

The Eighth Sunday after Pentecost July 14, 2024

O Holy Spirit, Enter In

Lutheran Service Book 913, Lutheran Worship 160, The Lutheran Hymnal 235



1 O Ho - ly Spir - it, en - ter in, And in our hearts
2 Give to Your Word im - pres - sive pow'r, That in our hearts
3 O might - y Rock, O Source of life, Let Your dear Word,



Your work be - gin, Your dwell - ing place now make us.
from this good hour As fire it may be glow - ing,
in doubt and strife, In us be strong - ly burn - ing



Sun of the soul, O Light di - vine, A - round and in
That in true Chris - tian u - ni - ty We faith - ful wit -
That we be faith - ful un - to death And live in love



us bright - ly shine, To joy and glad - ness wake us
ness - es may be, Your glo - ry ev - er show - ing.
and ho - ly faith, From You true wis - dom learn - ing.



That we may be Tru - ly liv - ing, To You giv - ing
Hear us, cheer us By Your teach - ing; Let our preach - ing
Your grace and peace On us show - er; By Your pow - er



Prayer un - ceas - ing And in love be still in - creas - ing.
And our la - bor Praise You, Lord, and serve our neigh - bor.
Christ con - fess - ing, Let us see our Sav - ior's bless - ing.

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 143:1–2, 8a; antiphon Psalm 143:11

L For your name's sake, O Lord, preserve my life!

In your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble!

C Hear my prayer, O Lord; give ear to my pleas for mercy!

In your faithfulness answer me, in your righteousness!

L Enter not into judgment with your servant,

for no one living is righteous before you.

C Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love,
for in you I trust.

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 For your name's sake, O Lord, preserve my life!

In your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble!

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 Lord, You granted Your prophets strength to resist the temptations of the devil and courage to proclaim repentance. Give us pure hearts and minds to follow Your Son faithfully even into suffering and death; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Amos 7:7–15

⁷This is what [the Lord GOD] showed me: behold, the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. ⁸And the LORD said to me, “Amos, what do you see?” And I said, “A plumb line.” Then the Lord said,

“Behold, I am setting a plumb line
in the midst of my people Israel;
I will never again pass by them;
⁹the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate,
and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste,
and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.”

¹⁰Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, “Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words. ¹¹For thus Amos has said,

“Jeroboam shall die by the sword,
and Israel must go into exile
away from his land.”

¹²And Amaziah said to Amos, “O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, and eat bread there, and prophesy there, ¹³but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king’s sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom.”

¹⁴Then Amos answered and said to Amaziah, “I was no prophet, nor a prophet’s son, but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore figs. ¹⁵But the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’”

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!
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 85:8–13

- L** ⁸Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints; but let them not turn back to folly.
- C** ⁹**Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land.**
- L** ¹⁰Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other.
- C** ¹¹**Faithfulness springs up from the ground, and righteousness looks down from the sky.**
- L** ¹²Yes, the LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase.
- C** ¹³**Righteousness will go before him and make his footsteps a way.**

Ephesians 1:3–14

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

¹¹In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹²so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

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

Verse of the Day: Matthew 5:10

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, Alleluia.
- C** **Alleluia, Alleluia. for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Alleluia.**

Mark 6:14–29

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

¹⁴King Herod heard [about all this], for Jesus' name had become known. Some said, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead. That is why these miraculous powers are at work in him." ¹⁵But others said, "He is Elijah." And others said, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." ¹⁶But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised." ¹⁷For it was Herod who had sent and seized John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because he had married her. ¹⁸For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." ¹⁹And Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death. But she could not, ²⁰for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly.

²¹But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his nobles and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. ²²For when Herodias's daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests. And the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you." ²³And he vowed to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom." ²⁴And she went out

and said to her mother, “For what should I ask?” And she said, “The head of John the Baptist.”²⁵ And she came in immediately with haste to the king and asked, saying, “I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.”²⁶ And the king was exceedingly sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word to her.²⁷ And immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John’s head. He went and beheaded him in the prison²⁸ and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother.²⁹ When his disciples heard of it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

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 sits at the right hand of God the Father
Almighty.

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

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

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

Sing Praise to God, the Highest Good

Lutheran Service Book 819, Lutheran Worship 452, The Lutheran Hymnal 19



1 Sing praise to God, the high - est good, The au - thor of cre -
2 What God’s al - might - y pow’r has made, In mer - cy He is
3 We sought the Lord in our dis - tress; O God, in mer - cy
4 He nev - er shall for - sake His flock, His cho - sen gen - er -



a - tion, The God of love who un - der - stood
keep - ing. By morn - ing glow or eve - ning shade
hear us. Our Sav - ior saw our help - less - ness
a - tion; He is their ref - uge and their rock,



Our need for His sal - va - tion. With heal - ing balm our
His eye is nev - er sleep - ing. With - in the king - dom
And came with peace to cheer us. For this we thank and
Their peace and their sal - va - tion. As with a moth - er’s



souls He fills And ev - 'ry faith - less mur - mur stills:
of His might All things are just and good and right:
praise the Lord, Who is by one and all a - dored:
ten - der hand, He leads His own, His cho - sen band:



To God all praise and glo - ry!
To God all praise and glo - ry!
To God all praise and glo - ry!
To God all praise and glo - ry!

- 5 All who confess Christ's holy name,
Give God the praise and glory.
Let all who know His pow'r proclaim
Aloud the wondrous story.
Cast ev'ry idol from its throne,
For God is God, and He alone:
To God all praise and glory

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Devotional thoughts:

It is a rare treat to live in a time with righteous rulers. Our Old Testament lesson and Gospel lesson both speak of times when national leaders abandoned God and His standards. In the Old Testament lesson, God reveals to Amos His judgment upon Israel because of their wickedness. In the Gospel lesson, we learn of the offensive and corrupt actions of King Herod.

We know from history that this particular King Herod is Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great. Upon the death of Herod the Great, Caesar Augustus divided the Holy Land into three parts. Each of these parts was to be ruled by one of Herod's sons.

Matthew 2:22 reports this about Joseph's return with Mary and Jesus from Egypt, "But when he [Joseph] heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee." Another son, Philip, ruled in the north and Herod Antipas ruled in Galilee and Perea. Archelaus was a poor ruler and was soon replaced in Judea by a Roman governor. The fifth Roman governor of Judea was Pontius Pilate. This is the political setting of today's account from Mark.

Jesus' reputation spread far and wide. His ministry and miracles were a topic of conversation in the royal household. Herod seems to have been curious about spiritual things but didn't allow religion to interfere with his personal pleasure. God's plan for a moral life was of little interest to him.

His half-brother, Philip, had married Herodias. The marriage didn't last. She soon left him for Herod. The King Herod of our story was already married. He divorced his wife and married Herodias.

John the Baptist found Herod's moral misconduct to be repulsive. He had a message for the ruler of Galilee and Perea, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."

Herodias made no pretense of showing an interest in spiritual things. She was offended by his message and simply wanted John the Baptist dead.

We don't know what palace intrigue may have taken place. But eventually, Herod put John the Baptist into "protective custody." Josephus recounts that he was imprisoned in the fortress, Machaerus in present-day Jordan near the Dead Sea.

It seems that from time to time, Herod would summon John the Baptist and listen to his message. From what we know of John the Baptist, his messages must have included a strong emphasis on judgment, repentance, and the forgiveness of sins. It is hard to understand what was going on in Herod's mind as he heard John preach. Mark tells us that he was perplexed yet heard him gladly. What happened next reveals that John's preaching hadn't penetrated Herod's heart.

Herod held a massive party on what may have been his 50th birthday. Everyone who was anyone was there. I imagine that if the party was held today, reporters would be watching the red carpet and describing the guests' stunning attire.

This party was highlighted by a stage show. It included a dance by Herodias's daughter, Salome. Although the Bible doesn't report her name, we learn it from Josephus.

Salome's dance has been the subject of art throughout the ages. Recent broadcasts of the Oscars or Grammy award shows may provide a modern illustration for this first-century performance. Mark simply reports "She pleased Herod and his guests."

Herod enjoyed the dance. He also was delighted that his party guests were equally charmed. A suitably grand reward was in order. It must show his appreciation to her and impress the elite of the nation with his extravagance.

Without much reflection on his proposal, he made an ostentatious offer to Salome. "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you." "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom."

Pastoral wisdom passed down from generation to generation has often pointed to this passage with this warning. "Never promise or swear to things with an uncertain or unknown outcome." In essence, Herod had written a blank check that he would soon regret.

We don't know the age of Salome. We may assume that she was young, for she sought advice from her mother. In any case, she contemplated her request with more deliberation than Herod when he made the offer.

The complete hatred of Herodias for John the Baptist and her corrupt heart is indicated by her detestable suggestion. Salome was to request the head of John the Baptist—on a platter!

Upon hearing this, Mark reports that "the king was exceedingly sorry." The Greek word translated "exceedingly sorry" has the connotation of all-encompassing sorrow. In spite of this, Herod would proceed to fulfill this hideous request.

At this point, pastoral wisdom requires me to point out that oaths to do evil or sin must be broken. Saving face, sidestepping embarrassment, or avoiding public humiliation is never an excuse to sin. It is certainly never an excuse to commit murder and execute an innocent man. This applies to all whether they are high and mighty or lowly and weak.

And so the renowned and memorable ministry of John the Baptist comes to an end. My mother would often recount to me that many years ago Pastor David Wacker at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Bridgman, Michigan had so graphically described the beheading of John the Baptist from the pulpit that a gentleman sitting in front of him fainted. I will make no such attempt. John the Baptist's desire that "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30) was now fulfilled.

It would be easy to use today's lessons to point out God's judgment on corrupt and shameful activities displayed by celebrities or politicians. Not only do they often behave badly, they frequently flaunt and promote immoral and repulsive behavior. That is a legitimate ministry of the present day John the Baptists among us. But that would squander a real opportunity for self-reflection offered by this account.

There is a little bit of Herod and Herodias in all of us. None of us likes to hear God's word of judgment and condemnation because of our sin. It is fashionable today to declare one's self to be "spiritual but not religious." Often this is simply a coded way of saying, "I'm not going to allow God to influence my activities or moral decisions."

Like Herod, we are tempted to allow power, pleasure, or fame to influence our morality. We may like to dabble in spiritual matters but not want to go so far as to allow God's commandments to change our lifestyles.

Some may even sink to the depths of Herodias. We slide in that direction whenever we allow hate to guide our actions rather than love.

John the Baptist still has a message for each of us today. "Repent!" Mark reports that Jesus began His ministry with the very same message, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and

believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:14). In our Gospel lesson last week, Jesus sent out the twelve, two by two. They went out and proclaimed that people should repent (Mark 6:12).

The message of repentance means that it is not too late to change. It is not too late to receive forgiveness and absolution for all of our wrongdoings.

John the Baptist sought to decrease so that Jesus would increase. In one way Jesus’ increasing meant that He was raised on a cross. John the Baptist’s death did not redeem anyone. But when the Lamb of God was sacrificed on the cross, He took away the sins of the world. Included in those sins was every moral failure and burden weighing down your soul.

In the Epistle lesson for this week, Paul proclaims what this means. Because of Jesus, God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. By His glorious grace, He adopted us through Jesus Christ. In Jesus, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which he lavished upon us.

May we never trade this to follow in Herod’s footsteps.

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:4-7).

God’s richest blessings to you in Christ.

Prayers

L Preserve us, O Lord, amidst the difficulties that we face in the world, O Lord. Answer our prayers in Your faithfulness. You sent John the Baptist forth to testify to Your Word, let us follow in his footsteps by proclaiming repentance and forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ alone.

C Amen.

L Preserve the honorable estate of marriage among us, O Lord. Help us to live chaste and decent lives. Bind husband and wife together in love and forgiveness. Equip them by Your Spirit with every good gift to care for and teach the children You give.

C Amen.

L You, O Lord, are King over all the earth. You bring ruin to wicked nations and their rulers and are no respecter of persons. Spare our nation and its leaders, O Lord. Let the conduct of our civil servants and of our people be wise, just, and honorable in accord with Your revealed will. For the sake of Christ, be merciful to those who oppose You, and remember that You desire all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

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.

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 of God, O Light of Light

Lutheran Service Book 810, Lutheran Worship 83, The Lutheran Hymnal 132



1 O God of God, O Light of Light, O Prince of Peace and
2 For deep in proph-ets' sa-cred page, And grand in po-ets'
3 That life of truth, those deeds of love, That death so steeped in
4 Then raise to Christ a might-y song, And shout His name, His



King of kings: To You in heav-en's glo-ry bright The song of
wing-ed word, Slow-ly in type, from age to age The na-tions
hate and scorn— These all are past, and now a-bove He reigns, our
mer-cies tell! Sing, heav'n-ly host, your praise pro-long, And all on



praise for - ev - er rings. To Him who sits up - on the throne,
saw their com - ing Lord; Till through the deep Ju - de - an night
King once crowned with thorn. Lift up your heads, O might - y gates!
earth, your an - them swell! All hail, O Lamb for sin - ners slain!



The Lamb once slain but raised a - gain, Be all the glo - ry
Rang out the song, "Good-will to men!" Sung once by first-born
So sang that host be - yond our ken. Lift up your heads, your
For - ev - er let the song as - cend! Wor - thy the Lamb, en -



He has won, All thanks and praise! A - men, a - men.
sons of light, It ech - oes now, "Good - will!" A - men.
King a - waits. We lift them up. A - men, a - men.
throned to reign, All glo - ry, pow'r! A - men, a - men.

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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 Eighth Sunday after Pentecost July 15-20, 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.
- C** Amen.

Verse of the Day: Matthew 5:10

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, Alleluia.
- C** Alleluia, Alleluia. for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Alleluia.

Introit Psalm 143:1–2, 8a; antiphon Psalm 143:11

- L** For your name's sake, O Lord, preserve my life!
In your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble!
- C** Hear my prayer, O Lord; give ear to my pleas for mercy!
In your faithfulness answer me, in your righteousness!
- L** Enter not into judgment with your servant,
for no one living is righteous before you.
- C** Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love,
for in you I trust.
- 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** For your name's sake, O Lord, preserve my life!
In your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble!

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. |

Students of Scripture have identified seven penitential psalms (6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130). Psalm 143 is the last of them. David declares in Psalm 143:2 “Enter not into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you.”

It is always an easy thing to call others to repentance. Social media appears to be filled with modern “John the Baptists” pointing out every deviation from progressive or conservative orthodoxy. It seems as though no one can ever be pure enough to meet the righteous demands of X (formerly Twitter).

Now and again, one media outlet or another will uncover some socially heretical statement made in the past by prominent moral watchdogs. Then the words of David ought to echo in our ears, “No one living is righteous.”

Before expressing the moral outrage of modern-day Pharisees, it would be wise for each of us to examine our own hearts in the light of Holy Scripture. St. Paul echoes King David’s words in Romans 3:

“None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God.

All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one” (Romans 3:11-12).

Before we begin to call others to repentance, it is good to remember that “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). While looking for a speck in your neighbor’s eye, make sure that you do not neglect the log in your own eye (Matthew 7:3). When you uncover the log in your eye, it is time to remember how Paul concludes his statement about sin: “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:23-24).

Bear in mind that each call for repentance is not a demand for a “pound of flesh.” Rather it is a call to penitence and forgiveness in Christ.

May our own gracious acts of kindness and forgiveness to repentant sinners be a guide to those around us.

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| L | Let us pray. Heavenly Father, You do not wish sinners to die but to repent and live. According to Your great compassion be merciful to me. Take away my sin, deliver me from my guilt, and restore to me the joy of Your salvation; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. |
| C | Amen |

Tuesday

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

Verse of the Day: Matthew 5:10

- | | |
|----------|---|
| L | Alleluia, Alleluia. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, Alleluia. |
| C | Alleluia, Alleluia. for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Alleluia. |

Kyrie

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

L Let us pray: O Lord, You granted Your prophets strength to resist the temptations of the devil and courage to proclaim repentance. Give us pure hearts and minds to follow Your Son faithfully even into suffering and death; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Our lessons this week point us to two prophets, Amos and John the Baptist. Both of them were given the task to proclaim repentance. Both required courage in the face of great opposition. Both came from lowly backgrounds. Amos was a shepherd and John the Baptist lived in the wilderness wearing camel's hair clothes.

Prophets always speak God's word. Often God gave His word directly to prophets of old. Today, prophets are those who speak clearly the words and teachings of Holy Scripture.

The message is always the same: sin and grace; repentance and forgiveness. All of this is in Christ who suffered, died, and rose again for our justification and salvation.

There may be times when God calls you to be a prophet with His message of salvation.

If you cannot preach like Peter,
If you cannot pray like Paul,
You can tell the love of Jesus
And say He died for all.

There Is a Balm in Gilead
LSB stanza 2
Public Domain

Let us pray: O Lord, You granted Your prophets strength to resist the temptations of the devil and courage to proclaim repentance. Give us pure hearts and minds to follow Your Son faithfully even into suffering and death; through the same 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: Matthew 5:10

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, Alleluia.

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

Psalm 85:8–13

L ⁸Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints; but let them not turn back to folly.

C ⁹Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land.

L ¹⁰Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other.

C ¹¹Faithfulness springs up from the ground, and righteousness looks down from the sky.

L ¹²Yes, the LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase.

C ¹³Righteousness will go before him and make his footsteps a way.

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.

Throughout my life, people have been concerned with pollution. In the early part of the twentieth century, it was common for people to toss their trash out of the window as they drove through the countryside. Then Lady Bird Johnson, the First Lady of the United States, started her antilittering campaign. It changed our habits. Some people consider it the most effective first-lady project ever.

On June 22, 1969, the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland, Ohio burst into flames. This produced countrywide concern for our rivers and environment which led to the Clean Water Act in 1972.

Acid rain, the diminishing of the ozone layer, smog, and air pollution led to a number of laws collectively referred to as the Clean Air Act. To bring all of this together, 50 years ago on December 2, 1970, President Nixon signed an executive order establishing the Environmental Protection Agency.

As a result, fewer and safer pesticides are used. The discharge of pollution into lakes and rivers is controlled. Cars meet emissions standards. More work needs to be done but our environment is now the cleanest it has been in my lifetime.

Christians should take a cue from society. We too should be concerned about pollution. We certainly are concerned about the pollution of our land, water, and air. But more than that, we should be concerned about the pollution entering our eyes and ears.

Psalm 85:8 declares, "Let me hear what God the LORD will speak." It seems that today every effort is being made to drown out the voice of God's word. Commentators, pundits, and politicians all scream into our ears. The entertainment industry is determined to fill our minds with the vulgar and profane. God's people must focus to filter out this secular pollution and listen to God and His holy word.

When we listen to God's word, what do we hear? Yes, this week we have heard a call to repentance. But that is only the beginning. Our psalm for this week assures us that God has an even better word for us. When we take time to listen to God's word, we learn that God "will speak peace to his people."

When God's salvation comes near to us in Christ, what is it like? The psalmist explains, "¹⁰Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other."

When we hear God's word of grace in Christ and take it to heart it is as if "¹¹Faithfulness springs up from the ground, and righteousness looks down from the sky." The spring and summer rains of God's word in our lives cause faithfulness to blossom and flourish. The warmth of God's love, mercy, and righteousness bathes us like the sun on a balmy day.

Let us block out the pollution that bombards our ears every day and "hear what God the LORD will speak."

Prayer: Almighty God, thank You for Your word of peace. Grant that we may faithfully hear You speak to us through Your holy word, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thursday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Matthew 5:10

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, Alleluia.

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

Kyrie

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

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

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

Amos 7:7–15

⁷This is what [the Lord GOD] showed me: behold, the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. ⁸And the LORD said to me, “Amos, what do you see?” And I said, “A plumb line.” Then the Lord said,

“Behold, I am setting a plumb line
in the midst of my people Israel;
I will never again pass by them;
⁹the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate,
and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste,
and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.”

¹⁰Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, “Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words. ¹¹For thus Amos has said,

“Jeroboam shall die by the sword,
and Israel must go into exile
away from his land.”

¹²And Amaziah said to Amos, “O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, and eat bread there, and prophesy there, ¹³but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king’s sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom.”

¹⁴Then Amos answered and said to Amaziah, “I was no prophet, nor a prophet’s son, but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore figs. ¹⁵But the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’”

In the Upper Peninsula of Michigan near St. Ignace, there is a tourist attraction called “Mystery Spot.” Some years ago, I visited there with my wife and daughters. We had a good time. As you go through the “Mystery Spot,” your guide will explain:

In the early 1950’s, 3 surveyors named Clarence, Fred, and McCray came from California to explore the Upper Peninsula. They stumbled across an area of land where their surveying equipment didn’t seem to work properly. For instance, no matter how many times they tried to level their tripod, through the use of a plum-bob or level, the plum-bob would always be drawn far to the east, even as the level was reading level. As they continued their research of this land, they noticed a constant feeling of being light-headed. Later, realizing their queasiness and problems with the surveying equipment only occurred in an area about 300 feet in diameter, they felt they had discovered a “Mystery Spot”! (http://mysteryspotstignace.com/about_us)

What follows is a series of optical illusions, carefully constructed to give you a sense that indeed, in this one spot, a plumb bob will not point straight down. Water appears to run uphill. Tall people appear to be short and short people appear to be tall.

God told Amos that He was setting a plumb line in the midst of his people. God’s word is the straight-line necessary to measure all human activity.

Satan would like to deceive you into believing that in your mystery spot, God’s word doesn’t apply. Things are different. You are free to create your own reality. He wants you to believe that you are free to create your own morality.

When we depart the uprightness of God’s holy word, eventually God’s patience with us is exhausted and He will no longer be near to us with His blessings. Our lives become a desolate wasteland.

May we never live under the illusion that God’s word does not apply to us. May we come to our senses and return to the Lord our God. He is merciful and gracious. Slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

Prayer: Look mercifully upon us, O Lord, that we would never depart from the uprightness of Your word. Grant that we would always experience Your gracious presence in our lives; 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 5:10

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, Alleluia.

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

Kyrie

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

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

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

Ephesians 1:3–14

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

¹¹In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹²so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Now through the end of August, our epistle lessons will come from Paul's letter to the Ephesians. This is one of my favorite books of the Bible. It is densely packed with rock-solid theology.

Right away, following his greeting, Paul dives into eternal election and predestination! I remember once when my daughter was in high school, she was confronted by "Bible-believing" evangelical Christians. They were astonished when she admitted that she believed in predestination!

But here it is, as big as day, in Ephesians 1:5 & 11! It is also found in Acts 4:28 and Romans 8:29 & 30. So it is surprising that this group of "Bible-believing" young people could not understand how it was possible to find a Christian who believed in predestination.

Of course, predestination is one of those sticky doctrines that cause Christians to disagree with each other. I recall a time when an elder in the church was telling me of an experience he had at Bible Study Fellowship. He detailed the intense discussion caused by this doctrine in his group during a meeting.

As he described the debate between the two sides, he concluded that he wasn't sure which one was correct. I had to chuckle inside. This elder in a Lutheran Church had articulated to me the Calvinist Reformed view versus the Arminian Reformed view of predestination. It never occurred to him (or his group) that there was a third view that is entirely consistent with Holy Scripture but admittedly not compatible with human reason.

This Lutheran view affirms Ephesians chapter 1 that God “chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.” So predestination is real!

However, Lutherans do not make the mental leap thinking that because we are predestined for adoption through Jesus Christ that some are not and therefore predestined to be lost. This would be contrary to Scripture. He wants none to be lost. The Bible says so in 2 Peter 3:9, “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.”

And so the Calvinists are partly right and the Arminians are partly right and they are both partly wrong in their doctrines of predestination. Lutherans are content to live in the tension between Ephesians 1 and 2 Peter 3.

So what does it mean for you? This doctrine of predestination articulated in Ephesians 1 is there for your comfort.

When I was young, I always knew that I believed but worried that someday I might fall away. When I learned in Ephesians that God has chosen me before the foundation of the world, it gave me great comfort. God has done everything necessary for my salvation and He will keep me in the faith until He calls me home. He will do this for you, too.

Jesus, our Good Shepherd, tells us this in John 10:27-29, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and **no one will snatch them out of my hand**. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and **no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand**.”

(For an exhaustive discussion of this topic, check out The Formula of Concord, the Solid Declaration, Article XI, “God’s Eternal Foreknowledge and Election.” For a more concise discussion, look at the same article in the Formula of Concord, the Epitome.)

Prayer: O God, Your love restores those who err, seeks the scattered, and preserves those whom You have gathered. By Your tender mercy, pour out on Your people the grace of unity that, all division would end and that Your flock may be gathered to the true Shepherd of Your Church and may serve You in all faithfulness; 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: Matthew 5:10

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, Alleluia.
- C** Alleluia, Alleluia. for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 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.

Ephesians 1:11–14

¹¹In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹²so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

There is so much in these few verses from Ephesians 1 that it's hard to know which treasure to explore next. Today, let's consider the word inheritance. Over and over again the Bible talks about our salvation as an inheritance.

Inheritance is a “grace” word. Inheritances are neither earned nor deserved. They are simply received.

Jesus earned our inheritance in heaven by His death on the cross. When He declared “It is finished,” He made it clear that there is nothing we can contribute. He has done it all. And now, He gives this salvation to us freely as an inheritance.

If an inheritance is earned, it wouldn't be an inheritance. It would be a wage that we deserve. The only wage that we have earned and deserve is death. “The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). Eternal life in Christ is an inheritance!

Prayer: Almighty and most merciful God and Father, we thank and praise You that You have made us members of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and heirs of Your heavenly kingdom. We humbly implore You that You would keep us in the one true faith and move us to lead godly lives to the praise and honor of Your holy name and finally, with all Your saints, obtain our promised inheritance in heaven; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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