

Independence Day Worship

The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

July 7, 2024

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 We worship God, the Father,

C Who created heaven and earth, who created our nation and every nation, who makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust, who is worthy to be praised for the bounty of the land, who loved the world so that he gave his only begotten Son.

Genesis 1:1; Matthew 5:45; Ps. 65:9; John 3:16

L We worship God, the Son,

C The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, who died for the nations, and gives life to all who believe.

John 1:29; John 11:51,52; John 5:24

L We worship God, the Holy Spirit,

C Who is sent by the Father and the Son to work through baptizing and teaching to make disciples of all nations.

John 14:15; John 15:26; Matthew 28:18-20

L Lord, of the nations, to you our country we commend.

C Be her refuge and her fortress, her everlasting friend.

Ps. 91:2

Confession of Sins

L Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD;

C O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.

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.

Ps. 130:1-4

C Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Judge of all people and nations, we admit and confess our sinfulness. We have turned away from you and each other in our thinking, speaking, and doing. We have done the evil you forbid and have not done the good you demand. Especially do we confess that we have failed as citizens of your kingdom and as citizens of this nation in which we live. We do repent and are truly sorry for these our sins. Have mercy on us, kind Father, because of the obedience of our Brother, Jesus Christ, your Son. Forgive us all that is past, and with the power of the Holy Spirit move us to serve you faithfully. Have mercy on us and set our feet upon the new path of life, and build your kingdom here through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

L Almighty God, our heavenly Father, has had mercy upon us and has given his only Son to die for us and for his sake forgives us all our sins. To them that believe on his name he gives the power to become the children of God and has promised them his Holy Spirit. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.

L Grant this, Lord, unto us all.

C Amen.

Introit Psalm 132:13–16; antiphon Psalm 34:8

L Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!

Blessèd is the man who takes refuge in him!

C For the Lord has chosen Zion;
he has desired it for his dwelling place:

- L** “This is my resting place forever;
here I will dwell, for I have desired it.
- C** **I will abundantly bless her provisions;
will satisfy her poor with bread.**
- L** Her priests I will clothe with salvation,
and her saints will shout for joy.
- C** **Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**
- L** Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!
Blessèd is the man who takes refuge in him!

Kyrie

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

Gloria in Excelsis ~ Glory to God in the Highest

- L** Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.
- C** **Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father: We worship You, we give You thanks, and we praise You for Your glory.**
- L** Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, You are Lord and God, You are the Lamb of God:
- C** **Lord Jesus Christ, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.**
- L** Lord Jesus Christ, You are seated at the right hand of the Father; and we ask you to graciously receive our prayer.
- C** **For You alone are the Holy One,
You alone are the Lord,
You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

Collect of the Day

- L** Let us pray: O God, Your almighty power is made known chiefly in showing mercy. Grant us the fullness of Your grace that we may be called to repentance and made partakers of Your heavenly treasures; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C** **Amen.**

Prayer for Independence Day

All: Lord of all nations, we thank and praise you that You created us for freedom and that you recreated us for freedom in Your holy Gospel. We pray for strength to live up to our obligations in a nation where you have given us great civil and religious freedoms. Help us as people free in Christ to encourage those freedoms throughout the world to open the way for the hearing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Ezekiel 2:1–5

¹ He said to me, “Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak with you.”

²And as he spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard him speaking to me.
³And he said to me, "Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, to nations of rebels, who have rebelled against me. They and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day. ⁴The descendants also are impudent and stubborn: I send you to them, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD.' ⁵And whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that a prophet has been among them.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

God of Our Fathers

Lutheran Service Book n/a, Lutheran Worship 501, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a

1. God of our fa - thers, whose al - might - y hand
 2. Your love di - vine has led us in the past,
 3. From war's a - larms, from dead - ly pes - ti - lence,
 4. Re - fresh your peo - ple on their toil - some way,

Leads forth in beau - ty all the star - ry band
 In this free land by you our lot is cast;
 Your might - y arm our ev - er sure de - fense;
 Lead us from night to nev - er - end - ing day;

Of shin - ing worlds in splen - dor through the skies,
 Be our strong rul - er, guar - dian, guide, and stay,
 Your true re - li - gion in our hearts in - crease,
 Fill all our lives with heav'n-born love and grace,

Our grate - ful songs be - fore your throne a - rise.
 Your word our law, your paths our cho - sen way.
 Your boun - teous good - ness nour - ish us in peace.
 Un - til at last, we meet be - fore your face.

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Gradual Romans 11:33, 36

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

Psalm 123

- L** ¹To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens!
- C** ²**Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he has mercy upon us.**
- L** ³Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us, for we have had more than enough of contempt.
- C** ⁴**Our soul has had more than enough of the scorn of those who are at ease, of the contempt of the proud.**

2 Corinthians 12:1–10

¹I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. ²I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. ³And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— ⁴and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. ⁵On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. ⁶Though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. ⁷So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. ⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

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

Verse of the Day: Mark 6:13

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. They cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them, Alleluia.
- C** Alleluia, Alleluia. Many who were sick and healed. Alleluia.

Mark 6:1–13

- L** The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 6th chapter.
- C** Glory to You, O Lord.

¹[Jesus] went away from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. ²And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished, saying, “Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? ³Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. ⁴And Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household.” ⁵And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. ⁶And he marveled because of their unbelief.

And he went about among the villages teaching.

⁷And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. ⁸He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts— ⁹but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics. ¹⁰And he said to them, “Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. ¹¹And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.” ¹²So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. ¹³And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.

- 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

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 - plore, 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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Devotional thoughts:

I was a vicar (intern) at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Moline, Illinois from August 1975 to August 1976. While I was there, we had the privilege to celebrate the bicentennial of the Declaration of Independence. Remarkably, July 4th fell on a Sunday that year. As you can imagine, patriotism was in vogue. Our church sponsored a float in the Independence Day Parade. Red, white, and blue were everywhere. We said the Pledge of Allegiance at the beginning of our service and sang patriotic hymns. A special Independence Day sermon was preached. (I continued these practices throughout my ministry when I served in the United States.)

How times have changed! In recent years, athletes have refused to stand for the National Anthem or turned their backs on the flag. Pastors, believing they are being faithful to God, refuse to mention the 4th of July in their sermons and remove the American flag from their churches.

Despite this, patriotism has a long history in the Lutheran Church. In 1732, German-speaking Lutherans in Pennsylvania requested a pastor from Germany. In 1742, the request was finally fulfilled when Henry Melchior Muhlenberg accepted their call. His journals indicate that he was one of the first people to hear the public reading of the Declaration of Independence. His son, Peter was a pastor but in the Revolutionary War, he

became a Major General in the Continental Army and later was elected to the U.S. Congress. Another son, Frederick also became a pastor. He served in the Continental Congress and was the first Speaker of the House of Representatives. As Speaker, he signed the Bill of Rights along with John Adams, the Vice President.

The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod also has a long history of patriotism and national service. Pastors of the LCMS have served as military chaplains since the Civil War.

Of course, patriotism should never be confused with faithfulness to God. A constant theme in the Old Testament is the unfaithfulness of the kings of Judah and Israel. Their rebellion against God was ultimately punished by destruction and exile. Nevertheless, a good and peaceful government is a gift from God. Paul reminds us that all authority comes from God (Romans 13) and we are to pray for our national leaders (1 Timothy 2:1-3). In fact, it is pleasing to God.

Patriotism and praying for our national and local authorities are particularly difficult when we are scorned and ridiculed for our faith by political leaders and fellow citizens. But this should not be surprising. Jesus met the same disdain in his hometown of Nazareth. They refused to recognize Him even as a prophet! To them, He was just a carpenter and nothing more. In their minds, he certainly wasn't the Christ, the Son of God and Savior of the world.

In addition, the national leaders in Jerusalem saw Him as a threat to their earthly power and authority. Their solution was to put Him to death as a rebel against authority. History tells us that Peter and Paul also were executed by the government in Rome.

In the face of this opposition, what are we to do? First, we must understand that we live in a sinful world and our leaders are sinful. They need a savior just as we do. Their sinful actions should never catch us off guard. We do not accept their sinfulness but understand it. Just as King David of old, our leaders need to repent and receive forgiveness (2 Samuel 12; Psalm 51; Psalm 32).

Next, we recognize that our nation is a gift from God. He has put each of us in this time and place in history. It is no accident that we are to be citizens of our country while at the same time, we are citizens of God's kingdom. When confronted with this dilemma Jesus declared, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21).

While it may have become fashionable in the church to ignore Independence Day, it is good to hear what Martin Luther has to say about Romans 13:

"In chapter 13 [Paul] teaches honor and obedience to worldly government. Although worldly government does not make people righteous before God, nevertheless it is instituted in order to accomplish at least this much, that the good may have outward peace and protection and the bad may not be free to do evil in peace and quietness, and without fear. Therefore the good too are to honor it even though they themselves do not need it. Finally, he comprehends it all in love, and sums it up in the example of Christ: as he has done for us, we are also to do, following in his footsteps" (AE 35:379).

As we celebrate Independence Day during a time of confusion about patriotism, it would be well for us to conclude by hearing the Apostle Paul's direction concerning Christian citizenship and patriotism.

^{3:1} Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, ² to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. ³ For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. ⁴ But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. ⁸ The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people" (Titus 3:1-8).

Prayer for Our Country

- C** 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.
- L** 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** O Lord, Your people of old were a rebellious house. Grant that in our day that our nation and leaders would put away all rebelliousness and disobedience. Make us a people who hear Your Word and trust Your promises through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- C** Amen.
- L** O Lord, we often suffer in ways beyond our understanding and comprehension. When this happens bring to our minds Your words to the Apostle Paul that Your grace is sufficient for us and that for Your power is made perfect in weakness through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- C** Amen.
- L** Gracious Lord, Jesus did not receive honor and acceptance in His home town. Grant that we may never fail to honor Him and receive His blessings, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.
- C** Amen.
- L** O God of peace, during this time of war in the ancient land of Jesus' birth and in Ukraine, we pray that You would grant a swift end to the conflict and lasting peace, that right and justice would prevail, and that You would grant Your mighty hand of protection to the innocent and helpless.
- 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 according to Your will. Help each of us to bear our crosses with patience and grace.
- C** Amen.
- L** O Lord, heavenly Father, we gratefully remember the sufferings and death of Your dear Son, Jesus Christ, for our salvation. Strengthen us in faith amid the many changes that we endure throughout our lives. Help us to trust that Your will is always best. Graciously receive our prayers, deliver and preserve us, for to You alone we give all glory, honor, and worship, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- 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 Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

July 8-13, 2024

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.
- G** Amen.

Verse of the Day: Mark 6:13

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. They cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them, Alleluia.
- G** Alleluia, Alleluia. Many who were sick and healed. Alleluia.

Introit Psalm 132:13–16; antiphon Psalm 34:8

- L** Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!
Blessèd is the man who takes refuge in him!
- G** For the Lord has chosen Zion;
he has desired it for his dwelling place:
- L** "This is my resting place forever;
here I will dwell, for I have desired it.
- G** I will abundantly bless her provisions;
will satisfy her poor with bread.
- L** Her priests I will clothe with salvation,
and her saints will shout for joy.
- G** 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** Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!
Blessèd is the man who takes refuge in him!

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.

This was a long weekend for many people. Two of our largest local fireworks displays were presented on Wednesday evening. With the Fourth of July falling on Thursday, large numbers of people were able to include Friday as part of their holiday. So please bear with me as I extend our Independence Day observance for one more day.

Those who know me, know that I like to sing. I love to sing the National Anthem at ball games. I will joyfully join in singing America, the Beautiful, and God Bless America.

All three of these patriotic songs are an embarrassment to secularists. They all make mention of God and His blessings upon our nation. Stanza four of "The Star-Spangled Banner" declares:

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.'

God Bless America is quite clear on insisting that our reliance is on God.

God bless America, land that I love
Stand beside her and guide her
Through the night with the light from above
From the mountains to the prairies
To the oceans white with foam
God bless America, my home sweet home.

Of these three, America, The Beautiful is the most clear in proclaiming our reliance on God in each stanza.

1. God shed His grace on thee
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea!
2. God mend thine every flaw,
Confirm thy soul in self-control,
Thy liberty in law!
3. May God thy gold refine,
Till all success be nobleness,
And every gain divine!
4. God shed His grace on thee
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea!

They all echo the idea articulated in the antiphon for the introit this week from Psalm 34:8, "Blessèd is the man who takes refuge in him!"

Yet as Christians, we know that taking refuge in God means more than what these three patriotic songs announce. Taking refuge in God means believing and trusting in Jesus and the salvation that He won for us on the cross.

One day wars will cease. All that America is will come to an end. Time itself will be no more. Yet those who take refuge in Jesus will enjoy eternity with Him forevermore.

- L** Let us pray. 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.
- 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: Mark 6:13

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. They cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them, Alleluia.
- C** Alleluia, Alleluia. Many who were sick and healed. Alleluia.

Kyrie

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

- L** Let us pray: O God, Your almighty power is made known chiefly in showing mercy. Grant us the fullness of Your grace that we may be called to repentance and made partakers of Your heavenly treasures; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C** Amen.

Jesus never disregarded a plea for mercy! Time and again those in need of healing for themselves or others came to Him for mercy and He always granted it.

Now is the time for us to show mercy. In the Gospel lesson for this week, He sent out His disciples as His agents of mercy. They anointed the sick and healed them. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy” (Matthew 5:7).

We are merciful because we have received from Him the greatest mercy of all. We have received the forgiveness of sins and have been made partakers of His heavenly treasures. Because of this, we are more than eager to show mercy to those we encounter.

Let us pray: O God, Your almighty power is made known chiefly in showing mercy. Grant us the fullness of Your grace that we may be called to repentance and made partakers of Your heavenly treasures; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, 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: Mark 6:13

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. They cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them, Alleluia.
- C** Alleluia, Alleluia. Many who were sick and healed. Alleluia.

Psalm 123

- L** ¹To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens!
- C** ²Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he has mercy upon us.
- L** ³Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us, for we have had more than enough of contempt.
- C** ⁴Our soul has had more than enough of the scorn of those who are at ease, of the contempt of the proud.

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.

Mercy is one of the several themes for this week. We all need God's mercy but not all of us recognize this. When we neglect God's word and neglect to worship, we are saying in essence that we do not need God's mercy and grace.

When we willfully sin and slander God's name, we reject God's mercy and grace. When we ignore pleas for help and mercy, we disregard our own need for God's mercy and grace.

Then there are times when God allows us to experience some discomfort or suffering. He may do this so that we would recognize just how helpless we are. Then we lift up our eyes to the Lord our God and seek His mercy.

Lamentations 3:22-21 reminds us, "His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning." Without God's mercy, no one would survive. Dangers and hardships abound. Adversaries and foes are around every corner. Sickness and disease are never far away. But God in His mercy protects us.

But we ought never to forget the greatest mercy of all. It was won for us on the cross. "He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

Prayer: Almighty God, grant us a steadfast faith in Jesus Christ, a cheerful hope in Your mercy, and a sincere love for You and one another; 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: Mark 6:13

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. They cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them, Alleluia.
- C** Alleluia, Alleluia. Many who were sick and healed. Alleluia.

Kyrie

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

Ezekiel 2:1–5

¹ He said to me, “Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak with you.”
² And as he spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard him speaking to me.
³ And he said to me, “Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, to nations of rebels, who have rebelled against me. They and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day. ⁴The descendants also are impudent and stubborn: I send you to them, and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD.’ ⁵And whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that a prophet has been among them.

These words from God to Ezekiel are sobering, “I send you to the people of Israel, to nations of rebels, who have rebelled against me. They and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day.” The people of Israel are suffering in exile because of their rebellion. God had sent many prophets to bring warnings to them but they refused to listen. As a result, God’s patience was eventually exhausted and the people suffered the consequences.

In our celebration of God’s blessings upon our nation, we must never forget God’s displeasure with sin. We ought not to misinterpret God’s patience as an acceptance of evil. Now is the time to repent and return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster (Joel 2:13).

Prayer: Look mercifully upon our nation, O Lord. We implore You, let not our sin destroy us, nor hopelessness overwhelm us, but let Your boundless mercy save us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Friday

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

Verse of the Day: Mark 6:13

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|----------|---|
| L | Alleluia, Alleluia. They cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them, Alleluia. |
| C | Alleluia, Alleluia. Many who were sick and healed. 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 Corinthians 12:1–10

¹I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. ²I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. ³And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— ⁴and he heard things that cannot be told,

which man may not utter. ⁵On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. ⁶Though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. ⁷So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. ⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

This is one of the most powerful portions of Paul’s epistles. Unfortunately, it is included in our readings when so many other things catch our attention.

Paul’s words are a mighty rebuke to those who claim that faith guarantees healing and that the lack of healing is a sign of weak faith. Often God allows illness and suffering to serve a larger purpose.

Paul, a man of extreme faith, recounts his encounter with God when he prayed for healing. God’s answer to his prayer was not miraculous healing but these words, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

Sometimes our difficulties in life serve a greater purpose. Paul includes these on the list: weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. One day while reading this passage of scripture, I suddenly realized that the insults and hardships I was called upon to endure were opportunities to rely on God for His grace. We can join Paul in exclaiming, “When I am weak, then I am strong.” May our difficulties in life move us to cling to Jesus and His cross.

Prayer: O God, whose strength is made perfect in weakness, strengthen us by Your grace that we may endure hardships and insults of every kind. Grant us faith to trust that Your will for us is always best and that we may glorify Your holy name; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Saturday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Mark 6:13

L Alleluia, Alleluia. They cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. Many who were sick and healed. Alleluia.

Gradual Romans 11:33, 36

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

C How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

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

C 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.

2 Corinthians 12:7

⁷ So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited

Romans 12:3

³ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

These two passages go hand-in-glove. They are at odds with pop culture and pop psychology.

Many in our country believe that the greatest evil in the world is low self-esteem. To be sure, this is a danger. No one should believe that they are worthless and unworthy of love. God in Christ loves each one of us.

On the other hand, there is great danger in thinking too highly of one's self. Much evil in the world results from individuals placing their wants, needs, and goals over everyone else.

The corporate environment has long been characterized as a dog-eat-dog world. We witness this every day in politics. X (formerly known as Twitter) and Facebook are filled with extreme criticisms of those who don't live up to some unspoken standard of modern self-righteousness.

Conceit is particularly painful when it is found in the church. Pastors are often forced to endure countless meetings where people allow inflated egos to destroy God-pleasing plans. Lay people have to endure pastors who glory in lording it over those who sit in the pew.

These two passages of scripture offer a healthy antidote to such thinking. Paul is reflecting the teaching of Jesus:

⁴² And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³ But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:42-45).

We are thankful that Jesus humbled Himself to die on the cross for our sins. May we also learn such humility.

Prayer: O God, You resist the proud and give grace to the humble. Grant us true humility following the example of Jesus so that we may never be filled with pride or conceit. Give us lowliness by Your grace; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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