianity will make our lives carefree? Is our faith in Jesus simply the pathway to earthly success?

These are all questions we must ask. Jesus says that before you follow Him, you should count the cost!

Following Jesus means bearing a cross. Following Jesus means nothing can be more important than Him. In fact, life itself comes in second.

Our old sinful flesh will still choose hockey practice over Sunday school. Our old sinful flesh stays in bed on Sunday morning. Our old sinful flesh loves pleasure and entertainment more than Jesus.

But Jesus loved us more than anything else. For our sake, He resisted Satan when tempted to turn stones into bread. For our sake, He prayed “not my will but Thine be done.” For our sake, He looked down from the cross and prayed, “Father forgive them.”

When we stumble and fall, He restores us to Himself. He loves us when we fail to love Him. He forgave Peter for denying Him three times. He called Saul on the road to Damascus.

Because of His great love for us, we declare, “Take my life and let it be Consecrated, Lord to Thee.” By the working of the Holy Spirit, we choose life over death. We fear, love, and trust in God above all things. We refuse to allow husband or wife, mother or father, son or daughter to stand between us and Jesus.

I don’t know what crosses you have been given to bear. I don’t know the difficulties you face because of your faith in Jesus. But I do know that He has said to you, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

“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.

Prayers

L O God, our King, You counted the cost of our salvation and sent Your only-begotten Son to give His life for us on the cross. Inspire our hearts to trust fully in His sacrificial victory. Grant us faith to follow in His way through death and into eternal life.

C Amen.

L Almighty God, You have set before us life and death. Send us Your Holy Spirit through word and sacrament that we may always be moved to choose life through faith in Jesus.

C Amen.

L O Lord, keep us from fearing, loving, or trusting anyone or anything more than You. When, in our weakness, we slip into any idolatrous thought, grant us true repentance and forgiveness through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

L Give Your aid, O Lord, to all elected and appointed public officials and all who serve us in Your name in government. Protect those in harm’s way because of the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East that cause innocent men, women, and children to suffer. Grant peace to the nations, and prosper the cause of justice.

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.

All People That on Earth Do Dwell

Lutheran Service Book 791, Lutheran Worship 435, The Lutheran Hymnal 14



1 All peo - ple that on earth do dwell, Sing to the
2 Know that the Lord is God in - deed; With - out our
3 O en - ter then His gates with praise; Ap - proach with
4 For why? The Lord our God is good: His mer - cy
5 To Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly Ghost, The God whom



Lord with cheer - ful voice. Him serve with mirth, His
aid He did us make. We are His folk, He
joy His courts un - to. Praise, laud, and bless His
is for - ev - er sure. His truth at all times
heav'n and earth a - dore, From us and from the



praise forth - tell; Come ye be - fore Him and re - joice.
doth us feed, And for His sheep He doth us take.
name al - ways, For it is seem - ly so to do.
firm - ly stood And shall from age to age en - dure.
an - gel host Be praise and glo - ry ev - er - more.

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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 THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST September 8—13, 2025

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.

Verse of the Day: Galatians 6:14

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, Alleluia.
- C** Alleluia, Alleluia. By which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Alleluia.

Introit Psalm 119:28–32;; antiphon Psalm 119:27

- L** Make me understand the way of your precepts,
and I will meditate on your wondrous works.
- C** My soul melts away for sorrow;
strengthen me according to your word!
- L** Put false ways far from me
and graciously teach me your law!
- C** I have chosen the way of faithfulness;
I set your just decrees before me.
- L** I cling to your testimonies, O Lord;
let me not be put to shame!
- C** I will run in the way of your commandments
when you enlarge my heart!
- 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** Make me understand the way of your precepts,
and I will meditate on your wondrous works.

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.

Choosing right over wrong, life over death is a theme for this week. In the Gospel lesson, Jesus warned about the cost of choosing to follow Him.

Psalms 119:30-31 says, "I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I set your just decrees before me. I cling to your testimonies, O Lord; let me not be put to shame!" This is the exclamation of all of God's people.

By the working of the Holy Spirit through the means of grace, God has enabled each of us to choose faithfulness. In a world of uncertainty and changing morals, we cling to the unchanging teachings of God's eternal word. Clinging to His word, God makes our hearts bold to confess Him and live according to His will for our life.

Faithfulness to Jesus leads to eternal life. May we never reject His word of truth.

My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less

Lutheran Service Book 575, Lutheran Worship 368, The Lutheran Hymnal 370



1 My hope is built on noth - ing less Than Je - sus'
2 When dark - ness veils His love - ly face, I rest on
3 His oath, His cov - e - nant and blood Sup - port me
4 When He shall come with trum - pet sound, Oh, may I



blood and righ - teous - ness; No mer - it of my
His un - chang - ing grace; In ev - 'ry high and
in the rag - ing flood; When ev - 'ry earth - ly
then in Him be found, Clothed in His righ - teous -



own I claim But whol - ly lean on Je - sus' name.
storm - y gale My an - chor holds with - in the veil.
prop gives way, He then is all my hope and stay.
ness a - lone, Re - deemed to stand be - fore His throne!

Refrain



On Christ, the sol-id rock, I stand; All oth-er ground is sink-ing sand.

Tuesday

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

Verse of the Day: Galatians 6:14

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia. **By which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Alleluia.**

Kyrie

- L** O Lord, **C** Have mercy on us.
L O Christ, **C** Have mercy on us.
L O Lord, **C** Have mercy on us.

- L** Let us pray: O merciful Lord, You did not spare Your only Son but delivered Him up for us all. Grant us courage and strength to take up the cross and follow Him, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
C Amen.

Jesus' cross is proof of His total commitment to us. Bearing our own personal crosses is evidence of our commitment to Him.

Some have suggested that the Christian cross does not consist of the everyday trials and tribulations of life. Rather they say that the Christian cross can only be identified as the unique persecutions and difficulties that we face because we are Christians. Early in my ministry, I subscribed to this definition. However, I think I was wrong.

I believe that the Christian cross is any trial, pain, or suffering that we undergo in life that we bear with faith and Christian virtue. There is no doubt that martyrs who were persecuted were bearing a cross but let me pose this scenario to you.

There are two individuals. One is a believer and the other is an unbeliever. They both endure an extended stay in the hospital undergoing treatment for cancer. The unbeliever is filled with anger, constantly being rude and insulting the medical staff while complaining about everything. The believer is kind and generous, always thankful for the people who are providing treatment while enduring the hardship graciously. I am convinced that the believer is bearing a cross in this situation. The believer is enduring suffering in a uniquely Christian way.

The circumstance I just described is not a hypothetical one but one I witnessed. I regularly visited a woman on the oncology floor at our local hospital. Her name was Irene. Like many cancer patients, she had a long and difficult treatment regimen. She spent many days in the hospital. Whenever I visited her, she had a positive attitude. One day as I was leaving her room, a nurse stopped me and said, "We are always so glad to have Irene here. She spreads happiness to the entire floor!" Irene's illness was not something thrust upon her because she was a Christian. But it was a cross that she bore with Christian faithfulness and virtue! May we all learn to bear our crosses from her.

As we are called to bear our individual cross, I recall the words of the Apostle Paul, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Romans 8:18).

Later in the chapter, he writes these words of encouragement for every Christian who bears a cross:

"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

And

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:31-39).

Let us pray: O merciful Lord, You did not spare Your only Son but delivered Him up for us all. Grant us courage and strength to take up the cross and follow Him, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Wednesday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Galatians 6:14

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. **By which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 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.

Have you ever noticed that the Book of Psalms and Jesus' Sermon on the Mount begin in the same way with a description of the "Blessed"? Psalm 1 presents us with the distinction between the "blessed" and the "wicked." (Did you notice that the opposite of blessed in this psalm is not the unblessed but rather the wicked?).

Blessedness is rejecting wickedness and the way of sinfulness. Blessedness has nothing to do with scoffers!

Blessedness delights in God's holy word. The blessed spend their days and nights meditating on God's word! (This is why these daily excursions into the propers for the week are called "meditations." Christian mediation is not inward reflection and mindfulness. Christian meditation is focusing on the truth of God's word.)

When drought, trouble, and hardship come, the blessed flourish because of the nourishment provided by God's word. But the wicked dry up in the face of suffering and distress.

You and I are blessed because of Jesus. He came to purchase us from wickedness with His holy, precious blood and His innocent suffering and death. The wicked perish. The blessed receive eternal life!

Let us pray: O Lord, thank You for our blessings in Jesus. Preserve us from wickedness. Direct us by Your holy word that we would never stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thursday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Galatians 6:14

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. By which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 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.

Deuteronomy 30:15–20

¹⁵“See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. ¹⁶If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his just decrees, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. ¹⁷But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, ²⁰loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

Moses had a rich and full life. At the time of his birth, he was condemned to death because he was a baby boy. Pharaoh had declared, “Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live” (Exodus 1:22).

His mother loved him dearly and hid him for three months. When she couldn't hide him any longer, she placed him in the Lord's hands. She cast him into the Nile but in a little boat. His mother had lovingly made a basket of bulrushes to protect her dear son.

We don't know what she prayed. But God answered her heart's desire. Pharaoh's daughter found the helpless child floating in the river. God worked it out so that Moses' mother was able to nurse her son for Pharaoh's daughter. This was the first of many miracles in the life of Moses.

Moses grew up in the royal palace as the son of the princess. But he never forgot that he was born a Hebrew, one of God's people. One day, he protected a Hebrew slave who was being beaten by an Egyptian. When he was found out, he was forced to flee to the land of Midian because Pharaoh sought to kill him. This turned out to be a blessing because there he met God in the burning bush.

Everything up to this point in Moses' life was simply a prelude. His real work began when He led His people out of slavery in Egypt through the Red Sea into the wilderness. They were on their way to the Promised Land. But as things developed, God disciplined the Children of Israel with a 40-year journey through the wilderness. Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land and at the age of 120, he died.

In our Old Testament lesson, we hear Moses speaking to God's people at the end of his life. When it was all said and done, when he considered all that he had been through on their behalf, he was concerned about only one thing. He implored the people, "Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them." Every aspect of his life had been dedicated toward this one ultimate purpose that his people would choose life!!!

What is important to you? Have you dedicated your life to anything? Some people are committed to their careers. Others are committed to social causes and community service. To be sure, these are noble causes. But they pale in comparison to the cause of Moses, Jesus, the Apostles, and prophets. They and all of God's servants share in the mission of bringing eternal life to people through faith in Jesus. John wrote, "These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31).

Someone in your life wanted you to believe in Jesus and share in eternal life. There is no greater cause than presenting the gift of forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation to people you know and love.

Let us pray: O Lord, thank You for the gift of eternal life. Grant us the privilege of bringing the salvation won by Jesus to the people around us. Amen.

Friday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Galatians 6:14

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. By which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 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.

Philemon 1–21

¹Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,

To Philemon our beloved fellow worker ²and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house:

³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, ⁵because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and all the saints, ⁶and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. ⁷For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.

⁸Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, ⁹yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus—¹⁰I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. ¹¹(Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.) ¹²I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. ¹³I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, ¹⁴but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own free will. ¹⁵For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, ¹⁶no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

¹⁷So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. ¹⁸If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. ¹⁹I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. ²⁰Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.

²¹Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

The Book of Philemon is only 21 verses long. It is a personal letter written by the Apostle Paul to a wealthy Christian man named Philemon on behalf of a slave named Onesimus.

I prefer to not become sidetracked in this meditation on slavery which is too important of a subject to avoid. *The Lutheran Study Bible* contains two excellent articles on slavery in the Bible and in the Roman world. They are found on pages 101 and 2095.

I enjoy reading Philemon and the other personal comments found in Paul's epistles. They help me remember that these were real people who lived in a real time and place. They struggled with the same issues that we face today in our interpersonal relationships.

Philemon was a dedicated and committed Christian. The local congregation met in his house. Paul was instrumental in bringing the Gospel to him. Through Paul's ministry, Philemon came to faith. Now in a parallel fashion, Philemon's slave, Onesimus, also came to faith through the work and ministry of the Apostle Paul.

It seems that Onesimus had been a trusted but unbelieving slave of Philemon. At some point, he ran away with some valuables from Philemon's household. Unspecified circumstances brought him to Paul and to faith in Jesus. The Book of Philemon is Paul's passionate letter of intercession on behalf of Onesimus.

Reading Philemon helps us understand how the early Christians viewed each other. Through faith in Jesus, Paul considered Philemon to be his partner and brother. Because Onesimus had now come to faith, Paul encouraged Philemon to think of Onesimus as his brother in the same way.

Christians still use this language of the family when speaking about each other. Yet, I wonder if we are always as serious about it as Paul was in New Testament times.

We have all become brothers and sisters in Christ. We have all been baptized into the family of God. As we interact with our fellow redeemed, let us use Philemon as a guide. May we truly treat one another as dear brothers and sisters in Christ caring for one another as we do for our own families.

Let us pray: O Lord, thank You for making us a part of Your family through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Grant that we would love one another as our brother, Jesus has loved us. Amen.

Saturday

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

Verse of the Day: Galatians 6:14

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia. By which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Alleluia.

Gradual Psalm 34:9, 19, alt.

- L** Fear the Lord, you his saints,
C for those who fear him lack nothing!
L Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
C but the Lord delivers him out of them all.

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. |

Luke 14:25–27

²⁵Now great crowds accompanied [Jesus], and he turned and said to them, ²⁶“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

The words of Jesus in our Gospel lesson are so startling that we may miss what prompted them. Great crowds were accompanying Jesus. We can assume that some in the crowd were sincere in their commitment to follow Jesus. It is likely that many were not. Mixed together were the faithful and the unfaithful, the authentic and fraudulent, the true and false disciples. Even among the twelve, there was one who would betray Him.

So it has always been. Sometimes people are motivated to participate in a local congregation simply for personal gain. They see the church as a gateway to social status, business connections, and the like.

Some years ago, a young immigrant woman attended my adult membership class. Week after week, we talked about salvation and other important spiritual topics. Through the Lutheran Heritage Foundation, I obtained a Bible in her language. When she read the Bible for the first time in her native tongue, she cried.

One day, she informed me that she would no longer be attending the class. I asked her why she had made that decision. She told me that her friend convinced her that a church from another denomination offered her more benefits than our congregation. I was saddened but I learned an important lesson. Some people follow Jesus not because He offers them forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. No, they follow Jesus for “personal benefits.”

Jesus doesn’t want that kind of follower. They aren’t really His disciples. They will soon learn that following Jesus means giving up all personal benefits and even life itself. Following Jesus means bearing a cross. Loving Jesus means hating the world of sin and selfishness.

Our old sinful self loves the “personal benefits” that the devil and the world have to offer. But in the face of eternity, none of them mean anything. The Apostle Paul understood the relative value of earthly things. He wrote to the Philippians:

“But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have

suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.” (Philippians 3:7-11).

May we always share Paul’s attitude who said, “Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 6:14).

Let us pray: O Lord, thank You for the greatest benefit of all, salvation through faith in Jesus. Grant us the faith to take up our cross and follow Jesus. Give us the courage to leave behind the great crowds who only seek Jesus for worldly benefits through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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