

The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

August 10, 2025

Rise, My Soul, to Watch and Pray

Lutheran Service Book 663, Lutheran Worship 302, The Lutheran Hymnal 446



1 Rise, my soul, to watch and pray; From your sleep a - wak -
2 Watch a - gainst the dev - il's snares Lest a - sleep he find
3 Watch! Let not the wick - ed world With its lies de - feat
4 Watch a - gainst your - self, my soul, Lest with grace you tri -



en! Be not by the e - vil day Un - a - wares o'er -
you; For in - deed no pains he spares To de - ceive and
you Lest with bold de - cep - tions hurled It be - tray and
fle; Let not self your thoughts con - trol Nor God's mer - cy



tak - en; For the foe, Well we know, Is a
blind you. Sa - tan's prey Oft are they Who se -
cheat you. Watch and see Lest there be Faith - less
sti - fle. Pride and sin Lurk with - in, All your



har - vest reap - ing While the saints are sleep - ing.
cure are sleep - ing And no watch are keep - ing.
friends to charm you, Who but seek to harm you.
hopes to shat - ter; Heed not when they flat - ter.

5 But while watching, also pray
To the Lord unceasing.
God protects you day by day,
Strength and faith increasing,
So that still
Mind and will
Shall unite to serve Him
And forever love 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 147:8–11; antiphon Psalm 147:7

L Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving;
make melody to our God on the lyre!

C He covers the heavens with clouds; he prepares rain for the earth;
he makes grass grow on the hills.

L He gives to the beasts their food,
and to the young ravens that cry.

C His delight is not in the strength of the horse,
nor his pleasure in the legs of a man,

L but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him,
in those who hope in his steadfast love.

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 Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving;
make melody to our God on the lyre!

Kyrie

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

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

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

Gloria in Excelsis ~ Glory to God in the Highest

L Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

C Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father: We worship You, we give You thanks, and we praise You for Your glory.

L Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, You are Lord and God, You are the Lamb of God:

C Lord Jesus Christ, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.

L Lord Jesus Christ, You are seated at the right hand of the Father; and we ask you to graciously receive our prayer.

C For You alone are the Holy One,
You alone are the Lord,
You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Collect of the Day

L Let us pray: Almighty and merciful God, it is by Your grace that we live as Your people who offer acceptable service. Grant that we may walk by faith, and not by sight, in the way that leads to eternal 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.

Genesis 15:1–6

¹After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” ²But Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” ³And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.” ⁴And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.” ⁵And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” ⁶And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

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

Gradual Psalm 34:9, 19, alt.

L Fear the Lord, you his saints,
C for those who fear him lack nothing!
L Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
C but the Lord delivers him out of them all.

Psalm 33:12–22

L ¹²Blessèd is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!
C ¹³The LORD looks down from heaven; he sees all the children of man;
L ¹⁴from where he sits enthroned he looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth,
C ¹⁵he who fashions the hearts of them all and observes all their deeds.
L ¹⁶The king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength.
C ¹⁷The war horse is a false hope for salvation, and by its great might it cannot rescue.
L ¹⁸Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love,
C ¹⁹that he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine.
L ²⁰Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and our shield.
C ²¹For our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name.
L ²²Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us,
C even as we hope in you.

Hebrews 11:1–16

¹Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ²For by it the people of old received their commendation. ³By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

⁴By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. ⁵By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. ⁶And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. ⁷By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

⁸By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. ¹¹By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. ¹²Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

¹³These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. ¹⁴For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Verse of the Day: Luke 12:32

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Fear not, little flock, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. For it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Alleluia.

Luke 12:22–34

L The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 12th chapter.

C Glory to You, O Lord.

²²[Jesus] said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. ²³For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. ²⁴Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! ²⁵And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁶If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? ²⁷Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ²⁸But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! ²⁹And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. ³⁰For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you.

³²"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in

the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

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

How Firm a Foundation

Lutheran Service Book 728, Lutheran Worship 411, The Lutheran Hymnal 427



1 How firm a foun - da - tion, O saints of the Lord,
2 "Fear not! I am with you, O be not dis - mayed,
3 "The soul that on Je - sus has leaned for re - pose
4 "When through fi - ery tri - als your path - way will lie,



Is laid for your faith in His ex - cel - lent Word!
For I am your God and will still give you aid;
I will not, I will not, de - sert to his foes;
My grace, all - suf - fi - cient, will be your sup - ply.



What more can He say than to you He has said
I'll strength - en you, help you, and cause you to stand,
That soul, though all hell should en - deav - or to shake,
The flames will not hurt you; I on - ly de - sign



Who un - to the Sav - ior for ref - uge have fled?
Up - held by My righ - teous, om - nip - o - tent hand.
I'll nev - er, no nev - er, no nev - er, for - sake!
Your dross to con - sume and your gold to re - fine.

5 “Throughout all their lifetime My people will prove
My sov’reign, eternal, unchangeable love;
And then, when gray hairs will their temples adorn,
Like lambs they will still in My bosom be borne.”

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Devotional thoughts:

Do you remember turning 12? I do. 12 is a wonderful age. The whole world is before you. But there was a downside. When I turned 12 the cost of admission to the Three Oaks movie theater jumped from 25 cents for the children’s ticket to 35 cents for an adult ticket! That’s a 40% increase.

But there was an advantage to going to the movies in those days. If you came in after the beginning of the film, you could just stay in your seat and wait for it to start again to catch the beginning. That is happening this week with our Gospel lesson. You just walked in during the middle of the lesson.

This episode in the life of Jesus really began with last week’s Gospel when “Someone in the crowd said to [Jesus], ‘Teacher, tell my brother to divide the INHERITANCE with me’” (Luke 12:13). Of course Jesus’ refused to be the arbitrator. He said, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” Then he proceeded to tell the parable of the Rich Fool:

“The land of a rich man produced plentifully, ¹⁷and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ ¹⁸And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.’ ¹⁹And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ ²⁰But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ ²¹So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

This is where we entered the theater this week. After telling the Parable of the Rich Fool and explaining the danger of having earthly treasure but not being rich toward God, Jesus says, “Therefore!”

You may recall that I am fond of quoting many sayings from Pastor Ferrier. You might have already guessed the one that came to my mind this week. Pastor Ferrier often said something like this “When the lesson that you are reading from the Bible begins with “therefore,” make sure that you ask, “What is it there for?”

Our Gospel lesson for this week begins, “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on.” Taking my cue from Pastor Ferrier, I was motivated to look at the Gospel lesson for last week.

The man who asked Jesus to divide the inheritance with his brother was in a real sense ultimately worried and anxious about his earthly life! This is a great danger for all of us.

The Greek word for anxious or worried here has the meaning of “Being pulled in opposite directions.” We might say something like, “He was beside himself” or “He was going to pieces.” Have you ever felt like that because of money?

When I was 12, my dad was paid on Fridays. After dad got home from work and supper was over, we would all go to the grocery store in town to do our shopping for the week. At the checkout counter, dad would pay for our week’s groceries with his paycheck for the week. It wasn’t uncommon in those days for grocery stores to be the first stop rather than the bank.

I’m sure that there were many times that my parents were anxious about what we would eat and drink for the week or where they would find clothes for their children. But at 12 years old, I was blissfully unaware of

their anxiety. I always had something to eat and something to wear! As far as I was concerned, I was living the Life of Riley!

Why was I carefree and unworried? I knew that my father and mother were taking care of me! Yes, I was interested in money. One summer I earned \$15 picking berries. Half of it my dad matched to buy a used bike. The rest I spent at the fair or on other frivolous things. But my food and clothes were all provided for me by my loving parents.

In our Gospel lesson, Jesus says, “Do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on.” Then He explains why. Your heavenly Father cares for you and provides for all your earthly needs! When it comes to material possessions, we should take a cue from 12-year-olds!

Martin Luther says in his explanation of The Fourth Petition of the Lord’s Prayer, “Give us this day our daily bread.” He then asks, “*What does this mean?*” Here is the answer, “God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.”

What is meant by daily bread? Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

We all need “daily bread” i.e. everything we need to support our bodies. God provides it to everyone! In Matthew 5:45, Jesus said that our Father in heaven “makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” If God provides for believers and unbelievers alike, what’s the difference? We trust Him for His goodness and unbelievers worry about it.

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught a lesson very similar to our Gospel lesson for this week. You can read His words in Matthew 6:25-34. He concludes with these words “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

I prefer the King James translation, “Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

Anxiety and worry are not gifts from God. They are symptoms of a lack of faith. Jesus says, “O you of little faith! Do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you.”

1 Peter 5:7 tells us to cast all your care upon Him; for He cares for you. Jesus says in our lesson, “Fear not, little flock, for it is your FATHER’S GOOD PLEASURE TO GIVE YOU THE KINGDOM.”

Not only has God provided us with certain talents and abilities to provide for our earthly needs but He has also given us His Kingdom!

We have the joy and privilege of living under Jesus’ cross. Our sins have been forgiven. We have peace with God. Beyond that, we will one day enter the eternal mansions of heaven!

This portion of the Gospel of Luke began with a man asking for Jesus to divide the inheritance. It ends with Jesus telling us that we will not receive a divided inheritance but a full inheritance. One day He will say to you, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:33).

Many of us have received an abundance of earthly blessings. God has given us much more than we need to provide ourselves with food, clothing, shelter, and transportation. As His people, we know who to thank and praise for such good gifts.

God has been generous with us so that we can be generous with others. He gives us the privilege of caring for the needy the same way He cares for us so that they too will thank and praise God.

What was this lesson about? Food, clothing, money, or faith?

Have no fear little flock, for it is your FATHER’S GOOD PLEASURE TO GIVE YOU THE KINGDOM.

“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 Almighty God, increase our faith and preserve us from anxiety. Grant that we would ever trust in Your promises and be counted righteous in Your Son, Jesus Christ. Lord.

C Amen.

L Lord, grant that Your people would be defended against the assaults and temptations of the devil. By Your Holy Spirit, grant that we live would righteous lives in Christ always seeking Your grace and forgiveness through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

L Holy Father, You promised great and abundant blessings to Abram. Bless parents with the ability to provide for their children the necessities to support this body and life. Especially, move parents to be faithful in teaching their children about the gift of eternal life through faith in Jesus.

C Amen.

L O Lord, because we are weak and powerless apart from You, defend us against all our enemies and bless our nation and those who lead us. Make them wise and endow them with a good heart, that they may seek justice and show mercy, especially on behalf of the unborn and those least able to defend themselves. Protect those in harm’s way because of the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East that cause innocent men, women, and children to suffer. Curb what is evil and promote what is good among us wherever we live in this fallen world.

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.

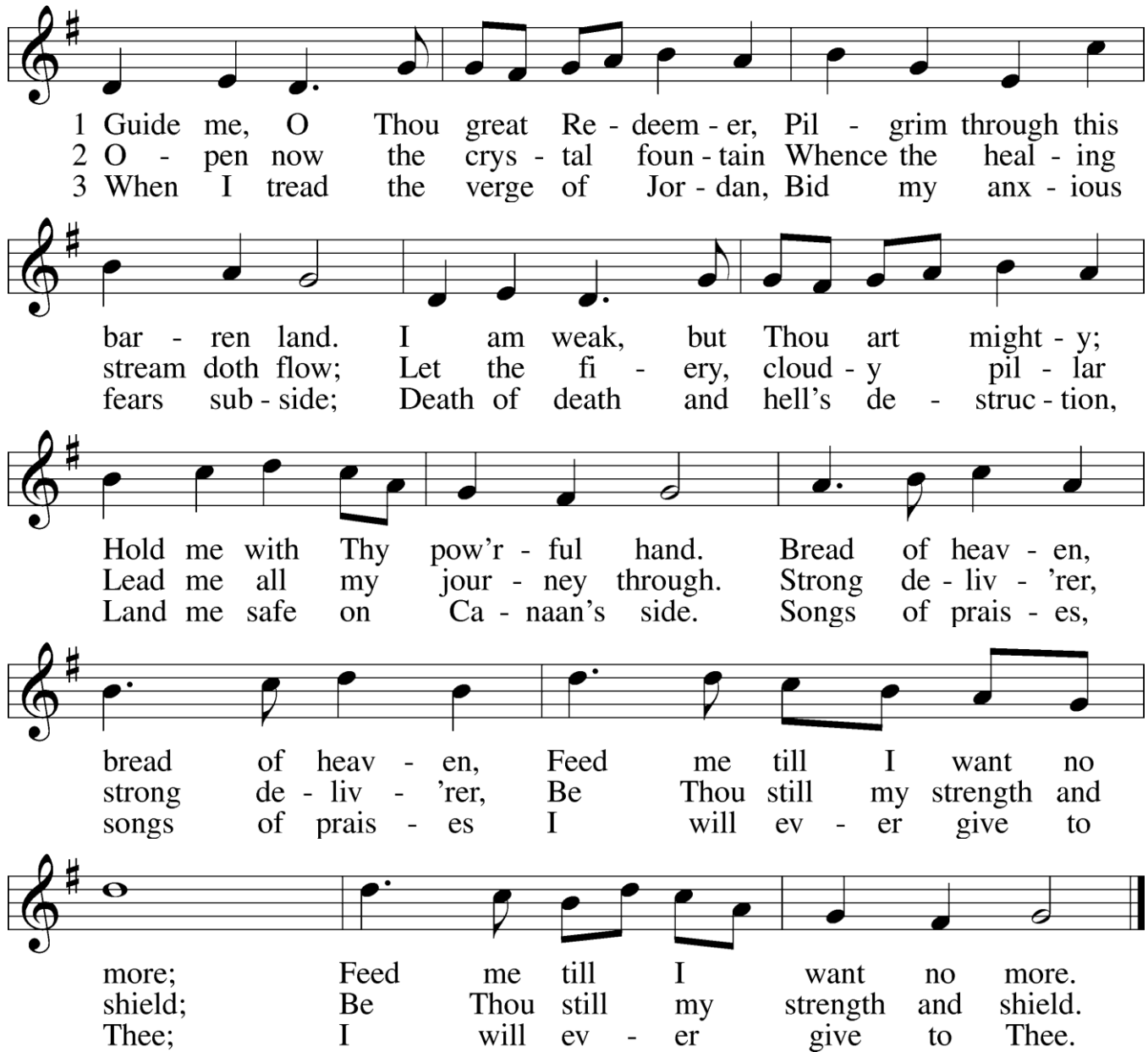
C Thanks be to God.

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

C Amen.

Guide Me, O Thou Great Redeemer

Lutheran Service Book 918, Lutheran Worship 220, The Lutheran Hymnal 54



1 Guide me, O Thou great Re - deem - er, Pil - grim through this
2 O - pen now the crys - tal foun - tain Whence the heal - ing
3 When I tread the verge of Jor - dan, Bid my anx - ious

bar - ren land. I am weak, but Thou art might - y;
stream doth flow; Let the fi - ery, cloud - y pil - lar
fears sub - side; Death of death and hell's de - struc - tion,

Hold me with Thy pow'r - ful hand. Bread of heav - en,
Lead me all my jour - ney through. Strong de - liv - 'rer,
Land me safe on Ca - naan's side. Songs of prais - es,

bread of heav - en, Feed me till I want no
strong de - liv - 'rer, Be Thou still my strength and
songs of prais - es I will ev - er give to

more;
shield;
Thee;

Feed me till I want no more.
Be Thou still my strength and shield.
I will ev - er give to Thee.

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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 NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST August 11—16, 2025

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: Luke 12:32

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Fear not, little flock, Alleluia.
- G** Alleluia, Alleluia. For it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Alleluia.

Introit Psalm 147:8–11; antiphon Psalm 147:7

- L** Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving;
make melody to our God on the lyre!
- G** He covers the heavens with clouds; he prepares rain for the earth;
he makes grass grow on the hills.
- L** He gives to the beasts their food,
and to the young ravens that cry.
- G** His delight is not in the strength of the horse,
nor his pleasure in the legs of a man,
- L** but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him,
in those who hope in his steadfast love.
- 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** Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving;
make melody to our God on the lyre!

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. |

Our introit for this week is the second of three sections that make up Psalm 147. The first and last sections speak about the Lord caring for Jerusalem. This section reminds us that God cares for all of the plants and animals of creation. When Jesus spoke in our Gospel lesson about God caring for the ravens and the lilies, He may have had this portion of Psalm 147 in mind.

God cares for nature but His greatest delight is in people who love and trust in Him. That is what the Old Testament means when it speaks about people who “fear the Lord.”

Our sinful nature caused us to rebel against God and hide from Him. But in Christ, our sins are forgiven and we are restored to a right relationship with Him. Through faith in Jesus, He makes us His children and takes pleasure in us because we put our hope in Him!

Let us pray: O Lord, thank You for the blessings of nature. We rejoice in the rhythm of rain and sunshine and the growth of crops that provide our daily bread. Grant us Your grace to truly fear, love, and trust in You and place our hope in Your steadfast love through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Tuesday

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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: Luke 12:32

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| L | Alleluia, Alleluia. Fear not, little flock, Alleluia. |
| C | Alleluia, Alleluia. For it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 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. |

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| L | Let us pray: Almighty and merciful God, it is by Your grace that we live as Your people who offer acceptable service. Grant that we may walk by faith, and not by sight, in the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. |
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|----------|--------------|
| C | Amen. |
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Almost everything we do is based on what we believe. When I come home late at night, I turn the light switch on because I believe that there is electricity in the wires provided by the power company. Following a storm when our power is knocked out, I enter the room with a flashlight without even trying the wall switch.

So it is also with our faith in God. Our actions in life are governed by what we believe. When we believe God and His promises, our activities will be governed by that faith. Our Epistle Lesson from Hebrews 11 gives us a catalog of Old Testament heroes of the faith and how they acted when they believed God's promises.

Christian people believe in God. Our faith in Him moves us to praise and thank Him for His grace and mercy. It also motivates us to be gracious to others and serve their needs the way God has served ours.

Let us pray: Almighty and merciful God, it is by Your grace that we live as Your people who offer acceptable service. Grant that we may walk by faith, and not by sight, in the way that leads to eternal 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 of the Day: Luke 12:32

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Fear not, little flock, Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia. For it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Alleluia.

Psalm 33:12–22

L ¹²Blessèd is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!
C ¹³**The LORD looks down from heaven; he sees all the children of man;**
L ¹⁴from where he sits enthroned he looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth,
C ¹⁵**he who fashions the hearts of them all and observes all their deeds.**
L ¹⁶The king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength.
C ¹⁷**The war horse is a false hope for salvation, and by its great might it cannot rescue.**
L ¹⁸Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love,
C ¹⁹**that he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine.**
L ²⁰Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and our shield.
C ²¹**For our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name.**
L ²²Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us,
C even as we hope in you.

Kyrie

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

Psalm 33:12 is often quoted on national holidays, “Blessèd is the nation whose God is the LORD.” While the United States has no official religion, since its founding it has been an overwhelmingly Christian nation. Even today, at least two-thirds of Americans claim to be Christian. No other religion can claim more than 1%.

There is no doubt that even through all the ups and downs of history, the United States has been blessed. One of the great blessings that the secular media often ignores is a shared sense of morality that is based on the Ten Commandments. Even atheists and agnostics generally accept our Biblical definition of right and wrong. But this is not the greatest blessing that comes from our Christian heritage.

The greatest blessing Christianity has brought to America is the concept of forgiveness. Christians live under the cross. We are fully aware of our sin and our need of forgiveness. We rejoice in God's grace given to us through faith in Jesus. Christians across our country from every denomination pray, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

Christianity is not a religion of revenge. Our nation and western culture, in general, are blessed by having been saturated by the Christian virtue of forgiveness. May it ever be so.

Let us pray: O Lord, bless our nation. Grant that we would not depart from Your ways. Guide our leaders to honor our shared values of right and wrong. Make us a nation of loving and forgiving people 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: Luke 12:32

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Fear not, little flock, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. For it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Alleluia.

Kyrie

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

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

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

Genesis 15:1–6

¹After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." ²But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." ⁴And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." ⁵And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ⁶And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

Have you ever read flavor descriptions on a bottle of wine? One that I recently read says, "Aromas of ripe cherry, cedar, & chocolate complement smooth flavors of candied strawberry, cherry cordial & spice." Now, in all honesty, I have to admit that I can't taste those things in wine. Apparently, I'm not good at identifying anything subtle. I know that some people are and so I ask about things that I've missed. I'm not just talking about flavors. I mean it is hard for me to identify anything subtle. If you want me to notice something, it has to be right in front of me and I still might miss it.

One thing that is not so subtle about this week's lessons is their laser-like focus on faith! It is absolutely the heart and soul of the Epistle lesson from Hebrews but it is clearly in the other lessons as well. In the Gospel lesson, Jesus calls us to trust God the Father for all that we need to support our bodies and life on this earth. This is a call to faith.

In this reading from Genesis, we hear Abram voice his doubt to the Lord. He is advanced in years and still, God has not granted him a son to receive his inheritance. It is natural for him to doubt. However, God reassured Abram that his "very own son" would be his heir. Abram believed the Lord. His faith in God's promise was counted to him as righteousness!

I don't think it is subtle but it seems that many people often miss the fact that faith equals righteousness! It is not our works that make us righteous. It is faith in Christ's work of salvation that makes us righteous.

Abram and Sarah were at an age in life where only a miracle would provide an heir for them. It was a miracle that God provided.

Because of our sinfulness and failings in life, it is only a miracle that anyone of us could be saved. God provided that miracle in the person of Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross. We believe His promise of

forgiveness and God counts that as righteousness for us. As righteous people through faith in Jesus we have the gift of eternal life.

I'm glad that God is not subtle about that. His promise is clear. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Let us pray: O Lord, thank You for the gift of salvation through faith in Jesus. Grant that we would never doubt Your love for us in Christ through the same 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: Luke 12:32

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Fear not, little flock, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. For it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 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.

Hebrews 11:1–16

¹Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ²For by it the people of old received their commendation. ³By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

⁴By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. ⁵By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. ⁶And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. ⁷By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

⁸By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. ¹¹By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.

¹²Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

¹³These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. ¹⁴For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

Hebrews 11 is a testimony to the faith of God's people throughout the Old Testament. In our Old Testament lesson for this week we were reminded of the faith of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The remainder of the chapter continues with Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets.

Some of these names may be familiar to you, others not so much. They all had one thing in common. They lived by faith. They all understood the truth of Psalm 125:1, "Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever." Their lives exemplified the truth of Isaiah 40:30-31, "Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

They all experienced hardship but their faith brought them through difficult times. Jeremiah explained it this way, "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit" (Jeremiah 17:7-8).

Clearly, the Old Testament is not about works, and the New Testament about faith. The entire Bible teaches us to trust God and to have faith in His promises. He cares for His people in this life and in the one to come.

Let us pray: O Lord, grant us the grace to trust Your promises in Christ. Keep us faithful to You and Your word. In times of difficulty, strengthen our faith. In times of prosperity, keep us from becoming distracted by the pleasures of this world 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: Luke 12:32

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Fear not, little flock, Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia. For it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Alleluia.

Gradual Psalm 34:9, 19, alt.

- L** Fear the Lord, you his saints,
C for those who fear him lack nothing!
L Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
C but the Lord delivers him out of them all.

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.

We turned a corner this week that may have gone unnoticed by most of us. We have a new gradual for the first time since the last Sunday in June.

Our gradual from Psalm 34 is a powerful reminder of how God cares for His people. Even when times become difficult, we know that God will ultimately deliver us.

The question some may ask about our gradual is the concept of the “fear of the Lord.” Fear is not something that many of us are uncomfortable with when it comes to thinking of our gracious God who invites us to call him Father.

The Hebrew word translated as fear can mean to be afraid but it really communicates much more than that. When it comes to God’s people standing before the Lord it would be better translated as “awe” or “reverence.”

The Lutheran Study Bible says this about the “fear of the Lord.”

“Proverbs points out that true wisdom begins with such fear. The opening verses sum up the entire Book:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Pr 1:7)

This fear is closely related to trust because we can truly respect and reverence God only when we believe that He is truly everything that His Word, the Bible, says He is. Understanding “fear of the Lord” as trust helps us understand other enigmatic Bible passages such as Ps 130:4:

But with You there is forgiveness, that You may be feared.”¹

In our age of casual worship, it might do us well to think again about the meaning of the “fear of the Lord.”

Let us pray: O Lord, grant me to have true reverence for You and Your word. Help me to grow in the wisdom and knowledge that I may have an abiding fear of the Lord. Amen.

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¹Edward A. Engelbrecht, *The Lutheran Study Bible*, 1001 (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).