

The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Preparing to Celebrate

The 250th Anniversary of The United States of America and Canada Day

June 28, 2026

One of the greatest concepts in the Bible is the Kingdom of God. Misguided believers in both the Old and the New Testaments confused the Kingdom of God with an earthly kingdom to be established with Jerusalem as its capital city.

In fact, King Jesus does already rule the universe by His almighty power (Eph. 1:15-23). However, He has no interest in a political kingdom. He spoke these words to Pilate, **“My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, My servants would fight to prevent My arrest by the Jews. But now My kingdom is from another place”** (John 18:36).

Jesus directed His disciples to proclaim, “The kingdom of God has come near to you.” **God’s kingdom comes to us today through the Word and Sacraments. In His kingdom, Jesus brings peace and forgiveness. We enter His kingdom by faith.**

The thief on the cross called out to Jesus, “Remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” We look forward to the day when our sojourn through this sinful world comes to an end and we are with the Savior forever in His eternal kingdom of paradise in heaven.

In addition, we rejoice in the freedoms that we enjoy in our nation. Many have sacrificed for our benefit. Yet not everything in our country is in accord with God’s holy word, therefore we do not forget that we must obey God rather than men. It is important for Christian citizens to exercise their rights in a God-pleasing way.

God Bless Our Native Land

Lutheran Service Book 965, Lutheran Worship 497, The Lutheran Hymnal 577



1 God bless our na - tive land; Firm may she ev - er stand
2 So shall our prayers a - rise To God a - bove the skies;



Through storm and night. When the wild tem - pests rave, Rul - er of
On Him we wait. Thou who art ev - er nigh, Guard - ing with



wind and wave, Do Thou our coun - try save By Thy great might.
watch - ful eye, To Thee a - loud we cry: God save the state!

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 89:15-18; antiphon Psalm 89:1

L I will sing of the steadfast love of the Lord, forever;
with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations.

C Blessed are the people who know the festal shout,
who walk, O Lord, in the light of your face,

L who exult in your name all the day
and in your righteousness are exalted.

C For you are the glory of their strength;
by your favor our horn is exalted.

L For our shield belongs to the Lord,
our king to the Holy One of Israel.

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 I will sing of the steadfast love of the Lord, forever;
with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations.

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 God, by the working of Your Holy Spirit, grant that we may gladly hear Your Word proclaimed among us and follow its directing; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
C Amen.

Jeremiah 28:5–9

⁵Then the prophet Jeremiah spoke to Hananiah the prophet in the presence of the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the LORD, ⁶and the prophet Jeremiah said, “Amen! May the LORD do so; may the LORD make the words that you have prophesied come true, and bring back to this place from Babylon the vessels of the house of the LORD, and all the exiles. ⁷Yet hear now this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people. ⁸The prophets who preceded you and me from ancient times prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms. ⁹As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes to pass, then it will be known that the LORD has truly sent the prophet.”

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

Gradual Romans 11:33, 36

L Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!
C For from him and through him and to him are all things.
To him be glory forever. Amen.

Psalms 119:153–160

L Look on my affliction and deliver me,
for I do not forget your law.
C Plead my cause and redeem me;
give me life according to your promise!
L Salvation is far from the wicked,
for they do not seek your statutes.
C Great is your mercy, O Lord;
give me life according to your just decrees.
L Many are my persecutors and my adversaries,
but I do not swerve from your testimonies.
C I look at the faithless with disgust,
because they do not keep your commands.
L Consider how I love your precepts!
Give me life according to your steadfast love.
C The sum of your word is truth,
and every one of your just and righteous decrees endures forever.
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.

Romans 7:1–13

¹Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? ²Thus a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. ³Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

⁴Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. ⁵For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. ⁶But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.

⁷What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” ⁸But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law, sin lies dead. ⁹I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. ¹⁰The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. ¹¹For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. ¹²So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

¹³Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Verse of the Day Matthew 10:39

L Alleluia. Whoever finds his life will lose it, Alleluia.

C Alleluia. and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Alleluia.

Matthew 10:34–42

L The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 10th chapter.

C Glory to You, O Lord.

³⁴[Jesus said:] “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. ³⁶And a person’s enemies will be those of his own household. ³⁷Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

⁴⁰“Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. ⁴¹The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward. ⁴²And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.”

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

Before You, Lord, We Bow

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



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!

Devotional thoughts:

In January 1975, the Altair 8800 microcomputer kit appeared on the cover of Popular Electronics magazine. I was an avid reader of Popular Electronics and Radio Electronics. I also noted a small ad in the magazine. It offered the BASIC computer programming language for the Altair on a cassette or punched tape. You could buy this software from a small startup company named Microsoft!

I developed my interest in computers in eighth grade after reading a book about them. I'm pretty sure that if I hadn't been a resource-challenged vicar at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Moline, Ill at the time, I would have purchased that kit and the Microsoft tape. As it turned out, I didn't purchase my first computer until the spring of 1982.

Old timers in the computer field will remember this well-worn phrase, "Garbage in—Garbage out." Or maybe you are familiar with this proverb, "To err is human but to really mess things up, you need a computer."

You may believe that this is an old-fashioned way of thinking about computers. After all, today we have Artificial Intelligence. Of course, we don't call it that anymore. Now, we simply refer to it as A.I. or AI.

But have things really changed? "Garbage in—Garbage out" is as true today as ever,

I was experimenting with the AI chatbot known as ChatGPT. I asked it to tell me about important events in the history of Stevensville, Michigan. It told me an amazing story about a battle of the Black Hawk Indian War that happened near Stevensville.

I was fascinated. I had never heard about this before. As it turned out, the reason I'd never heard of it before is because it never happened. The AI chatbot was suffering from something known as Artificial Intelligence Hallucination. This is when AI generates false information. It's not all that uncommon.

A friend of mine was using an AI chatbot to learn about the history of Bridgman, MI. It told him about a bank robbery and murder in the 1920s that never happened!

So by now, you are asking, "Why is he talking about computers and AI?"

The Gradual for today sent me down this path. The Gradual is one of the oldest parts of the liturgy and possibly one of the most obscure. The name "Gradual" comes from the Latin word "*gradus*" meaning step. It got this name because it was chanted as the congregation was preparing to hear the Gospel read from a special place of honor on a step in front of the altar. When it is used today, it is often moved to after the Old Testament reading and before the Epistle lesson. Unlike other propers in the liturgy, the Gradual changes with the season. Today is the first Sunday for our Gradual from Romans 11:33, 36.

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

For from him and through him and to him are all things.

To him be glory forever. Amen.

Romans 11:33-36 is a doxology or words of praise to God. Paul was praising God for His amazing plan to save both Jews and Gentiles by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. This is something that far exceeds all human wisdom and knowledge! Even the most powerful computer can never delve into the depth and riches of God's wisdom.

We live in a time of human pride and arrogance. Many in our day believe that humanity has all the answers. They reject God's wisdom and His judgments and replace them with their own ignorance and conceit.

On this Independence Day and the celebration of the 250th birthday of the United States, it is important to remember that it wasn't always so in our country. The founders of our nation did not rely on human reason. No, they turned to God as justification for declaring independence on July 4, 1776, with these words:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

John Hancock, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Samuel Adams, and the rest all risked death when they attached their signatures to this remarkable statement:

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States.

Unless you think that these references to God in the Declaration of Independence are a fluke, let us consider the words of George Washington, in his first inaugural address on April 30, 1789:

It would be peculiarly improper to omit in this first official Act, my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the Universe, who presides in the Councils of Nations, and whose providential aids can supply every human defect, that his benediction may consecrate to the liberties and happiness of the People of the United States, a Government instituted by themselves for these essential purposes: and may enable every instrument employed in its administration to execute with success, the functions allotted to his charge. In tendering this homage to the Great Author of every public and private good I assure myself that it expresses your sentiments not less than my own; nor those of my fellow-citizens at large, less than either. No People can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand, which conducts the Affairs of men more than the People of the United States.

It has become fashionable to believe that we are smarter than God. Marriage that was once held sacred is marred by redefinition and divorce. Human thought and reason are used to undermine the sanctity of human life. Lives are destroyed through legalized gambling. The list goes on.

What are we to do? First, don't be surprised. Jesus warned us that His people will not experience peace on this earth (Matthew 10:34). There will always be those who want to destroy faith and oppose faithful people. Sometimes we will find them even in our own families.

Second, take up your cross and follow Jesus. Living in difficult times is no reason to abandon the faith. Satan may tempt us to reject Jesus in order to find earthly prosperity but Jesus warned us: "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matthew 10:39).

Third, you are not alone. Elijah thought that he was the only one left. He told God, "For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away." But God responded that there were still seven thousand in Israel that had not bowed to Baal nor kissed him (1 Kings 19:14-18).

Fourth, support pastors, church workers, and fellow believers in difficult times. God will bless you for it (Matthew 10:40-42).

Finally, and most importantly, when the world tempts you to trust in the government or computers, put your trust in the depth of the riches and wisdom, and knowledge of God. Remember that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Corinthians 1:25).

God's wisdom is found in the cross of Christ. It is found in God's mercy and grace. It is found in the forgiveness of sins. The Apostle Paul preached Jesus Christ and Him crucified so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:2-5).

God's love for you may seem to be unsearchable, inscrutable, and unfathomable but it is God's remarkable plan that you should live with Him forever eternity.

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!
For from him and through him and to him are all things.
To him be glory forever. Amen.

God's richest blessings to you in Christ.

Prayer for Our Country

G Almighty God, you have given us this good land as our heritage. Grant that we remember your generosity and constantly do your will. Bless our land with honest industry, truthful education, and an honorable way of life. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion, from pride and arrogance, and from every evil course of action. Make us who came from many nations with many different languages a united people. Defend our liberties, and give those whom we have entrusted with the authority of government the spirit of wisdom that there may be justice and peace in our land. When times are prosperous, let our hearts be thankful; and in troubled times do not let our trust in you fail; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Prayers

L Let us pray. Our Creator and Lord, from You all things come and to You are all things directed. Provide for our nation faithful leaders who will hear and heed Your law, protect and defend the citizens, preserve the precious gift of liberty, and inspire us to use our freedom honorably. Make us mindful of the heritage our forebears have given to this land, and guide us to be faithful in our stewardship of all the resources You have provided.

C Amen.

L Gracious Father, according to Your promise You returned exiles from captivity to Jerusalem. Remember those who are displaced from their homes by violence, war or persecution. Provide them with shelter and bodily needs, and foster in them the hope of an eternal home in Christ.

C Amen.

L God of our salvation, Your Son warned that Your people would face opposition from the world. Give courage and fortitude to all Your people that we would boldly sing Your praises, gladly endure suffering for the name of Jesus, and continue by Your grace to be faithful to the end.

C Amen.

L Lord God, heavenly Father, receive our thanks for Your kindness, especially for our noble forebearers who risked everything to establish one nation under God in which we live. May our nation always hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. Grant that we would use our freedom in service to others.

C Amen.

L Father in heaven, bring peace, not a sword, to our homes by Your grace. Foster a common love and knowledge of Your Word among husbands and wives, parents and children, and guide their love for one another by Your love for them.

C Amen.

L Lord, guide and give wisdom to our nation and its leaders, and to all judges and magistrates. Protect those who serve us as firefighters, police, disaster workers and medical personnel. 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 that the current cease fire would be sustained and lasting peace would be established.

C Amen.

L Visit us in Your compassion, O Lord. Deliver the sick from their infirmity, the troubled from their afflictions, the grieving from their sorrow, and the dying from their fear. May all who cry to You receive grace sufficient for their needs according to Your will. Help each of us to bear our crosses with patience and grace.

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

O God, Our Help in Ages Past

Lutheran Service Book 733, Lutheran Worship 180, The Lutheran Hymnal 123



1 O God, our help in a - ges past, Our hope for years to come,
2 Un - der the shad - ow of Thy throne Thy saints have dwelt se - cure;
3 Be - fore the hills in or - der stood Or earth re - ceived her frame,
4 A thou - sand a - ges in Thy sight Are like an eve - ning gone,



Our shel - ter from the storm - y blast, And our e - ter - nal home:
Suf - fi - cient is Thine arm a - lone, And our de - fense is sure.
From ev - er - last - ing Thou art God, To end - less years the same.
Short as the watch that ends the night Be - fore the ris - ing sun.

5 Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Soon bears us all away;
We fly forgotten as a dream
Dies at the op'ning day.

6 O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be Thou our guard while troubles last
And our eternal home!

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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 Fifth Sunday after Pentecost June 28—July 4, 2026

Introduction

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

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

Monday

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

Verse of the Day Matthew 10:39

- L** Alleluia. Whoever finds his life will lose it, Alleluia.
C Alleluia. and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Alleluia.

Introit Psalm 89:15-18; antiphon Psalm 89:1

- L** I will sing of the steadfast love of the Lord, forever;
with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations.
C **Blessèd are the people who know the festal shout,
who walk, O Lord, in the light of your face,**
L who exult in your name all the day
and in your righteousness are exalted.
C **For you are the glory of their strength;
by your favor our horn is exalted.**
L For our shield belongs to the Lord,
our king to the Holy One of Israel.
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 I will sing of the steadfast love of the Lord, forever;
with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations.

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. |

The psalmist sings of God's steadfast love! God's steadfast love is a concept in the Bible that cannot be fully appreciated in English. It is sometimes translated as mercy as in "His mercy endures forever."

Martin Luther speaks of it this way. God's steadfast love is "goodness in action." All of God's favor towards us is summarized in His "steadfast love."

God's steadfast love comes to us in the babe born in Bethlehem. God's steadfast love is "peace on earth, goodwill toward men." God's steadfast love is made real when "the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them" (Matthew 11:5). God's steadfast love is heard from the cross when Jesus prays, "Father, forgive them." God's steadfast love is found in the words of the angel at the empty tomb, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay" (Matthew 28:5).

God's steadfast love comes to us by His grace. We receive it by faith in Jesus. God's steadfast love grants us forgiveness, life, and salvation. It is new to us each day. It is ours for eternity.

We join our voices with the psalmist, "I will sing of the steadfast love of the Lord, forever; with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations" (Psalm 89:1).

- L** Let us pray. Almighty God, our heavenly Father, because of Your steadfast love toward us sinners You have given us Your Son that, believing in Him, we might have everlasting life. Continue to grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may remain steadfast in this faith to the end and finally come to life everlasting; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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 10:39

- L** Alleluia. Whoever finds his life will lose it, Alleluia.

C Alleluia. and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Alleluia.

Collect of the Day

- L** Let us pray. Almighty God, by the working of Your Holy Spirit, grant that we may gladly hear Your Word proclaimed among us and follow its directing; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen

Rowan Atkinson plays a delightfully humorous character by the name of Mr. Bean. If you have seen him, I know that you are smiling already. One of my favorite clips is Mr. Bean trying to stay awake during the sermon!

Have you ever had that problem? As a child I remember catching my head nodding during the sermon and quickly straightening up only to hit my head on the back of the pew.

Once on vicarage, I was assigned to preach on the ending of the Lord's Prayer. My sermon had four parts:

Kingdom, Power, Glory, and Amen. After having completed the first three parts of my sermon, I came to the fourth part and began, “And now for the ‘amen’.” At the word “amen” a gentleman in the middle of the church stood straight up! I can only imagine what dinner was like at his house that day.

Sermons have the reputation of being boring and sleep inducing. I am sure that I have delivered my fair share of boring sermons. So why do we continue to attend church and hear boring sermons when there are so many amazing alternatives? Because in the sermon we hear God’s word proclaimed. In the sermon we learn of sin and grace. We learn of God’s abiding love for us. We lean of the Way and the Truth and the Life.

Our collect this week offers this salutary prayer: Grant that we may gladly hear Your Word proclaimed among us.

Prayer: Almighty God, by the working of Your Holy Spirit, grant that we may gladly hear Your Word proclaimed among us and follow its directing; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Wednesday – Canada Day

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day Matthew 10:39

L Alleluia. Whoever finds his life will lose it, Alleluia.

C Alleluia. and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Alleluia.

Psalm 119:153–160

L Look on my affliction and deliver me,
for I do not forget your law.

C Plead my cause and redeem me;
give me life according to your promise!

L Salvation is far from the wicked,
for they do not seek your statutes.

C Great is your mercy, O Lord;
give me life according to your just decrees.

L Many are my persecutors and my adversaries,
but I do not swerve from your testimonies.

C I look at the faithless with disgust,
because they do not keep your commands.

L Consider how I love your precepts!
Give me life according to your steadfast love.

C The sum of your word is truth,
and every one of your just and righteous decrees endures forever.

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.

Canada and the United States are very similar but also each is unique. I once lived in Ontario. I have family living in British Columbia, Alberta, and Manitoba. I once had family members living in Saskatchewan and Quebec. I am happy to count several Canadians among my closest friends. Yet, I don’t claim to be an expert on Canada but I do rejoice that the United States is bordered by such a faithful friend with many wonderful people.

Nevertheless, Canadians are sinful just as Americans. We all have our failings and foibles. We all need a

savior. We all need a loving and caring God. We all need to hear His holy word and believe in Jesus for our salvation.

I have listened to a reading of Psalm 119. It took almost 16 minutes to complete the entire Psalm! There are 176 verses in all. It is a marvelous ode to God's word containing many memorable passages such as: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). And, "How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word" (Psalm 119:9).

I suspect this portion of the psalm is chosen for our worship this week because it relates so well to Jesus' words in the Gospel. Verse 157 particularly caught my attention, "Many are my persecutors and my adversaries, but I do not swerve from your testimonies." Even the psalmist faced persecution because of his faithfulness!

It is always difficult to experience criticism for doing the right thing. It is particularly hurtful when we are seeking to be faithful to God's word. Nevertheless, this does happen. It is the lot of every Christian in one way or another, whether we find ourselves living in Canada, the United States, Mexico, or some other part of the world.

Why then are we faithful in the face of this persecution? Because in God's holy word we find life! In God's holy word we find salvation. In God's holy word we find our savior, Jesus!

Prayer: Blessed Lord, You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. Grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them that, by patience and comfort of Your holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; 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 10:39

L Alleluia. Whoever finds his life will lose it, Alleluia.

C Alleluia. and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Alleluia.

Jeremiah 28:5–9

⁵Then the prophet Jeremiah spoke to Hananiah the prophet in the presence of the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the LORD, ⁶and the prophet Jeremiah said, "Amen! May the LORD do so; may the LORD make the words that you have prophesied come true, and bring back to this place from Babylon the vessels of the house of the LORD, and all the exiles. ⁷Yet hear now this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people. ⁸The prophets who preceded you and me from ancient times prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms. ⁹As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes to pass, then it will be known that the LORD has truly sent the prophet."

You most likely have heard of the prophet Jeremiah. However, Hananiah may not be so familiar to you. Not much is known of him except that he is the spokesman for the false prophets.

What is the message of the false prophets in this case? Everything will be okay! Jeremiah prays that the Lord would indeed quickly bring back the exiles from Babylon. But Jeremiah knows that this is a false and misleading dream.

It is always dangerous to listen to false prophets whether they preach prosperity or gloom, they always depart from God's word. Jeremiah knows that peace will not come to the people of Judah and the exiles. He has constantly called them to repentance and they have refused. God has brought this punishment upon them.

Just as the people in Jeremiah's day, many people today believe that they can ignore God's law and

everything will be just fine. They can continue to live in unrepentant sin without consequences.

Jeremiah knew as we know today, you can't ignore God's law. Some may confuse God's patience with indifference. Let us not make that mistake.

Peter writes, "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief" (2 Peter 3:9-10).

May we heed the words of Isaiah, "Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near;" (Isaiah 55:6).

The Apostle Paul's words are just as true for us today as they were when they were first written to Timothy:

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. ¹⁶ But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. ¹⁷ To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (1 Timothy 1:15-17).

Prayer: O God, let us not confuse your patience with indifference. We thank you that by the patient endurance of Your only-begotten Son You have destroyed sin, death, and the devil. Help us to treasure in our hearts what our Lord has borne for us on the cross. Grant that we may bear with patience those things that are difficult for us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. 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 10:39

L Alleluia. Whoever finds his life will lose it, Alleluia.

C Alleluia. and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Alleluia.

Romans 7:1–13

¹Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? ²Thus a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. ³Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

⁴Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. ⁵For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. ⁶But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.

⁷What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." ⁸But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law, sin lies dead. ⁹I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. ¹⁰The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. ¹¹For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. ¹²So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

¹³Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.

Paul's Book of Romans is a wonderful treatise on Law and Gospel, Sin and Grace. He wants us to know that God's law is good. It is perfect. It is beneficial. However, God's law does not bring life. God's law shows us that we are not good, we are not perfect.

As we learned in confirmation class, God's law Shows us Our Sin (SOS). We may want to believe that we are good but God's law will not let us. It shows our need for Jesus and the Gospel.

The Gospel is God's life giving word in Jesus. The Gospel Shows us Our Savior (SOS).

These two little phrases concerning Law and Gospel are good to remember. The law always (not only) shows us our sin. Like a mirror it shows us as we truly are. The law always focuses on us and what we do or fail to do.

On the other hand the Gospel never focuses on us. If we read the Gospel in such a way that it makes demands upon a sinner, we have read it improperly. The Gospel always focuses on Christ and what He has done for our salvation. The Gospel always points to Jesus, never to us.

The Law condemns. The Gospel saves. It is the power of God for all who believe (Romans 1:16).

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank and praise You that You gave Your only-begotten Son so that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have eternal life. Amen.

Saturday - The 250th Anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day Matthew 10:39

L Alleluia. Whoever finds his life will lose it, Alleluia.

C Alleluia. and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Alleluia.

Gradual Romans 11:33, 36

L Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

C For from him and through him and to him are all things.

To him be glory forever. Amen.

250 years ago the United States of America declared itself to be an independent nation. Surprisingly to many 21st Century Americans, the founders of our nation found justification for their actions in the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God! This thought is becoming increasingly important to remember as the religion of secularism has bewitched so many Americans.

A few years back, Valerie and I had the opportunity to take a tour of Baltimore Harbor and see the star spangled banner flying over Fort McHenry from the same location it was observed by Francis Scott Key after witnessing the bombardment by British ships in 1814. On this Independence Day take a moment to read all the stanzas of his poem. Take particular notice of the final stanza its reference to our trust in God!

O say can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming,
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming?
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there;

O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

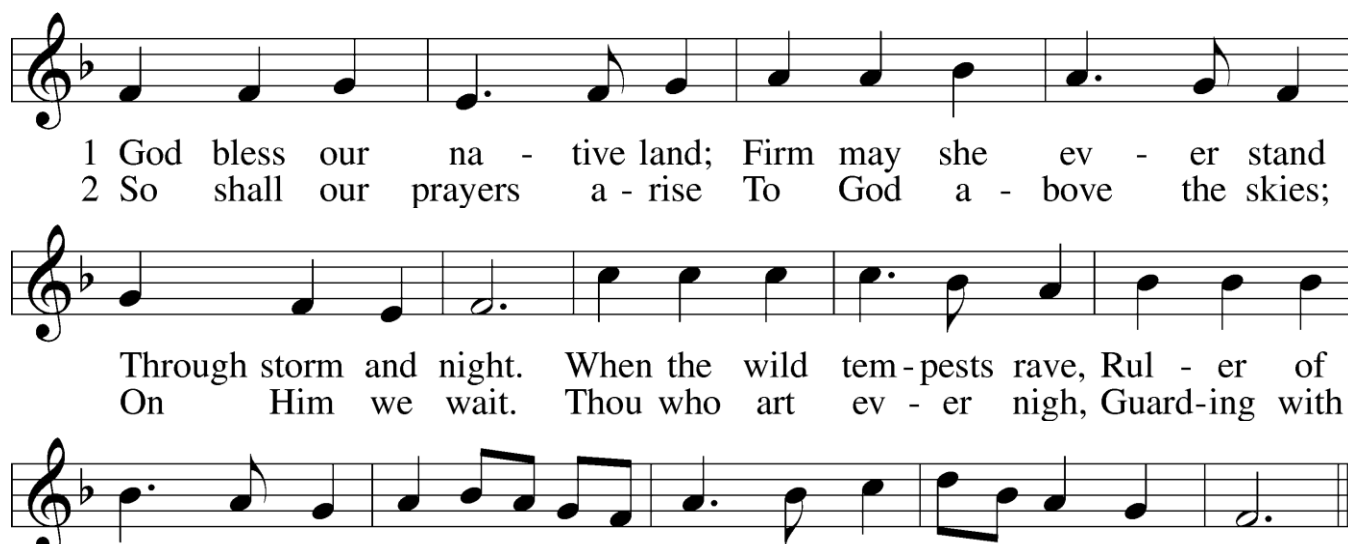
On the shore dimly seen through the mists of the deep,
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,
What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,
As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses?
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,
In full glory reflected now shines in the stream:
'Tis the star-spangled banner, O long may it wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion,
A home and a country, should leave us no more?
Their blood has washed out their foul footsteps' pollution.
No refuge could save the hireling and slave
From the terror of flight, or the gloom of the grave:
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave,
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

O thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand
Between their loved homes and the war's desolation.
Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the Heav'n rescued land
Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation!
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,
And this be our motto: 'In God is our trust.'
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

God Bless Our Native Land

Lutheran Service Book 965, Lutheran Worship 497, The Lutheran Hymnal 577



1 God bless our na - tive land; Firm may she ev - er stand
2 So shall our prayers a - rise To God a - bove the skies;

Through storm and night. When the wild tem - pests rave, Rul - er of
On Him we wait. Thou who art ev - er nigh, Guard - ing with

wind and wave, Do Thou our coun - try save By Thy great might.
watch - ful eye, To Thee a - loud we cry: God save the state!

Prayer: Lord, keep this nation under Your care. Bless the leaders of our land that we may be a people at peace among ourselves and a blessing to the other nations of the earth. Grant that we may choose trustworthy leaders, contribute to wise decisions for the general welfare, and serve You faithfully in our generation; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

My preferred interpretation of "No refuge could save the hireling and slave":

This is the most fiercely debated line in the entire song. Historians and scholars offer differing interpretations: Professional vs. Volunteer Soldiers: Many historians suggest Key is contrasting America's heroic volunteer soldiers with the British forces. "Hirelings" referred to mercenaries (like the German Hessians used by the British), while "slaves" may have metaphorically referred to ordinary British subjects forced to fight for a tyrannical king, rather than for the cause of freedom.

-Google

University of Michigan professor Mark Clague and Key's biographer has claimed that the poem celebrates the courage of the American soldiers, both black and white, who helped defend the fortress and the city. The controversial phrase, "the hireling and the slave", according to Clague, actually refers to British armed forces personnel and their American collaborators regardless of race, who are promised either death on the battlefield or, similarly to United Empire Loyalists after the American Revolution, permanent exile once the British Empire is defeated.[19] This interpretation is consistent with what Celticist Michael Newton has written about how, during the American Revolution, "slavery" and "oppression" were routinely used as Patriot code words for continued "British rule" over the United States.

Also according to Clague, Francis Scott Key freed four of the seven slaves he inherited and was involved in his later years with the American Colonization Society's practice of buying slaves and setting them free in what is now Liberia. Key's poem, according to Clague, "in no way glorifies or celebrates slavery."

-Wikipedia

Mark Clague (August 31, 2016). "'Star-Spangled Banner' critics miss the point". CNN.com. Retrieved April 18, 2017.

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