

The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost July 16, 2023

In our modern world, it is tempting to downplay the importance of God's Word. Yet without God's Word, there can be no real life, only existence. We should never forget that God's Word is effective. It does what God intends for it to do (Isaiah 55). Unfortunately, it is too easy to allow the "cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word" (Matthew 13:22). Pray that your heart will be the good soil where the Word prospers and you bear much fruit.

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

Lutheran Service Book 790, Lutheran Worship 444, The Lutheran Hymnal 39



1 Praise to the Lord, the Al - might - y, the King of cre -
2 Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things is won - drous - ly
3 Praise to the Lord, who has fear - ful - ly, won - drous - ly,
4 Praise to the Lord, who will pros - per your work and de -



a - tion! O my soul, praise Him, for He is your
reign - ing And, as on wings of an ea - gle, up -
made you, Health has be - stowed and, when heed - less - ly
fend you; Sure - ly His good - ness and mer - cy shall



health and sal - va - tion! Let all who hear Now to His
lift - ing, sus - tain - ing. Have you not seen All that is
fall - ing, has stayed you. What need or grief Ev - er has
dai - ly at - tend you. Pon - der a - new What the Al -



tem - ple draw near, Join - ing in glad ad - o - ra - tion!
need - ful has been Sent by His gra - cious or - dain - ing?
failed of re - lief? Wings of His mer - cy did shade you.
might - y can do As with His love He be - friends you.

- 5 Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore Him!
All that has life and breath, come now with praises before Him!
Let the Amen
Sound from His people again;
Gladly forever adore Him!

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 103:15-19; antiphon Psalm 103:8

L The Lord is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

C As for man, his days are like grass;
he flourishes like a flower of the field;

L for the wind passes over it, and it is gone,
and its place knows it no more.

C But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him,
and his righteousness to children's children,

L to those who keep his covenant
and remember to do his commandments.

C The Lord has established his throne in the heavens,
and his kingdom rules over all.

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 The Lord is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

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: Blessed Lord, since 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 we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C** Amen.

Isaiah 55:10–13

¹⁰“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
 and do not return there but water the earth,
 making it bring forth and sprout,
 giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
¹¹so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
 it shall not return to me empty,
 but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
 and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

¹²“For you shall go out in joy
 and be led forth in peace;
 the mountains and the hills before you
 shall break forth into singing,
 and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

¹³Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;
 instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;
 and it shall make a name for the LORD,
 an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

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

Gradual Romans 11:33, 36

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

Psalm 65:9–13

- L** ⁹You visit the earth and water it; you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide their grain, for so you have prepared it.
- C** ¹⁰**You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth.**
- L** ¹¹You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with abundance.
- C** ¹²**The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy,**
- L** ¹³the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy.

Romans 8:12–17

¹²So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

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

Verse Isaiah 40:8

- L** Alleluia. The grass withers, the flower fades, Alleluia.
- C** **Alleluia. But the word of our God will stand forever. Alleluia.**

Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23

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

¹That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. ²And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. ³And he told them many things in parables, saying: “A sower went out to sow. ⁴And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. ⁵Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, ⁶but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. ⁷Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹He who has ears, let him hear.”

¹⁸“Hear then the parable of the sower: ¹⁹When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. ²⁰As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, ²¹yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. ²²As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. ²³As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

- L** This is the Gospel of the Lord.
- C** **Praise to You, O Christ.**

C I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven

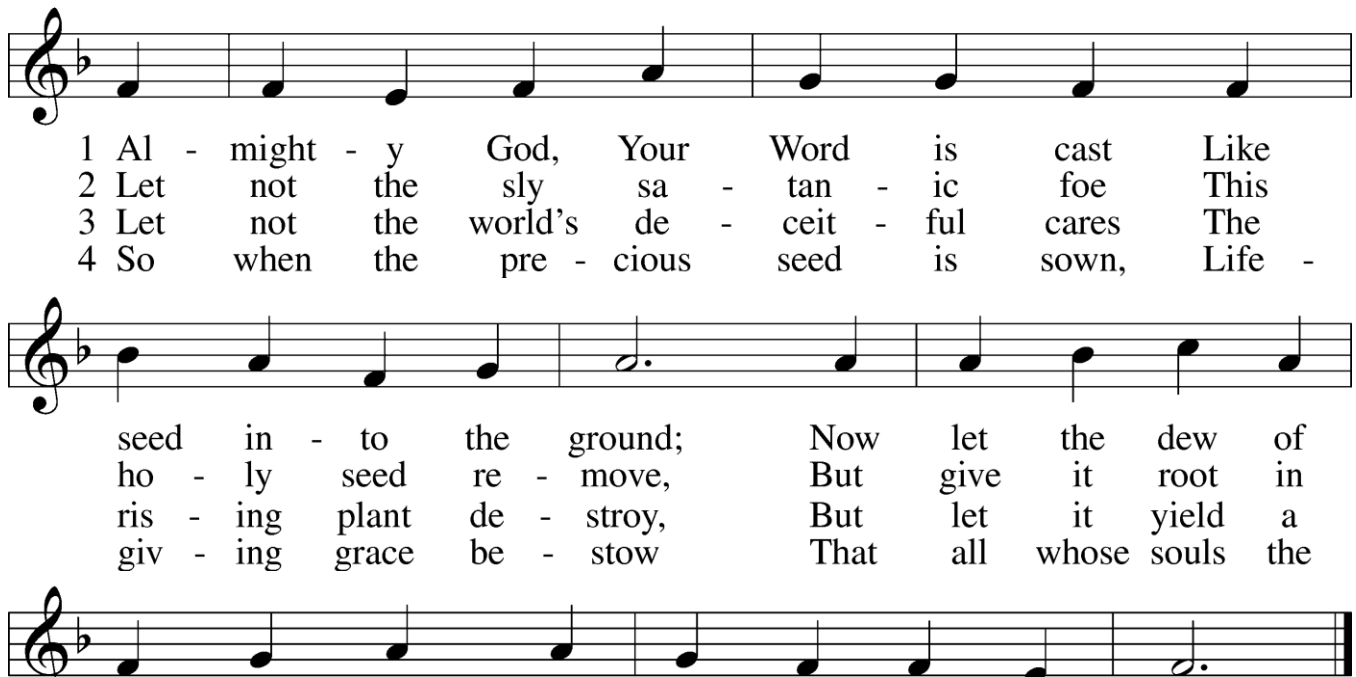
and sits at the right hand of God the Father
Almighty.

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

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen

Almighty God, Your Word Is Cast

Lutheran Service Book 577, Lutheran Worship 342, The Lutheran Hymnal 39



1 Al - might - y God, Your Word is cast Like
2 Let not the sly sa - tan - ic foe This
3 Let not the world's de - ceit - ful cares The
4 So when the pre - cious seed is sown, Life -

seed in - to the ground; Now let the dew of
ho - ly seed re - move, But give it root in
ris - ing plant de - stroy, But let it yield a
giv - ing grace be - stow That all whose souls the

heav'n de - scend And righ - teous fruits a - bound.
ev - 'ry heart To bring forth fruits of love.
hun - dred - fold The fruits of peace and joy.
truth re - ceive Its sav - ing pow'r may know.

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Devotional thoughts:

I was startled when I first saw Nazareth, Jesus' childhood town. When Mary, Joseph, and Jesus lived there, it was no more than a small town or village. Today, it is the largest city in northern Israel with a population of 77,000. About 69% of the people living in Nazareth are Muslim and 31% are Christian. These facts are indeed startling. But what was most startling to me is that Nazareth sits on a bluff almost 1000ft above the Jezreel Valley.

From atop the bluff near Nazareth, Jesus would have gazed out across the fertile valley to Mount Megiddo. On a clear day, if He turned southwest, He could glimpse Mount Carmel. Or He could have turned to the east to see the solitary Mount Tabor rise from the broad valley.

In our time, just as it must have been in Jesus' day, the Jezreel Valley is lush with crops. It is considered the breadbasket of Israel. It is cultivated with wheat and barley. The land also produces white beans, chickpeas, cotton, green beans, cowpeas, oranges, sunflowers, corn, squashes, watermelons, herbs, and spices.

With this little bit of geographic knowledge, you can understand how natural it was for Jesus to teach the adoring crowds with the Parable of the Sower. Although Jesus grew up in a town where His father was a carpenter, Jesus' earliest memories certainly must have included the vivid images of farmers sowing their crops. As each season gave way to the next, year after year, he would have witnessed planting and growth, ripening and harvest.

The life of a farmer is one of faith. He can do very little to control the outcome of the crop. He can plant. He can cultivate. But God must send the sunshine and the rain. God must direct the seed to sprout and grow. God gives the bountiful harvest.

In faith, the farmer scatters the seed on the soil and then he must wait and watch. "First the blade and then the ear, Then the full corn shall appear."

Jesus adds a down-to-earth reality to this picture. Some seed doesn't make it to maturity. It falls on the path. Quick-eyed birds soon devour it.

Although the Jezreel Valley is lush and green, Nazareth, itself, is rocky. Jesus often must have witnessed the hopeful sowing of seed only to see it wither away in the heat under the scorching sun.

Some seeds do find a home in fertile soil. Unfortunately, choking thorns quickly overtake the tender sprouts.

All this, Jesus must have observed. But in the face of these seeming failures, He also had watched seed falling in the rich soil of a farmer's field. Here, all of the farmer's hopes and dreams for his crop were realized. The bitter disappointment of paths, rocky, and weedy soils are soon forgotten. In the right environment, the seed even produces a hundredfold!

Jesus certainly knew His agriculture. Researchers today tell us that a single seed of wheat will produce a plant where, on average, you will find 22 seeds per head and 5 heads per plant, or 110 seeds per plant!

Of course, Jesus is not giving a lesson in farming. As important as this noble profession is, He is teaching about something even more important. He is teaching about the Kingdom of God!

God's Kingdom is wonderful! It is the place where the lamb lies down with the lion. It is the place where peace and justice abound. It is the place where God reigns and everything is as God intended it to be without the corruption of sin, death, or the devil.

God's Kingdom presents us with a puzzle. Why doesn't everyone immediately embrace this marvelous message of God's kingdom coming in the person of His own beloved Son? The answer is found in a farmer sowing his field.

Some hear the wonderful word of the kingdom. But they find it hard for their human intellect to comprehend and the devil snatches it away from their hearts.

Others perceive the kingdom of God for what it is. They rejoice in its coming but then misfortune and troubles overcome their joy. They fall away from this encounter with God's comfort and peace.

Still, others hear the word of the kingdom and embrace its truth. But soon they are enticed away by worldly pleasures and the deceitfulness of financial gain.

Finally, the wonderful word of the kingdom does fall where it takes root and flourishes. By the grace of God, Jesus' message accomplishes its ultimate purpose of bringing people to faith and granting the gift of eternal life.

Jesus' parable answers the perplexing question: Why doesn't everyone believe? Why does the flock of the faithful seem to be so small?

It also serves as a word of warning for us. Don't allow the difficulties or successes of life to pull you away from faith and peace with God.

During this time of economic and political turmoil, the joy of God's Kingdom is more attractive than ever. For a little while, we may have to share in Jesus' cross of suffering and persecution. However, we keep in our mind's eye the empty tomb and Jesus' awesome resurrection from the dead as we wait for the day when He will wipe away every tear from our eyes and we will dwell in God's Kingdom forever.

God's richest blessings to you in Christ.

L Father of all mercy and grace, the thorns and briars of sin in our lives have yielded only trouble and strife. Forgive our disobedience and preserve us in times of temptation that we may rejoice in Your name and the promise of everlasting life.

C Amen.

L Almighty God, You send forth Your Word like rain upon the earth. Grant that it would not return to You empty but accomplish the purpose for which You send it both in our lives and in the world.

C Amen.

L Lord of life, continue to sow Your Word through the fields of the earth. Bless all pastors and missionaries as they proclaim Your truth. Prepare the hearts of all who hear to believe and yield abundant fruit.

C Amen.

L Heavenly Father, bless parents with faithfulness as they plant Your Word into their children that they may grow in faith among the cares and troubles of this world.

C Amen.

L Creator of heaven and earth, by Your Word You send forth rain and snow to make the world bring forth and sprout. Give seed to the sower and bread to the eater. Provide us seasonable weather and bountiful harvest, that we may enjoy daily bread and praise Your name

C Amen.

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

C Amen.

C I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

C Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

L Let us bless the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

L The Lord bless us, defend us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

C Amen.

Sing to the Lord of Harvest

Lutheran Service Book 893, Lutheran Worship 493, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a



1 Sing to the Lord of har - vest, Sing songs of love and praise;
2 God makes the clouds rain good - ness, The des - erts bloom and spring,
3 Bring to this sa - cred al - tar The gifts His good - ness gave,



With joy - ful hearts and voic - es Your al - le - lu - ias raise.
The hills leap up in glad - ness, The val - leys laugh and sing.
The gold - en sheaves of har - vest, The souls Christ died to save.



By Him the roll - ing sea - sons In fruit - ful or - der move;
God fills them with His full - ness, All things with large in - crease;
Your hearts lay down be - fore Him When at His feet you fall,



Sing to the Lord of har - vest A joy - ous song of love.
He crowns the year with bless - ing, With plen - ty and with peace.
And with your lives a - dore Him Who gave His life for all.

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Service Notes:

One person may serve as Leader or this may be shared with a number of individuals.

Read one or more of the lessons. Hymns may be sung or read. Use as much or little of this service as you would like.

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Enhancing Your Worship

Meditating on God's Word and Works

I will meditate on your wondrous works. Psalm 119:27
My eyes are awake through the night watches,
That I may meditate on Your word. Psalm 119:148 NKJV

The Week of The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost July 17 – 22, 2023

Introduction

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

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

Monday

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

Verse Isaiah 40:8

- L** Alleluia. The grass withers, the flower fades, Alleluia.
- C** Alleluia. But the word of our God will stand forever. Alleluia.

Introit Psalm 103:15-19; antiphon Psalm 103:8

- L** The Lord is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
- C** As for man, his days are like grass;
he flourishes like a flower of the field;
- L** for the wind passes over it, and it is gone,
and its place knows it no more.
- C** But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him,
and his righteousness to children's children,
- L** to those who keep his covenant
and remember to do his commandments.
- C** The Lord has established his throne in the heavens,
and his kingdom rules over all.
- 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** The Lord is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

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.

I hope you are enjoying summer. I am. I'm enjoying the flowers that my wife has planted around our house. I am enjoying watching the crops blossom and grow. It is a wonderful time of the year!

But it is too short. Sadly, too soon it will all be a memory. Leaves will change color and fall to the ground. Winter winds will blow.

The Psalmist reminds us that human life is just like that. It flourishes for a while but all too quickly it begins to decline. Finally, it is gone.

But wait! The steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting! It is His desire that we should live in His steadfast love in all eternity. For this reason, He sent His Son to be our Savior!

We may watch the seasons come and go. We may observe our own human frailty but thanks be to God who gives us the victory in Jesus Christ our Lord. We await the day when we will join together in paradise before the throne of God. We look forward to the day when the Tree of Life will produce its twelve kinds of fruit on the banks of the River of Life in the City of God (Revelation 22:1-5).

L Let us pray. O Lord, Your steadfast love is from everlasting to everlasting. Grant that we may not be so distracted by the temporary things of life that we forget to fix our eyes on Jesus and the eternal life He grants to sinners, through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, ever one God world without end.

C Amen

Tuesday

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

C Amen.

Verse Isaiah 40:8

L Alleluia. The grass withers, the flower fades, Alleluia.

C Alleluia. But the word of our God will stand forever. 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. Blessed Lord, since 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 we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen

In my youth, I heard this collect prayed many times each year. It was one of two prayers appointed for the closing of the non-communion service which begins on page 5 in the Lutheran Hymnal. It has a name. It is known as The Collect for the Word.

This prayer is packed with meaning. Indeed, it is God, Himself who has provided His holy word for us in

the Bible. It is written to be a blessing for each one of us that we may learn of His love for us in Jesus Christ.

We pray that we would hear it. Read it. Take special note of it. Learn from it. And inwardly digest it!

I remember a time when it was common to belittle the phrase, “inwardly digest.” It was changed in Lutheran Worship to “take them to heart.” But now in Lutheran Service Book “inwardly digest” is back.

However, Lutheran Service Book makes this collect harder to find since it is no longer provided as a weekly option. I find that disappointing. It has so much to say.

The ultimate goal of this prayer and all of our Christian lives finds its summation in the conclusion of this collect. God provides His word. We take it to heart “that we may embrace and ever hold fast to the blessed hope of everlasting life!”

Prayer: Blessed Lord, since 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 we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Wednesday

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

C Amen.

Verse Isaiah 40:8

L Alleluia. The grass withers, the flower fades, Alleluia.

C Alleluia. But the word of our God will stand forever. Alleluia.

Kyrie

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

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

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

Psalms 65:9–13

L ⁹You visit the earth and water it; you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide their grain, for so you have prepared it.

C ¹⁰**You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth.**

L ¹¹You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with abundance.

C ¹²**The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy,**

L ¹³the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy.

The Psalm for this week is the conclusion of Psalm 65. It is appropriate because it reminds us that God provides the water necessary to sustain earthly life.

However, we would do well to read the entire Psalm. David’s song of praise to God is motivated by God’s love and forgiveness. At the beginning of the Psalm in verse 3 he writes, “When iniquities prevail against me, you atone for our transgressions.”

This breathtaking reality of atonement is His inspiration to speak these words of praise to God for all of God’s works that David observes in creation and nature. The rain that visits the earth is one more example of God’s generosity. May we, too, see in nature the goodness of God and be reminded of the salvation that is ours in Christ through the forgiveness of sins that He won for us on the cross.

Prayer: O God, when it rains allow us to be reminded of your goodness and grace that falls upon us and refreshes our souls in Christ. Amen.

Thursday

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

Verse Isaiah 40:8

L Alleluia. The grass withers, the flower fades, Alleluia.
C Alleluia. But the word of our God will stand forever. 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.

Isaiah 55:10–13

¹⁰“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
and do not return there but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
¹¹so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

¹²“For you shall go out in joy
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you
shall break forth into singing,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

¹³Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;
instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;
and it shall make a name for the LORD,
an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

These verses are on my list of favorites from Isaiah. They are words of comfort to a preacher and all believers. They are an astounding promise from God.

God’s word is like the rain. Wherever God’s word is preached, faith will sprout and grow. Even in the parched soil of the desert, life will spring up in all its majesty when rain falls from heaven.

At times, we all become discouraged. This is particularly true when we witness all the evil in the world. This is even more true for preachers. All we have to fight evil is the word of God.

Early in my ministry, I encountered a young man whose language was so foul that it would “make a sailor blush.” (I apologize to all navy personnel for this colloquial expression.) I had a weekly encounter with him. One day I came home and told my wife, “Here is someone whom we will never see in our church.” Her response to me was, “You never know what God can do!”

I remember these words because a few years later, I confirmed him and his wife and welcomed his whole family into our church. Even dead and parched hearts will spring to life when they are watered by the Gospel of Jesus and the message of forgiveness, life, and salvation through faith in Him.

Prayer: O God, as the rain and snow come from heaven and bring life to the earth, grant that Your holy word would water our parched souls and restore us to life in You, 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 Isaiah 40:8

L Alleluia. The grass withers, the flower fades, Alleluia.
C Alleluia. But the word of our God will stand forever. Alleluia.

Kyrie

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

Romans 8:12–17

¹²So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

As we continue our journey through Romans, we encounter these amazing words: We “have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’” We are children of God! We are fellow heirs with Christ!

When we forget the awesome majesty of God, we little appreciate how awesome it is that God has adopted us into His family through Christ. All that we could ever want or imagine is ours through this adoption.

Yes, we may suffer for a little while, even as Jesus did. But soon we will be glorified with Him in His kingdom forever.

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

Saturday

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

Verse Isaiah 40:8

L Alleluia. The grass withers, the flower fades, Alleluia.
C Alleluia. But the word of our God will stand forever. 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.

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. |

Another week comes to a close. We have again witnessed the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! We may have been too distracted to notice. Today, let us pause and reflect on not only the beauty of nature but the richness of God's grace in Christ.

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind but now I see.

Prayer: Lord God Almighty, grant that in the beauty of the earth we may be reminded of your generosity of the cross where you saved a wretch like me. Let your word of grace water my soul each minute of every day; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

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