

The Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

October 23, 2022

Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee

Lutheran Service Book 803, Lutheran Worship n/a, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a



1 Joy - ful, joy - ful we a - dore Thee, God of glo - ry, Lord of love!
2 All Thy works with joy sur-round Thee, Earth and heav'n re - flect Thy rays,
3 Thou art giv - ing and for - giv - ing, Ev - er bless-ing, ev - er blest,



Hearts un - fold like flow'rs be - fore Thee, Prais-ing Thee, their sun a - bove.
Stars and an-gels sing a-round Thee, Cen - ter of un - bro - ken praise.
Well-spring of the joy of liv - ing, O - cean-depth of hap - py rest!



Melt the clouds of sin and sad - ness, Drive the gloom of doubt a - way.
Field and for - est, vale and moun-tain, Flow - 'ry mead - ow, flash-ing sea,
Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly Spir - it, Foun - tain-head of love di-vine:



Giv - er of im - mor - tal glad-ness, Fill us with the light of day.
Chant-ing bird, and flow - ing foun-tain Call us to re - joice in Thee.
Joy - ful, we Thy heav'n in - her - it! Joy - ful, we by grace are Thine!

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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 56:10–13; antiphon Psalm 56:3

L When I am afraid,
I put my trust in you.

C In God, whose word I praise,
in the Lord, whose word I praise,

L in God I trust; I shall not be afraid.
What can man do to me?

C I must perform my vows to you, O God;
I will render thank offerings to you.

L For you have delivered my soul from death, yes, my feet from falling,
that I may walk before God in the light of life.

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 When I am afraid,
I put my trust in you.

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: Almighty and everlasting God, You are always more ready to hear than we to pray and always ready to give more than we either desire or deserve. Pour down on us the abundance of Your mercy; forgive us those things of which our conscience is afraid; and give us those good things for which we are not worthy to ask except by the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Genesis 4:1–15

¹Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.” ²And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. ³In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, ⁴and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, ⁵but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. ⁶The LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? ⁷If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.”

⁸Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. ⁹Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?” ¹⁰And the LORD said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground. ¹¹And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. ¹²When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.” ¹³Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is greater than I can bear. ¹⁴Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.” ¹⁵Then the LORD said to him, “Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Gradual Psalm 91:11; 103:1

L He will command his angels concerning you

C to guard you in all your ways.

L Bless the Lord, O my soul,

C and all that is within me, bless his holy name!

Psalm 5

L ¹Give ear to my words, O LORD; consider my groaning.

C ²Give attention to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you do I pray.

L ³O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch.

C ⁴For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you.

L ⁵The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers.

C ⁶You destroy those who speak lies; the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.

L ⁷But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house.

I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you.

C ⁸Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make your way straight before me.

L ⁹For there is no truth in their mouth; their inmost self is destruction; their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue.

C ¹⁰Make them bear their guilt, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; because of the abundance of their transgressions cast them out, for they have rebelled against you.

L ¹¹But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may exult in you.

C ¹²For you bless the righteous, O LORD; you cover him with favor as with a shield.

2 Timothy 4:6–8, 16–18

⁶For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. . . .

¹⁶At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them!

¹⁷But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. ¹⁸The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

G Thanks be to God.

Verse of the Day: Luke 18:16b

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. For to such belongs the kingdom of God. Alleluia.

Luke 18:9–17

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

G Glory to You, O Lord.

⁹[Jesus] also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: ¹⁰“Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ ¹³But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

¹⁵Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. ¹⁶But Jesus called them to him, saying, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. ¹⁷Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.”

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.

Just as I Am, without One Plea

Lutheran Service Book 570, Lutheran Worship 359, The Lutheran Hymnal 388



1 Just as I am, with - out one plea But that Thy
2 Just as I am and wait - ing not To rid my
3 Just as I am, though tossed a - bout With man - y a
4 Just as I am, poor, wretch - ed, blind; Sight, rich - es,



blood was shed for me And that Thou bidd'st me come to
soul of one dark blot, To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each
con - flict, man - y a doubt, Fight - ings and fears with - in, with -
heal - ing of the mind, Yea, all I need, in Thee to



Thee, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.
spot, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.
out, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.
find, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

5 Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

6 Just as I am; Thy love unknown
Has broken ev'ry barrier down;
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

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Devotional thoughts:

Note: This is another week when the Gospel lesson consists of two immensely significant pericopes, “The Pharisee and the Tax Collector” and “Let the Children Come to Me.” They both are too important to ignore so I will take them in order. We will consider “The Pharisee and the Tax Collector” today and “Let the Children Come to Me” on Friday. Those who are more familiar with the King James Version of the Bible will recall that this parable has been known through the centuries as “The Pharisee and the Publican.” A *publicanus* was an individual who collected taxes for the Roman Empire. The right to collect taxes for a particular region was auctioned every few years to a *publican*.

When composer Jerome Kern died on November 11, 1945, Broadway producers Rodgers and Hammerstein asked Irving Berlin to write both the music and lyrics to their new musical, *Annie Get Your Gun*. It premiered on Broadway the next year on May 16, 1946, and ran for 1,147 performances! The show starred Ethel Merman as Annie and Ray Middleton as Frank Butler. In 1950, it was made into a film that won the Academy Award for Best Scoring of a Musical Picture and received three other nominations.

Five hit songs came from the show. You may be most familiar with “There's No Business Like Show Business.” But the one that came to mind as I read our Gospel lesson is “Anything You Can Do (I Can Do Better).”

In the musical, Annie and Frank enter into a bragging contest singing “Anything you can do, I can do better. I can do anything better than you.” I can almost hear the Pharisee in Jesus’ parable singing this little ditty.

Let me set the scene. Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed and sang thus: “God, I thank you that I can do anything better than other men. I can do anything better than them! I can fast better than anyone can and I give tithes of all that I get.”

To be true to the show, the tax collector should then sing, “No, you can’t” and the Pharisee replies, Yes, I can.”

Indeed that would be comical if it wasn’t so sad. And unfortunately, it seems that the attitude of this Pharisee is alive and well in the Christian Church today.

Over the years, I have been confronted by people leaving our church because they had been taught in other denominations that Lutherans weren’t holy enough. People who attended these other congregations were better Christians. They prayed more. They were more faithful in their devotions morning and night. They never missed church. In fact, they dedicated the whole day to worship, not just Sunday morning. They read the Bible more. They listened to Christian music and watched Christian television. And of course, they were all faithful in their tithing.

To be sure, these are all good things to do. But this attitude of spiritual superiority is deadly to the soul. And it is all around us. It creeps into Lutheran preaching, too. We are all tempted to compare ourselves to others. It makes us feel so good to thank God in such a self-righteous way.

It not only affects religion. We see it in politics, especially now that the election is approaching. People are quick to believe that their political views make them good people and that those who disagree are evil.

But as Martin Luther penned on his deathbed, “We are beggars, this is true.” The tax collector (publican) in Jesus’ parable understood this. He couldn’t bring himself to approach the place of prayer but stood far off. Indeed, he would not even lift up his eyes to heaven (which, by the way, we still model today when we bow our heads and fold our hands in prayer rather than look to the sky.) In spiritual anguish, he beat his breast, saying, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!”

He didn’t claim to be better than others. He didn’t claim to be better than extortioners, the unjust, and adulterers. He didn’t compare himself to anyone but God. And standing in God’s presence, he was forced to admit that he was nothing more than a poor miserable sinner.

In today’s world of hyper-self-esteem, this is a bitter pill to swallow. We don’t want anyone to challenge our personal choices. People are quick to claim, “No one can tell me that I am a sinner. I must satisfy my whims. No one dare stand in my way, not people around me, not the government, and especially not the Church.”

But these claims all turn out to be hollow. Eventually, the ego-centric life falls apart. They leave nothing but emptiness inside.

Jesus came into the world to save only one kind of person. He came into the world to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15).

Like so many in the world, for a time, mighty King David thought that he was able to sin with impunity. But he could not keep his sin a secret from God. God sent the prophet Nathan to David. David’s guilt was exposed when Nathan declared, “You are the man!” Thankfully, David was led to repentance and confessed “I have sinned against the Lord.” And God forgave the iniquity of his sin (2 Samuel 11:1-12:14).

In thanksgiving for God’s forgiveness, David wrote Psalms 32 and 51. Here are some important verses from these psalms for us to remember:

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions (Psalm 51:1)

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise (Psalm 51:17).

Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered (Psalm 32:1).

I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,"
and you forgave the iniquity of my sin (Psalm 32:5).

The tax collector acknowledged his sin and asked for mercy. God granted it to him. Jesus said, "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other."

May we ever join this repentant tax collector and echo his attitude. Our song is not "Anything You Can Do (I Can Do Better)." Rather, we sing:

Just as I am, without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

"God, be merciful to me, a sinner!"

"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).

Prayers

L Almighty Father, we come to You at the gracious invitation of Your Son. May we receive Your gifts as little children, that neither our sinful flesh, the world, nor the devil would deter us from turning to You in repentance. Grant us humility to pray, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner."

C Amen.

L Be merciful to Your Church here and in every place. Defend our pastors and strengthen them in the faithful preaching of Your Word, that both Your holy Law and Your precious Gospel would be proclaimed and Your children be united in saving faith.

C Amen.

L As Your Son welcomed infants, give us a deep care for the children entrusted to us, that we would defend their lives even before birth. Instill in parents a desire and commitment to bring their little children to Jesus. Use our Lutheran school, Sunday school, Bible classes and the instruction of youth to preserve them in the faith. Teach each of us in humility to receive the kingdom of God like a little child.

C Amen.

L Heavenly Father, You have caused the sacred writings of Your Word to be proclaimed through all generations. Encourage and strengthen parents to teach Your Word to their children, that Your people may be trained in righteousness and equipped for every good work.

C Amen.

L Almighty God, send Your holy angels to watch over all of our loved ones, especially those who live in distant places. Strengthen all those who serve us in the medical field. Give Your comfort and peace to all

who are suffering from illness. Be with those who mourn. Grant to them the hope and assurance of a blessed reunion in heaven.

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.

Before You, Lord, We Bow

Lutheran Service Book 966, Lutheran Worship 500, The Lutheran Hymnal 575



1 Be - fore You, Lord, we bow, Our God who reigns a - bove
2 The na - tion You have blest May well Your love de - clare,
3 May ev - 'ry moun - tain height, Each vale and for - est green,
4 Earth, hear your Mak - er's voice; Your great Re - deem - er own;



And rules the world be - low, Bound-less in pow'r and love. Our thanks
From foes and fears at rest, Pro - tect - ed by Your care. For this
Shine in Your Word's pure light, And its rich fruits be seen! May ev -
Be - lieve, o - bey, re - joice, And wor-ship Him a - lone. Cast down



we bring In joy and praise, Our hearts we raise To You, our King!
bright day, For this fair land—Gifts of Your hand—Our thanks we pay.
'ry tongue Be tuned to praise And join to raise A grate - ful song.
your pride, Your sin de - plores, And bow be - fore The Cru - ci - fied.

5 And when in pow'r He comes,
Oh, may our native land
From all its rending tombs
Send forth a glorious band,
A countless throng,
With joy to sing
To heav'n's high King
Salvation's song!

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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 Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

October 24 – October 29, 2022

Introduction

Most modern forms of mediation turn a person inward. Biblical meditation turns a person outward toward what God has said and done especially what He has said and done through Jesus for our salvation.

Each Sunday has its own special theme directing us to meditate on God's word and actions. This theme is found in the Propers of the Day (the parts of the service that change week to week). From Advent through the Easter season these themes focus our attention on the life of Jesus from His birth to His death and resurrection. There is always much more in the propers than can be covered in any Sunday service. God willing, I will use the propers for Sunday to provide you with a devotion each day to help you meditate on what God has done for you.

Monday

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

Introit Psalm 56:10–13; antiphon Psalm 56:3

- L** When I am afraid,
I put my trust in you.
- C** In God, whose word I praise,
in the Lord, whose word I praise,
- L** in God I trust; I shall not be afraid.
What can man do to me?
- C** I must perform my vows to you, O God;
I will render thank offerings to you.
- L** For you have delivered my soul from death, yes, my feet from falling,
that I may walk before God in the light of life.
- 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** When I am afraid,
I put my trust in you.

Verse of the Day: Luke 18:16b

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, Alleluia.
- C** Alleluia, Alleluia. For to such belongs the kingdom of God. 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.

1969 was a significant year for a variety of reasons. Among those, 650 million people watched Neil Armstrong take his first steps on the surface of the moon. I graduated from high school and started college. And, according to the American Film Institute, the 73rd-greatest American film was released. The Library of Congress deemed it as being "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant" and it was selected for preservation in the United States National Film Registry!

What, you may ask, is the name of this film? Maybe you have already guessed that it is Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid.

I wouldn't be surprised if you have never heard of it. I don't think that it is on the radar of many people born in the 1970s or later. Nevertheless, almost anyone from my generation (especially those of the female persuasion) can immediately tell you that Butch Cassidy was played by Paul Newman and his partner, the Sundance Kid, was played by Robert Redford.

For those who don't know, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid were train robbers in the old west. In the film, they are relentlessly pursued by a posse of lawmen.

In one memorable scene, the posse closes in on Butch and Sundance. They find themselves trapped on the top of a cliff about a hundred feet above a river. Their choices were to allow themselves to be captured or to jump off the cliff. (For those who haven't yet seen the film, I won't spoil it by telling you what happened.)

Have you ever found yourself between a rock and a hard place like Butch and the Sundance Kid? David did! This is the background to Psalm 56 that is the source of our introit.

David was being pursued by King Saul who wanted to kill him. His only option was to flee to the Philistine city of Gath. You may recall that Goliath was a Philistine. Philistines were David's enemies. There seemed to be no way out. He was between a rock and a hard place.

But even in that dire situation there was a way out. God delivered him. David wrote about it in Psalm 56.

He said, "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you." David feared for his life. Saul was trying to kill him and the Philistines had every reason to want him dead. Yes, David was afraid. Only God could help him and calm his fears.

His trust in God was not in vain. God preserved his life. David expressed it this way, "For you have delivered my soul from death, yes, my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of life."

Have you ever been between a rock and a hard place? Most of us have. When there seems to be no way out, God is always there to deliver us. Trust in Him.

Our ultimate deliverance comes from Jesus. He is, as David wrote, the light of life. John 1:4 tells us, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men."

Remember, when you are afraid, put your trust in Him.

Let us pray: O Lord, thank You for rescuing us when we are between a rock and a hard place. Give us faith to trust in you when we are afraid through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Tuesday

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

Verse of the Day: Luke 18:16b

L	Alleluia, Alleluia. Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, Alleluia.
C	Alleluia, Alleluia. For to such belongs the kingdom of God. 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: Almighty and everlasting God, You are always more ready to hear than we to pray and always ready to give more than we either desire or deserve. Pour down on us the abundance of Your mercy; forgive us those things of which our conscience is afraid; and give us those good things for which we are not worthy to ask except by the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

This phrase from our collect is one of my favorites: “Almighty and everlasting God, You are always more ready to hear than we to pray and always ready to give more than we either desire or deserve.”

Have you ever prefaced a conversation with, “I’m sorry to bother you but…”? I know I have and I’ve been on the receiving end of that comment, too.

In our human experience, we often hesitate to make requests or ask for favors from important and busy people. It just doesn’t seem right to bother them. But that is never the case with God!

No matter how often we pray and no matter how long our prayers are, we will never exhaust God’s willingness to hear and answer our prayers! In addition, God is ready to give us even more than we have requested and certainly more than we deserve.

These words from our collect reflect what Paul wrote to the Ephesians at the conclusion of chapter 3. He said, “Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (Ephesians 3:20-21).

What is the greatest request that you can make of God? Is it health, wealth, or happiness? These are all desirable things. But God’s greatest answer to prayer is granting us His mercy and forgiveness that come to us by His grace through faith in Jesus. Everything else is transient—here today, gone tomorrow. They all fade away. But through God’s mercy and forgiveness, we receive an everlasting blessing of life and salvation with Him for all eternity. This is why Jesus came into the world. This is what he won for us on the cross!

Let us pray: Almighty and everlasting God, You are always more ready to hear than we to pray and always ready to give more than we either desire or deserve. Pour down on us the abundance of Your mercy; forgive us those things of which our conscience is afraid; and give us those good things for which we are not worthy to ask except by the merits and mediation of 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: Luke 18:16b

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia. For to such belongs the kingdom of God. Alleluia.

Psalm 5

- L** ¹Give ear to my words, O LORD; consider my groaning.
- C** ²**Give attention to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you do I pray.**
- L** ³O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch.
- C** ⁴**For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you.**
- L** ⁵The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers.
- C** ⁶**You destroy those who speak lies; the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.**
- L** ⁷But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house.
I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you.
- C** ⁸**Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness because of my enemies;
make your way straight before me.**
- L** ⁹For there is no truth in their mouth; their inmost self is destruction;
their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue.
- C** ¹⁰**Make them bear their guilt, O God; let them fall by their own counsels;
because of the abundance of their transgressions cast them out, for they have rebelled against you.**
- L** ¹¹But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy,
and spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may exult in you.
- C** ¹²**For you bless the righteous, O LORD; you cover him with favor as with a shield.**

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. |

Poetry fills our lives! But you may not have noticed it. That is because most poetry is set to music and we hear it in the form of songs. Almost every time you see someone walking with earbuds, you are watching someone listening to poetry.

Most English poetry is made up of rhythm and rhyme. However, in its purest form, poetry is a clever way of saying things.

In Hebrew, rhyming is not particularly difficult. Most verbs and nouns have regular endings. Rhyming is as simple as concluding each phrase with matching endings. As a result, rhyming in Hebrew poetry is not important.

Rather than rhyming, Hebrew poetry finds other approaches to say things in skillful ways. One of those ways is known as parallelism. This means that Hebrew poets often used a system of saying the same thing in two different ways. To our ears, it may seem redundant but in Hebrew, it is artful poetry.

Psalm 5 is a perfect example of parallelism in Hebrew poetry. As you read each verse, notice that the second half of the verse mirrors the first half. Consider verse 1, “Give ear to my words, O LORD; consider my groaning.” Asking the Lord to consider my groaning is the same as asking Him to give ear (hear) my words.

As you read through the psalm notice how the second half of each verse echoes the first half. As you do this, verse 5 may jolt your ears. I believe that Psalm 5 was chosen to be read this week because of verse 5. It resonates with our Gospel lesson of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. It says, “The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers.”

Following the principle of the second half of the verse reinforcing the first half of the verse, verse 5 gives us insight into God’s attitude towards (spiritual) boastfulness. This verse is saying that those who stand before God boasting in their own righteousness are not simply misguided. They are, in fact, evil doers.

I know that this is a hard pill to swallow. Contemporary society praises pride. Gone are the days when pride was known as one of the seven deadly sins.

Sinful pride and boastfulness are exemplified in the Pharisee of the Gospel lesson. He considers himself to be better than other people. If you read the Gospel lesson carefully, he does not only claim to be better than

extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or the tax collector. He claims to be better than other men. This is not wholesome. It is evil.

This attitude has spawned all manner of evil in our world. It was evident during World War II and during the time of slavery in our country. It's clearly alive and well today.

In contrast, Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). James tells us, "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you" (James 4:10). Peter writes, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:6-7).

David declared, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" (Psalm 51:17). God invites us to come before Him, humbly confessing our sins and clinging to Jesus for our righteousness. In our Gospel lesson, the tax collector humbly prayed, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" Jesus tells us that in answer to this simple prayer, he "went down to his house justified."

Let us pray: God, be merciful to me, a sinner! Amen.

Thursday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Luke 18:16b

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. For to such belongs the kingdom of God. 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.

Genesis 4:1–15

¹Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD." ²And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. ³In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, ⁴and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, ⁵but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. ⁶The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? ⁷If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."

⁸Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. ⁹Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" ¹⁰And the LORD said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. ¹¹And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹²When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth." ¹³Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. ¹⁴Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." ¹⁵Then the LORD said to him, "Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.

The account of Cain and Abel is heart wrenching. It confirms the fact that sin is inherited. It demonstrates how the fall into sin corrupted humanity. It cautions us that even our closest relationships are not immune to the ravages of sin.

God had warned that sin would lead to death (Genesis 2:17). In Genesis 4, we find the first death as a result of sin. It didn't come from the hand of God but from one brother against another.

One of the myths of modern society is that natural things are automatically good and wholesome. But those who live close to nature know that it can be deadly. Hurricanes are natural occurrences. Many natural plants in the wild produce fruit that can make you sick or even poison you. Since the fall into sin, our human nature is corrupted by sin. It is neither safe nor wise to follow all of our "natural" urges.

Cain followed his "natural" feelings of anger and jealousy. It led him to murder his brother.

When confronted by God for his deplorable deed, he responded with this memorable answer in the form of a question, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

This seemingly flippant response underscores the problem with sinful human nature. It is only concerned about itself. It has no concern for brother or sister. It feels no responsibility for anyone or anything that gets in the way of personal desires.

Everything from street violence to the disintegration of the family can be traced to one cause: sin. Our human nature fights against God's commandments and His plan for life. As a result, people suffer.

The tax collector in the Gospel lesson recognized this. The Pharisee didn't.

The first step in receiving God's mercy is the recognition of sin. We do this when we come to God and confess our sins. On Sunday morning, the congregation confesses together:

Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

Or we may simply join with the tax collector saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!"

In response, we rejoice in hearing the wonderful message of God's grace:

In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for His sake God forgives us all our sins. To those who believe in Jesus Christ He gives the power to become the children of God and bestows on them the Holy Spirit. May the Lord, who has begun this good work in us, bring it to completion in the day of our Lord Jesus 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: Luke 18:16b

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. For to such belongs the kingdom of God. Alleluia.

Kyrie

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

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

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

2 Timothy 4:6–8, 16–18

⁶For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. . . .

¹⁶At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them!

¹⁷But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. ¹⁸The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

In the city of Rome stands a church named the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls. As you approach the church, you will see a large statue of the Apostle Paul holding a sword in his right hand.

Saint Paul's Outside the Walls is one of the oldest Christian Churches in the world. It was established by Emperor Constantine in A.D. 324 after Christianity was legalized. At about the same time, the Church of the Holy Nativity in Bethlehem and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem were built. The most well-known church in Rome, St. Peter's Basilica was also begun at that time.

Saint Paul's Outside the Walls is located on the site of Paul's burial outside the walls of Ancient Rome. The Apostle Paul was condemned to death under Emperor Nero's persecution of Christians some time before Nero died in A.D. 68.

As a Roman citizen, Paul was not tortured but executed by beheading. Early Christians commemorated the location of his tomb with a *cella memoriae* which is Latin for "memory room." Saint Paul's Outside the Walls was built at the location of this *cella memoriae*. In 2002, an 8 foot long marble sarcophagus, inscribed with the words "PAULO APOSTOLO MART" ("Paul apostle martyr") was discovered during excavations underneath Saint Paul Outside the Walls.

This bit of history comes to mind because Paul's second letter to Timothy was written shortly before his death. The words of our Epistle lesson this week are the last words he wrote that survive to this day.

Remember the statue in front of Saint Paul's Outside the Walls? In art, the Apostle Paul is often depicted with a sword in his hand. There is a long tradition in Christian art to depict martyrs with the instrument of their death. In this case, it is a reminder that St. Paul was beheaded with a sword.

But there is another reason that St. Paul is pictured with a sword. In our Epistle lesson, Paul wrote, "I have fought the good fight." We know that his life for Christ was a struggle. He was beaten and imprisoned. His mission work of spreading the Gospel was opposed everywhere he went. But he never gave up. He kept the faith! He battled on with the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God! (Ephesians 6:17). This is what I think of when I see a sword in his hand.

Like him, we too must fight the good fight. We must keep the faith. In this battle, we have the most powerful weapon of all. We have the word of God. We have the mighty sword of the Spirit.

With Paul, we look forward to finishing the race and receiving the crown of righteousness won for us by Jesus on the cross. We know that in the end, He will bring us safely into His heavenly kingdom.

Until that time comes:

Oh, may Thy soldiers, faithful, true, and bold,
Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old
And win with them the victor's crown of gold!
Alleluia! Alleluia!

Saturday

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

Gradual Psalm 91:11; 103:1

- L** He will command his angels concerning you
C to guard you in all your ways.
L Bless the Lord, O my soul,
C and all that is within me, bless his holy name!

Verse of the Day: Luke 18:16b

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia. For to such belongs the kingdom of God. 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. |

Luke 18:15–17

¹⁵Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. ¹⁶But Jesus called them to him, saying, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. ¹⁷Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.”

If you are like me, you don’t like to be wrong. When someone claims that I am wrong, my first response is to prove that I’m right.

When I was in my fourth year in seminary and overflowing with confidence, having just experienced an amazing year as a vicar, I answered a question posed by a professor. He told me that I was wrong. Convinced that I couldn’t be wrong, I took up a quest to prove that I was right. I spent hours in the seminary library. My extensive research proved that I was wrong. On a positive note, I have never forgotten the correct answer to that question.

In our Gospel lesson, the disciples thought they were right in keeping babies from coming to Jesus. Their teacher informed them that they were wrong! They didn’t have to research the question. They were corrected by the highest authority of all, the Son of God. Jesus told them that they had things backward. Children did not need to grow up and possess an adult faith before coming to Jesus. No, to the contrary, adults need to come to Jesus like a child. If they do not, they will never enter the kingdom of God.

Notice that the infants did not decide to come to Jesus. They were simply brought to Jesus by adults.

Unfortunately, today, there are many Christians who will go to any length to prove that the disciples were right and Jesus was wrong. They are convinced that children need to decide to follow Jesus before they can be brought to Him in baptism.

There is a great blessing in bringing children to Jesus. For this reason, parents take seriously their responsibility to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Churches, seeking to be faithful, invest in bringing children to Jesus. At one time, this was the hallmark of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod.

In the first constitution of the LCMS, churches were required to have schools before they could be admitted into the synod. An important group of immigrants who helped found the Missouri Synod were the Saxon

immigrants of Perry County, Missouri. They arrived in early 1839. Before the year was out, they had built a log cabin school for the training of children.

May we never doubt Jesus' words to let the little children come to Him and do nothing to hinder them. May God richly bless our Christian schools. May He move our hearts to love little children as much as He does. May pastors of congregations with Christian schools wholeheartedly support their work and ministry of bringing children to Jesus.

Let us pray: O Lord, help us to accept the truth of Your word and Your promises to little children. Enable us to fully support the bringing children to Jesus in our churches and schools through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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