

The Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost September 10, 2023

In our Gospel Lesson today we have four important sections of Holy Scriptures: Who Is the Greatest?; Temptations to Sin; The Parable of the Lost Sheep; and If Your Brother Sins Against You. Each of these portions of the Bible is worthy of our special consideration. Together they embody valuable lessons on love: God's love for us and our response by loving people around us.

Jesus declares, "Unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." How foolish many Christians are when they believe that God is not ready for children until they reach a certain age or level of maturity. Today, Jesus says the opposite. We are to become like children, having their faith. Every day those associated with Lutheran schools are privileged to witness the wonderful faith of children. May we never grow weary of caring for these little lambs. May we always take seriously our God-given responsibility to train them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ, Be Present Now

Lutheran Service Book 902, Lutheran Worship 201, The Lutheran Hymnal 3



1 Lord Je - sus Christ, be pres - ent now; Our hearts in
2 Un - seal our lips to sing Your praise In end - less
3 Then shall we join the hosts that cry, "O ho - ly,
4 All glo - ry to the Fa - ther, Son, And Ho - ly



true de - vo - tion bow. Your Spir - it send with
hymns through all our days. In - crease our faith and
ho - ly Lord Most High!" And in the light of
Spir - it, Three in One! To You, O bless - ed



light di - vine, And let Your truth with - in us shine.
light our minds; And set us free from doubt that blinds.
that blest place We then shall see You face to face.
Trin - i - ty, Be praise through - out e - ter - ni - ty!

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 92:1–4; antiphon: Psalm 92:5

L How great are your works, O Lord!

Your thoughts are very deep!

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

L to declare your steadfast love in the morning,
and your faithfulness by night,

C to the music of the lute and the harp,
to the melody of the lyre.

L For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work;
at the works of your hands I sing for joy.

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 How great are your works, O Lord!

Your thoughts are very deep!

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, from whom all good proceeds, grant to us, Your humble servants, Your holy inspiration, that we may set our minds on the things that are right and, by Your merciful guiding, accomplish them; 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 33:7–9

⁷“So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. ⁸If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. ⁹But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.

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

Psalm 32:1–7

- L** ¹Blessèd is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.
- C** ²**Blessèd is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.**
- L** ³For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.
- C** ⁴**For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.**
- L** ⁵I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity;
I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,” and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.
- C** ⁶**Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;
surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.**
- L** ⁷You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts of deliverance.

Romans 13:1–10

¹Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ²Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword

in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. ⁶For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. ⁷Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

⁸Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Verse of the Day Matthew 5:3

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Blessed are the poor in spirit, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Alleluia.

Matthew 18:1-20

L The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 18th chapter.

C Glory to You, O Lord.

¹At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" ²And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them ³and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

⁵"Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, ⁶but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

⁷"Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes! ⁸And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. ⁹And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.

¹⁰"See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven. ¹²What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray?

¹³And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray.

¹⁴So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

¹⁵"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."

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

Shepherd of Tender Youth

Lutheran Service Book 864, Lutheran Worship 471, The Lutheran Hymnal 628



1 Shep - herd of ten - der youth, Guid - ing in
2 You are the ho - ly Lord, O all - sub -
3 You are the great High Priest; You have pre -
4 O ev - er be our guide, Our shep - herd,



love and truth Through de - vious ways; Christ, our tri -
du - ing Word, Heal - er of strife. Your - self You
pared the feast Of ho - ly love; And in our
and our pride, Our staff and song. Je - sus, O



um - phant king, We come Your name to sing
did a - base That from sin's deep dis - grace
mor - tal pain None calls on You in vain;
Christ of God, By Your en - dur - ing Word



And here our chil - dren bring To join Your praise.
You so might save our race And give us life.
Our plea do not dis - dain; Help from a - bove.
Lead us where You have trod; Make our faith strong.

5 So now, and till we die,
 Sound we Your praises high
 And joyful sing:
 Infants and all the throng,
 Who to the Church belong,
 Unite to swell the song
 To Christ, our king!

Public domain

Devotional thoughts:

The presidential election is more than a year away but we are already witnessing candidates competing for the greatest office in the land. Some might even say that it is the most powerful office in the world. As we watch this competition, we can learn something about human nature. In our Gospel lesson for today, we also hear Jesus' commentary on this piece of human frailty.

This drive for power and authority in political candidates may not infect everyone but it is certainly widespread. Where have you noticed it? We see this in almost every human endeavor. It's very apparent in sports with teams and athletes seeking to exert dominance over each other. It is common in the business world. Profits and salaries serve as an indication of supremacy. Executives boast about their number of "reports," i.e. the number of employees that report to them.

We see it among siblings and in schools. Bullying is one form of this quest for domination. Another form is observed in students contending for social dominance among their peers. It goes on and on. Artists and musicians, theologians and educators, actors and writers all can be enticed to declare, "I am the greatest!"

Therefore, it is not surprising to observe this same desire among the disciples. In Matthew 18, this appears to be a rhetorical question, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" However, other portions of scripture reveal that this is a deeply personal question. In Luke 22:24 we read, "A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest." In Matthew 20, we find the mother of James and John petitioning Jesus on behalf of her sons to make them the greatest among the disciples (Matthew 20:20-21).

Whenever an unwholesome desire to be the greatest surfaces in your heart, pause and review what Jesus has to say in these verses from Matthew 18. This desire for greatness is unacceptable in the kingdom of heaven! In fact, it disqualifies you from the kingdom! Listen to Jesus' surprising response, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." Jesus goes on to say that contrary to human wisdom, "Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Humility seems to be a forgotten commodity among Christians in this age of megachurches and celebrity clergy, self-esteem seminars, and the prosperity Gospel. Marketing and retail religion are the order of the day. Clearly, we still need to hear these words of Jesus.

Who is this child? Some translations refer to the child as a "little" child. This is an apt translation. The Greek word here can refer to a newborn. It is used in that way in John 16:21 where it is translated as baby, "When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world."

Spiritual boasting and dominance have no place in the kingdom. There is only room for those who are totally dependent on God's grace just as an infant is totally dependent on its mother.

It is no wonder that in one version of the divine service, we all declare, "I, a poor miserable sinner, confess." Unless we come to Jesus and humbly confess our sins, there is no room for us in the kingdom. But thanks be to God, Jesus is abounding in grace and forgiveness. Those who seek His mercy, receive it without any merit or worthiness in them! We rejoice with King David in Psalm 32:5 "I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,' and you forgave the iniquity of my sin."

As you read through the rest of the Gospel lesson for this week, notice Jesus' love for children. It is no wonder that He has a special place in His heart for little children. They are the little lambs that He seeks leaving the 99 behind. May we also have such care for children. May we raise them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

If the Church is the family of God, then we all bear a responsibility for children. To this end may we support every effort to teach children God's holy word and the message of the cross. May we be faithful supporters of Lutheran Schools wherever they may be. May we humble ourselves and become like little children in Jesus' kingdom.

"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.

Prayers

L Blessed Lord, You have promised that where two or three are gathered in Your name, You are in the midst of them. Hear the prayers of Your people, and grant our supplications.

C Amen.

L Our Father in heaven, You have instructed Your people to diligently teach Your children the saving word of scripture. Grant that Your holy word would continually be on our hearts, minds, and lips in our homes and as we travel, in the morning and in the evening, all the day long.

C Amen.

L Heavenly Father, open the hearts of Christians to one another, especially within the home and between neighbors. Let our love be genuine, speech truthful and patience constant.

C Amen.

L O Lord, grant that we would never oppose Your divine purpose and plans. Give us faith to trust that Your ways are better than our ways.

C Amen.

L Righteous God, You give leaders to every nation and people. Grant us good and wise public servants defend the innocent and punish evil. Guard those who protect us, especially our armed forces, police and firefighters.

C Amen.

L Heavenly Father, Your Son came to heal the sick and forgive sinners. Hear our prayers for those who suffer in any way. Restore them according to Your gracious will, and strengthen their trust in Your faithfulness and love. Let Your blessings rest upon all medical personnel and first responders who come to our aid in time of need.

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.

Savior, Again to Thy Dear Name We Raise

Lutheran Service Book 917, Lutheran Worship 221, Lutheran Hymnal 47



1 Sav - ior, a - gain to Thy dear name we raise
2 Grant us Thy peace up - on our home - ward way;
3 Grant us Thy peace, Lord, through the com - ing night;
4 Grant us Thy peace through - out our earth - ly life,



With one ac - cord our part - ing hymn of praise;
With Thee be - gan, with Thee shall end, the day.
Turn Thou for us its dark - ness in - to light.
Our balm in sor - row and our stay in strife;



Once more we bless Thee ere our wor - ship cease,
Guard Thou the lips from sin, the hearts from shame,
From harm and dan - ger keep Thy chil - dren free;
Then, when Thy voice shall bid our con - flict cease,



Then, low - ly bend - ing, wait Thy word of peace.
That in this house have called up - on Thy name.
For dark and light are both a - like to Thee.
Call us, O Lord, to Thine e - ter - nal peace.

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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 Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost September 11 – 16, 2023

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 Matthew 5:3

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Blessed are the poor in spirit, Alleluia.
- C** Alleluia, Alleluia. for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Alleluia.

Introit Psalm 92:1–4; antiphon: Psalm 92:5

- L** How great are your works, O Lord!
Your thoughts are very deep!
- C** It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
to sing praises to your name, O Most High;
- L** to declare your steadfast love in the morning,
and your faithfulness by night,
- C** to the music of the lute and the harp,
to the melody of the lyre.
- L** For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work;
at the works of your hands I sing for joy.
- 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** How great are your works, O Lord!
Your thoughts are very deep!

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 the only psalm specifically tied to the Sabbath. It describes what a Sabbath should look like.

Giving thanks and praise are primary to our worship. In our thanks and praise, we recognize God's steadfast love in the morning and His faithfulness at night. In other words, the message of God's love and salvation is declared all the day long!

One of the most prominent synonyms for the Gospel in the Old Testament is God's steadfast love which is sometimes translated as mercy. God's steadfast love is seen in our lives in a multitude of ways. God's steadfast love is seen in its completeness in Jesus' cross.

God's steadfast love is new every day when we humble ourselves before God in confession and receive His forgiveness for Christ's sake. God's steadfast love is evident in every good gift that He gives to us. God's steadfast love is shown when we forgive others as He forgives us. God's steadfast love finds its complete and total fulfillment in the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

It is no wonder then that we are glad and sing for joy for all that God has done for us. With lute and lyre, trumpet and cymbal, organ and symphony we make music and melody to our Savior and Lord.

L Let us pray. O Lord, our God, let us be ever mindful of your faithfulness and steadfast love in Jesus. Grant that we would worship you in spirit and in truth, in church and at home, all the days of our lives 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 of the Day Matthew 5:3

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Blessed are the poor in spirit, Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia. for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Alleluia.

Kyrie

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

L Let us pray. O God, from whom all good proceeds, grant to us, Your humble servants, Your holy inspiration, that we may set our minds on the things that are right and, by Your merciful guiding, accomplish them; 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 virtue of humility is out of style. In today's world of social media influencers, YouTube celebrities, and viral memes, everyone seems to be dreaming of fame.

A few years ago, a politician was caught violating a Covid-19 protocol that she had publicly supported. When she was confronted by a video that clearly displayed the violation, there was no humble admission of

guilt. Rather she blamed her political opponents.

No surprise here. We all seek to blame others for our shortcomings. But this ought not to be. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus proclaims blessings for the “poor in spirit.” He reflects the words recorded in Isaiah, “This is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word” (Isaiah 66:2).

In our collect for this week, we pray that God would help us see what is truly right, not what the world thinks. May we learn to be truly humble and poor in spirit and so receive the Kingdom of Heaven by God’s grace in Christ Jesus.

Prayer: O God, from whom all good proceeds, grant to us, Your humble servants, Your holy inspiration, that we may set our minds on the things that are right and, by Your merciful guiding, accomplish them; 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 of the Day Matthew 5:3

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Blessed are the poor in spirit, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 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.

Psalms 32:1–7

L ¹Blessèd is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

C ²Blessèd is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

L ³For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

C ⁴For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.

L ⁵I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity;
I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,” and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

C ⁶Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;
surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.

L ⁷You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts of deliverance.

In Psalm 32, we witness the great King David extol the virtue of humble confession of sin and the gift of forgiveness.

Verse 5 seems to be a reference to his encounter with Nathan after he had committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband, Uriah killed (2 Samuel 12).

Nathan was given the unenviable task of confronting David with his sin. Nathan tactfully tells David the story of a rich man who took a poor man’s pet lamb for a meal with his guest.

David is filled with outrage at this rich man and declares that he ought to die! To this, Nathan speaks these famous words to David, “You are the man!” (2 Samuel 12:7) and then recounts to him his sin of adultery and murder.

Nathan pronounces harsh judgment on David because of his sin. David is crushed by the weight of his sin and God's judgment and declares, "I have sinned against the Lord." Nathan responds, "The Lord also has put away your sin."

For the first decades of my life, every Sunday the pastor and congregation would declare the words of Psalm 32:5, "I said, 'I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord. And Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.'"

May we always be aware of God's great love for sinners and humbly seek His forgiveness.

Prayer: O Lord, thank you for the grace and mercy shown to your servant who humbly confesses sins before you. Grant that we may always be number among them until we stand before your throne in glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thursday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day Matthew 5:3

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Blessed are the poor in spirit, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 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 33:7-9

⁷"So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. ⁸If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. ⁹But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.

This often-repeated warning to Ezekiel is important to hear. Ezekiel was given the task of warning the wicked. If he were to evade that responsibility, he too would be guilty. While this warning is specifically given only to Ezekiel, it is one that should be heeded by all.

I once stopped to help change a flat tire for someone on the side of the road. To my surprise, I knew the woman who was driving the car. When the new tire was on, I noticed that the front suspension was so worn that it was about to break.

I couldn't let her merrily go on her way without warning her how dangerous her car was. I insisted that she immediately get it fixed. More than that, I talked to her pastor to make sure that the repair could be paid for. I may not have been legally guilty if she had an accident but I certainly would have been morally responsible if I had not warned her.

So also it is in spiritual matters. We have the privilege of knowing sin and grace, law and gospel. With this privilege comes a responsibility to seek to tell others. We dare not keep it to ourselves.

This little gospel light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine! Hide it under a bushel? NO! I'm gonna let it shine!

Prayer: O Lord God, grant us Your spirit that we may speak Your word of truth warning of Your judgment upon sin and Your mercy in Christ. Amen.

Friday

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

Verse of the Day Matthew 5:3

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Blessed are the poor in spirit, Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia. for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 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.

Romans 13:1–10

¹Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ²Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. ⁶For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. ⁷Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

⁸Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Entire books have been written on this portion of scripture. In society, we must have established authority. St. Paul reminds us that this authority comes from God. Indeed, all authority comes from God, even when it is held by ungodly people as was the case here when the Roman emperor was the highest earthly authority.

While earthly authority comes from God, it doesn't come through the Church as some Christians have believed. It comes directly from God. The Church's authority is different.

Earthly authority is established to reward good conduct and to punish the wrongdoer. The Church's authority is to teach about Jesus, proclaim law and gospel, and administer the sacraments. These two areas of authority ought not to interfere with each other. You and I are bound by both.

As Christian people, we seek to obey every law established by earthly authority whether or not it can be found in scripture such as speed limits and zoning ordinances. On the other hand, if we are commanded by earthly authority to disobey God's command then we are bound to "obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

While earthly authority deals with our outward actions, the Church is concerned with the heart. Since God first loved us, we also love one another. "Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

Prayer: O Lord, give us good and honest leaders who will govern according to Your Word and will. Give us grace, that we may not fail to pray for those who lead us and to act as good citizens and good neighbors to one another. Give peace to the nations, and bring an end to violence, prejudice, and racism. Guide us to know and respect all life, from the infant in the womb to the youth beginning maturity, and from the mature to the aged. Amen.

Saturday

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

Verse of the Day Matthew 5:3

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Blessed are the poor in spirit, Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia. for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Alleluia.

Gradual Psalm 34:9, 19, alt.

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

There is an old saying that goes like this: “I am proud of my humility.”

Like so many other things, humility is not something that we can produce in ourselves. Yes, humility can be imitated outwardly but true humility is something that must be given to us by God so that our hearts are changed.

Jesus is our true example of humility. Although He was the Son of God from all eternity, He humbled Himself to be born of the Virgin Mary. The ultimate display of His humility was His death on the cross for sinners.

It is only the “poor in spirit” who inherit the kingdom of heaven. May we join King David in humbling ourselves before God and saying, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.”

Prayer:

- 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.

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