

The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost July 21, 2024

Throughout history, false prophets—wolves in sheep’s clothing—have sought to destroy and scatter the sheep of the Lord’s pasture. Through the faithful study of God’s Word, we are able to remain faithful to God. We are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Himself as the cornerstone in whom the Church is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In this Christian Church, He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers.

The Church's One Foundation

Lutheran Service Book 644, Lutheran Worship 289, The Lutheran Hymnal 473



1 The Church's one foun - da - tion Is Je - sus Christ, her Lord;
2 E - lect from ev - 'ry na - tion, Yet one o'er all the earth;
3 Though with a scorn - ful won - der The world sees her op - pressed,
4 Through toil and trib - u - la - tion And tu - mult of her war



She is His new cre - a - tion By wa - ter and the Word.
Her char - ter of sal - va - tion: One Lord, one faith, one birth.
By schisms rent a - sun - der, By her - e - sies dis - tressed,
She waits the con - sum - ma - tion Of peace for - ev - er - more



From heav'n He came and sought her To be His ho - ly bride;
One ho - ly name she bless - es, Par - takes one ho - ly food,
Yet saints their watch are keep - ing; Their cry goes up, "How long?"
Till with the vi - sion glo - rious Her long - ing eyes are blest,



With His own blood He bought her, And for her life He died.
And to one hope she press - es With ev - 'ry grace en - dued.
And soon the night of weep - ing Shall be the morn of song.
And the great Church vic - to - rious Shall be the Church at rest.

5 Yet she on earth has union
 With God, the Three in One,
 And mystic sweet communion
 With those whose rest is won.
 O blessed heav'nly chorus!
 Lord, save us by Your grace
 That we, like saints before us,
 May see You face to face.

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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 147:7–11; antiphon Psalm 145:16

L You open your hand;
 you satisfy the desire of every living thing.

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

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

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

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

C 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 You open your hand;
 you satisfy the desire of every living thing.

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: Heavenly Father, though we do not deserve Your goodness, still You provide for all our needs of body and soul. Grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may acknowledge Your gifts, give thanks for all Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
C Amen.

Jeremiah 23:1–6

¹“Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!” declares the LORD. ²Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people: “You have scattered my flock and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for your evil deeds, declares the LORD. ³Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. ⁴I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the LORD.

⁵“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The LORD is our righteousness.’”

- 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 23

- L** ¹The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
- C** ²**He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.**
- L** ³He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
- C** ⁴**Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.**
- L** ⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
- C** ⁶**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.**

Ephesians 2:11–22

¹¹Remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— ¹²remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

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

Verse of the Day: Psalm 78:25

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Man ate of the bread of the angels, Alleluia.
- C** **Alleluia, Alleluia. He sent them food in abundance. Alleluia.**

Mark 6: 30–44

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

³⁰The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. ³¹And he said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. ³²And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. ³³Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. ³⁴When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things. ³⁵And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, “This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. ³⁶Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.” ³⁷But he answered them, “You give them something to eat.” And they said to him, “Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?” ³⁸And he said to them, “How many loaves do you have? Go and see.” And when they had found out, they said, “Five, and two fish.” ³⁹Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰So they sat

down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. ⁴¹And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all. ⁴²And they all ate and were satisfied. ⁴³And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. ⁴⁴And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men.

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

All Depends on Our Possessing

Lutheran Service Book 732, Lutheran Worship 415, The Lutheran Hymnal 425



1 All de - pends on our pos - sess - ing God's a - bun - dant
2 He who to this day has fed me And to man - y
3 Man - y spend their lives in fret - ting O - ver tri - fles
4 When with sor - row I am strick - en, Hope a - new my



grace and bless - ing, Though all earth - ly wealth de - part.
joys has led me Is and ev - er shall be mine.
and in get - ting Things that have no sol - id ground.
heart will quick - en; All my long - ing shall be stilled.



They who trust with faith un - shak - en By their God are
He who ev - er gent - ly schools me, He who dai - ly
I shall strive to win a trea - sure That will bring me
To His lov - ing - kind - ness ten - der Soul and bod - y



not for - sak - en And will keep a daunt - less heart.
guides and rules me Will re - main my help di - vine.
last - ing plea - sure And that now is sel - dom found.
I sur - ren - der, For on God a - lone I build.

5 Well He knows what best to grant me;
All the longing hopes that haunt me,
Joy and sorrow, have their day.
I shall doubt His wisdom never;
As God wills, so be it ever;
I commit to Him my way.

6 If my days on earth He lengthen,
God my weary soul will strengthen;
All my trust in Him I place.
Earthly wealth is not abiding,
Like a stream away is gliding;
Safe I anchor in His grace.

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Devotional thoughts:

Each week, we learn about Jesus' life through the eyes of the Gospel of Mark. As we focus on these individual readings, it is easy to lose track of the course of Jesus' ministry. From time to time, it is helpful to sit down and read (or listen to) the Gospel of Mark from beginning to end.

To understand the context of today's lesson, we need to go back to verse 7. There we read about the sending of the twelve two by two. Here in verse 30, we learn that apostles have returned and reported to Jesus about all that they had done and taught.

Their experience must have been exhausting. In ministering, they didn't even have time to eat! Jesus, in His wisdom, planned a retreat from the multitudes.

This is when things begin to go off course. Jesus and His disciples confirm the observation made by Robert Burns, "The best laid plans of mice and men often go astray". [Or as he wrote in a Scottish dialect, "The best laid schemes o' mice an' men. Gang aft a-gley".]

Their boat ride to a secluded spot is noticed from the shore. Word spreads like wildfire. Jesus and His disciples are in the boat. People drop what they are doing and dash ahead to Jesus' intended destination. Now instead of a time of respite, there will be more work to do.

Again, going back to the beginning of the chapter will help you catch the irony of this situation. Jesus was virtually scoffed at in His hometown of Nazareth but everywhere else people cannot get enough of Him! Indeed, Jesus' words have proven to be true, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown."

As Jesus and His disciples come ashore, we might expect Him to say something like this, "Go away. We're exhausted. We need some rest. We need something to eat. Come back tomorrow." But instead, Mark reports that Jesus had compassion on them. They were like sheep without a shepherd.

Yes, there were many pretend shepherds. As Jeremiah so aptly reported concerning them, they have scattered the flock and have driven them away. They have not attended to them.

Now, the Good Shepherd will attend to their needs. He will nourish them with the word of life and teach them many things.

All the while, the practical disciples have been keeping their eye on the time. Maybe their stomachs were growling from hunger, too. So they came to Jesus with this advice, "This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat."

Jesus has been teaching the people all day. Their souls have been fed. Now it is time to teach the disciples. He said to them, "You give them something to eat."

They answered Jesus' challenge in a typical human way. As if Jesus is unaware of the realities of finance, they explained to Him the hard facts of balance sheets and business. To put it in colloquial terms, they said

something like this, “Are you kidding? There is no way on God’s green earth that we have enough money to feed this horde of people.”

Without a pause, Jesus accepted the fact that their purses were empty. He asked, “How much bread do you have? Go and see.”

Among all the people there, they were able to come up with five loaves of bread and two fish. That would be hardly enough to feed the twelve disciples. There is no way that it would ever be enough for this massive throng. At least, that is what the disciples likely thought. Nevertheless, to their credit, they continued to do what Jesus asked.

The people sat down in groups on the green grass. Jesus took the loaves and fish, looked to heaven, and said a blessing. Now, what is impossible for man is made possible by God.

The food is distributed. They all ate and were satisfied. Not only that, there were twelve baskets filled with leftovers! There was one for each disciple! Amazing!

We know this miracle as The Feeding of the Five Thousand or it is sometimes called The Multiplication of Loaves and Fish. But Bible scoffers have another explanation. They claim that no thinking person would leave home without bringing food. So they continue, when the crowd saw one boy share his lunch, it moved everyone to share with each other their stash of provisions.

This sad denial of Jesus’ miraculous action does not stand up to careful examination. It does not fit the Gospel of Mark or the details of the text.

Mark from the very first verse has made it a point to underscore the divinity of Jesus. There he writes, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” At the cross, Mark reports the words of the centurion upon Jesus’ death, “Truly this man was the Son of God!” (Mark 15:39).

In addition, this assembly of people was not planned. No one had time to grab a lunch. Jesus was spotted from the shore and people ran to keep up with the boat and arrive at His landing before He arrived.

No, Mark intends for us to see Jesus’ divine activity in this miraculous, supernatural feeding of the gathered multitude. He is the Good Shepherd. He makes me to lie down in green pastures beside the still waters. He sets a table before me. My cup runneth over. He is the Bread of Life who gives us manna from heaven.

Jesus cares for our needs, both physical and spiritual. Most often He gives us our daily bread through ordinary means. However, when necessary, He is also able to provide for us in miraculous ways.

This is often hard to remember. It is even difficult to remember in our Christian congregations. Every year offerings and budgets cause great anxiety for pastors and church leaders. When these times come, we would do well to offer this little prayer, “Dear Lord, in Your mercy, I ask that You would make these few loaves and fish to be sufficient for our needs.”

A key part of this account is Jesus’ compassion for the crowds who are like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus gave up his personal comfort to minister to these lost sheep. His ministry to them went beyond teaching them and feeding their bodies. His compassion led Him to the cross where the Good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep.

We are recipients of Jesus’ compassion and sacrifice. In His mercy, He paid for our sins and opened for us a home in heaven where He is our Good Shepherd. There we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Until then, may we live by faith trusting the Good Shepherd to meet our needs of body and soul. May we also show the same compassion for those around us as Jesus had for the crowd that day near the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

“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 We give thanks to You, heavenly Father, for Your compassion shown to us in Christ Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep and the righteous Son of David. Grant that we would trust our Good Shepherd at all times and keep us secure in the shelter of Your flock.

C Amen.

L We give thanks to You, heavenly Father, that we are no longer strangers. You have reconciled us to Yourself through the cross. Now that You have brought us from many families into Your family, continue to bless our homes, that fathers and mothers may faithfully lead their children by word and deed to call upon You as Father.

C Amen.

L We give thanks to You, heavenly Father, that You have sustained us as we wander through the desolate places of life. Grant that even as You made five loaves and two fish to be sufficient for those who followed Jesus, that we would find Your abundant blessings to be sufficient for our needs today, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

L Heavenly King, You provide for all our needs of body and soul. Grant us good government and faithful rulers, while reminding us always that all provision comes from You.

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 We give thanks to You, O Lord, that You have made us fellow citizens with the saints in light. Keep us in the true faith for as long as You preserve us in this world, that we would hopefully and eagerly await the day when we stand in Your presence with them; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the 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.

Lord, Dismiss Us with Your Blessing

Lutheran Service Book 924, Lutheran Worship 50, The Lutheran Hymnal 218



1 Lord, dis - miss us with Your bless - ing, Fill our hearts with
2 Thanks we give and ad - o - ra - tion For Your Gos - pel's
3 Sav - ior, when Your love shall call us From our strug - gling



joy and peace; Let us each, Your love pos - sess - ing,
joy - ful sound. May the fruits of Your sal - va - tion
pil - grim way, Let not fear of death ap - pall us,



Tri - umph in re - deem - ing grace. O re - fresh us;
In our hearts and lives a - bound. Ev - er faith - ful,
Glad Your sum - mons to o - bey. May we ev - er,



O re - fresh us, Trav - 'ling through this wil - der - ness.
ev - er faith - ful To Your truth may we be found.
may we ev - er Reign with You in end - less day.

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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 July 22-27, 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: Psalm 78:25

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Man ate of the bread of the angels, Alleluia.
- C** Alleluia, Alleluia. He sent them food in abundance. Alleluia.

Introit Psalm 147:7–11; antiphon Psalm 145:16

- L** You open your hand;
you satisfy the desire of every living thing.
- C** Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving;
make melody to our God on the lyre!
- L** He covers the heavens with clouds; he prepares rain for the earth;
he makes grass grow on the hills.
- C** He gives to the beasts their food,
and to the young ravens that cry.
- L** His delight is not in the strength of the horse,
nor his pleasure in the legs of a man,
- C** 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** You open your hand;
you satisfy the desire of every living thing.

Kyrie

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

The introit for this week is a pleasant combination of two psalms for the commemoration of the Feeding of the Five Thousand. The antiphon is from Psalm 145 and the body of the introit is from Psalm 147.

Indeed, the Lord simply opens His hand and satisfies the desires of every living thing. However, not all of us recognize the source of our blessings. Those who do sing in thanksgiving to the Lord with delightful melodies.

I am always amazed at the justifications given to me for not worshiping in church. Of course, people don't have to justify themselves to me but to the Lord. The psalmist simply states that praising the Lord is the proper response for receiving the goodness of God. When we don't recognize the incredible blessings showered upon us by God, we will not sing praise to Him!

The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him and place their hope in His steadfast love. This is the rhythm of life. God gives blessings to us. We recognize those blessings and sing praises to God. God takes pleasure in us and our response to His blessings.

In our Gospel lesson, people are rushing to Jesus! He blesses them with His teaching and miraculously feeds them in a desolate place. It is hard to imagine these people remaining silent and failing to praise Jesus for satisfying their hunger of soul and body.

- L** Let us pray. Lord God, heavenly Father, we offer before You our thanksgiving and praise for all of the wonderful gifts that You have showered upon us. We are especially thankful for the blessings of the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation granted to us by our savior; through the same 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: Psalm 78:25

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Man ate of the bread of the angels, Alleluia.
- C** Alleluia, Alleluia. He sent them food in abundance. 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: Heavenly Father, though we do not deserve Your goodness, still You provide for all our needs of body and soul. Grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may acknowledge Your gifts, give thanks for all Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C** Amen.

The collect for this week is a mini-commentary on the Feeding of the 5000. The people who followed Jesus to a desolate location when He was seeking rest did not deserve His goodness. This is so true for us and for

everyone. God does not owe us His goodness and mercy. We have been rebellious in thought, word, and deed. God would be justified in allowing us to just wither away.

However, Jesus had compassion for the people who were like sheep without a shepherd. He fed their souls with the eternal truth of God's word and He fed their bodies with the loaves and fish. He has compassion for us as well. All that we have comes from Him. Food and drink, house and home, family and friends all are gifts from above. But even more than that, Jesus gave himself for us on the cross. In His compassion for us, He sacrificed Himself. He died so that we can live. There is no greater gift.

In our fallen state, we are unwilling to acknowledge these amazing gifts from God. Not only do we ignore His compassionate gifts, we actively deny them and rebel against God. But God gives one more gift. He gives the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit changes our hearts so that we recognize and acknowledge Jesus' great love for us.

When we acknowledge His goodness and grace, we can do no less than to offer ourselves to Him in gratitude. We willingly and joyfully serve Him with all that we have. Our service to Jesus in thanksgiving for all of His gifts includes caring for others in their time of need. We are so grateful for His compassion that we are moved with compassion for others.

Let us pray: Heavenly Father, though we do not deserve Your goodness, still You provide for all our needs of body and soul. Grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may acknowledge Your gifts, give thanks for all Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience; 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: Psalm 78:25

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Man ate of the bread of the angels, Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia. He sent them food in abundance. Alleluia.

Psalm 23

- L** ¹The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
C ²**He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.**
L ³He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
C ⁴**Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.**
L ⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
C ⁶**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.**

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.

While reading through the Twenty-third Psalm again, I recalled an experience that has been etched into my mind since the beginning of my ministry. I have retold it many times to people who were suffering distress and anxiety in their lives.

There was a young family that belonged to our church. They weren't very involved and seemed to be lukewarm about spiritual things. It was August and I visited their home to encourage them to send their daughter to confirmation instruction in the fall.

As I entered their home, I began to sense something quite different about their attitude toward God and the church. To my surprise, the young mother was almost bubbling over when she talked about God. After a few minutes, I couldn't help but ask her about the change that I observed in her life. And what follows is her story. It's a little long for these midweek meditations. I will shorten it as much as possible.

She related that her father and brothers had traveled into the boreal forest of Northwestern Ontario for a spring bear hunt. When her brothers returned to their cabin from a morning of hunting, they discovered that their father was nowhere to be found.

An extensive search was made for their father. Authorities were contacted. They could discover no trace of her father.

As the months passed, she became more and more filled with anxiety. She couldn't sleep. She couldn't focus on daily tasks. To put it mildly, she was a wreck.

She confided in her friends everything that she was suffering. One of them pointed her to a book of meditations based on the Twenty-third Psalm. As she worked through the book and made the Twenty-third Psalm an integral part of her daily life, things began to change. She began to experience a peace that had escaped her for months. She trusted that the Lord was her Shepherd and He cared for her. She excitedly shared her experience with anyone who would listen.

There is more to her story than I can relate here. But I will let you know that for the rest of my ministry when people would come to me with trouble or anxiety not knowing where to turn, I would recount to them this story and direct them to infuse their lives with the Twenty-third Psalm. I have lost track of this woman but she has helped untold numbers of people by telling me her story on that day.

The Good Shepherd has laid down His life for you. He will never leave you or forsake you. Cast your cares on Him for He cares for you.

Prayer: Lord God, our shepherd, You gather the lambs of Your flock into the arms of Your mercy and bring them home. Comfort us with the certain hope of the resurrection to everlasting life and a joyful reunion with those we love who have died in the faith; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.. Amen.

Thursday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Psalm 78:25

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Man ate of the bread of the angels, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. He sent them food in abundance. 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.

Jeremiah 23:1-6

¹“Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!” declares the LORD. ²Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people: “You have scattered my flock and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for your evil

deeds, declares the LORD. ³Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. ⁴I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the LORD.

⁵“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The LORD is our righteousness.’”

In the year before he died, Martin Luther recounted his discovery of the Gospel. It is found in the preface to his works in Latin (Luther’s Works, Vol. 34, pages 336-337). There he describes his struggle with the concept of the righteousness of God.

He fought against it. He says, “I hated that word ‘righteousness of God.’” In his day, he had been taught that this term was to be interpreted to mean “God is righteous and punishes the unrighteous sinner.” He was so aware of his own failings and sin that he said, “I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners.”

Then one day while studying Romans 1:17 (For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”), he came to understand that the “righteousness of God” is something God gives to us through faith. It is God’s own righteousness that is ours through Christ. It is not something we do or could even begin to do. It is what Jesus has done for us. He realized that Romans 1:17 means “He who through faith is righteous shall live.”

He was so ecstatic about this discovery that he wrote: “I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates.” It was this great discovery of salvation by grace through faith for Christ’s sake that he refused to abandon when he stood before the emperor at the Diet of Worms. It was this understanding of the righteousness of God that he defended when he said, “I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. Here I stand, I can do no other. May God help me. Amen.”

In a way, the Reformation is built on the concept expressed in these verses from Jeremiah that serve as our Old Testament lesson for this week. Jesus is the righteous Branch of David that has been raised up as King. In Him “The LORD is our righteousness!” Our personal righteousness is filthy (Isaiah 64:6) but Jesus is our righteousness. He makes us worthy to live with our holy God for all eternity.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, You invite all who are burdened with sin to come to You for rest. Thank you for Your righteous and holy life and Your sacrifice on the cross for our unrighteousness. Strengthen our faith to trust that You are now our righteousness that we are free from the burdens of sin and death. Amen.

Friday

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

Verse of the Day: Psalm 78:25

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Man ate of the bread of the angels, Alleluia.
- C** Alleluia, Alleluia. He sent them food in abundance. 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 2:11–22

¹¹Remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— ¹²remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Jerry Pournelle was one of my favorite writers. His Wikipedia article identifies him as a polymath. (I had to look it up, too.) Among his many interests, he was a pioneer in the field of personal computers. He would do difficult and expensive things and then write about them. Then he would write something like this, “I do this so that you don’t have to.”

In preparing to write this meditation, I had one of those moments. I did the difficult work so that you don’t have to.

I began by reading Ephesians 2:11-22 as printed in the lessons for this week. I then turned to the verses as printed in the Bible. I made an interesting discovery. Although they are both from the ESV, they start with different words. The epistle lesson for Sunday drops the first word of Ephesians 1:11!

To save you the trouble of looking it up, I’ll tell you that the missing word is “therefore.” I worked for many years with Pastor Kenneth Ferrier. I still recall a number of his sayings. One of them was, “If you see the word “therefore,” you should ask yourself, “What is it there for?” It’s a catchy phrase and true!

In this case it signals that Ephesians 2:11 and the following verses depend on the first ten verses of the chapter. Unfortunately, by omitting that word, we might forget to look at those verses. That would be unfortunate because they are some of the most significant verses in the entire book.

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Now we can continue:

“Therefore, remember...”

It is common today to talk about our shared human experience. However, one part of the shared human experience that is often ignored is our need for salvation and our inability to save ourselves.

Ephesians 2:8-9 shows us that we are all saved by grace. It’s not something that we do but a gift from God. In fact, faith, also, is a gift so no one may boast.

It is God’s grace in Christ that brings us together into the family of God. None of us can gain admittance on our own. Therefore, we are all one built together on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone. We are neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female but we are all one in Christ Jesus (adapted from Galatians 3:28).

Prayer: O God, through Your Son, Jesus Christ, You reconciled the world to Yourself and have given Your Church the ministry of reconciliation. We give you thanks that by Your grace, we have peace with You and one another. Strengthened by Your forgiveness, grant that we may continue to live in the unity of the Spirit and share the bond of peace; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Saturday

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

Verse of the Day: Psalm 78:25

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Man ate of the bread of the angels, Alleluia.
G Alleluia, Alleluia. He sent them food in abundance. Alleluia.

Gradual Romans 11:33, 36

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

Kyrie

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

The Olympics have begun. Maybe you watched the opening ceremonies.

It always amazes me how much the Olympic opening ceremonies resemble a religious service. There is ritual and reverence. The past is recalled. Sports are celebrated as the highest good and a unifier of humanity.

This year the Olympic games are being held in Paris. I have always enjoyed the Olympics and have faithfully watched them every four years since 1964. Nevertheless, it does bother me that so many people seem to make sports their God.

Sunday mornings, once reserved for Sunday school and church, are now filled with softball, baseball, hockey, and soccer. Those who participate in sports are asked to make a total commitment and untold sacrifices. For some fans, watching sports and following their team becomes all-consuming. They build shrines in their homes and argue with anyone who supports another team.

It is disappointing when Christians display less fervor than sports fans about the true God and the salvation that He gives to us in Jesus. Of course, this is nothing new. I am reminded of the hymn, We Give Thee but Thine Own, stanza 3.

Oh, hearts are bruised and dead,
And homes are bare and cold,
And lambs for whom the Shepherd bled
Are straying from the fold.

All of this causes me to realize that there is much work to do. Watching the opening ceremonies reminds me that missions are essential. There are many in the world who need to hear the love of Jesus, who need to hear He died for all. But we have much mission work to do right here at home in our own congregations and among our fellow believers. There is never a time when we outgrow our need for repentance and forgiveness. We daily sin much. We daily need to return to Jesus and His cross. We daily need to rededicate our lives to Him.

To comfort and to bless,
To find a balm for woe,
To tend the lone and fatherless
Is angels' work below.

The captive to release,
To God the lost to bring,
To teach the way of life and peace,
It is a Christ-like thing.

And we believe Thy Word,
Though dim our faith may be:
Whate'er for Thine we do, O Lord,
We do it unto Thee.

We Give Thee But Thine Own, stanza 3-6
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Prayer: Almighty and gracious God, You want all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. Magnify the power of the Gospel in the hearts of Your faithful people that Your Church may spread the good news of salvation. Protect, encourage, and bless all who proclaim the saving cross that Christ, being lifted up, may draw all people to Himself, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

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